

- So welcome to this, I suppose I have to say, blighted land, today in Britain, with the prospect of yet another prime minister, yet another set of ministers were promised within a week. Well, we'll see what happens. It's quite disturbing for those of us living in Britain, but other countries have their own problems. You don't want to hear about ours. Now, this is the second talk about France, and this in a sense, is a prelude. It's prelude because it's about Roman France, or I should say Gaul, the Romans called it Gallia, we call it Gaul. Gaul because it's sort of before French history sort of begins, if you like. It's a sort of prelude, but it's a long prelude, and it has links through the rest of French history. So it's particularly interesting.

Now, you might think many of you listening, well, I don't know anything about Roman Gaul. It sounds a rather boring thing, but I guess many of you who are around my age, if you go back to your school days, many of you will remember Latin lessons, usually in my memory, on cold Monday, winter mornings or hot Friday afternoons in summer when we were doing Latin, and we always had to study whichever country you lived in, Europe, America, Canada, the set text is always the Gallic War. Why? Because it's meant to be the easiest Latin to translate. I don't know about you, but he never seemed easy to me. But it was meant to be. Written by Julius Caesar and is his account of his conquest of Gaul in the 50s B.C.. It has famous opening lines. The opening line goes like this, . And then remembering my school days, those dreaded words. Now, Tyler, would you translate that for me? Just wake up child! Frozen. Well, fortunately for all our sakes, I have an English translation, which many of you will know. Many of you will know the Latin, many more of you will know the English. "All Gaul," wrote Caesar, "All Gaul is divided into three parts, "one of which the Belgae inhabit, the Aquitani another. "Those who in their own language are called Celts, "in our language, Gauls, the third. "All these differ from each other in language, "customs and laws." And on the map that I sent you all, you can see those three. Belgica in the north of France and leaking into Belgium and the Netherlands and a bit of Germany. Aquitania in the southwest of Gaul, and Celtica, the main body of France in the middle. There it is on the map, the three Belgica, Celtica, Aquitania. Now additionally, the map shows you at the southeast of France. in what we would call Provence. Provence in English, Provence in French, in Latin, Provincia. The province of Narbonne. Why they used the word provincia for that area in particular, is because it was the first part of the western side of the Alps that the French reached, and they were reached it and needed to reach it because of the city of Marseilles, which if you look at the coastline is Massilia in Latin. Marseilles had been founded by the Greeks. It was a great Mediterranean trading port in the west of the Mediterranean. It was also a link from there through to Italy, by sea,

as well as by road, but mainly by sea. So the Romans wanted Marseilles so that they may come over the Alps to Marseilles, but they establish a new city, Narbonne, which on your map is just above the end of Narbonensis and it reads Narbonne. That's merely the Latin. We call it, the French call it and thus we call it, Narbonne.

Now, some of you may have been to Narbonne, and if you have, you know that there's a great deal of Roman material that still exists that you can see in Narbonne. It's the most interesting small town, I think, to visit. He said, that is the Caesar said in that opening, that these were three different people, the Celti in the centre, the Belgae in the north and the Aquitani in the southwest. But he says they differed in language, in customs. Now that's true, but there's no doubt that the Belgae and the Celti were Celts. The Celts are a tribal people. Thus on your map that I sent you, if you look at the small words, you've got all sorts of little tribes thrown in there. And they were tribal groups, but they were all Celtic. And by the time the Romans came, they're in those three groups, the Belgae, the Celtica, and the Aquitani. But there is a problem because Caesar is actually not quite correct, because the Aquitani today, there's much discussion and the language was not Celtic or not entirely Celtic. It was Basque, the Basque on both sides of today, the French Spanish border, as you well know, and it was Basque they think, and the Basques are one of those, and the Basque language is one of those great mysteries of history.

