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The Brythonic Tribes of Roman Britain



The Celtic (Brythonic) tribes of Roman Britain. For a larger version of this map click [here](#) or on the map itself (this will open in a new window).

The map on the left shows all the major Celtic (Brythonic) tribes of the British mainland. This is based on Roman records *circa* 120 CE and therefore includes the Belgic tribes (Belgiae, Parisii and Cantiaci, Atrebates) that migrated to Britain before the advancing Romans. It should be noted that only the main Brythonic (ie P-Celtic-speaking) tribes of the mainland are shown. There were several smaller tribes whose existence were known and who were either isolated geographically from the main tribes, or allied to them but these are not presented here.

One of the main sources of information about these tribes is from the Roman writer, Tacitus and much of our information about the tribes of Scotland derives from the geographical writings of Ptolemy. However, both authors were writing from a Roman viewpoint and their works have to be treated with some caution when it comes to their descriptions of the tribes, their beliefs and attributes (this is most especially true of the *Caledonian* [Scottish] tribes). However, by combining the writings of these Roman authors with modern Archaeological research it is possible to paint a broad-brush picture of many of these tribes.

Short Descriptions of the Brythonic Tribes of Roman Britain

Dumnonii

In terms of territory, the Dumnonii occupied one of the largest regions of Britain, with their territory occupying modern Cornwall, Devon and parts of Southern Somerset. As a peoples, they did not appear to use coins, nor did they have any large settlements which might act as the political centres for the tribe and (until post-Roman times there is no evidence for a dynasty of Dumnonian kings. As a result most commentators believe that the Dumnonii were in fact a confederation of a number of smaller tribes. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Dumnonii lived in small farmsteads, often surrounded by large walls or ramparts. There is also evidence from pottery that the Dumnonii had strong links with Armorica (Brittany) a link that was maintained well into post-Roman times.

Interestingly, the Dumnonii seem to have presented little resistance to the [Roman conquest](#) and as a result the region was never heavily garrisoned. This may be one of the reasons that the Dumnonii never fully-adopted the Roman way of life. The Romans granted them *civitas* status and their administrative centre was at *Isca Dumnoniorum* (Exeter). In post-Roman times the Dumnonian line became one of the most important of the Brythonic royal houses and many of the early Brythonic kings (including [Arthur](#)) claim descent from this royal lineage.

Durotriges

The territory of the Durotriges was centred around modern Dorset (though it seems also to have included southern Wiltshire and Somerset as well). The Durotriges lived in a mineral-rich area and minted coins well before the Roman invasion. They also had varying burial practices with one group, centred around modern Dorchester employing inhumation (rather than the more typical cremational) cemeteries. This and the lack of any indication of a royal lineage has led to the supposition that the Durotriges were also a confederation of smaller tribes. Although atypical at the time, the Durotriges represent what we think of today as the archetypal Celtic peoples in that they still occupied hillforts. Indeed, many of the most famous hillforts (Maiden Castle, South Cadbury Castle and Hod Hill) were all occupied by the Durotriges.

Though there was a major port at Hengistbury Head in the lands of the Durotriges (from which trade with Gaul was controlled) the Durotriges themselves seem to have been disdainful of these imported goods and tended to use local pottery produced at Poole Harbour. During the time of the Roman invasion the Durotriges put up a spirited opposition, and if Suetonius is to be believed then the Durotriges represent one of the two tribes that fought against Vespasian and the second legion. Despite their opposition, the Durotriges were made into a *civitas* after the conquest, with an administrative capital at *Durnovaria* (Dorchester). About half a century later and a second Durotrigian *civitas* was created, this time administered from *Lindinis* (Ilchester).

Belgiae

The *Belgiae* seem to present something of a mystery to us. The name itself is probably Roman, who applied the term *Belgiae* to almost all the tribes of north-western Gaul. As a result the *Belgiae* of Britain were probably not a native Brythonic tribe, but rather may represent an influx of peoples from Gaul who were probably not of the same tribe but aggregated together because of shared language and culture.

