The Roman Invasion

The Emperor Claudius spent just sixteen days in Britain, long enough to lead his troops into Camulodunum (Colchester) and witness the **submission** of several British kings. The Roman army then built a military fortress on the highest ground inside Camulodunum, the site of the present city centre.

By AD49 the fortress at Camulodunum had been turned into a civilian settlement named Colonia Claudia after the Emperor, and this became the first capital of the new Roman province of Britannia (Colchester).

The settlement was populated mainly by retired soldiers, whose role was to spread Roman civilisation and keep an eye on the natives. Many of the military buildings were retained and converted, but the legionary defences were dismantled, leaving the city fatally unprotected. Large public buildings were constructed, including a theatre and a senate house. The grandest building of all was the Temple of Claudius, built to worship the Emperor after his death in AD54, when he was made a God.

Colchester Castle stands on the foundations of the Temple of Claudius, and these can still be seen by taking a trip to the Castle vaults, accessible via guided tours which take place daily in the Castle.

Roman Colchester was virtually destroyed a few years after it was built. In AD60 Queen Boudica of the Iceni, led a major rebellion against the Roman rulers because after her husband’s death the Romans attacked his widow (Boudica) and her daughters, refusing to accept the women as the king's heirs.

A revolt erupted and Boudica led her followers against Camulodunum (Colchester), the Roman capital. Here the Iceni joined forces with the Trinovantes to attack and burn the undefended city. Those who survived retreated to the city's largest building. The **Temple of Claudius**, but they could only hold out for a couple of days. The Temple, which had been paid for through local taxes and built with slave labour of the Britons, was a focus of hatred. It was burnt and all the defenders slaughtered.