



SELECTIONS FROM CAESAR'S *GALLIC WARS*



VERCINGETORIX SURRENDERS TO CAESAR AT ALESIA



The extracts from Caesar's *Gallic Wars* which follow are intended for use with learning outcomes 3.10 and 3.11 of the Leaving Certificate Classical Studies Specification. Alexander the Great should be studied first.

3.10. Compare how Alexander treats the Persians with how Caesar treats the Gauls

3.11. Explore what Alexander's interactions with the Persians and Caesar's interactions with the Gauls suggest about their cultural ambitions and norms, and their conception of what it means to be 'civilised' or 'barbarian'

COMMENTARII DE BELLO GALLICO

1. *Gaul comprises three areas, inhabited respectively by the Belgae, the Aquitani, and a people who call themselves Celts though we call them Gauls. All of these have different languages, customs and laws. The Celts are separated from the Aquitani by the river Garonne, from the Belgae by the Marne and Seine. The Belgae are the bravest of the three peoples, being farthest removed from the highly developed civilisation of the Roman Province, least often visited by merchants with enervating (tiring or energy sapping) luxuries for sale, and nearest to the Germans across the Rhine, with whom they are continually at war. For the same reason the Helvetii are braver than the rest of the Celts; they are in almost daily conflict with the Germans, either trying to keep them out of Switzerland or themselves invading Germany. The region occupied by the Celts, which has one frontier facing north, is bounded by the Rhone, the Garonne, the Atlantic ocean, and the country of the Belgae; the part of it inhabited by the Sequani and the Helvetii also touches the Rhine. The Belgic territory, facing north and east, runs from the northern frontier of the Celts to the lower Rhine. Aquitania is bounded by the Garonne, the Pyrenees, and the part of the Atlantic coast nearest Spain; it faces north-west. (Gallic Wars 1.1)*

In book 6 Caesar describes the customs and institutions of the Gauls. It is not clear why he did not include this information at the start of his account but, for Leaving Cert purposes, it makes much more sense to place this passage here. Though written as a continuous piece by Caesar I have chosen to divide it into sections numbered 2 – 5, because of its length.

2. *In Gaul, not only every tribe, canton, and subdivision of a canton, but almost every family, is divided into rival factions. At the head of these factions are men who are regarded by their followers as having particularly great prestige, and these have the final say on all questions that come up for judgement and in all discussions of policy. The object of this ancient custom seems to have been to ensure that all the common people should have protection against the strong; for each leader sees that no one gets the better of his supporters by force or by cunning – or, if he fails to do so, is utterly discredited. The same principle holds good in intertribal politics . . . Everywhere in Gaul there are only two classes of men who are of any account or consideration. The common people are treated almost as slaves, never venture to act on their own initiative and are not consulted on any subject. Most of them, crushed by debt or heavy taxation, or the oppression of more powerful persons, bind themselves to serve men of rank, who exercise over them all the rights that masters have over slaves. The two privileged classes are the Druids and the knights (from the Latin word Equites. Caesar means the nobility).*

3. *The Druids officiate at the worship of the gods, regulate public and private sacrifices, and give rulings on all religious questions. Large numbers of young men flock to them for instruction, and they are held in great honour by the people. They act as judges in practically all disputes, whether between tribes or between individuals; when any crime is committed, or a murder takes place, or a dispute arises about an inheritance or a boundary, it is they who adjudicate the matter and appoint the compensation to be paid and received by the parties concerned. Any individual or tribe failing to accept their award is banned from taking part in sacrifice – the heaviest punishment that can be inflicted upon a Gaul. Those who are laid under such a ban are regarded as impious criminals. Everyone shuns them and avoids going near or speaking to them, for fear of taking some harm by contact with what is unclean; if they appear as plaintiffs, justice is denied them, and they are excluded from a share in any honour.*

All the Druids are under one head, whom they hold in the highest respect. On his death, if any one of the rest is of outstanding merit, he succeeds to the vacant place; if several have equal claims, the Druids usually decide the election by voting, though sometimes they actually fight it out. On a fixed date in each year they hold a session in a consecrated spot in the country of the Carnutes, which is supposed to be the centre of Gaul. Those who are involved in disputes assemble here from all parts, and accept the Druids' judgements and awards. The Druidic doctrine is believed to have been found existing in Britain and thence imported into Gaul; even today those who want to make a profound study of it generally go to Britain for the purpose.

The Druids are exempt from military service and do not pay taxes like other citizens. These important privileges are naturally attractive: many present themselves of their own accord to become students of Druidism, and others are sent by their parents or relatives. It is said that these pupils have to memorise a great number of verses – so many, that some of them spend twenty years at their studies. The Druids believe that their religion forbids them to commit their teachings to writing, although for most other purposes, such as public and private accounts, the Gauls use the Greek alphabet. But I imagine that this rule was originally established for other reasons – because they did not want their doctrine to become public property, and in order to prevent their pupils from relying on the written word and neglecting to train their memories; for it is usually found that when people have the help of texts, they are less diligent in learning by heart, and let their memories rust.

A lesson which they take particular pains to inculcate is that the soul does not perish, but after death passes from one body to another; they think that this is the best incentive to bravery, because it teaches men to disregard the terrors of death. They also hold long discussions about the heavenly bodies and their movements, the size of the universe and of the earth, the physical constitution of the world, and the power and properties of the gods; and they instruct the young men in all these subjects.

4. *The second class is that of the Knights. When their services are required in some war that has broken out . . . these all take the field, surrounded by their servants and retainers, of whom each knight has a greater or smaller number according to his birth and fortune. The possession of such a following is the only criterion of position and power that they recognise.*

As a nation the Gauls are extremely superstitious; and so persons suffering from serious diseases, as well as those who are exposed to the perils of battle, offer, or vow to offer, human sacrifices, for the

performance of which they employ Druids. They believe that the only way of saving a man's life is to propitiate (appease) the god's wrath by rendering another life in its place, and they have regular state sacrifices of the same kind. Some tribes have colossal images made of wickerwork, the limbs of which they fill with living men; they are then set on fire, and the victims burnt to death. They think that the gods prefer the execution of men taken in the act of theft or brigandage, or guilty of some offence; but when they run short of criminals, they do not hesitate to make up with innocent men.

The god they revere most is Mercury. They have very many images of him, and regard him as the inventor of all arts, the god who directs men upon their journeys, and their most powerful helper in trading and getting money. Next to him they revere Apollo, Mars, Jupiter and Minerva, about whom they have much the same ideas as other nations – that Apollo averts illness, and Minerva teaches the principles of industries and handicrafts; that Jupiter is king of the gods, and Mars the lord of war. When they have decided to fight a battle they generally vow to Mars the booty that they hope to take, and after a victory they sacrifice the captured animals and collect the rest of the spoil in one spot. Among many of the tribes, high piles of it can be seen on consecrated ground; and it is an almost unknown thing for anyone to dare, in defiance of religious law, to conceal his booty at home or to remove anything placed on the piles. Such a crime is punishable by a terrible death under torture.

5. *The Gauls claim all to be descended from Father Dis (Pluto), declaring that this is the tradition preserved by the Druids. For this reason they measure periods of time not by days but by nights; and in celebrating birthdays, the first of the month, and new year's day, they go on the principle that the day begins at night. As regards the other usages of daily life, the chief difference between them and other peoples is that their children are not allowed to go up to their fathers in public until they are old enough for military service; they regard it as unbecoming for a son who is still a boy to stand in his father's sight in a public place.*

When a Gaul marries he adds to the dowry that his wife brings with her a portion of his own property estimated to be of equal value. A joint account is kept of the whole amount, and the profits which it earns are put aside; and when either dies, the survivor receives both shares together with the accumulated profits. Husbands have power of life and death over their wives as well as their children. When a high-born head of a family dies, his relatives assemble, and if the circumstances of his death are suspicious they examine his widow under torture, as we examine slaves; if her guilt is established, she is consigned to the flames and put to death with the most cruel torments. Gallic funerals are splendid and costly, for a comparatively poor country. Everything that the dead man is supposed to have been fond of, including even animals, is placed upon his pyre; and not long ago there were people still alive who could remember the time when slaves and retainers known to have been beloved by their masters were burnt with them. (Gallic Wars 6.11-20)

Immediately after his description of the customs of the Gauls in book 6 Caesar describes the habits of the Germans.