Even the territory occupied by these *Belgiae* is something of a mystery. In his Geography, Ptolemy records the territory of the Belgae as including the areas of modern Winchester and Bath as well as an unidentified settlement he called *Ischalis*. This would seem to give the tribal area a very strange shape and would squash it between the lands of the much stronger Durotriges, Atrebates and Dobunni. Yet, it is known that the administrative capital of the Belgae was at *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester) so that Ptolemy may be correct. Perhaps the lands of the Belgae represent a carve-up by the extant colonial powers (the Romans) and thus it may well have been an artificial creation (something similar happened to the realm of the Regni, as described below).

Regni

Before the Roman conquest the area of West Sussex occupied by the Regni during Roman times was a part of the lands of the Atrebates. Partly because of existing strong links with Gaul and partly due to the rise of a new ruler (Togidubnus) Chichester and the surrounding area became an important centre in the period just prior to the Roman invasion and also served as one of the bases for the Roman invasion itself. Because of the aid afforded to the Romans by Togidubnus Chichester and the surrounding area became a client kingdom rather than a direct part of the Roman province of Britannia (until Togidubnus' death at least). With the passing of Togidubnus the territory of the Atrebates was split into three separate *civitates* with the Regni being the *civitas* centred on Chichester that administered West Sussex. It may be that the Regni were a separate tribe, a client of the Atrebates; though it is equally possible that this 'tribe' is a Roman invention.

Cantiaci

These were the peoples of northern and western Kent (and it is from them that Kent itself derives its name). The Cantiaci had very strong links with northern Gaul and they buried their dead in the Gaulish manner (the burial of cremated remains). It is quite possible that the Cantiaci were an admixture of native peoples and immigrants from northern Gaul, which would certainly explain the links between these peoples. Prior to the Roman conquest the Cantiaci became a member of the large confederation of peoples led by Cunobelinus and after the conquest they became an independent *civitas* centred around their principal settlement at *Durovernum Cantiacorum* (Canterbury).

Trinovantes

The Trinovantes are first mentioned by Julius Caesar in his *de Bello Gallico* (on the Gallic Wars), appearing the account of his (abortive) invasion of Britain in 54 BCE. From Caesar's account it seems as if by this time the Trinovantes were already engaged in a power struggle with the neighbouring Atrebates and the tribes that were soon to be forged into the Catuvellauni under the leadership of Tasciovanus to the west. Though there may already have existed some kind of relationship between the Catuvellauni, the Trinovantes and the Cantiaci in that they shared funerary practices, agricultural practices and used money as well as eating from plates and drinking from cups. The king of the Catuvellauni, *Cunobelinus* eventually forged the Catuvellauni, Cantiaci and Trinovantes into a single large kingdom, establishing Colchester as a new royal site. This was one of the reasons that Colchester became a major target for Claudius' invasion of Britain in 43 CE. However, the alliance was disbanded after the Roman invasion and the Trinovantes were restored as a tribal entity, with a tribal capital at *Camulodunum* (Colchester).

Atrebates

The Atrebates are another Brythonic tribe that share a name with a Gaulish tribe that inhabited modern-day Belgium. In this case the name of the tribe is suggestive of their nature, as Atrebates can be derived from the **reconstructed proto-Celtic** elements: **attrebh* (settlement) and **atē* (they who). Thus the Atrebates are 'they who [form] settlements', or more succinctly 'the settlers'. It may well be that the Atrebates were peripatetic by nature, forming settlements as they traversed the breadth of Europe. Of these settlements only the ones in Britain and Belgium survived into historic times. The Belgic and British tribe may well have had strong links even into Roman times. It is certainly true that Commas, leader of the Belgian Atrebates fled to Britain during Julius Caesar's Gallic wars and that a Commius then appears as the ruler of the British Atrebates.

