

CAESAR INVADES RESOURCES

Caesar wrote an account of his invasion of Britain in 55 BC. He wrote it so that the people who ruled Rome would reward him for being a great general. Caesar wrote in Latin – this is a translation.

The natives [Celts] ... sent forward their cavalry [horse soldiers] and a number of chariots, which they use in fighting. The rest of their troops followed close behind and were ready to stop the landing. The Romans faced huge problems.

[A]

The size of the ships meant the Romans could not run them aground except in fairly deep water. The soldiers did not know the ground. They had their hands full, and were weighed down with the heavy load of their armour and weapons. They had to jump down from the ships, get a footing in the waves, and fight the enemy. The Celts, standing on dry land or going only a short way into the water, fought freely on ground they knew. The enemy hurled javelins and galloped their horses trained to fight in this way.

[B]

Seeing this, I ordered the warships ... to be rowed hard and to run ashore on the enemy's right. This worked for the shape of the warships, and the movement of the oars frightened the enemy. The Celts retreated a little. But the Romans still held back on the ships'

[C]

Chiefly on account of the depth of the water, the man who carried the eagle of the 10th Legion, after praying to the gods that his action might bring good luck to the Legion, cried out in a loud voice: "Jump down, comrades, unless you want to surrender our eagle to the enemy. I, at any rate, mean to do my duty to my country and my general." With these words he leapt out of the ship and advanced towards the enemy with the eagle in his hands.

[D]

At this the soldiers, encouraging each other not to submit to such a disgrace, jumped together from the ship. The men from the next ships, when they saw them, followed them and advanced against the enemy.

[E]

Both sides fought hard. But the Romans could neither keep in order, nor get a firm foothold, nor follow their own standards. So, a shambles was the result. Men from different ships followed the first standard that they came across.

[F]

The enemy knew all the shallows. So, when they saw small parties of soldiers landing from the boats one by one, they galloped up and attacked them. ... While the Celts surrounded the Romans with their larger numbers, other Celts threw spears at the right side of the Roman parties. Caesar therefore ordered the warships' boats and other small vessels to be loaded with Roman troops, so that he could send help to any point where the Romans were in difficulties.

[G]

As soon as the soldiers had landed on the beach and had waited for all their comrades to join them, they charged the enemy and put them to flight, but couldn't pursue very far.'

[H]