Now, I will come back to talking about the Basque later in French history. For now, I just want you to home in on the fact that when Caesar arrived, the Romans already held Narbonne and Marseilles, Provence. They now hold the rest of what we call France. Ignore the bits that are in Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Just ignore that. In terms of France, it's the Belgae, the Celti and the Aquitani that now become part of the Roman Empire, and it is Caesar that managed to achieve that. Before I leave Narbonne, it's worth just mentioning that the city of Narbonne, I said, was founded by Rome. Unlike Marseilles, founded by the Greeks, Narbonne was formed in 118 B.C.. The Romans have reached Narbonne and Narbonensis in 125 B.C.. For those of you who, I'm not sure whether Americans in particular, do not like people referring to A.D. and B.C. and like the modern way of expressing it, I just think that's nonsense because the common era is in fact, still the Christian era. So I think people of my generation and many people in Britain still use B.C. and A.D., and I'm going to use B.C. and A.D. and if it offends anyone, I'm sorry, but I see no point in changing it my age. So Narbonne in the south becomes important. Now, one of the things the Romans did in Narbonne before Caesar begins his conquest the rest of France was to drive roads in, and they drove roads in, in order to facilitate trade. And one of the roads was called the Via Aquitania. And it eventually, is to lead to Toulouse and Bordeaux, so linking to the west. The other is called the Via, road, Domitia, and that leads to the south, to what is become the Roman province of Hispania or Spain. Now, again, I sent you

a picture. They were pictures I took myself in Narbonne. The first picture shows you the road of the Via Domitia right in the centre of Narbonne today, right in the centre of Narbonne in Roman times. It's below street level because the level of the land has changed, as we all know when we look at Roman remains, but they preserve this piece of the Via Domitia and it's a fantastic thing to see. And the second picture simply tells you what it was called, the Via Domitia. They take their Roman heritage seriously in Narbonne. And why I emphasise roads is because roads were the great infrastructure of the entire Roman Empire from Asia through North Africa, through Europe and into Britain. It's the roads that connected. And you remember that Roman roads were extraordinarily well built, extraordinarily well designed, and normally followed an absolutely straight line, straight as an arrow. In Britain and in France indeed, the roads don't improve until the 18th century. We're still using the Roman roads. When Harold marched from Yorkshire to Sussex to fight William of Normandy at Hastings, he came on Roman roads. That's why he was able to do it so quickly. By the 18th century, these roads were in appalling state, and it is only with the road building of people, like Macado in England that the roads improved, and the same goes for France. It is true that Napoleon began a real system of roads for the same reason that the Romans had them, to pull this large country of France together and to make it possible additionally, to move troops quickly, exactly the same as Rome, trade and troops is what roads were for. And so the road infrastructure is not just an aside of history, it's a really important study and lots of people study across Europe, in France and in Britain, the road schemes. I have a fantastic Roman road, remains of one, near me in a village called Hallicop, where the, you can walk along the Roman road. Unfortunately, it's underneath the ground. You can't actually walk like the picture, but it has trees that come over it to make a hollow way and it's a very picturesque part of my area of England. The Celts, the Celts are a tricky, tricky people to describe. They are Iron Age tribal people. They have a beautiful language, which survives in both the British Isles and in France. In France, in Breton, in the language Breton, from Brittany. In the United Kingdom, in Scottish Gaelic, in Cornish, and in Welsh, and of course, survives in Ireland too with Irish Gaelic, Gaelic in Scotland, Gaelic in Ireland, Welsh in Wales, Cornish in Cornwall, Breton in France, and Manx, I should have mentioned the Isle of Man, Manx. Manx is a, I think of all the Celtic languages, Manx is the most beautiful. I went to a concert in the Isle of Man, a folk concert where all the songs were in Manx, and it was, I didn't understand the word of course, but it, the rhythm of the language was so beautiful. Celtic languages were beautiful, but although they had beautiful language, they had no written works. So our knowledge of Celts is either much later or we have to rely on Roman sources, and that makes it quite difficult, really. Why? Well, because the Romans are rather, the Romans are rather despising of the Celts. They're the conquerors. Conquerors make out that the people they're conquering, this is an imperial story, which isn't simply rote, they make out that they are barbarians. In