At the time of the Roman invasion they were second only to the Catuvellauni in terms of power and like their neighbours they minted their own coins and had numerous contacts with Gaul. At the height of their power Aterbatian lands stretched from modern-day West Sussex all the way up to Hampshire and Berkshire. The extent of their territory suggests that they were a conglomeration of tribes ruled over by a single dynastic family. Certainly, the peoples subsequently known as the Regni were part of the Atrebates prior to the Roman invasion

(see above).

From about 15 BC, the Atrebates seem to have established friendly relations with Rome, and it was an appeal for help from the last Atrebatian king, Verica, which provided Claudius with the pretext for the invasion on Britain in AD 43. Because of the Atrebates' support of the invasion (most notably by their leader, Togidubnus) their region remained an independent client kingdom of the Roman province of Britannia, at least until Togidubnus' death *circa* 80 CE when the territory of the Atrebates was divided into three *civitates* with one region going to the Regni, and with *Calleva Atrebatum* (Silchester) being the administrative centre of the largest part (including modern Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey and Hampshire).

Dobunni

The Dobunni (sometimes known as Dubunni) were amongst the largest tribes of Britannia, with a territory that covered large extents of the Severn Valley and the Cotswolds. They were another tribe that issued pre-Roman coinage and from these coins it can be determined that the Dobunni were divided into northern and southern sub-groupings. The Dobunni were a wealthy agrarian peoples who were already fairly Romanized by the time the Romans invaded. As a result they did not resist the invasion and may well have been amongst the first to submit to [Roman rule](#). After the conquest the Dobunnian settlement of Bagendon in Gloucester (the largest in their territory) was supplanted by the Roman city of *Corinium Dobunnorum* (Cirencester). Many of the Dobunni did very well from the Roman conquest, as can be attested by the large number of wealthy villas in the region.

As an agrarian peoples the Dobunni seemed to have revered deities of agriculture and fertility above all, which may well explain the large number of dedications to the [Genii Cucullati](#) in their territory.

Silures

The Silures were the tribe of the area that now covers the Brecon Beacons and the Valleys of South Wales. Living in the high ground the Silures, unlike their Dobunni relatives offered strong resistance to the Romans. Indeed, between 45–57 CE it is probably fair to say that they led the [British opposition](#) to the westwards advance of the [Roman Empire](#). As a result, though we know little of how they lived day to day, many of the leading Roman writers (notably Pliny, Ptolemy and Tacitus) mention them by name. Tacitus describes them as a 'strong and warlike nation', but by the early 60s CE they had been occupied by the Romans. However, the Silures' bitter and concerted resistance may explain why they were only granted self-governing *civitas* status during the early second century CE with the administrative centre being at *Venta Silurum* (Caerwent).

Demetae

These were the people of the fertile lands of south-western Wales. Like the Dumnonii they were an agrarian peoples living in small settlements and like most of the other agrarian tribes they both acquiesced to and adapted readily to Roman rule. The only real garrisons in the territory of the Demetae were those on their eastern border, which may well have been there to protect them from the far more aggressive Silures. The tribe was granted *civitas* status early during the conquest, with its administrative capital at *Moridunum Demetarum* (Caerfyrddin [Carmarthen]). Like the Dumnonii the Demetae also maintained close links with Armorica (Brittany) well into post-Roman times. The name of the Demetae is derived from that of their patron warrior deity [Demetos](#) and it is this deity (and the tribe named after him) that provide the name for the modern [Welsh county](#) of Dyfed. Thus they are the People of the God of Mead.

Ordovices

The territory of the Ordovices covered most of what is today mid and west Wales. Their neighbours were the Demetae to the south, the Silures to the east and the Deceangli to the north. They were a war-like peoples living in small fortified farmsteads. After the Roman invasion in 43 CE it was to the Ordovices that Caractacos fled to seek refuge. He managed to stir the Ordovices into rebellion and they successfully resisted the Romans for almost a quarter of a century. It was only in 77–78 CE that the Roman general, Agricola, finally defeated the Ordovices. Unlike the Silures, however, the Ordovices were granted *civitas* status quite soon after their conquest.

