

Gnaeus Julius Agricola was born in A.D.40 in modern day Southern France of parents who were from families of Senatorial Rank. Both of his Grandfathers served as Imperial Governors and his father Julius Graecinus became a member of the Roman Senate. Between August 40 A.D and January 41 A.D, the Roman Emperor Caligula ordered Graecinus' death because he refused to prosecute the Emperor's second cousin Marcus Junius Silanus Torquatus.

Agricola's mother was Julia Procilla. The Roman Historian Tacitus described her as "A Lady of singular virtue". Agricola was educated in Massilia, now Marseille, and showed what at that time was considered an unhealthy interest in Philosophy.

Agricola began his career in Roman public life as a military tribune, serving in Britain under Gaius Suetonius Paulinus from 58 A.D to 62 A.D. and participated in the suppression of Boadica's uprising in 61. Returning to Rome in 62 he married Domitia Decidiana, a woman of noble birth. Their first child was a boy. Agricola was appointed as a quaestor in 64, and he served in the province of Asia. Whilst there his daughter Julia Agricola was born, but unfortunately his Son died shortly afterwards. He was tribune of the Plebs in 66 and Praetor in 68. During this time he was ordered to take an inventory of the Temple treasures.

In June 68 the emperor Nero was deposed and committed suicide, and the period of civil war known as "The Year of the Four Emperors" began. Galba succeeded Nero, and was murdered by Otho, who then became the next Emperor.

Agricola's mother was murdered on her estate in Liguria.

Agricola gave his support to Vespasian who went on to become Emperor Vespasian. He was then appointed to the command of the Legio XX Valeria Victrix, stationed in Britain in place of Marcus Roscius Coelius who had stirred up a revolt against the Governor Marcus Vettius Bolanus.

Agricola reimposed discipline on the Legion and helped to consolidate Roman Rule. In 71 Bolanus, that would be Vittius, was replaced by a more aggressive governor Quintus Petillius Cerialis.

When Agricola's command ended in 75, he was enrolled as a patrician and appointed to govern Gallia Aquitania. In AD 77 he was recalled to Rome and appointed Suffect Consul and betrothed his daughter to the scribe Tacitus. The following year Julia and Tacitus married. Agricola was appointed to the college of Pontiffs and returned to Britain.

The Romans in Alba

In AD 77 to AD 83 Gnaeus Julius Agricola was a Roman General responsible for a large part of the Roman conquest of Brittania. Educated in Marseille, France his biography was written by his Son in Law Tacitus.

Agricola began his Army career under the auspices of Gaius Paulinus, Governor of Britannia, and after a glorious army career in Asia and Europe, was made Consul and Governor of Britannia in AD 77.

On his arrival in the mid-summer of AD 78 Agricola found the Ordoevices of North Wales had virtually destroyed the Roman Army stationed in their territory. His powerful Army took little time in defeating the Tribes. Agricola then moved north to the island of Anglesey which had been regained by the Brits and forced the occupants to "Sue for Peace". During this period of time he had proven to be an excellent administrator, introducing Romanising measures, encouraging communities to build towns on the Roman model and educating the sons of native nobility in the Roman manner.

Agricola began to expand Roman rule into Caledonia (modern Scotland) and in the summer of AD 80 pushed his Armies north to the estuary of the river Taus.

In AD 82 Tacitus tells us that Agricola and his Army crossed a body of water. Agricola fortified the West coast facing Ireland. He had given refuge to an exiled Irish King and Tacitus recalls Agricola saying that Ireland could be conquered with a single legion and auxiliaries. Irish legend provides a striking parallel!

Teachtmhar, a legendary High King, is said to have been exiled from Ireland as a boy and to have returned from Britain at the head of an Army to claim his throne. Archeology in Ireland has found Roman artefacts in several sites associated with Tuathal.

In AD 83 General Agricola and his Roman Army continued their advance into Caledonia. He had raised a fleet of ships and encircled the tribes including Brigantes, Votadini, Novantae, Caledonie, Epidin and Matae beyond the Forth.

According to Tacitus, son in law of Agricola, the ninth legion escaped destruction when the Caledonians beyond the Forth launched a surprise attack at night on their fort. They burst upon them and terrified them in their sleep. In desperate hand-to-hand fighting the Caledonians burst into their camp, but Agricola was able to send cavalry to relieve the legion. Seeing the relief force, the men of the ninth legion recovered their spirit and sure of their safety, fought for glory, pushing back the Caledonians.

Included in the Roman Army during this time was the Legio IX Hispana (the Ninth Legion) popularised in the novel *The Eagle of the Ninth*, in which the legion marched into Caledonia (Scotland) and were wiped out in a battle against the local tribes. It is possible that the soldiers were merely a detachment from the 9th Legion. The Ninth also suffered a serious defeat during the rebellion by Boadica when most of its foot soldiers were killed in a disastrous attempt to relieve the besieged city of Camulodunum, now known as Colchester.

In AD 83-84 General Agricola advanced northwards and in the summer of 84 faced the massed Armies of the Caledonians who were led by Calgacus at the battle of Mons

Graupius. Agricola put his auxiliaries in the front line keeping his legions in reserve. Though the Caledonians were routed, two thirds of it's Army managed to escape into the "trackless wilds" as Tacitus calls them.

Battle casualties according to Tacitus, Son in Law to General Agricola, were about 10,000 on our side, and 360 on the Roman side. From then onwards the tribes avoided face to face encounters and reverted to guerrilla tactics, attacking the Romans in the hills and glens, and then disappearing.

General Agricola used the tried and tested method of smashing through the centre of the enemy line. He used his English and Dutch auxiliaries as his main striking force. As Tacitus explained: "The victory being more glorious if there were no cost of Roman Lives".

This was a tactic also used by Prime Minister William Pitt when he invited disgruntled Highland warriors into the British Army after the battle of Culloden. He recalled the Highlanders are hardy, intrepid, accustomed to rough country, and it is no great mischief if they fall. How can you better employ a secret enemy than by making his end conducive to the common good!

However, Winston Churchill said: "Of all the small nations of this earth, perhaps only the Ancient Greeks surpass the Scots in their contribution to Mankind."

Caledonian Pict Chieftain said: "The Romans make a desert and call it peace "