6. *The customs of the Germans are entirely different. They have no Druids to control religious observances and are not much given to sacrifices. The only beings they recognise as gods are things that they can see, and by which they are obviously benefitted, such as Sun, Moon and Fire; the other gods they have never even heard of. They spend all their lives in hunting and warlike pursuits, and inure themselves from childhood to toil and hardship. Those who*

preserve their chastity longest are most highly commended by their friends; for they think that abstinence makes young men taller, stronger, and more muscular. To have had intercourse with a woman before the age of twenty is considered perfectly scandalous. They attempt no concealment, however, of the facts of sex: men and women bathe together in the rivers, and they wear nothing but hides or short garments of hairy skin, which leave most of the body bare.

The Germans are not agriculturalists, and live principally on milk, cheese and meat. No one possesses any definite amount of land as private property; the magistrates and tribal chiefs annually assign a holding to clans and groups of kinsmen or others living together, fixing its size and position at their discretion, and the following year make them move on somewhere else. They give many reasons for this custom: for example, that their men may not get accustomed to living in one place, lose their warlike enthusiasm, and take up agriculture instead; that they may not be anxious to acquire large estates, and the strong be tempted to dispossess the weak; to prevent their paying too much attention to building houses . . . or becoming too fond of money – a frequent cause of division and strife; and to keep the common people contented and quiet by letting every man see that even the most powerful are no better off than himself.

The various tribes regard it as their greatest glory to lay waste as much as possible of the land around them and to keep it uninhabited. They hold it a proof of a people's valour to drive their neighbours from their homes, so that no one dare settle near them. And also think it gives them greater security by removing any fear of sudden invasion. In peacetime there is no central magistracy; the chiefs of the various districts and cantons administer justice and settle disputes among their own people. No discredit attaches to plundering raids outside the tribal frontiers; the Germans say that they serve to keep the young men in training and prevent them from getting lazy. When a chief announces in an assembly his intention of leading a raid and calls for volunteers, those who like the proposal, and approve of the man who makes it, stand up and promise their assistance amid the applause of the whole gathering; anyone who backs out afterwards is looked on as a deserter and a traitor and no one will ever trust him again. To wrong a guest is impious in their eyes. They shield from injury all who come to their houses for any purpose whatever, and treat their persons as sacred; guests are welcomed to every man's home and table. (Gallic Wars 6.21-23)

At one point in his account Caesar singles out the German tribe the Suebi for a special mention.

7. *The Suebi are by far the largest and most warlike of the German nations. It is said that they have a hundred cantons, each of which provides annually a thousand armed men for service in foreign wars. Those who are left at home have to support the men in the army as well as themselves, and the next year take their turn of service, while the others stay at home. Thus both agriculture, and military instruction and training, continue without interruption. No land, however, is the property of private individuals, and no one is allowed to cultivate the same plot for more than one year. They do not eat much cereal food but live chiefly on milk and meat, and spend much time in hunting. Their diet, daily exercise, and the freedom from restraint that they enjoy – for from childhood they do not know what compulsion or discipline is, and do nothing against their inclination – combine to make them strong and as tall as giants. They inure themselves, in spite of the very cold climate in which they live, to wear no clothing but skins – and these so scanty that a large part of the body is uncovered –*

and to bathe in the rivers. Traders are admitted into their country more because they want to sell their booty than because they stand in any need of imports . . . they absolutely forbid the importation of wine, because they think that it makes men soft and incapable of enduring hard toil. (Gallic Wars 4.1-2)

Of the tribes outside the borders of the Roman province the Aedui tribe was one of the most important. The Aedui were long-standing allies of Rome and helped Caesar in a variety of ways during his campaigns - including direct military support. During Caesar's first campaign in Gaul, against the Helvetii, the following incident involving two brothers from the Aeduan nobility occurred.

8. *Meanwhile Caesar was daily demanding from the Aedui the grain which, as he reminded them, their government had promised. For on account of the cold climate the standing corn was still unripe, and there was not even a sufficient supply of hay . . . the Aedui kept putting him off from day to day, saying that the grain was being collected, was in transit, was on the point of arriving, and so forth. When he saw that there was going to be no end to this procrastination, and the day on which the soldiers' rations were due was approaching, he summoned the numerous Aeduan chiefs who were in the camp, including Diviciacus and Liscus, their chief magistrate – the Vergobret, as the Aedui call him – an annually elected officer holding power of life and death over his countrymen. Caesar reprimanded them severely for failing to help him at such a critical moment, when the enemy was at hand and it was impossible either to buy corn or get it from the fields. He pointed out that it was largely in response to their entreaties that he had undertaken the campaign, and in still stronger terms than he had yet used accused them of betraying him by this neglect.*

His remarks at last induced Liscus to drop concealment and speak out. 'There are a number of private individuals in our state', he said, 'who have great influence over the masses, and are more powerful than the magistrates themselves. It is these who, by criminal and seditious talk, work on the fears of the people to prevent them from bringing in the grain that is due. They argue that if the Aedui are no longer able to maintain their supremacy in Gaul, it is better to have Gauls as masters than Romans, and say they are certain that, if you defeat the Helvetii, you mean to rob the Aedui of their liberty along with all the rest of the Gauls. These men also keep the enemy informed of your plans and of all that goes on in the camp, and I have no power to control them.

Caesar perceived that Liscus's remarks alluded to Diviciacus' brother Dumnorix, and as he did not want the matter discussed with a number of others present, he promptly dismissed the assembly, telling Liscus to stay behind. When they were alone he questioned him about what he had said . . . it was indeed Dumnorix that he had referred to, a man of boundless daring, extremely popular with the masses on account of his liberality, and an ardent revolutionary.

He (Dumnorix) had his own reasons for hating Caesar and the Romans, because their arrival in Gaul had decreased his power and restored his brother Diviciacus to his former position of honour and influence. If disaster should befall the Romans, he felt sure that with the aid of the Helvetii the throne was within his grasp, whereas a Roman conquest of Gaul would mean that he could not hope even to retain his present standing, much less make himself King . . . Dumnorix had secured a passage for the Helvetii through the territory of the Sequani, and arranged an exchange of hostages between them.

He had done this not merely without the authority of Caesar or the Aeduan government, but actually without their knowledge; and he was denounced by the chief magistrate of his tribe. Caesar therefore decided that he had good grounds for either punishing him himself or calling on his fellow tribesmen to do so. The one objection to this course was that he knew Dumnorix's brother Diviciacus to be an enthusiastic supporter of Roman interests, a very good friend to him personally, and a man of exceptional loyalty, fair-mindedness, and moderation; and there was reason to fear that he would be much displeased if his brother were executed. Accordingly, before taking any action, he sent for Diviciacus and dismissing the ordinary interpreters talked to him with the assistance of Gaius Valerius Troucillus (A Romanised Gaul and second generation Roman citizen), a prominent man in the Province of Gaul and an intimate friend of his own, in whom he had entire confidence. He reminded Diviciacus of what he himself had heard said about Dumnorix in the meeting, informed him of what had been stated in his private interviews with various persons, and earnestly begged him not to take offence, but to consent to his either hearing the case himself and passing judgement on Dumnorix, or else instructing the Aeduan state to do so.