Gangani

The territory of the Gangani covered most of what is today the Llŷn Peninsula in North-West Wales. Their neighbours were the Ordovices to the east. They were seem to have war-like peoples living in fortified farmsteads (a number of these stone-built forts still survive on the Llŷn Peninsula, most notably at *Tre'r Ceiri*). The tribe

shares its name with an Irish tribe who occupied the region now known as Leinster. It seems that the Llŷn Gangani were an offshoot of the Irish Gangani as the name Llŷn is etymologically derived from the same root as the Irish Leinster. After the Roman invasion this tribe was probably kept in check by the garrison of the fort at Pen Llystyn which may well mark the border between the lands of the Ordovices and the Gangani. The name of the tribe is contained in the Roman name for the Llŷn Peninsula, *Ganganorum Promontorium*, found in Ptolemy's Geography, which literally means 'The headland of the Gangani'.

Deceangli

The Deceangli were the tribe of what today is north Wales and *Mona* (Môn [Anglesey]). The Deceangli were targeted for conquest as the Romans considered the druids as playing a crucial role in encouraging the resistance against Rome. The centre for British druidry seems to have been in *Mona*, which is why the island was targeted. However, the Deceangli were a warlike tribe (as detailed in Tacitus' *Agricola*) and it wasn't until 60 CE (the time of the Boudicca revolt) that *Mona* was invaded and the druids were slaughtered. The Deceangli were another hillfort people and this may be one of the reasons they Romans for almost seventeen years.

Catuvellauni

Even before the time of Julius Caesar the Catuvellauni were a large and powerful tribe, their territories covering most of modern Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and southern Cambridgeshire. Allied tribes also probably gave them a foothold in Buckinghamshire and north-western Oxfordshire. The Catuvellauni began minting coins quite early and from these we know that around 10 CE a leader arose, known as Tasciovanus who founded a large royal and ritual centre at *Verulamium* (St Albans). Through conquest and alliance he began the process that linked the Catuvellauni, Trinovantes and Cantiaci into a single grouping. This tightening of links between the three tribes (who already shared similar lifestyles and beliefs) culminated in the rule of Cunobelinus. However, after this leader's death (somewhere around the late 30s CE) the kingdom was riven by the rivalries of his successors. This internal strife was used as one of the excuses by Claudius to invade Britain in 43 CE, as the Catuvellauni were one of the most pro-Roman of the British peoples. This probably explains why *Verulamium* became one of the very first *civitates* of the new province of Britannia.

Etymologically the name of this tribe can be derived from the **reconstructed proto-Celtic** elements: **katu-* (battle) and **welo-* (good) thus the Catuvellauni are those who are 'good in battle'; perhaps with the sense of 'Foremost in Battle'.

Iceni

The Iceni have to be one of the best-known of the Brythonic tribes. As a coin-issuing tribe it is known that the Iceni occupied the modern counties of Norfolk, as well as the major part of Suffolk and eastern Cambridgeshire. The Iceni seems to be an agglomeration of smaller tribes that grew to dominance in the period between 200 and 50 BCE. The various gold hoards obtained from Iceni territories (including the Snettisham torcs) indicate that the Iceni were a wealthy peoples. Unlike their southern neighbours, however, the Iceni seem to have actively shunned contact with the Roman world. This may explain why, when the Romans granted the Iceni the status of *civitas* they ignored the traditional centres at Snettisham and Thetford and instead founded a new city at *Caistor* (Norwich). Despite this, the Iceni were initially hospitable to the Roman invaders. So much so that Prasutagus (the ruler at the time) became a client king of the Romans. However, after his death (just as would later happen to the Atrebates) the kingdom was incorporated into the Roman province and a spate of very harsh rule ensued. As a result of these abuses, in 60 CE Prasutagus' widow, Boudicca, led what was to become the most successful revolt against Roman rule in Britain.