fact, Cesar describes them as lazy, independent and prone to violence, both so unlike us because so hardworking and are so community orientated and so peaceful, don't you know? Well we don't, but that's how they portray, that's how they portray the Celts, as a barbarous people. Well that's not good. In fact, the word Gaul, Gallia in Latin, was used in low Latin, the language of the streets of Rome and so on, as meaning uncouth or unsophisticated. Uncouth, oh my goodness! Aren't you bringing your son up badly? He's terribly gaulish you know, terribly uncouth, uncivilised. That's not true. It's simply isn't true. Why not? Because they were extraordinarily able in many ways. In what sort of ways were they able? Well, to start with, they had great ability as craftspeople. They were iron workers first and foremost. This is, they're Iron Age people, but they're leather workers, jewellery makers, and they'd open mines on what we would now describe as the French side of the Pyrenees mining for gold. So they produced jewellery. These are not unsophisticated people. They also lived in communities, which the Romans called . If you remember your Latin, is a town. They weren't towns like we know towns. They were towns which were settlements, in terms of a defensive area. Think of a hill fort on top of a hill, in which people lived and the animals lived and it was defensible. It isn't a town. The concept of town as we know it, came to Europe as a Roman concept. They built cities. They built cities, , cities from which of course we get the word civilization. And that's what the Romans really thought they were bringing to France, to Gaul, they were bringing civilization. Well, that's what they thought, they were also bringing, not just to France, but indeed to England, Britain as well. There's some wonderful descriptions of how they brought quality to of civilization. They thought themselves so superior. And today, I've just indicated we know a lot more about the Celts from archaeology mainly, and we've come to respect them as not that sort of barbarian people. They're not living in trees. These are quite sophisticated people, with their own laws, their own language, unwritten, their own towns, different from the towns of the Romans and the towns we know, their own trading routes. After all, there is a big trading route between what is now England and France, which the Celts did, 'cause there's Belgae in England, as well as in northern France and people go back and forth. It's the Roman author, Tacitus, who wrote a biography of his father-in-law, the general Agricola, who was governor in Britain. And Agricola fought the Britons right up into modern day highland Scotland in 85 A.D.. So that's 120, 30 years after Caesar's conquest of Gaul. But I'm reading it because it has this fantastic passage. Now we know that Tacitus knew about Britain and Agricola's campaigns from a Agricola's own mouth. And Tacitus writes a speech of the British leader, a man called Calgacus, C-A-L-G-A-C-U-S, Calgacus in Latin, and Calgacus was the leader of the Celts in highland Scotland, who defended highland Scotland against Rome against Agricola. And he made a speech to his troops before the battle. Now, he was taken prisoner and almost certainly Agricola would've spoken to him. Agricola may even have heard the speech firsthand and not after it had been made. But even if

it isn't word for word, what Calgacus said, it's clearly gives you the message that Calgacus with giving his own Celts. And Tacitus says, Calgacus said this, "To us who dwell on the uttermost confines of the earth," highlands of Scotland, furthest point in Europe, "To us who dwell on the uttermost confines of the earth "and of freedom, this remote sanctuary of Britain's glory "has up to this time been a defence. "Now, however, the furthest limits of Britain "are thrown open and the unknown "always passes for the marvellous." And then this fantastic bit, "But there are no tribes beyond us. "Nothing indeed, but waves and rocks, "and yet more terrible Romans." The Romans had circumnavigated the island of Britain. "And yet more terrible Romans, "from whose oppression escape is vainly sought "by obedience and submission. "Robbers of the world, having by their universal plunder, "exhausted the land, they rifle the deep. "If the enemy be rich, they are rapacious. "If they be poor, they lust for dominion. "Neither the east nor the west "has been able to satisfy them. "Alone among men they covet with equal eagerness, "poverty and riches." And then this fantastic sentence, "To robbery, slaughter, plunder, "they give the lying name of empire. "They make a desert and they call it peace." They a desert and call it peace. It's an extraordinary speech. And I think it's almost certainly, I cannot see that Tacitus would've written that without information from his father-in-law. This sounds authentic to me. Now, I read that about Britain and not France because it's the same people, the Celts, but the French also had their own leader, who fought and lost against Caesar, and his name was Vercingetorix and Vercingetorix also made a speech. And Vercingetorix's speech is extraordinarily like that of our friend Calgacus. It's the same message that is given out, and the message given out is one of resistance in the name of freedom. We are free. We don't want to be conquered, thank you very much. We don't want to be conquered. But of course in Gaul and in Britain, they were conquered. Although Rome never held the north of Scotland. The Antonine Wall in the middle of Scotland was the endpoint, and even they had to abandon that and retreat to Hadrian's Wall in the north of England. And of course, they didn't reach Ireland, except we now know as trading as traders in Dublin. This was the limit of the empire in the west. They held a bit of Germany in the south for a short period of time, but they couldn't really take Germany. And so the limits westwards is actually Britain, that is to say England and Wales are the bits they took. They also incidentally took the Isle of Man. I'll just say a word about that in an a moment and Anglesey. But in England they had to put more legions on the ground and keep them stationed here in Britannia than in any other part of the empire because the Celts in Britain were so... Bloody minded, I think you'd say. But they had the opportunity to be bloody minded because of the fact that we were an island. And again, that is a recurring feature of history between France and England, that we are an island, and France is not, that England has set borders and France doesn't. Although your map, you will see that the Roman France went up to the Rhine, and that is important because the Rhine becomes important in the history of

