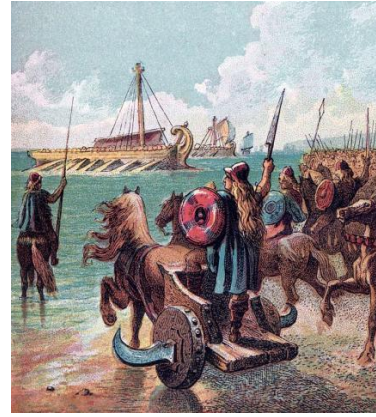




0. ROME LEAVES A POWER VACUUM - Story Preface

1. ROME LEAVES A POWER VACUUM

2. WOLVES ENTER THE FOLD

3. INVADING ANGLO-SAXONS

4. DEFENDERS BECOME INVADERS

5. A CHANGING CULTURE

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While Ancient Britons opposed the Roman takeover of their country, they were left without protection when Rome's legions actually left Briton around 410 A.D. This image depicts a drawing by Joseph Martin Kronheim, from 1868, which imagines how Britons may have reacted when Rome's legions first arrived in the province which Rome called "Britannia." It appears as Plate III in a book called *Pictures of English History: From the Earliest Times to the Present Period* published, in London, during 1868 by George Routledge and Sons. Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

When Rome left its province of Britannia, after nearly four centuries of imperial rule, the native population had little protection against intruders. Between the time of Rome's conquest (in 43 A.D.), and its departure (in 410), the empire's forces were responsible for maintaining law and order.

One can only imagine the power vacuum which developed after Rome's legions left. Who would rule? Whose troops would defend the people and their land?

Rome itself had experienced difficulty keeping out intruders along the northern border. First a road (the Stanegate), then a wall (Hadrian's), proved ineffective. What could native Britons do?



After thirty years (or so) had passed, the Brits (a Celtic people who inhabited the country known today as England) were forced to seek help outside their own boundaries. Scholars believe Britons living in Ceint (today's Kent) hired German-Danes from Angulus (the Angles) and Germans from Saxony (the Saxons) to provide mercenary services.

Those were the "Dark Ages." One reason for that description is the lack of written source materials. Few unbiased contemporary records remain (or were ever created).

Although we are "in the dark" about much, we do know from Gildas (a monk who wrote *The Ruin of Britain* [*De Excidio Britanniae*] in approximately 540) and later from Venerable Bede (an 8th century monk, living in Northumbria, who completed his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* in 731), that Britons sought assistance from foreigners to help them resist intruders. They paid for those services with some of their own land.

Initially, the Britons had appealed to Rome - specifically to Aetius, the Roman commander in Gaul (today's France) - for help. In approximately 427, according to Gildas, they sent a letter pleading with Aetius:

The barbarians push us back to the sea, the sea pushes us back to the barbarians; between these two we are either drowned or slaughtered.

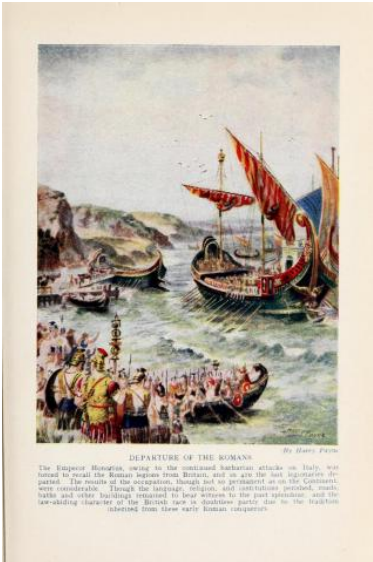
When Aetius provided no assistance, the Britons invited the Angles, Saxons and Jutes to help. Had those early Britons envisioned what could happen when mercenaries (invited or not) reached their shores, perhaps they would have looked elsewhere (or nowhere) for help.

One thing is certain: Invited foreigners, who became invading intruders, forever changed Britannia and her people.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ROME-LEAVES-A-POWER-VACUUM-Beowulf>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ROME-LEAVES-A-POWER-VACUUM-Beowulf>

Media Stream



Roman Legions Leave Britannia - 410 AD
Illustration from *Hutchinson's Story of the British Nation*, at page 57.
PD
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Map: Britannia
Map image online, courtesy Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin.
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Stanegate Road
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Stanegate Border Map
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Hadrian's Wall

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Map of Southeast Britain and Ceint (Kent)

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Map Showing Location of Hadrian's Wall

Map image created by Norman Einstein, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Gildas Statue

Photo of the St Gildas statue by Romary. Online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Venerable Bede Drawing

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802 BC Map of British Isles

Map online, courtesy Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

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Venerable Bede - Dark-Ages Historian

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