Coritani

The Coritani seem to have been a loose confederation of mainly agrarian tribes whose economy seems to have been based predominantly on cattle. Their area of influence stretched from modern Leicestershire up through Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and into South Yorkshire. Like most of the other agrarian tribes the Coritani seem to have readily embraced Roman rule. Prior to this point, the Coritani had their own capital at *Lindum* (Lincoln) and minted their own coinage. After the conquest, the Coritani *civitas* was governed from *Ratae Corieltavorum* (Leicester). One reason the the Coritani acquiesced to Roman rule so readily was that the Romans aided in their defence against their more warlike western neighbours, the Brigantes. That the Coritani are a conglomeration of peoples is made more likely by their name which is derived from the **reconstructed proto-Celtic** **koryo-* (troop, tribe) and *tank-(j)e/o-* (join) thus they are 'the joined tribes'.

Cornovii

Lying at the heart of Britain, the *Cornovii civitas* had one of the largest of all tribal centres at *Viroconium* (Wroxeter). Yet, despite this, the *Cornovii* themselves are shrouded in mystery; however it is likely that the members of this tribe lived in the areas of the modern-day counties of Staffordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire. Etymologically the tribe's name is derived from the **reconstructed proto-Celtic** **karno-* (horn, hoof). Thus the *Cornovii* are the 'people of the horn'; or perhaps more probably they are the 'people of the horned god'.

Brigantes

It is known from a number of dedications and temple monuments that the *Brigantes* were actually a federation of many smaller peoples whose territory was centred on the region of the Pennines. At the time of the Roman conquest, some of the smaller tribes that made-up the *Brigantes* were the *Setanti* of Lancashire, the *Lopacares*, the *Corionototae* and the *Tectoverdi* of the Tyne Valley and the *Textoverdi*. Unusually, after the Roman Conquest the *Brigantes* were formed into a single large *civitate* that seems to have covered much of modern-day Yorkshire, Cleveland, Durham and Lancashire. By the first century CE the *Brigantes* had built a large capital in Stanwick, North Yorkshire.

Like many of the southern tribes, the *Brigantes* had a defined monarchy and are thought to be derived originally from northern Gaul. At the time of the invasion it seems as if they were ruled from Stanwick by *Cartimundia*, who was pro-Roman, though her husband was anti-Roman. *Cartimundia* was victorious on this occasion, but over the years the warlike *Brigantes* revolted several times. The last of these was put down in 79 CE by *Ostorius* when the *Brigantes* became a Roman *civitas* with an administrative centre at *Isurium Brigantum* (Aldborough in North Yorkshire). Other major *Brigantian* settlements were at *Calcaria* (Tadcaster) and *Luguvalium* (Carlisle), then somewhere around 100 CE the *Carvetii* broke from the confederation of the *Brigantes* and were given their own *civitas* (see below) centred around Carlisle.

Etymologically the *Brigantes* are the 'people of the goddess **Brigantia** (her name literally means 'The Highest'. It is likely that in the post-Roman period the *Brigantes* evolved into the kingdom of *Rheged* who's last (and arguable greatest) ruler was **Urien Rheged**.

Setantii

The *Setantii* are known only from a mention in Ptolemy's *Geography* where he names a *Portus Setantiorum* to the north of *Moricambe Aestuarium* (Morcombe Bay). Though Ptolemy's *Portus Setantiorum* has never been positively identified, but it is thought to have been located on the Fylde near the mouth of the River Wyre near to the modern fishing town of Fleetwood in Lancashire. This entry in the *Geography* can be translated as the 'Seaport of the *Setantii*' and it remains the only positive evidence we have for this tribe's existence. It is likely that they were a sept of the *Brigantes* who ruled the entire north of England during the Romano-British period. The *Brigantes* were an agglomeration of many smaller tribes who came under the dominion of a tribal overlord, perhaps based somewhere on the Yorkshire moors, as their *civitas* capital during the Roman administration was at *Isurium Brigantum* (Aldborough, North Yorkshire). The larger septs of this tribe included the *Parisii* of North Humberside and the *Carvetii* of Cumbria (see below).

