

“Give us back
our Eagles!”

The (attempted) Roman invasion of
Germania



The Roman Empire under Augustus Caesar – 8AD:

- Encompassing all of the Mediterranean, Gaul (France), Greece, North Africa and Judea.
- Augustus was not an expansionist emperor.
- His focus was on domestic policies, *Lex Juliae* and *mos maiorum*.
- He wanted to return Rome to its former values and strengths, prior to the civil wars and corruption of the previous century.



The Roman Empire under Claudius Caesar – 47AD.

- Now encompassing Britannia and the Rhineland.
- Claudius faced many domestic problems.
- He was seen as a weak emperor and had never expected to come to power.
- His expansionist foreign policy was an attempt to demonstrate his puissance and to gain public support.
- His conquest of Britannia is generally considered his greatest achievement.



The Roman Empire under Trajan – 117AD.

- Having expanded to the Middle East.
- Trajan was one of the finest military emperors.
- As you can see, the Roman Empire grew considerably under his reign.
- Despite his having been born in Spain, he was popular with the army and led many successful conquests.



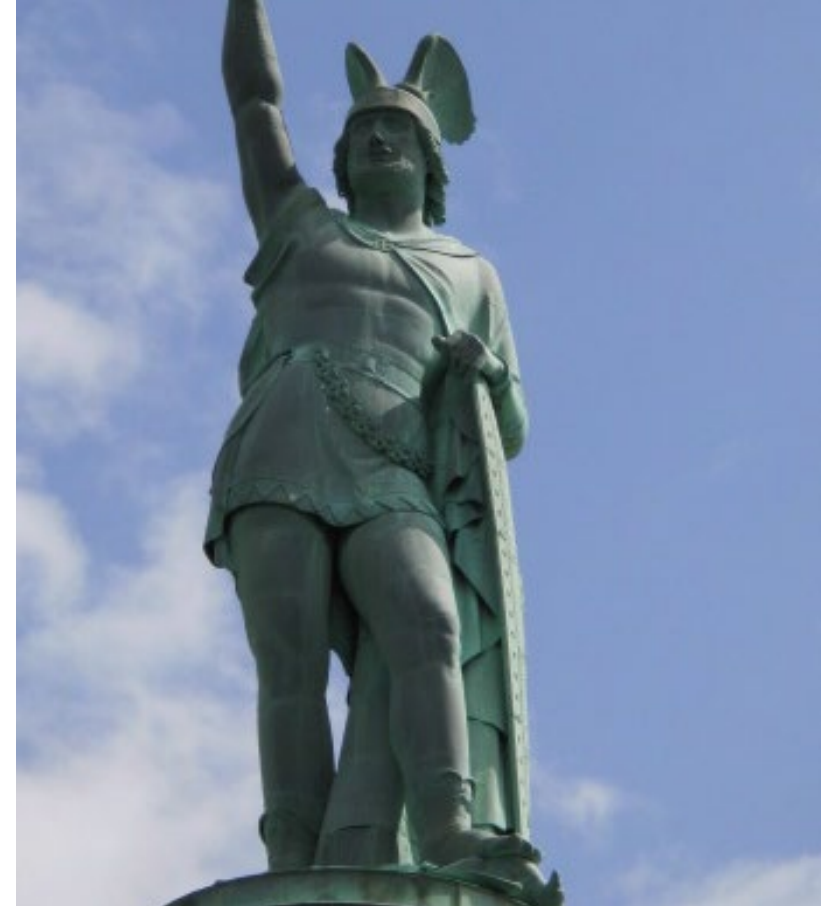
The attempted conquest of Germania

- In order to defend their northern border, the Romans had, periodically, attempted to secure the Germanic region.
- Caesar's conquest of Gaul, finalised in 50BC, extended the Empire to the English Channel but border raids were always a threat.
- There was some successful colonisation of the Germanic territories under the Emperor Augustus and his stepson, Tiberius (who would later become Emperor) subdued Germanic revolts in the years 11-9BC.



