



0. INVITING WOLVES INTO THE FOLD - Story Preface

1. HADRIAN'S WALL

2. A TRIP TO THE WALL

3. A POWER VACUUM

4. INVITING WOLVES INTO THE FOLD

5. THE ANGLO-SAXON INVASIONS

6. ANGLO-SAXON WARS

7. BRITONS FIGHT BACK

8. ARTHUR AND HIS WORLD

Julius Caesar, the Roman general, initially tries to invade and conquer Britain in 55 BC. He is met with people, lined along the shore, who are willing to fight against Caesar and his troops. Sailing back to France (then known as Gaul), Caesar returns to Britain the following year. He ultimately abandons his plan to invade and conquer the island. Rome does not conquer Britain, turning it into a Roman province (Britannia), until 43 AD. Hundreds of years later, Rome leaves Britannia for good, creating a power-vacuum. Who will defend Britain after the Roman legions are gone?

How was it that Britons, who had already endured prior Saxon attacks, could have invited these people into their country? Both Gildas (writing in the 6th century) and Bede (writing in the 8th) describe dire circumstances which led to fateful invitations.

Gildas, whose main literary objective was to castigate his countrymen for their lack of religious faith, describes a council which debated how best to repel invasions from the Picts and Scots:

And they convened a council to decide the best and soundest way to counter the brutal and repeated invasions and plunderings by the peoples I have mentioned. [Picts and Scots, referenced in earlier passages.] Then all the members of the council, together with the proud tyrant, were struck blind; the guard (or rather the method of destruction) they devised for our land was that the ferocious Saxons (name not to be spoken!), hated by man and God, should be let into the island like wolves into the fold, to beat back the peoples of the North.

Bede, writing two centuries later and relying on Gildas as well as other sources, notes that the attacks were harsh and frequent and the Britons were apparently powerless to stop the incursions:

They [the Britons] consulted as to what they should do and where they should seek help to prevent or repel the fierce and very frequent attacks of the Northern nations; all, including their king Vortigern, agreed that they should call the Saxons to their aid across the seas.

Once the Saxons (a name used by Britons to describe all the various invading tribes) answered the call, it was too late to rescind the invitation. Gildas describes their arrival:

Then a pack of cubs burst forth from the lair of the barbarian lioness, coming in three keels, as they call warships in their language. ... On the orders of the ill-fated tyrant, they first fixed their dreadful claws on the east side of the island, ostensibly to fight for our country, in fact to fight against it.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/INVITING-WOLVES-INTO-THE-FOLD-King-Arthur>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/INVITING-WOLVES-INTO-THE-FOLD-King-Arthur>



King Vortigern

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD-art.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/King-Vortigern0>