

TOTALLY CHAOTIC HISTORY

ROMAN BRITAIN
GETS ROWDY!



illustrated by
**RIKIN
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expert interruptions by
**DR EMMA
SOUTHON**

GREG JENNER

To Esmé, who makes me laugh every day – G.J.

For Jay Lee – E.S.

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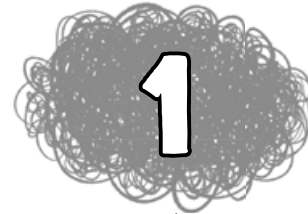
GREG JENNER

with **Dr EMMA SOUTHON**

illustrated by **RIKIN PAREKH**



WALKER
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WELCOME TO ROMAN BRITAIN!

Hello! I assume you're here because you want to know more about Roman Britain, right? Well, you've chosen wisely. This book is so chock-a-block full of ancient stuff, you'll soon have knowledge leaking out of your ears, like jam oozing from a doughnut! You'll find out about marching legionaries, luxury villas and Hadrian's Wall. But watch out! This book isn't going to be a boring list of facts, because it's really about ...

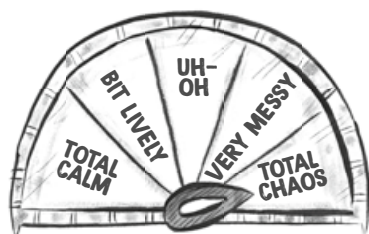
**TOTAL
CHAOS!!!**

(... and also Roman Britain)



Hi! I'm Greg, and I'm a public historian – that means my job is to make history fun. And in this book I'm going to propel you through the unpredictable story of how Britain was conquered and changed by the Romans (until they abandoned it!).

Be warned: this will be a wild ride. At one point, nineteen Roman emperors in a row will meet a sticky end! Watch out for my chaos meter – it will tell you how cheerfully calm or calamitously chaotic things are:



And we won't be on this journey alone! Let me introduce you to my mega-brainy co-author, Dr Emma Southon, who is an expert ancient historian. While I pull you through the story at super-speed, Emma will be here to tell us which events *are* true,

which *might* be true, and which are just a bunch of fanciful myths. We might even have a big ol' argument about rival theories, but don't worry – passionate debate is CLASSIC



HISTORIAN BEHAVIOUR, and we'll still be pals afterwards! Listen out for Emma's accuracy alarm as we go along.

I'm also totally going to scribble all over the margins – I have loads of facts to share with you!

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?!

You might think that history is just loads of yawn-worthy dates and confusing names that seem to be spelled by an angry cat stomping on a computer keyboard. Sure, some names are tricky – like Tiberius Claudius Cogidubnus – but it's not all about that. What if we stopped thinking of Roman Britain as being ages ago and imagined what it would actually be like to live through it? We wouldn't think of ourselves as ancient; we'd be MODERN! And we'd have no idea what was coming next – no clue if there'd be a rebellion on Wednesday, a new emperor on Thursday, or an army of giant radioactive hamsters attacking major cities at the weekend! Historians study stuff after it's happened – they know what comes next – but when you're living through the chaos, *tomorrow* is ??????

That's what you're going to experience in this book. Prepare to be rocketed through a thousand years of TOTAL CHAOS. Hold on tight!

Third time lucky, Greg!

Er ... WHAT?!



SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW ROMAN BRITAIN?

Here's a question for you – what do you think of when I say Roman Britain? Perhaps these are some of the things that pop into your mind...



And none of those are wrong! But the history of Roman Britain is messier than you probably realize. For example, did you know that...

- Hadrian wasn't the only emperor to build a famous wall – so did a ruler called Antoninus Pius.
- Some Roman writers thought Julius Caesar's invasion of Britain was a total waste of time!
- Boudica wasn't the only warrior queen in ancient Britain (and we don't know if that was her actual name!).

There's so much chaos for us to race through, but don't panic – it's going to be epic! We'll start 2,800 years ago, in the Iron Age, and then hurtle through 1,200 years of invasions, rebellions, murdered emperors and loads of fish gut sauce (I'll explain later!). Once we're done, you'll never see Roman Britain in the same way again. To help you get to grips with it all, here's a handy timeline...



TIMELINE OF

ROMAN BRITAIN

100 BCE

Roman stuff arrives in Iron Age Britain thanks to traders from Gaul.

55-54 BCE

Roman leader Julius Caesar invades Britain twice, but soon goes home.

43 CE

Emperor Claudius conquers southern Britain.

50 CE

British king Caratacus leads the resistance in the west of Britain (modern Wales), but is captured by the Romans.

60-61 CE

Queen Boudica rebels, and destroys several Roman towns! She is defeated at the Battle of Watling Street.

78 CE

The Romans conquer the western area of Britain (modern Wales).