Europe, the dividing line between France and Germany, a line that was still of vital importance in World War II. Much, much history has been written around the river Rhine. Between France and England is the channel, and that's a quite different. That's a different ball game, to cross the channel and to take the other country, from England to France, France to England, much more difficult. Now I've gone, I knew this would happen. I've got carried away this afternoon. I've gone entirely off peace as it were, and decided just to talk. I like just talking, even if you don't like listening. You still have to, but I should go back to my notes and pick up what I was going to say. One of the things I was going to say is where the word Gaul comes from.

Now, the piece I read from Caesar's Gallic War at the beginning says, They call themselves Celti and we call them Gauls, Gallia. Now, the word Gaul appears to be not a-- Well, it appears to be not maybe a Celtic word. There is confusion over the origin, but it looks to mean something like foreigner or enemy. And this word was adopted from Celtic. We say Celtic, but there's some argument about that, meaning stranger or foreigner. So to the Romans, the Celts were strangers and foreigners. And for some reason, how do we ever know, they decided to use the word Gaul, and that word has become important. It's become important in France in a number of interesting ways. I mentioned just now, the leader of resistance against Caesar and against Rome, Vercingetorix. Now Vercingetorix as leader has become, I think it's right to say the first hero of France. France doesn't exist at this stage, but when France does exist, post-Rome, Vercingetorix is looked back as a great French hero, and great statues of him are put up, particularly in the 19th century, around the Bonaparteist era, and the French recognise this period. That's why I said, although this period precedes the history of France in one sense, in another sense it doesn't because the French look back to this period and they look back to the resistance of the Celts in the same way that in Britain, we look back. Well, not to the resistance of the Celts so much, although Boadicea, Boudica, features in our, we look back to the resistance by the Celts on the incoming Saxon. So we have the legendary figure of King Arthur, but the French have a real figure, in Vercingetorix. And that gives them a longer history and it gives them a link to this Celtic past.

Now, as we go through next week, we will look at or begin to look at the various strands of, as it were, a Frenchman or Frenchwoman's DNA today. And although there's Celtic, there's also other strands within the French DNA, but this is a period of heroic defeat, of people fighting against an empire and not giving in. That's the same sort of stories we want to tell in Britain. And the French reworked this post World War II, when in October of 1959, for the first time, a comic series appeared in a magazine, a Franco-Belgian comic magazine, and it starred an ancient Gaul, and he was called Asterix. And Asterix has gone on to become a huge star, not only in France but across the world. I had a vice principal once, who used to collect all of the

