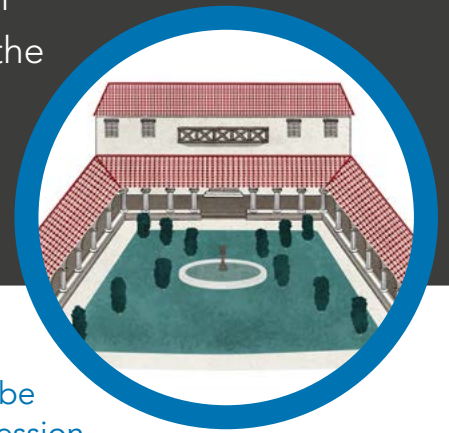# THE ROMAN INVASION OF WALES

CORE CONCEPTS

The aim of this resource is to encourage learners to understand how the way people live has changed over time. Understanding how the Roman invasion in Wales affected the people of the Iron Age can help learners to appreciate how communities evolved into the communities we have today.

STATEMENTS OF WHAT MATTERS LINKS:

HUMANITIES – Human societies are complex and diverse, and shaped by human actions and beliefs. This resource focusses specifically on concepts surrounding **chronology**, **change and continuity**, **community**, and **identity and belonging**.

This resource is intended for **progression step 4** but could be adapted for use at other progression steps. The resource contributes to progression by focusing learning on the following descriptions of learning:

DESCRIPTIONS OF LEARNING

HUMANITIES: *I can use my knowledge and understanding to analyse and explain how different communities and societies have changed over time, in my locality and in Wales, as well as in the wider world.*

I can analyse and explain how identity is formed.

I can explain the connections between diverse societies.

I can explain and compare how communities have been shaped by the past and I can explain how a range of factors contribute to this.

GUIDANCE

Society in Iron Age Wales changed when the Romans invaded Britain. Their aim was to grow the Roman Empire by using Wales's natural resources, people, and farmland. In order to link military places and settlements together, they built roads. Towns grew up around military sites, with rectangular houses, shops along the main street, and a marketplace. The Romans introduced their culture to the local inhabitants and integrated Wales into the wider network of the Roman Empire. Iron Age roundhouses continued to be inhabited throughout the landscape by the Romanised population. People began to build new houses in the Mediterranean style, called villas.

The Romans brought with them different food, plants, animals, public baths, medicine, doctors, and religions. In their society, the elite learnt to read and write. The Iron Age population of Wales became "Romanised" as they took on this new culture, although the Roman occupation across Wales was varied, largely due to the terrain and the difficulty of building roads and networks throughout Wales. Life in Wales became a mixture of Roman and pre-Roman culture (people of the Iron Age), which would inform the culture of future Wales after the Romans left. The Roman Empire adopted the religion of Christianity, which meant that this would eventually became the religion of the Romanised people of Wales. This religion heavily influenced how society was governed during the Roman period, and afterwards during the Medieval period. Once the Roman army left, after Wales had been part of the Roman Empire for 300 years, it was difficult to go back to the way life was before they invaded because communities in Wales had become reliant on the Empire.

One example of an Iron Age settlement that was further occupied by Romans is the Dinas Dinlle Hillfort in Gwynedd. It was a busy trading settlement full of round houses, workshops and livestock pens and divided by streets. The natural hill sculpted by a glacier provided excellent defence, and its location on the coast provided access to fishing and trading routes. Part of the hillfort was excavated, revealing a 13-meter diameter roundhouse. Evidence for Roman occupation was found when the excavation revealed Roman coins and pottery from Dorset and quernstones for the daily grinding of flour. Exotic red Samian ware was also found which suggests that trading with the nearby Roman fort at Segontium, Caernarfon occurred.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Design a research task where learners investigate the following themes on the Roman invasion of Wales: Architecture, food, currency, language, diversity of people, weaponry, religion, transport, plants, the importance of coastal Wales and trading.

Websites to help find information:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zqtf34j/articles/z9j4kqt

https://cadw.gov.wales/learn/sites-through-centuries

https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/segontium-roman-fort

https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/richborough-roman-fort-and-amphitheatre/history/invasion/

https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/inspire-me/blog/articles/what-did-the-romans-do-for-us/

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zqtf34j/articles/z2dr4wx

2. Design a class discussion or a written task to answer the following questions:
- Compare societal life during the Iron Age and life after the Roman invasion.
- Discuss ideas around identity with respect to the Roman invasion in Wales and impacts on the local population. Describe how the Romans helped shape medieval communities.
- Describe and explain to what extent the Roman invasion influenced modern-day Wales.

Top left: Aerial image of Dinas Dinlle hillfort with the excavation of a stone roundhouse near the cliff edge.

Top right: Excavation of the Romano-British roundhouse at Dinas Dinlle.

Left: Reconstruction of Dinas Dinlle around 1900 years ago, showing the coastline in Roman times.

Reconstruction by Wessex Archaeology

After the Romans departed Wales in 383 AD, Wales was divided into Kingdoms (Powys, Gwynedd, Seisyllwg, Dyfed, Brycheiniog, Morgannwg and Gwent), controlled by leading families in their respective areas. These served the Welsh princes and kings, who fought ongoing battles between each other, defending Welsh regions from Anglo-Saxon invaders, and defending coastlines from frequent Viking raids. Finally, the last ruler of Wales, Dafydd ap Gruffydd, was killed by King Edward I in 1283, which resulted in Wales being ruled by the English monarchy. A number of Welsh uprisings against the English monarchy continue after the death of Dafydd ap Gruffydd, concluding with the final Welsh Revolt led by Owain Glyndŵr. He was known as the last native Welsh person to hold the title of Prince of Wales but was defeated by Henry V by 1412.