Parisii

The *Parisii* were a small grouping living in the region of modern-day East Yorkshire. Archaeological evidence suggests that the *Parisii* were primarily agrarian and unusually for a British tribe they buried their dead in large cemeteries. This was not a British practice, but was common in northern Gaul during the same period (300–100 BCE). This has led some to link the Brythonic *Parisii* with the *Parisii* tribe of the Paris region in Gaul. Were these two tribes originally related? This is certainly an intriguing possibility, though the question may never be completely resolved. Despite their burial practices, the *Parisii* in all other respects behaved like their Brythonic neighbours; though they survived as a distinct grouping into Roman times when they were granted the status of *civitas* with their administrative capital centred upon *Petuaria* (Brough on Humber).

Carvetii

Originally probably an independent tribe, it seems that the *Carvetii* had been subsumed into the *Brigantes* and it was not until around 100 CE when the *Carvetii* broke from the confederation of the *Brigantes* and were given their own *civitas* centred around *Luguvalium* (Carlisle). The separate identity of this tribe during Roman times may help to explain why the later Brythonic kingdom of *Rheged* was split into a small northern and a much larger

southern regions.

Corionototae

Little is known of the Corionototae tribe, save that they appear to have been a sept (or sub-tribe of the powerful Brigantes, rulers of much of Northern England during the Roman period). The Corionototae dwelt in the area around *Corstopitum* (Corbridge, Northumberland) where they are named in the RIB 1142 altarstone inscription: *LEG A... Q CALPVRNIVS CONCESSINI VS PRAEF EQ CAESA CORIONOTOTARVM MANV PRAESSENTISSIMI NVMINIS DEI V S* (The Legate of the Augustus [...] for cutting-down an armed band of Corionototae, Quintus Calpurnius Concessinius, Prefect of Cavalry, fulfills his vow to the spirit of the most omnipresent god.) The name of the Corionototae would seem to be etymologically, if not tribally related to that of the Irish tribe, the *Coriondi*.

Novantae

The Novantae remain an almost total enigma as almost nothing of their culture before the Roman invasion has survived. They seem to have inhabited the region of south-western Scotland that in the post-Roman period would become the southern part of the Brythonic kingdom of *Ystradclud* (Strathclyde). The Novantae seem to have been primarily an agrarian peoples but there is little evidence for their settlements. As a people on the borders between Roman Britannia and Pictland there is little known about these peoples even from the Roman records.

Votadini

The territory of the Votadini seems to have extended from the region of modern-day Edinburgh to Northumberland. Like their neighbours the Brigantes the Votadini seemed to have been formed as a confederation of many smaller tribes. Archaeologically the Votadini are separate from other northern tribes in that they used walls, banks and ditches to surround and defend their farms. They are characterized by offerings of fine metal objects made to the gods, but seem not to have worn the massive amulets which is a feature of the Brigantes.

The Votadini also seem to have employed hillforts, with three massive versions in within the boundaries of their territory being Yeavering Bell, Eildon Seat and Traprain Law. By the time of the Roman invasion these hillforts had probably been in use for at least a millennium. The Votadini are the same people who later became the Brythonic *Gododdin* (derived from the Old Cymric *Gwotodin* the Brythonic peoples of the Edinburgh region. The name of the tribe may be derived from the **reconstructed proto-Celtic** elements: **wo-trik-e/o-* (stay, dwell) (stay, dwell) and **d³no-* (fort, rampart). Thus the Votadini are the 'fort dwellers'.