Asterix books in English, not in French. There are about 40 volumes of Asterix books now, and quite incredible. Not written by the original author, but by new people writing, and it tells of the, it tells of how Asterix and his company from one village in France defy Caesar, defy the Romans, and it's good, solid patriotic stuff. Of course fiction, but based on the reality of Vercingetorix's defence of Celtic Gaul, against the incoming Romans. All the Asterix comics usually begin with this, "The year is 50 B.C.. "Gaul is entirely occupied by the Romans. "Well, not entirely. "One small village of indomitable Gauls "still holds out against the invaders. "And life is not easy for the Roman legionnaires, "who garrison the fortified camps "of Totorum, Aquarium, , "Laudanum and Compendium." There there's great humour by the use of Latin words Totorum, Aquarium, Laudanum, and Compendium. One of the main figures in the Asterix stories is a man called Panoramix in French, or get Getafix in English. Getafix in English means exactly what it says, get a fix because get Getafix is a Druid. In French, he's Panoramix the Druid. And this Druid had devised a magic potion, which when taken by the troops of Asterix, gives them momentarily, superhuman powers against the Romans. The end of the names, like Panoramix and Asterix, end in I-X, and the I-X ending is an ending for king, like Rex in Latin, or like the real man, Vercingetorix. It gives that indication of aristocracy, of leadership. It's, it's a really important... It's a really important part now of the story of France, is this Gaulish Celtic origin, not just Brittany, but for France as a whole, for the Gauls as a whole, Gallic. It becomes an important part of how the French see themselves resisting conquest. But of course, they didn't resist conquest. Well, at the beginning of course they did and later there were rebellions against Rome. Yes, of course there were, but but the Romans gave France Gaul, what it gave the empire as a whole, pax, peace. It gave Gaul peace and that is a very important thing for it to have given Gaul. Peace was a great benefit, as roads were a great benefit. They did all sorts of things. Not only did they build roads, did they give peace, but they brought law. When I read law for my first degree at Oxford, I had to learn two sets of Roman laws, and they were fascinating because it was so detailed and so meticulous. It wasn't... It really could have come out of any of our modern countries. In fact, it's rather better in some ways than some of the laws we have today. Very interesting. I did the laws of Gaius and then I did the laws of Justinian and there'd be many lawyers listening to me that can remember doing Gaius and Justinian for their law degrees. So they gave law, they gave roads, they gave peace, they gave a common language and a common currency.

Now, although there were coins minted in Gaul, which were different than the coins minted in Rome or minted in Britain, they were the same in value. They were the forerunner of the Euro. They also, of course Rome had weights and measures. Everything was in a sense, standardised, from language onwards. I said that that's absolutely fascinating because that's what, well, it's what France twice tried to replicate and Germany twice, arguably Spain once, and that the

European Union is trying. When the Roman Empire fell in the west, in the fifth century, ever afterwards, Europe, Western Europeans dreamed, well, perhaps not Britain, but Western Europe, continental western Europeans dreamed of recreating Rome. The first is Charlemagne, whom I shall talk about next week. And if we stick with France, and if anyone's listening who's German, I know all the arguments about Charlemagne. Was he German? Was he French? But as far as the French are concerned, he's French, and Charlemagne attempted to recreate the Roman Empire unsuccessfully, as it turned out. Napoleon tried to recreate a united Europe and failed. The Kaiser tried. Hitler tried. Philip of Spain tried. And in some ways you could say Vienna tried, with the Holy Roman Empire, stretching from Germany right across into Eastern Europe. But in truth, none of them ever came nearer to matching Rome. The EU would like to with a common army, which they can't get. A common currency, which they have largely got. A common language, which they don't have. It's extraordinary to think back, in terms of what Rome achieved at a time when there were a few resources that you would've thought would've enabled them to do it. No planes, no trains, no telephones. Communication was very difficult. You could only go as fast as a man could run, a man could ride, a man could row or a man could sail. He couldn't go any faster until the age of railways. But Rome managed it and after Rome fell, France is not alone in dreaming that one day it could recreate it. Interesting, it was Giscard d'Estaing who was tasked with writing a constitution for the EU. Well, it would be because France has this dream. Britain hasn't had that dream. And you say, well, why? Well, it's geography, because we're on this island. We're not there in Europe. If we were attached to Europe by land, we would've been equally determined. But because we're separate on an island, we didn't particularly have that dream. All that will come out is we go through the course, except of course, what you will say, well, William, shortly you've got to talk about the Middle Ages and the Hundred Years War and the only king that was both King of England and King of France, who was English, that is to say Henry VI. Yes, and Henry the V before him. But, Henry VI King of France and King of England was English. No, he wasn't English. He's Norman aristocratic English. We didn't have a king whose first language was English until 1400 and Henry IV. That's a story to come. France affects, as I said last week, not what ha-- Events in France affect the whole of Europe, including this island. But largely not because of the French Empire, but largely because of 1789 and the French Revolution affect the world. France is a central to understanding not just French, obviously French history, but not only central to understanding European history, but understanding global history. It's central to all of that which makes the study of France so interesting, and particularly for an Englishman, looking at how France dealt with it.

