

# Channeling the English

Don't believe everything that the experts tell you.

We were told that the legions of Rome “invaded” Britain in 43 AD. But recent research is suggesting that several of the chiefdoms in south and central Britain were really client-states of Rome, already trading and in need of a stabilizing military force.

It could be that Julius Caesar's unsuccessful invasion in 55 BC is what would have happened, if ever the British did not want to collaborate with Rome.

We were told that Roman “civilization” replaced the Celtic culture. But we now see the peaceful coexistence of both of these. For example, Roman engineering upgraded Bath, which had already been a spiritual centre of hot baths under Druidism.

It turns out that many of the great villas we thought were built to display the imposing power of Rome were actually built by wealthy Britons, born and raised as such. Because of high volumes of trade with Rome, especially of tin.

We were told that the Roman legions pulled out in 410 AD because of the sack of Rome. They told the Britons to look to their own defenses, while they attended to higher priorities in Europe.

Research is now suggesting that the Christianization of Rome after Constantine, in the decades before 410 AD, did not sit well with the Britons. So the rapprochement lost its compatibility, causing the Romans to move on.

We were told that after the Roman legions left, Britain was plunged into “dark ages”. But the archaeological record shows otherwise. Life trundled on, under the chiefdoms. One of these may have been the mythological King Arthur? The point of this legend is surely that Britain did not crash into the “dark ages” but rose to an indigenous high-water mark in the centuries after the Roman legions left.

Europe and especially the Roman church would like to tell it otherwise, but there is no indication that the economy crashed. To the contrary, archaeology suggests that ships from Constantinople (i.e. Turkey) were arriving at British ports direct – after the fall of Rome, while the Eastern Empire remained.

We were told that there was then an “invasion” of Angles and Saxons on the east coast of Britain. But there is no archaeological support for the story of a military invasion. Certainly there was Immigration from northern Europe, as well as Emigration by Brits into Europe. This give and take has always been going on. But there is no sign of a disruption in everyday, on-going life, in the wake of Rome’s departure.

We were told that Pope Gregory sent St Augustine to Christianize Britain in 597 AD. But the truth is that when he arrived, he encountered a church that thrived in some of the chiefdoms. A previous missionary St Patrick has evangelized Ireland, and the Irish Church was already busy evangelizing Scotland, northern England, Holland, and even down to St Gall in Switzerland.

At the Synod of Whitby in 664 AD, in the chiefdom of Northumbria, the Celtic church was represented by Bishops Colman and Cedd, and Abbess Hilda. The Roman church was represented by Queen Eanfled and Bishop Wilfrid. King Oswiu decided to let the Roman church prevail, in order to strengthen ties with the Continent.

We were told that the Vikings were next – invading coastal areas and sailing up navigable rivers. They did this in other places too – like Ireland and what is now France. One has to remember that neither France nor Britain by this time was one nation speak one language. Latin was the lingua franca wherever you went, but in France, Charles the Simple made a deal with the Norse. They could settle in an area on the north of West Frankia, if they would stop the raiding that had gone on for more than a century. The “Nor” is Normandy comes from the Norse. A century later, the Normans were expanding in all directions – including across the Channel. They also conquered parts of England. But they never held all of France and all of England – just part of each.

Old English and Old German are one and the same language. It seems that the chiefdoms preferred to adopt a northern European language for trade, than Latin. Of course the Normans brought a lot of French into the mix. But studies suggest that the structure of Celtic languages and thus its thinking is embedded in English – one of the factors that made English and German grow apart.

In the age of Brexit, we are told that the Remainers that a “no deal” will be disastrous. Surely this is exactly what the European Union would want British voters to think? But the ties are there, and they are deep - whether Britain chooses to Leave or adopts Theresa May’s negotiated compromise.

One way or the other, the Island nations will go from strength to strength. We have to take the dire warnings of collapse and regress with a grain of salt. England and its people have adapted to many major configurations in the past, relating to the Continent, and will do so again. It is connected to Europe in many ways and these ties will always remain, even if there is a “hard Brexit”.