85 CE

Vindolanda Fort is built on the northern border of Roman Britain.

122 CE

Construction of Hadrian's Wall begins.

286 CE

Roman commander Carausius declares himself independent emperor of Britain! He is later murdered by his adviser, Allectus.

235 CE

Crisis of the Third Century. The Roman Empire is in political and financial chaos!

211 CE

Emperor Septimius Severus splits Britain into two provinces, but dies after fighting the Caledonians in the north.

193 CE

Year of the Five Emperors. Murder and civil war rock the Roman Empire!

142 CE

Antoninus Pius builds another wall further north. It doesn't last long.

293 CE

Emperor Diocletian splits the Roman Empire in half, with each half co-ruled by a senior and junior emperor.

296 CE

Allectus is killed. Britain is returned to Roman control and split into four provinces.

306 CE

Constantine the Great is crowned emperor in Eboracum (York).

313 CE

Constantine makes Christianity legal in the Roman Empire.

367 CE

The Great Conspiracy: Britain is attacked from all sides by foreign enemies possibly working together.

383 CE

Wannabe emperor Magnus Maximus borrows Britain's soldiers for his civil war, leaving the country largely undefended.

c.400 CE

Britain has money troubles: trade collapses, coin hoards are buried and towns fall into disrepair.

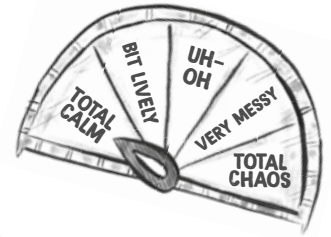
407 CE

Constantine III declares himself emperor and leaves Britain, taking most remaining Roman soldiers with him.

409 CE

Rome abandons Britain for ever.

So, that's what Roman Britain's history looks like to historians ... but how did it feel to live through it? Let's jump back in time to find out for ourselves – and to set the scene properly, we'll begin in the Iron Age, to discover who the Britons were BEFORE the Romans even showed up. But, be warned: with 800 years to cram in, we'll need to go fast, so hang on tight!



INTO THE IRON AGE!

YOU ARE HERE

Timeline of the Iron Age.



800 BCE 600 BCE 400 BCE 200 BCE 55 BCE

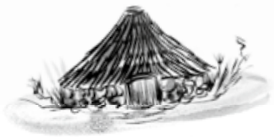
Welcome to ancient Britain, 2,800 years ago – and there's not a Roman to be seen anywhere! Let's get familiar with our surroundings, shall we? Great Britain is one of the two big islands in the so-called British Isles. People have lived here for thousands of years, but here in the Iron Age, they are finally learning how to get the wrinkles out of their clothes...

I live on the other big island, Ireland.

Stop being silly, Greg – it's not the Ironing Age!

JUST JOKING!!! Nah, it's when people learn to make strong tools and weapons by smelting iron (which is stronger than bronze). What's Iron Age Britain like, then? Well, everyone is living in

Heating iron ore in a furnace.



They're about 8 metres wide in the Early Iron Age, with a fireplace, no windows, and 10-20 people living together - cosy but smoky!

scattered homesteads (farms), and building roundhouses made of wood or stone, with thatched roofs. The types of house vary by region, but they all have that round shape, which suggests these Britons share a culture— Uh ... hang on a sec! Who are

these *Britons*? Don't we usually call them *Celts*, Emma?



CELTIC CONFUSION



This is a biggie, Greg! 'Celtic' can mean different things: a group of ancient languages; a group of people described by the Greeks and Romans; a name for the early Irish Christian Church; a modern idea of a shared culture between Ireland, Wales, Scotland and Brittany (in northern France); a famous football team from Scotland.

Ancient writers couldn't agree where the Celts were from. One said France, one said Spain and Germany, another said NOT Britain - but Roman leader Julius Caesar said it WAS Britain! Who was right? Modern experts have three theories: Celts came from Germany and moved westwards OR Celts came from the west and moved eastwards OR Celts came from France and moved in every direction! Annoyingly, all three might be true?! HOWEVER we have ZERO evidence that people in ancient Britain ever called themselves Celts. So I don't think we should either. Let's call them *Britons*. Deal?

Deal! WOW, that was SO confusing! That's why we need experts to sort this stuff out for us! My head hurts. Can we please get back to living in the Iron Age?

MOVING ON UP

OK, so we've got our Britons - NOT CELTS! - and they're suddenly having to deal with colder and wetter weather. Do they invent umbrellas? Nope!

They instead start building hill forts, which means digging big ditches to surround hills with chunky banks of soil. It takes loads of effort, so why

do it? Are these defences to keep people out? Yes, maybe?! Or are they building big stuff to show off? Uh ... also, yes!?



Archaeologists have been debating this for decades! The 'showing-off' theory is most popular right now.