So the Romans brought all those things, administrative structure. But one thing... I said the roads survived because the French, like everywhere else in western Europe, gave up on roads basically, after

the Romans left until the 18th century. We also bluntly gave up on peace. In England, we do manage to have centralised laws and weights and measures. Of course, France doesn't until the arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte. But what did the Romans leave in France? They left the concept of towns and cities, like Narbonne. Narbonne doesn't disappear, well, not entirely, when the Romans leave and it changes. because people don't know how to lay mosaics, they don't know how to lay hypocaust to provide indoor heating, they don't have posh gardens, they don't, they simply live differently. And across Western Europe, the houses are much the same, made of wood. Not as a Romans built. But that's another story. But what is the thing that the Romans? Ah, you say. You said William, that the Celts didn't have a written language. Correct. But when the Romans left, they had a written language. Correct again. So the Romans brought literacy. Yes, they did. And literacy was very much connected by the end of Roman rule, with the biggest legacy that the Romans left in France. And you say, well what was that legacy? Well, for those of you who like sort of questions, just think a moment. What is the greatest legacy that they left France? The answer is Christianity introduced from the first century A.D.. By the time the Romans left, Christianity was the state religion. We have churches, we have parishes, and above all we have bishops and diocese. We have a infrastructure of the church, which runs parallel to the civil structure of states. And of course it is with the church that we have literacy, literacy to read the Bible, but a literacy that as it were, seeped out of the church to the wider world with clerks, because you have to have someone. I need my will written. Well, I'm a great French Lord, I don't write, but I have a clerk who's been trained in a monastery, who can write my will for me. So the great gift of Rome is Christianity. And Christianity has, and still in many senses, either for or against, dominates issues in France, as in many European countries. Our whole moral structure is based upon Christianity and ethics. Now, those of you listening who are Jewish, say, what about Judaism? Well, actually there were Jews in France, there were Jews in Gaul. Why? Well, come on. Because there were trading opportunities and the Jews are the great traders of the Mediterranean. So there are Jewish communities in Roman France, in Gaul. Not in vast numbers, but with more trading power than their numbers would've predicted. And the issue of Jews in France is another question which goes through French history, goes right the way through French history, from persecutions, right through to Dreyfus in the 19th century. So there are issues here, which arise in Roman France in Gaul. We continue through the history, is it were, think of it as some, making an embroidery perhaps. And there's the needle going in and this needle is called Christianity. And it goes into the history of France and it goes on and on and on, and another needle says Jews in France. And that needle goes in and that goes through the history of France and literacy of all countries. The culture of France is so important. And remember, we are still writing in Norman French right up nearly to the age of Shakespeare, are works are written in Latin and in French, but barely in English. Chaucer's about the first. So

the needle goes in which says language, and that goes through the France and the concept of cities not Oppidum, not stakes around the top of the hill and people living in barns, but proper towns, like Narbonne, or even 'cause it begins in this period, Paris. And so you can put in the needle which says Paris, which goes through French history. And so the story is beginning. The first threads are put in.

So the history of France has to begin with Roman Gaul because the picture is well, beginning, underlying, beginning to be formed. Even that division between the north and the south, between the fact that Gallia and Narbonensis was created long before Caesar came into the other three large parts of France. So, and France was contained in the north by the Rhine. in the south by the Pyrenees, in the west by the channel, in the east, well, the east is more problematic. The east has always been problematic with France, this border, which is, which is a very difficult border. We also know that the Rhine is a difficult border, not a difficult river to cross. Roman legions crossed the Rhine. The Pyrenees and the channel are much clearer borders, but not entirely. I've mentioned that the Aquitani had a basis as Basques and there are Basques in Spain. And as the Spanish Basques demand independence, it flows over into southwest France, as does Catalanian. Spain Catalan flow over into Perpignan in the southeast of France. Perpignan is a Catalan city more than a French city, I think, as I said last week. So we're back to the borders.