*Bursting into tears, Diviciacus embraced Caesar and besought him not to deal too severely with his brother. 'I know', he said, 'that the allegations against him are true, and no one regrets it more than I do. For when I had great power at home and in the rest of Gaul, while he was too young to have much influence it was I that raised him to greatness; and the resources and strength he thus acquired he is now using, not only to weaken my position, but to bring me near to ruin. Nevertheless, he is my brother; and apart from my own feelings, I cannot afford to be indifferent to public opinion. If you take severe measures against him, everyone will think – in view of my friendly relations with you – that I desired it, and I shall become very unpopular throughout Gaul.' He was continuing to plead at some length, with tears in his eyes, when Caesar grasped his hand, reassured him, and bade him say no more. 'So high is my regard for you' Caesar said, 'that, since you wish it and beg me so earnestly, I will both overlook the injury to Roman interests and swallow my own indignation.' He then summoned Dumnorix (who was in the camp as a commander of a contingent of Aeduan cavalry) and in his brother's presence stated his reasons for complaint about his conduct, mentioning the information he had received and the charges made against him by his own government. He warned him to avoid henceforth giving any cause for suspicion; what was past, he would overlook for his brother's sake. However, he placed Dumnorix under surveillance in order to ascertain what he was doing and whom he talked with. **(Gallic Wars 1.16-20)***

After a series of defeats the Helvetii sent envoys to Caesar offering their surrender. Caesar describes what happened next.

9. *Caesar commanded that the Helvetii should stay where they were until he arrived. They obeyed, and on reaching the place he required them to give hostages and to surrender their arms and slaves who had deserted to them. While these were being searched for and collected, six thousand men of the clan known as the Verbigeni quitted the encampment in the early hours of the night and set out for the German frontier on the Rhine. Either they were afraid that they would be massacred when once they had given up their arms, or they hoped to escape punishment altogether, thinking that they could get away unobserved in such a large crowd of prisoners, and that the Romans might never learn of their departure. But Caesar heard of it, and sent word to the tribes through whose territory the fugitives were passing that they were to hunt them down and bring them back, or he would hold them*

responsible. When they were brought back he put them to death; but all the rest were allowed to surrender after handing over the hostages, deserters and arms.

The Helvetii . . . were bidden to return to their own country; and as all their produce was gone, so that they had nothing at home to live on, Caesar directed the Allobroges (Roman allies) to supply them with grain . . . Some documents found in the Helvetian camp were brought to Caesar. They were written in Greek characters, and contained a register of the names of all the emigrants capable of bearing arms, and also, under separate headings, the number of old men, women, and children. The grand total was 368,000.



GALLIC CAVALRY

Almost immediately after his defeat of the Helvetii (58 BC) representatives from a large number of different Gallic tribes came to see Caesar. This delegation was led by Diviciacus who explained that, several years earlier, the Sequani had sought a military alliance with the powerful German leader Ariovistus. The German leader had crossed the Rhine with thousands of warriors and helped the Sequani to defeat their enemies, who included the Aedui. The next passage begins towards the end of Diviciacus' speech to Caesar and the assembled Gallic ambassadors.

10. *'They (the tribes defeated by Ariovistus) had been forced to surrender their most distinguished citizens as hostages to the Sequani, and to bind themselves by oath not to attempt to recover them and not to solicit the aid of Rome, but to submit for ever without demur to the sovereign power of their conquerors . . . But a worse fate, he went on to say, had befallen the victorious Sequani than the conquered Aedui. For the German king*

Ariovistus had settled in their territory and seized a third of their land – the best in all Gaul. And now he was bidding them evacuate another third, because a few months previously he had been joined by twenty-four thousand men of the Harudes (a Germanic tribe), and must find them a home to settle in. In a few years time the whole population of Gaul would be expatriated and all the Germans would migrate across the Rhine; for there was no comparison between the soil of Germany and that of Gaul, or between their respective standards of living . . . Ariovistus had shown himself an arrogant and cruel tyrant, demanding the children of every man of rank as hostages, and making an example of them by the infliction of all manner of torture, if the least indication of his will and pleasure was not instantly complied with. The man was an ill-tempered, headstrong savage and it was impossible to endure his tyranny any longer. Unless Caesar and the Romans would help them, the Gauls must all do as the Helvetii had done – leave their homes, seek other dwelling-places out of reach of the Germans, and take their chance of whatever fortune might befall them.’ When Diviciacus had finished his speech, the whole deputation began with many tears to implore Caesar’s aid.

On receiving this information Caesar reassured the Gauls and promised to attend to the matter . . . He then dismissed the meeting. In addition to what he had been told, many other considerations convinced him that this problem must be faced and some action taken. The most important was the fact that the Aedui, who had frequently been styled by the Senate ‘Brothers and Kinsmen of the Roman People’, were enslaved and held subject by the Germans, and that Aeduan hostages were in the hands of Ariovistus and the Sequani, which, considering the mighty power of Rome, Caesar regarded as a disgrace to himself and his country. Furthermore, if the Germans gradually formed a habit of crossing the Rhine and entering Gaul in large numbers, he saw how dangerous it would be for the Romans. If these fierce barbarians occupied the whole of Gaul, the temptation would be too strong for them: they would cross the frontier into the province . . . and march on Italy, for the Roman Province lay just across the Rhone from the territory of the Sequani. (Gallic Wars 1.31-33)

Caesar’s next step was to send an envoy to Ariovistus stating that he wished to meet with him and Ariovistus should choose a place for the meeting halfway between his and Caesar’s current positions.

11. *To this delegation Ariovistus replied ‘If I wanted anything from Caesar, I should go to him; so if he wants anything of me, he must come to me.’ He could not imagine what business Caesar, or the Romans at all for that matter, had in the part of Gaul which was his by right of conquest. At this Caesar sent a second embassy . . . the envoys were instructed to deliver him an ultimatum: first, he was not to bring any more large bodies of men across the Rhine into Gaul; secondly, he was to restore the Aeduan hostages he held, and to authorize the Sequani to restore those whom they held; finally, he was not to oppress the Aedui or to make war on them or their allies. On these conditions Caesar and the Roman government would maintain cordial and friendly relations with him. If these demands were refused, then, in accordance with a decree of the Senate passed in the consulship of Marcus Messala and Marcus Piso (i.e. 61 BC), directing all governors of the Province of Gaul to do everything consistent with the public interest to protect the Aedui and other Roman allies, Caesar would not fail to punish his ill-treatment of them.*

*In reply Ariovistus said that it was the recognised custom of war for victors to rule the vanquished in any way they pleased, and that the Romans acted on this principle by governing their conquered subjects, not according to the dictates of any third party, but at their own discretion. Since he did not dictate to them how they were to exercise their rights, he ought not to be interfered with in the exercise of his. It was because the Aedui had tried the fortune of war, and were the losers in the fight, that they had to pay him tribute; and Caesar was doing him a serious wrong in coming to Gaul and causing him a loss of revenue. He would not return the hostages to the Aedui, but would refrain from making any wanton (unprovoked) attack upon them or their allies, if they kept their agreement and paid the tributes regularly every year; if they did not, the title of 'Brothers of the Roman People' would not save them from the consequences. 'I am not impressed,' he concluded, 'by Caesar's threat to punish my "oppression" of these people. No one has ever fought me without bringing destruction upon himself. Let him attack whenever he pleases. He will discover what German valour is capable of. We have never known defeat, we have had superb training in arms, and for fourteen years have never sheltered beneath a roof.'***(Gallic Wars 1.34-36)**



GALLIC INFANTRY

Caesar, on receiving this reply, marched North to confront Ariovistus. When he learned that the Roman army was approaching his location Ariovistus sent an envoy to Caesar saying that he was willing to meet with him.

12. *In an extensive plain there stood a fairly high mound of earth, about equidistant from the camps of Caesar and Ariovistus. Here they came, as agreed, to hold their conference . . . The king (Ariovistus) stipulated that they should confer on horseback, each accompanied by ten men. On reaching the place Caesar began by recalling the favours that he himself and the Senate had conferred on Ariovistus – how he had been honoured with the titles of ‘King’ and ‘Friend’, and had received handsome presents – pointing out that very few princes had been*

granted such distinctions, which were usually reserved for those who had rendered important services to Rome. 'You would have had no right', he said 'to apply to the Senate for any such favours; you owe them entirely to my kindness and my generosity and that of the Senate. The friendship between my country and the Aedui is of long standing and founded on solid grounds. Resolutions of the Senate, expressed in most complimentary terms, have repeatedly been passed in their honour. They held a position of supremacy in Gaul all along, even before they sought our friendship; and since it has always been our policy to see that our allies and friends, far from losing anything they had already, should have their credit, honour and importance increased, how can we allow them to be robbed of what they already had when they became our friends?' He then repeated the demands which he had instructed his envoys to present – that Ariovistus should not make war on the Aedui or their allies; that he should restore their hostages; and even if he could not send any of the Germans back home, he should at least not let any more cross the Rhine.