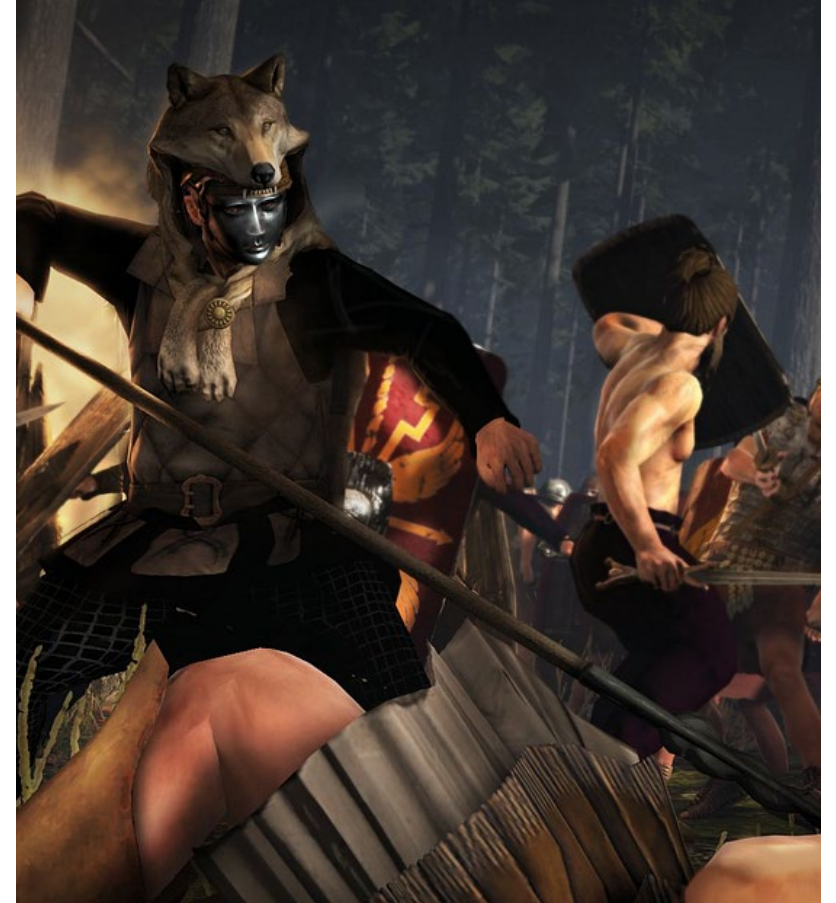
Arminius: A German Folk Hero

- After Tiberius successfully subdued the Germanic tribes, Segimerus the Conqueror, chieftain of the most prominent tribe, was ordered to send his sons, Arminius and Flavus, to Rome as tributes (or hostages).
- As noblemen, they received a Roman military education, which meant that they understood the Roman method of *bellum gerere*.
- Meanwhile, back in Germania, various tribes began to fight with one another and to attempt to overthrow Roman rule.
- Segimerus was declared a traitor to his own people as a result of his submission to Rome.



Arminius' Revolt

- In the year 4AD, Tiberius subdued a revolt by the Germanic tribes in the region of the Teutoburg Forest but a further revolt in the Balkan areas meant that he had to leave Germania and travel, with his army, to Eastern Europe.
- Control of the region was given to an experienced commander named Varus.
- Varus was a respected – but brutal – commander. He was given control of the XVII, XVIII and XIX legions, which were based in the area.
- Varus and his great friend, Arminius, were in complete control of the region... but Arminius was a double agent!
- Unbeknownst to Varus, Arminius was uniting the Germanic tribes and preparing them for revolt ... using the Romans' own military tactics against them!



Arminius' Betrayal

- With Tiberius having departed Germania to quash the Balkan revolt, Varus was now left to control Germania with only three legions (approximately 18,000 men). This was a vast geographic area and much of it impenetrable and unknown to the Romans.
- Arminius pretended that there had been a small uprising of Germanic tribes in the Rhine area and advised Varus to immediately subdue it.
- Arminius suggested that the best route to take, in order to reach the Rhine and quash the revolt, was through the Teutoburg Forest...



Ambush!!!

- ... the Germanic tribesmen were waiting for them.
- Using guerrilla tactics, they launched themselves upon the unsuspecting Roman legions.
- The Romans, accustomed to fighting in combat formation on an open field, were ill-prepared for such a battle.
- Unable to retreat because of the hostile terrain and unable to get into formation, all three legions were slaughtered in the Forest.



A Bloodbath

- That which ensued was a massacre.
- It is believed that between 15,000-20,000 Romans died and their commanders fell upon their swords, as a result of their dishonour.
- The greatest dishonour of all was the fact that the Standard of Rome – three Eagles – were captured by the Germanic tribes.
- Varus himself committed suicide. The Romans retreated from all of their outposts in Germania and the numbers XVII and XIX were never used again for Roman legions.
- The last of the captured Eagles was finally returned to Rome in 41AD.