Rome managed its borders because it was all part of the empire. But once the empire falls, those borders become less clear, less clear in the north, less clear in the east. And all of that will emerge as we go through our story. And for those of you who are listening from Britain and say, well, where did the links between France and Britain begin? And the first answer is, the one I gave just now, is they were trading members between the Celtic tribes in Gaul and the Celtic tribes in Britain. Not war, but sharing. The first coinage to arrive in Britain, before Romans arrived, was the coinage of Celtic Gaul and was adopted here. But there was one thing that linked us, which I had just barely mentioned, and that was Druidism, the religion of the Celts, of which we know little. Why? Because they didn't have a written language. And the Romans are disparaging about it. And the centre of Druidism was the Isle of Anglesey, off the coast of North Wales, and Druids in France came to Anglesey to be trained in Druidism. It was to the Romans, and goodness knows why, because they had human sacrifice, the Romans thought it was dreadful, but then the Romans hands aren't clean either. Think of the cult of Mithras. But the Celt's Druidism was interesting because it was nature born. They didn't have temples in the way that the Romans had temples or the Christians had churches. They worshipped in the open in oak groves. They used mistletoe. Mistletoe they used as a medicine, as a drug. The Druids are another part of the Celtic story of over which there is a degree of mystery. There's a degree of mystery over the Celts and lot of academic arguments, which would be made more complex by the way

that we now can test for DNA. And one of the things interesting about Britain is that we find that we have a great deal of Celtic blood in our veins, which we didn't expect. I always say if I'm talking to an English audience, I know there's a Frenchman listening, Xavier, I hope you won't be embarrassed. I often say I wish to be purely Saxon, my cut me and I bleed Saxon. Not true. Cut me and I will bleed Celt and cut me and I'll bleed French. Cause part, my grandmother's family from Devon were refugees as French Protestant Huguenots from the little village of Marles, in northern France near Amiens. And so we are a mix of things and I promise I will talk about the mixture. What is interesting with mixtures is how people see themselves. How do we see ourselves? Well, the English, I say English, not British, the English saw themselves as English because of the Norman invasion of 1066, which I will in due course come to. Then the French, Norman French, who came also began to think of themselves as English. Why? Because they wanted to hold on to the land they had and I will come to all of that. all of which is circling around during the Hundred Years War, which I will come to in a fortnights time. Now, I'm rapidly running out of time and I want to sort of say something about the death of Roman Gaul. How could this Roman Empire decay? Well, it's like all empires decay, they largely implode because the core of the empire goes rotten and because of peoples on the edges of empire, who crash into the empire, and once the thing begins to crumble, you've had it. This is Cecil Jenkins' book on the history of France and Jenkins writes this, "Yet for all its power, the Roman Empire itself, "could not last indefinitely "in the face of chaotic migrations of people "and shifts of worldview that were to take place "during the first millennium of this era, "releasing instability and violence "that will bring down Rome "and plunge Western Europe into the dark ages." It's the movement of peoples, but the movement of peoples and the decay of Rome is a slow, it was a slow process. For Gaul, you can say that in 257, Gaul came under attack from the Franks, who are in Germany. The same is true in Roman Britain, but it's really the middle of the fourth century, 354-5, there was a major invasion from the land we now call Germany, by the Franks into Gaul. Then on the 31st of December 406, there's a mass advance of Franks across the river Rhine, pushed through by the Huns, who'd moved in from Asia into Germany. The Huns move in, the Franks are push south. They come in huge numbers across the Rhine into Gaul. Four years later, Rome itself is sacked and the last Roman legionaries leave Britain. France has lost as it were, friends to the west and friends to the east. Italy has fallen, Britain has fallen. France is falling. Now there are attempts, of course, in France with various, as in Britain, with various Gallo Romans, and that is to say the Gauls who accepted Roman rule. Think of the Tacitus quotation, Romano British in Britain, King Arthur being a key. But then the Arthurian legends are also French legends in Brittany. There is a resistance, but it's a resistance that has no bottom to it or no back. There's no support coming from Rome and eventually, Roman Gaul fails. The only thing left is the Christian Church, with the Pope in Rome and the bishops in Gaul.