Ariovistus had little to say in reply to these demands, but spoke at length about his own merits. He had crossed the Rhine he said, not of his own accord but in response to the invitation of the Gauls . . . the possessions he had in Gaul had been ceded to him by the Gauls themselves, and the hostages had been given voluntarily. As for the tribute he exacted, this was customarily regarded as the right of a victorious belligerent. He had not been the aggressor: the Gauls had attacked him, all their tribes having marched out and taken the field against him. He had completely routed their entire force in a single battle. If they wanted to try their luck again, he was quite ready for another fight; if they wanted peace it was unfair for them to object to the tribute they had hitherto paid without demur. The friendship of the Roman people ought to be a distinction and a protection to him, not an occasion of loss, and it was with this expectation that he had sought it. If through Roman interference his subjects were absolved from payment and withdrawn from his control, he would be just as ready to discard that friendship as he had been to seek it. The large number of Germans he was bringing into Gaul were brought to secure his safety, not for aggression; the proof of that was that he had not come till he was asked, and had fought only in self-defence. However, yhe had come there before the Romans, whose armies had never before marched beyond the frontier of the Province. What did Caesar mean by invading his dominions?

'This part of the country,' he said, 'is my province, just as the other part is yours. I could not expect you to let me make raids into your territory with impunity, and it is a gross injustice for you to interfere with me in the exercise of my lawful rights. You say that the Aedui have been called "Brothers" by the Roman Senate. Well, I may be a "Barbarian"; but I am not such a barbarian, and not so ignorant, as not to know that in the recent revolt of the Allobroges (they had revolted against Roman rule of the Province in 61 BC) you got no help from the Aedui, and that they had to do without the benefit of your assistance in the war that they have just fought with me and the Sequani. I suspect that this talk of friendship is just so much pretence, and that your object in keeping an army in Gaul is to crush me. Unless you take yourself off from this country, and your army with you, it won't be as a "Friend" that I shall treat you. In fact, if I killed you, there are plenty of nobles and politicians in Rome who would thank me for it; I know this, because they themselves commissioned their agents to tell me so. I could make them all my grateful friends by putting an end to you. But if you will go away and leave me in undisturbed possession of Gaul I will reward you handsomely, and whenever you want a war fought, I will see the job through for you, without your lifting a finger or running any risk.' (Gallic Wars 1.43-44)

The meeting continued for another few minutes with Caesar saying that he refused to desert a loyal ally, i.e. the Aedui. Things ended abruptly however when some of the Germans with Ariovistus started throwing stones and javelins at Caesar's men. The next day Ariovistus sent envoys to Caesar asking for a second meeting.

- 13.** *Caesar did not see that anything was to be gained by a further interview, especially as on the previous day Ariovistus had been unable to restrain his men from attacking the Roman troops, and he thought it would be running a great risk to send a Roman officer and place him at the mercy of such savages. He decided that the best plan was to send Gaius Valerius Procillus, a young man of high character and liberal education, whose father Gaius Valerius Caburus had been granted Roman citizenship . . . Procillus was a man who could be trusted. His knowledge of the Gallic language would be useful, since by long practice Ariovistus had learnt to speak it fluently; and in his case the Germans would have no motive for foul play. With him he sent Marcus Metius, who was bound to Ariovistus by ties of hospitality, and their orders were to hear what the king had to say, and report to Caesar. But as soon as Ariovistus saw them at his camp headquarters, he shouted out in front of his whole army: 'what are you coming here for? To play the spy I suppose?' And when they attempted to speak, he stopped them and had them put in chains. (Gallic Wars 1.47)*

A week later Caesar and Ariovistus fought a closely contested battle. The Romans won but Ariovistus and a substantial number of his soldiers survived the battle and retreated back across the Rhine. Early in the following year (57 BC) Caesar learned that a number of Belgic tribes were attempting to form an anti-Roman military alliance. Caesar marched against them on the pretext of protecting the Remi, who had remained loyal to Rome. The first Belgic tribe he defeated were the Suessiones.

- 14.** *He took the leading men of the Suessiones as hostages, as well as two of king Galba's own sons, and accepted the surrender of the tribe after all the arms in the fortress had been handed over. Caesar marched next against the Bellovaci, who retired with all their belongings in to the fortress of Bratuspantium. when his army was about five miles off, all the older men came out, and signified by supplicatory gestures and cries that they placed themselves at his mercy and were not offering resistance. In the same way, when he marched close up to the fortress and began to make a camp, the women and children appeared on the wall with arms outstretched in their habitual manner of entreaty and begged for peace. Their plea was supported by Diviciacus . . . He said that the Bellovaci had always lived under the friendly protection of the Aedui, until their leading men induced them to sever the connection and take up arms against Rome, by telling them that the Aedui were enslaved by Caesar and had to endure every kind of ill-usage and humiliation. 'The people responsible for the adoption of this policy,' he continued, 'have now realised what a calamity they have brought upon their country, and have fled to Britain. To the prayers of the Bellovaci we Aeduans add our own, begging you to treat them with your usual clemency and humanity. By so doing you will enhance our prestige with all the Belgic tribes – a matter of importance to us, because we always rely on their troops and resources to see us through any war in which we are involved.' Caesar said that he would spare the Bellovaci and accept their submission out of respect for Diviciacus and the Aedui; but . . . he demanded six hundred hostages. (Gallic Wars 2.13-15)*



ROMAN INFANTRY

Despite his success against some of the Belgic tribes the Nervii refused to surrender to Caesar. Caesar then asked his Gallic allies about the Nervii.

15. *He learnt that they did not admit traders into their country and would not allow the importation of wine or other luxuries, because they thought such things made men soft and took the edge off their courage; that they were a fierce, warlike people, who bitterly reproached the other Belgae for throwing away their inheritance of bravery by submitting to the Romans, and vowed that they would never ask for peace or accept it on any terms.*

(Gallic Wars 2.15)

Caesar marched in to the territory of the Nervii but they were waiting for him and launched a well-planned attack when his army stopped to build a camp for the night. According to Caesar's own account his men came very close to a serious defeat and were only saved by the arrival of reinforcements who had been marching at the rear of the column that day. Their arrival, just in the nick of time, resulted in a crushing defeat for the Nervii.

16. *But the enemy, even in their desperate plight, showed such bravery that when their front ranks had fallen those immediately behind stood on their prostrate bodies to fight and when these too fell and the corpses were piled high, the survivors still kept hurling javelins as though from the top of a mound, and flung back the spears intercepted by their shields. Such courage accounted for the extraordinary feats they had performed already. Only heroes could have made light of crossing a wide river, clambering up the steep banks, and launching*

themselves on such a steep position. So ended this battle, by which the tribe of the Nervii was almost annihilated and their name almost blotted out from the face of the earth. On hearing the news of it, their old men, who, as already said, had been sent away with the women and children into tidal creeks and marshes, decided that nothing could stop the victorious Romans or protect their conquered tribe, and with the consent of all the survivors they sent envoys to Caesar and surrendered. In describing the calamity that had befallen their state, they asserted that they had three councillors left out of six hundred, and scarcely five hundred men capable of bearing arms out of sixty thousand. Caesar, wishing to let it be seen that he showed mercy to unfortunate suppliants, took great care to protect them from harm, confirmed them in possession of their territories and towns, and commanded their neighbours to refrain from injuring their persons or property, and to make their dependants do likewise. (Gallic Wars 2.27-28)

Caesar's next move was to besiege the main fortress of the Atuatuca. The defenders offered to surrender to Caesar and, when he insisted that they hand over their weapons, they threw them from the walls of the fortress and opened the gates. Caesar accepted their surrender but, as it was getting dark, he decided to wait until the morning to occupy the fortress. That night the Atuatuca armed themselves with weapons, which they had hidden from the Romans, and attempted to fight their way out.