Selgovae

As a tribe dwelling beyond Hadrian's wall little is known about the Selgovae. In his Geography, Ptolemy places the Selgovae in the Southern uplands of Scotland, though the precise extent of their territory is unknown. However, many modern scholars place them in the Tweed Basin, a site adjacent to the Votadini. Roman records tell us that the Selgovae were conquered in 79–80 CE, at the same time as the Votadini. As a result it is not entirely clear whether the Selgovae and Votadini were truly separate peoples or not. If the Selgovae can be considered a separate tribe then their main settlement was probably at Elidon Seat. The tribe's name can be derived from the **reconstructed proto-Celtic** **selgf-* (hunt). Thus the Selgovae were 'The Hunters'.

Damnonii

The Damnonii are a tribe that lived in the region of Scotland that today includes Glasgow and Strathclyde. The lands of the Damnonii were conquered by the Romans and occupied continually until the Romans retreated south to the line of Hadrian's wall. Etymologically the name of the Damnonii is essentially a cognate of that of the southern tribe of the Dumnonii. The name of both tribes may be derived from the **reconstructed proto-Celtic** element: **dubno-* (deep, world). Thus the Damnonii/Dumnonii are 'we who are the world'. The land of the Dumnonii in the post-Roman period evolved into the Brythonic kingdom of *Ystradclud* (Strathclyde) which was sacred to the goddess **Clōta**.

Epidii

Almost nothing is known about this tribe, save that they lived in the region that corresponds to modern Kintyre and the islands of Arran, Jura and Islay. Later subsuming of this tribe into the Brythonic kingdom of *Ystradclud* suggests that they were probably a client or (or at the very least allied to) the Damnonii.

Caledonii

Beyond the tribes mentioned already we move into *terra incognita* as far as the Romans were concerned. Beyond the Strathclyde region we fall off the Roman map and enter the unknown realm. Which is not so say that we know nothing about this region. Ptolemy's Geography gives us the names of many of these tribes (though his geography was often vague) and the northern forays of the Romans during the early days of the occupation does give us some information about a number of the tribes. Foremost amongst these are the *Caledones* or *Caledonii*. The Romans used this name both for a single tribe that lived in the valleys between modern Inverness and Fort William and for all the tribes living in the north of Scotland. The various other tribes of this region include the Cornovii and Smertae of Caithness, the Caereni of the western Highlands and the Carnonacae and Creones of the western Highlands. The Vacomagi lived around the Cairngorms.

It seems that a leader called Calgacus arose to unite the warriors from all these disparate tribes at the battle of *Mons Graupius* in 84 CE. The Romans won the day, but mostly because of the terrain and the weather they were never successfully able to subdue the highlands. Tacitus describes the *Caledonii* as red-haired and long limbed and the Romans admired these barbarians for their abilities to endure cold, hunger and hardship.

Taexali

This grouping lived in the Grampian region and were agrarian in nature, dwelling in small, undefended, farmsteads. They seem to share much in common with their southern neighbours, the Venicones, but appear to have been a separate people. The Taexali were defeated by the Romans in 84 CE, but dwelling above the Antonine Wall (which became the *de facto* northern border) they were never permanently occupied.

Venicones

This tribe lived in the region of modern Tayside. The lands of the Venicones were used by the Romans several times to create encampments as they moved northwards, but they were never permanently occupied. From the archaeological evidence they seem to be very similar to the Taexali in that they made offerings of decorated metal objects in bogs and lakes and possessed large amulets which could weigh up to 1.5kg apiece. Like the Taexali the Venicones seem to have been primarily agrarian, though little evidence of their settlements has survived.

If you would like to try the foods of the time of the ancient Celts, then why not have a look at the [ancient recipes](#) section of this site. For the foods of the time when some of these tales were written down, take a look at the [Medieval recipes](#) section of the site and, in particular, the [recipes from The Forne of Cury](#).

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