- 17.** *The Atuatuca struggled with the ferocity that was to be expected of brave men fighting a forlorn hope against an enemy who had the advantage of position and could hurl down missiles from an earthwork and towers, and knowing that courage was the one thing which could save them. About four thousand were killed and the rest driven back into the fortress. Next day the gates, now undefended, were smashed open and the soldiers let in; and Caesar sold all the inhabitants of the place by auction in one lot. The purchasers reported that the number of persons included in the sale was fifty-three thousand. (Gallic Wars 2.33)*

After the defeat of the Belgic tribes Gaul remained peaceful for months. Trouble began again in the winter of 56 BC though.

- 18.** *The occasion of the outbreak (of war) was the action of young Publius Crassus, who with the 7th Legion occupied the winter camp nearest the Atlantic, in the territory of the Andes. As food was scarce in that region, he sent a number of auxiliary officers and military tribunes to the neighbouring peoples to seek a supply of corn and other provisions. Among others, Titus Terasidius was sent to the Essuvii, Marcus Trebius Gallus to the Coriosolites, Quintus Velanius and Titus Sillius to the Veneti . . . They (the Veneti) were the first to take action against the Romans by detaining Sillius and Velanius and any others they could catch, hoping by this to recover the hostages they had given to Crassus. Their neighbours followed their example with the impulsive haste that characterises the actions of the Gauls. (Gallic Wars 3.7-8)*

Caesar attacked the Veneti because of their actions. Once he had defeated them he had all of their 'councillors' executed and sold the rest of the tribe into slavery. Caesar says he did this to teach the Gauls to be more careful about how they treated Roman ambassadors in the future. At the same time that Caesar was fighting the Veneti a senior officer called Sabinus was campaigning against the Venelli, allies of the Veneti.

19. *While these events were taking place in the country of the Veneti, Sabinus arrived with the troops assigned to him in the territory of the Venelli. Their leader was Viridovix, the commander-in-chief of all the rebel tribes, from which he had raised a large army. Within a few days of Sabinus' arrival the Aulerci, Eburovices and the Lexovii massacred their councillors because they would not sanction the policy of going to war, shut their gates and joined Viridovix; and there had also assembled from all over Gaul a host of desperadoes and bandits, to whom the prospect of fighting and plunder was more attractive than farming and regular work. Sabinus refused to leave his camp, which was ideally situated, while Viridovix, who had encamped opposite him at a distance of two miles, led his troops out daily and offered battle. The Gauls began to despise Sabinus, and even some of his own troops made insulting remarks; in the end he so convinced the enemy of his timidity that they ventured close up to the rampart of the camp. The real reason for his inaction was his opinion that a subordinate ought not to engage such a large enemy force, especially in the absence of his commander-in-chief, without having either an advantage of position or some particularly favourable opportunity.*

When everyone was fully persuaded that Sabinus was afraid, he selected from his auxiliaries a quick-witted Gaul, a man suitable for the purpose he had in mind, and induced him by liberal rewards and promises to go over to the enemy, explaining to him what he wanted done. The man came to them posing as a deserter, described the Romans' terror, and said that Caesar himself was hard pressed by the Veneti and that Sabinus planned to steal out of his camp the very next night and go to his aid. On hearing this they all cried that the chance of scoring a success should not be missed: they must march on the camp. (Gallic Wars 3.17-19)

As soon as the Gauls climbed the hill to attack Sabinus' camp he opened the gates and ordered his men, who were ready to attack, to charge the Gauls. The Gauls were surprised by this trick and fled back down the hill after taking substantial casualties. The surviving Gauls withdrew from the area.

In 55 BC two German tribes crossed the Rhine and invaded Gaul. They had been pushed out of their own territory in Germany by the Suebi. Caesar simply could not allow the Germans to enter Gaul unchallenged so he marched towards the Rhine to intercept them. On his approach a delegation of German elders came to Caesar as ambassadors asking for a truce and the opportunity to enter talks. Caesar agreed to this but a short while later a small detachment of Caesar's cavalry was attacked by the Germans (they may not have realised that a truce had just been agreed).

20. *After this treacherous and unprovoked attack by an enemy who had asked for peace, Caesar dismissed all further thought of giving audience to their envoys or accepting any overtures . . . The Gauls were so scatter-brained that even this single German success had no doubt made a great impression upon them, and that they must not be given time to concert plans. He told his generals and quaestor of his decision, and, not wanting to lose a single day in bringing the enemy to battle, marched forward. The next morning he had a great stroke of luck. Still pursuing their policy of treachery and deceit, a large deputation of Germans, comprising all their leaders and elder men of note, came to visit him in his camp. Their ostensible object was to apologise for attacking the day before in contravention of the agreement that they themselves asked for; but they also hoped to hoodwink Caesar into granting an extension of the truce. Caesar was delighted that they had put themselves in his power, and ordered them to be detained. (Gallic Wars 4.13)*

Caesar attacked the German camp that same day winning a decisive victory. Towards the end of the Summer of 55 BC Caesar began making preparations for an invasion of Britain. His excuse was that the Britons had sent help to the Gauls in their wars against the Romans.

21. *When the news (of Caesar's planned invasion) was brought by traders to the Britons, envoys were sent by a number of tribes, offering to give hostages and submit to Rome. Caesar gave them audience, made them generous promises, and urged them to abide by their resolve. He then sent them home, accompanied by Commius, whom he had made king of the Atrebates after the conquest of that tribe – a man of whose courage, judgement, and loyalty he had a high opinion, and who was greatly respected in Britain. He instructed Commius to visit as many tribes as possible, to urge them to entrust themselves to the protection of Rome, and to announce his impending arrival. (Gallic Wars 4.21)*

According to Caesar the Treveri were planning to take advantage of the fact that he would soon be away on campaign in Britain. They were speaking to some of the German tribes about a possible anti-Roman alliance and had refused to send a representative to a meeting of Gallic tribal leaders called by Caesar.

22. *The Treveri have much the most powerful cavalry in Gaul, and also a considerable force of infantry. Their territory, it will be remembered, borders on the Rhine. Two rivals were struggling there for supremacy – Indutiomarus and Cingetorix. As soon as news came of Caesar's approach with the legions, Cingetorix presented himself, assured Caesar that he and all his followers would remain loyal to the Roman alliance, and explained the position of affairs among the Treveri. Indutiomarus, however, began to prepare for war . . . some of the other leaders of the tribe, who were friends of Cingetorix, were alarmed by the approach of the Roman army, and since it was not in their power, they said, to help their country, they came to Caesar and petitioned for their personal safety.*

Indutiomarus was now afraid of being completely isolated, and sent to Caesar to say that the reason why he had not wanted to leave his followers and wait upon him was that by remaining he had a better chance of keeping the tribe loyal. If all the men of rank left the country, the common people in their ignorance might fall into error. In this way he had kept control of his countrymen, and with Caesar's permission would come to his camp and place himself and the tribe under his protection. Caesar understood his motive in saying this, and knew what deterred him from prosecuting his original design. Nevertheless, to avoid having to waste the summer there after making all preparations for a campaign in Britain, he told Indutiomarus to present himself with two hundred hostages, including his son and all his relations, who were mentioned by name. When these were brought, Caesar reassured him and urged him to remain loyal.

He (Caesar) also summoned the other leaders of the tribe and called on them individually to support Cingetorix. He thought that Cingetorix deserved this help, and that it was important to do all he could to increase the power of a man who had proved himself so devoted a friend. This abatement of his influence provoked Indutiomarus to bitter resentment, which greatly inflamed the hostility that he already felt towards the Romans. (Gallic Wars 5.3-4)

After this incident Caesar made his way to the port from which he was planning to invade Britain. He had also requested that all of the Gallic tribal leaders assemble there.

23. *Caesar had decided to leave behind only a few of these who had proved their loyalty, and to take all the rest with him as hostages, because he was afraid of a rising in Gaul during his absence. Among the Gallic leaders was Dumnorix the Aeduan . . . he was one whom Caesar was particularly determined to keep with him, because he knew him to be a political intriguer, ambitious, bold, and very influential with the Gauls. Moreover, Dumnorix had said in the Aeduan council that Caesar had offered to make him king of the tribe – a statement that was much resented by the Aedui, although they dared not protest to Caesar or ask him to give up this idea. Caesar learnt these facts from some Gauls in whose house he had lodged. Dumnorix began by begging hard to be allowed to stay at home, saying that he was unused to sailing and afraid of the sea, and also that he was debarred from leaving the country by religious duties. When he found that there was no hope of altering Caesar's determination not to leave him behind, he began to intrigue with the other chiefs, taking them aside one by one, urging them to remain on the continent, and working on their fears. He said that Caesar had an ulterior object in thus stripping Gaul of all her leading citizens: he shrank from killing them under the eyes of their countrymen, but his purpose was to put them all to death when he had got them across to Britain. He pledged his word to work with the others for what they saw to be the interest of Gaul, and called on them to take an oath to the same effect.*

When these facts were reported to Caesar by a number of informants, he decided that in view of the high regard which he had for the Aedui he ought to do everything possible to restrain Dumnorix and deter him from pursuing his design; and as the man's obsession was clearly increasing, it must be put beyond his power to do any injury to Caesar or to Roman interests . . . Caesar took measures to make Dumnorix behave himself, but at the same time to obtain information about any plans he might form. At length, taking advantage of the favourable weather, Caesar ordered the infantry and cavalry to embark. But while everyone's attention was occupied with this operation, Dumnorix took some Aeduan horsemen out of the camp without Caesar's knowledge and started for home. On hearing of this Caesar postponed the sailing. Letting everything else wait, he sent a strong detachment of cavalry to pursue him and bring him back; if he showed fight and refused to obey, their orders were to kill him, since Caesar thought that a man who flouted his authority under his very eyes could not be expected to behave rationally behind his back. On being summoned to return Dumnorix began to resist, sword in hand, begging his followers to protect him, and shouting over and over again that he was a free man and a citizen of a free state. In obedience to Caesar's orders he was surrounded and killed. (Gallic Wars 5.5-7)

Caesar describes the Britons.

24. *The interior of Britain is inhabited by people who claim, on the strength of an oral tradition, to be aboriginal (i.e. native to the island); the coast, by Belgic immigrants who came to plunder and make war – nearly all of them retaining the names of the tribes from which they originated – and later settled down to till the soil. The population is exceedingly large, the ground thickly studded with homesteads, closely resembling those of the Gauls, and the cattle very numerous. For money they use either bronze, or gold coins, or iron ingots of fixed weights. Tin is found inland, and small quantities of iron near the coast; the copper that they use is imported . . . By far the most civilised inhabitants are those living in Kent, whose way of life differs little from that of the Gauls. Most of the tribes in the interior do not grow corn but*

live on milk and meat, and wear skins. All the Britons dye their bodies with woad, which produces a blue colour, and shave the whole of their bodies except the head and the upper lip. Wives are shared between groups of ten or twelve men, especially between brothers and between fathers and sons; but the offspring of these unions are counted as the children of the man with whom a particular woman cohabited first. (Gallic Wars 5.12-14)

In the winter of 54 BC Caesar, as he always did, split up his army into its individual legions and sent them to their winter quarters. Unbeknownst to the Romans some of the Gallic tribes had a plan to attack a number of these isolated legions on the same day so that they could not come to each other's aid. The next passage describes a meeting between the Eburonian leader, Ambiorix and Gaius Arpineius, a Roman officer sent out of the camp to meet with Ambiorix on behalf of the legion's commander, Sabinus. Earlier that day Ambiorix's men had attacked the Roman camp. Two weeks earlier the Eburones had supplied the legion with grain. Ambiorix and Sabinus also knew each other on a personal level. Caesar had been in Gaul for several years now and it appears as if Ambiorix and Sabinus had met on multiple occasions.

25. *They were addressed by Ambiorix in the following terms: 'I admit,' he said, 'that I am greatly indebted to Caesar for the services which he has rendered me. It was he who relieved me of the tribute that I used to pay my neighbours the Atuatucae, and restored to me my son and my brother's son, who, when sent to them as hostages, had been enslaved and kept in chains. In attacking your camp I acted against my better judgement and my own wishes. I was constrained by my own subjects – for I am not an absolute ruler: the people have as much power over me as I have over them. And the reason why the tribe took up arms was because it could not oppose the movement in which all the Gauls suddenly leagued themselves together . . . I am not so ignorant as to imagine that my army by itself is strong enough to defeat the Romans. The whole of Gaul is united in this attempt, and they have arranged to attack all the camps today simultaneously, so that the legions shall not be able to help one another. It would have been difficult for us to refuse help to our fellow countrymen, especially as we knew that their object was the recovery of our national liberty.*

Having now discharged the duty which patriotism required of me, I remember what I owe to Caesar for his favours, and I urge and implore Sabinus, as my friend and host, to consider his own and his soldier's safety. A large force of German mercenaries has crossed the Rhine and will be here in a couple of days. It is for you to decide whether you will withdraw your troops from the camp before the neighbouring tribes can find out what you are doing, and take them either to Cicero, who is less than fifty miles away, or to Labienus – a somewhat greater distance. I swear to grant them safe conduct through my territory. In so doing I am acting in the interest of my people, who will be relieved from the burden of the camp in their midst, and at the same time repaying Caesar for his kindness.' After making this speech Ambiorix retired. (Gallic Wars 5.27)

The Cicero mentioned in this passage is Quintus Tullius Cicero; brother of the much more famous Marcus Tullius Cicero. Cicero was in command of another legion approximately two days march from Sabinus' position. Sabinus summoned his senior officers to a council and they debated what they should do. The choice was simple – stay, defend the camp, and hope to get a message out seeking reinforcement or trust Ambiorix and risk the march to join up with Cicero's legion. What would you do if you were Sabinus?

Immediately after the attack on Sabinus' camp Cicero's camp was attacked by a large force of Gauls. Cicero found himself in the same predicament as Sabinus and attempted to get a message to Caesar but all of the couriers who attempted to deliver the message were caught and killed by the Gauls. Some of them were tortured in plain view of the camp so that the Roman soldiers could see them. Several days passed and, as the attacks on Cicero's camp became more ferocious and his men succumbed to wounds and fatigue, Cicero realised that his only hope lay in the arrival of reinforcements.

- 26.** *There was one Nervian in the camp, a man of good birth named Vertico, who had deserted to Cicero at the start of the siege and served him very faithfully. The man induced his slave, by the promise of freedom and a large reward, to carry a dispatch to Caesar. He took it tied round a javelin, passed through his fellow countrymen's lines without exciting any suspicion, and reached Caesar, who learned from him the perils that surrounded Cicero and his legion.*
(Gallic Wars 5.45)

On receiving word of Cicero's plight Caesar marched to his aid with two legions. Caesar also used a Gaul to get a message to Cicero.

- 27.** *He then induced one of his Gallic horsemen, by the promise of a large reward, to convey a letter to Cicero, which he wrote in Greek characters, for fear it might be intercepted and his plans become known to the enemy. If he was unable to get in to the camp, the man was to tie the letter to the thong of a javelin and throw it in over the rampart . . . the Gaul was afraid to enter the camp and therefore threw the javelin in, according to his instructions. It happened to stick in one of the towers, where it remained unnoticed for two days. Then a soldier saw it, pulled it out, and took it to Cicero. . . On hearing the news from their patrols (that Caesar was approaching), the Gauls raised the siege and marched out to meet Caesar with all their forces, about sixty thousand men. With the help of Vertico – the man already mentioned – Cicero again found a Gaul to carry a dispatch to Caesar, in which he advised him to march warily and carefully, because the enemy had left the camp and diverted all their forces to oppose him.*
(Gallic Wars 5.48-49)

Caesar, in an effort to stop the revolt spreading, called the tribal leaders to a meeting.

- 28.** *Caesar summoned the leading men of each tribe and partly by intimidation, letting them know he was aware of what was going on, partly by persuasion, succeeded in keeping a large part of the country obedient. The government of the Senones, however, a very powerful tribe with great influence over the others, tried to kill their king Cavarinus, whom Caesar had set on his ancestral throne in succession to his brother Moritasgus, who occupied it at the time of Caesar's arrival in Gaul. When Cavarinus got wind of their intention and fled, they pursued him as far as the frontier, dethroned him, and banished him. On receiving a deputation sent to justify their action, Caesar ordered the whole of the tribal council to appear before him; but they disregarded his command. The fact that someone had been bold enough to take the initiative in hostile action made a deep impression on the ignorant natives, and produced such a profound change in their attitude that nearly every tribe was suspected by Caesar of disloyalty. Almost the only exceptions were the Aedui, whom he always held in special esteem for their long-standing record of unbroken loyalty, and the*

Remi, who had earned similar regard by their recent services in the Gallic campaigns. (Gallic Wars 5.54)

In 53 BC Caesar marched into the territory of the Eburones. He had two aims: punish the Eburones for starting the revolt in 54 BC and capture or kill Ambiorix.

29. Setting out once more to harass the Eburones, Caesar sent out in all directions a large force of cavalry that he had collected from the neighbouring tribes. Every village and every building they saw was set on fire; all over the country the cattle were either slaughtered or driven off as booty; and the crops, a part of which had already been laid flat by the autumnal rains, were consumed by the great number of horses and men. It seemed certain, therefore, that even if some of the inhabitants had escaped for the moment by hiding, they must die of starvation after the retirement of the troops . . . after ravaging the country in this way, Caesar withdrew his army . . . he convened a Gallic council and held an inquiry into the conspiracy of the Senones and Carnutes. Acco, the instigator of the plot, was condemned to death and executed in the ancient Roman manner (i.e. by beheading). Some others, who fled in fear of being brought to trial, were outlawed. (Gallic Wars 6.43-44)

In 52 BC a leading member of the Arverni tribe, Vercingetorix (a.k.a. Vergentorix), succeeded in organising a pan-Gallic revolt against the Romans. Almost all of the Gallic tribes joined Vercingetorix, even the Aedui! This revolt was the most serious threat to Caesar yet. The next passage describes some of the fighting during Caesar's siege of Avaricum, a major Gallic stronghold.

30. To baffle the extraordinary bravery of our troops, the Gauls resorted to all kinds of devices; for they are a most ingenious people and very clever at borrowing and applying ideas suggested to them. They pulled aside our wall hooks with lassoes, for example, and when they had made them fast hauled them inside . . . They made our terraces fall in by undermining, at which they were expert because they have extensive iron mines in their country and are thoroughly familiar with every kind of underground working. They had also equipped the whole circuit of the wall with towers, furnished with platforms and protected by hides. They made frequent sorties by day and night, either to set fire to the terrace or to attack our soldiers at work. (Gallic Wars 7.22)

At one point during the siege the Gauls launched a coordinated and sustained night attack in an effort to break out of Avaricum.

31. The fight went on everywhere throughout the remainder of the night, and the enemy's hope of victory was continually renewed, especially as they saw that the sheds used to protect the men who moved the towers were burnt and that it was not easy for our soldiers to advance without cover to help their comrades, while in their own ranks fresh men kept relieving those who were worn out. They felt that the fate of Gaul depended entirely on what happened at that moment, and performed before our eyes an exploit so memorable that I felt I must not leave it unrecorded.

There was a Gaul standing before one of the gates and throwing into the flames, opposite one of our towers, lumps of tallow and pitch that were passed along to him. An arrow from a catapult pierced his

right side and he fell dead. Another near him stepped over his prostrate body and took over his job. When he likewise was killed by the catapult, a third took his place, and so they went on. The post was not abandoned by the defenders until the fire on the terrace was extinguished, the Gauls repulsed all along the line and the battle at an end. (Gallic Wars 7.25)

Avaricum fell two days later and the Romans killed most of the inhabitants including women and children. The fall of Avaricum, however, did not stop the momentum of Vercingetorix's rebellion. Caesar now records the first signs of trouble with the Aedui.

32. *Some of the leading men of the Aedui came to ask for his help in a serious emergency. The situation, they said, was critical. Their old-established practice was to elect a magistrate to hold sovereign power for a year. Now, however, there were two magistrates in office, each of whom claimed to have been legally appointed. One was Convictolitavis, a young man of wealth and distinction; the other was Cotus, a descendant of a very old house and a man with great personal influence and numerous family connections whose brother Valetiacus had held the same office the year before. The country had become an armed camp; both council and people were divided in their loyalty and each claimant was supported by his retainers. If the quarrel was kept up much longer it would mean civil war. The only way of preventing this was for Caesar to intervene and exert his authority.*

It was most unfortunate for Caesar to have to leave the fighting front, but he knew what serious harm such disputes often cause. The Aedui were a powerful tribe, bound by the closest ties to Rome. He himself had done all in his power to strengthen them and had shown them every mark of favour; and now that there was a prospect of their coming to blows with each other, and a risk that the side which felt itself the weaker might call in help from Vercingetorix, he thought it was his first duty to prevent such a catastrophe. As Aeduan law forbade the chief magistrate to leave the country and Caesar wished to avoid the appearance of violating the rule of its constitution, he decided to go there in person, and summoned the whole council and the two disputants to meet him at Decetia . . . Caesar made Cotus resign his claims and told Convictolitavis . . . to continue in office. After deciding the matter in this way, Caesar advised the Aedui to forget their disputes and quarrels and allow nothing to distract them from the war they had on hand. They might look forward to receiving from him the rewards they deserved when the conquest of Gaul was complete. In the meantime they must send him, without delay, all their cavalry and ten thousand infantry to be distributed at various places for the protection of his convoys. (Gallic Wars 7.32-34)

A man called Litaviccus was placed in command of the Aeduan force requested by Caesar. Once they had set out to join Caesar, Litaviccus claimed that the Aeduan cavalry already with Caesar had been massacred by the Romans because Caesar had suspected them of plotting secretly with the rebels. This was not true but was, in fact, the first stage in a plan hatched by Litaviccus and Convictolitavis to persuade the Aedui to join the rebellion. The next passage begins at the end of a speech given by Litaviccus.

33. *'Let us avenge this foul murder by wiping out these ruffians.' With these words he indicated some Romans who had been travelling with him in reliance on his protection. The Gauls cruelly tortured and killed them and plundered a large quantity of grain and other supplies that they had with them. Litaviccus then sent messengers into every part of the Aeduan country and inflamed the people by the same propaganda about the massacre of cavalrymen*

and chiefs, calling on them to avenge their wrongs by doing the same as he had done. (Gallic Wars 7.38)

The Aeduan cavalry soldiers serving with Caesar were, of course, still alive. The leader of this cavalry contingent, Eporedorix, heard about what had happened and went straight to Caesar with the news.

34. Eporedorix came about midnight to inform Caesar of it, and begged him not to allow the misguided counsels of raw youths to detach the tribe from its friendship with Rome – which must happen if Litaviccus' army joined Vercingetorix, since neither their relations nor the tribal authorities could be indifferent to the safety of so many thousand men. Caesar was much perturbed by the news that the Aedui were turning disloyal in spite of the special favour that he had always shown them. Without a moment's hesitation he started out with four legions in light marching order and all his cavalry.

An advance of twenty-four miles brought him within sight of the Aeduan army. By sending forward the cavalry he forced them to halt and prevented them from resuming their march. Orders were given that no one was to kill any of them, and Eporedorix and Viridomarus, who were believed by the Aedui to have been put to death, were told to go to and fro among the cavalymen and speak to their fellow countrymen. As soon as the Aedui recognised them and realised that Litaviccus had imposed upon them, they stretched out their hands in token of surrender and throwing down their weapons begged for quarter. Litaviccus escaped to Gergovia, accompanied by his retainers; for Gallic custom regards it as a crime, even in a desperate situation, for retainers to desert their lord. (Gallic Wars 7.39-40)

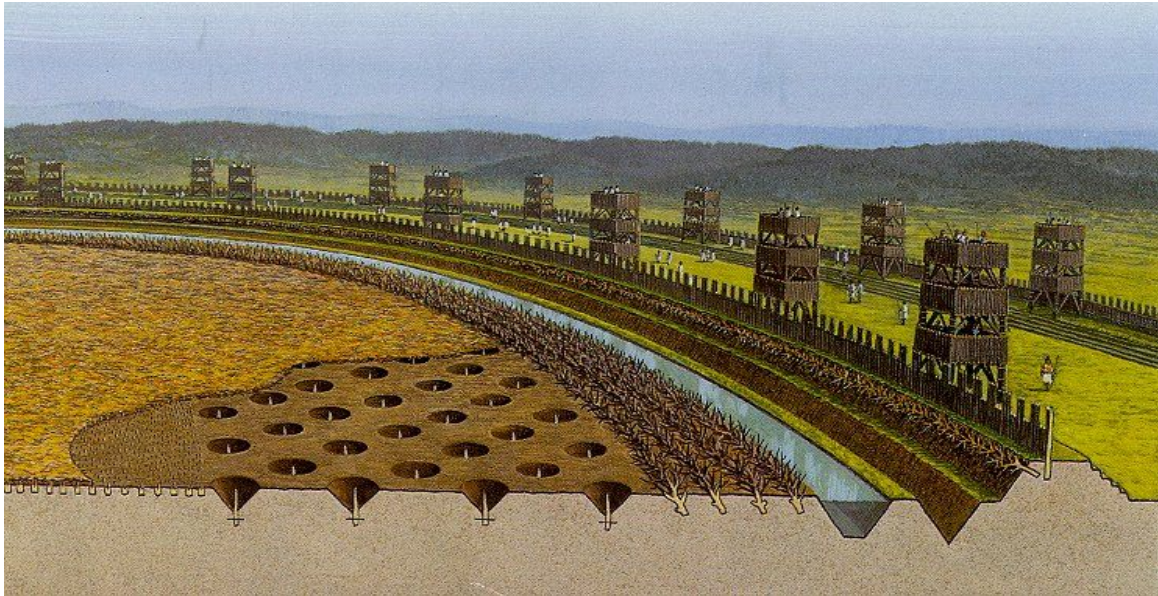
Caesar managed to prevent the defection of the Aedui on this occasion but, as the rebellion rumbled on, the Aedui tribe did eventually join Vercingetorix. This was particularly problematic for Caesar because the Aedui had also been entrusted with most of his Gallic hostages. In 52 BC Caesar besieged the major stronghold of Alesia. Vercingetorix commanded a large force of defenders inside the fortified town and Gallic reinforcements were on the way from other parts of Gaul. As the defenders' supply of food began to run low a meeting of the senior leaders was convened to discuss what they should do.

35. The speech of Critognatus, a noble Arvernian whose opinion commanded great respect, deserves to be recorded for its unparalleled cruelty and wickedness. 'I do not intend,' he said, 'to make any comment on the views of those who advise capitulation – the name they give to the most shameful submission to enslavement . . . I think we should do what our ancestors did in a war that was much less serious than this one. When they were forced into their strongholds . . . instead of surrendering they kept themselves alive by eating the flesh of those who were too old or too young to fight.

They (the Romans) mean to install themselves in our lands and towns and fasten the yoke of slavery on us forever. That is how they have always treated conquered enemies. You do not know much, perhaps, of the condition of distant peoples; but you need only to look at the part of Gaul on your own borders that has been made into a Roman province, with new laws and institutions imposed upon it, ground beneath the conqueror's iron heel in perpetual servitude.'

At the conclusion of the debate it was decided to send out of the town those whom age or infirmity incapacitated for fighting. Critognatus' proposal was to be adopted only as a last resort . . . so the

Mandubian population, who had received the other Gauls into their town, were compelled to leave it with their wives and children. They came up to the Romans fortifications and with tears besought the soldiers to take them as slaves and relieve their hunger; but Caesar posted guards on the ramparts with orders to refuse them admission. (Gallic Wars 7.77-79)



CAESAR'S DEFENCES AT ALESIA

The Gauls attacked the Roman fortifications multiple times but failed to breach either the inner or outer defensive line. They came very close on one occasion and Caesar, realising how perilous the situation was, led the Roman reserves into action himself. Finally, facing starvation, Vercingetorix decided to surrender.

36. *Vercingetorix was delivered up, and the arms laid down. Caesar set apart the Aeduan and Arvernian prisoners, in the hope that he could use them to regain the allegiance of their tribes; the rest he distributed as booty to the entire army, allotting one to every man. He then went to the country of the Aedui and received their submission. Envoys from the Arverni waited upon him there, undertaking to obey any orders he gave, and were commanded to supply a large number of hostages. Some twenty thousand prisoners were restored to the Aedui and Arverni. (Gallic Wars 7.89-90)*

A few years later Vercingetorix was paraded through the streets of Rome during Caesar's triumph and then executed. The last four passages were not actually written by Caesar himself but by one of his officers, and a close personal friend, Aulus Hirtius. Caesar ended his own account of the Gallic wars with the surrender of Vercingetorix. Hirtius' writing is just as reliable (or unreliable) as Caesar's and, even though it was not written by Caesar himself, Hirtius' book (book eight) is always counted as a legitimate part of Caesar's commentary on the wars. Hirtius begins by describing trouble with the Bellovaci in 51 BC.

37. *Several deputations had come from the Remi, warning him that the Bellovaci – the best fighters in the whole of Gaul, surpassing even the rest of the Belgae – were mobilising in conjunction with their neighbours and concentrating troops under their own leader Correis and Commius the Atrebatian. Their intention, it was said, was to make a concerted attack on*

the Suessiones, who had been placed under the suzerainty of the Remi. Caesar considered that both honour and prudence required him to protect allies who had done Rome good service. He therefore called out the 11th legion again . . . (Gallic Wars 8.6)

The Eburones and their allies, the Treveri, had been giving Caesar trouble almost continuously since 54 BC. After defeating the Bellovaci Caesar attempted to hunt down the virulently anti-Roman, Eburonian leader Ambiorix.

- 38.** *Caesar himself set out to lay waste and plunder the territory of Ambiorix the Eburonian, who fled in terror and so could not be forced into submission. Caesar thought that the next best way of obtaining the satisfaction that his honour demanded was to strip the country of inhabitants, cattle and buildings so thoroughly that any of the Eburones who had the good fortune to escape would loathe Ambiorix for bringing such calamities upon them and never allow him to return. Detachments of legionary or auxiliary troops went all over the country, killing or capturing large numbers of the natives, burning the homesteads, and carrying off plunder, until it was completely devastated. Caesar then sent Labienus with two legions against the Treveri – a people who, living so near the German border, were accustomed to fighting every day of their lives; they were nearly as fierce and uncivilised as the Germans themselves, and would never do as they were told unless compelled by armed force. (Gallic Wars 8.24-25)*

Caesar, sensing the potential for another large scale rebellion, visited the (currently peaceful) territory of some of the more anti-Roman tribes.

- 39.** *(Caesar) himself visited the tribes in Western Gaul. From some he demanded additional hostages, but his main concern was to reassure them and allay their fears. The Carnutes were particularly alarmed because they knew they had been guilty of shedding the first blood at the beginning of the great rebellion . . . in order to relieve the tribe as a whole from further anxiety, Caesar called on them to deliver up for punishment Gutuater, the person chiefly responsible for the outrage and the principal warmonger . . . they (the Carnutes) all made diligent search for him and quickly brought him to the Roman camp. Though Caesar was always averse to harsh punishments, he was forced to execute him in order to satisfy the soldiers, who crowded round and charged Gutuater with responsibility for all the perils and losses they had suffered in the fighting. Accordingly he was flogged to death and his head cut off. (Gallic Wars 8.38)*

The last significant act of Gallic resistance centred round the town of Uxellodunum. A large number of Gallic ‘rebels’ assembled there were besieged by Caesar. The Romans cut off the town’s water supply, thus forcing the Gauls to surrender.

- 40.** *Caesar saw that his work in Gaul could never be brought to a successful conclusion if similar revolts were allowed to break out constantly in different parts of the country; and his clemency was so well known that no one would think him a cruel man if for once he took severe measures. So he decided to deter all others by making an example of the defenders of Uxellodunum. All who had borne arms had their hands cut off and were then let go, so that everyone might see what punishment was meted out to evildoers. (Gallic Wars 8.44)*