Now, I read from Jenkins a moment ago, in which he said, you remember this little piece here, that he said "violence that will bring down Rome "and plunge western Europe into the Dark Ages." Now, there is a lot of debate about the Dark Ages, which is my subject next Tuesday, when I'm doing the next talk. Today, many historians in France and in Britain say, look, it isn't like it was taught to us at school and we used to think of it. The end of Roman Gaul doesn't happen at six o'clock on a Friday night and by nine o'clock on a Monday morning, France, barbaric France is born. Doesn't work like that. It's a much slower process. Here's a book on Roman Narbonne by two archaeologists, a husband and wife, and they end the book talking about the fall of Roman Narbonne, and they're talking particularly about the business district of Roman Narbonne, which was outside the walls of the main city, and they write, before the middle of the fifth century, before 450, the business quarter was definitely abandoned and returned to its agricultural state, up until the 20th century. Is at a dark age from 450 to 1900? The business quarter outside the walls in Narbonne is abandoned, it's ploughed, it's agricultural land, which once had been a thriving business quarter with a Jewish presence as well. So that sounds like a dark age, and I suppose a question we have to answer next week is how dark or how light were the dark ages in France that succeeded that of Roman France, and the big figure that emerges is Charlemagne. But it doesn't last. His image of rebuilding the Roman Empire fails. But we're going to look at these early French figures, like Clovis, Childrick, Charlemagne, and see what we can discover about how dark the dark ages were or how light they were. And one of the lights that shines throughout this period is that of Christianity and that is the civilization that the Romans left, if you like. Now, in his history of France, I promise this is the end, in his history of France, Jeremy Black writing about the end of Gaul, simply says in one sentence, "In the end, Gaul did not so much succumb "to the Germanic invaders, the Franks of the fifth century, "as become transformed by them." And the same is true in England. We were transformed by the Anglo Saxons, the French or the Gaul, sorry, the Romano Gauls were transformed by the invaders, Franks and others, and we'll talk about that next week, who came in to Gaul. Transformation does not mean the end of civilization. It means something different. And the problem in the past is we thought that everything that succeeded Rome was bad, and that's not necessarily true, culturally or in other ways as well. So that's what we will turn to... Excuse me, next week. Thanks for listening this week. I'm sure lots of people have got lots of interesting things to say and places they've visited in France and seen Roman stuff and so on and so forth. Let's see if I've got any questions. Yes, I have. What have I got here?

Q & A and Comments

– Oh, thank you Barbara. It's just Barbara, isn't it? Thank you

Barbara. Oh, it's not, people are just...

- Oh, this is Phil. I think that's true. Roman France stroke Gaul cannot be appreciated without reference to Asterix and Obelix. Obelix is his big companion. I think that's true.

- Marion says... Oh, well, she said 10 people couldn't find out where the map was. Oh, Marion says, I know this group is quite sophisticated. Well, no one told me you were sophisticated, but there, but for fun, check out the books, "Asterix le Gaulois" by Goscinny and "Uderzo". Yes, and there's also "Asterix in Britain", which is good because the British are always stopping war. It's beautiful. In the the Asterix book, the British Celts stop fighting the Romans when it's three o'clock time for tea, and they stop for tea.

- Oh, thank you about, we have an issue about B.C.. Yeah, okay, but in fact the the CE stuff is the Christian calendar anyhow.

- Sorry, Grandma Lorna, I don't do illustrations and visuals, I don't do cinema. I do theatre and I'm sorry if you think an hour is too long for concentration, but I have put in a map. I try and do maps if I can to help.

- "Lazy, barbarous and violence," says Shelly, "sounds what the Roman said of Judea." Absolutely correct, it is! That's how they viewed them and that's how the British, sorry, the English viewed the Irish, right through to the 19th century. It's an interesting, those of you who are American, it's very interesting. The Irish portrayed as lazy in Ireland under British rule in America, were thought to be very hardworking when they arrived in, we're talking about the 19th century, when they arrived in Boston. The sort of stereotype of the Irish from when they were part of Britain and they immigrated to America is the opposite. It's an extraordinary thing.

Q: "Do we know why the Celts didn't have a written language?" asks Karen.

A: That's a very difficult question to answer, and I'm not sure I can answer that at all. There were lots of people that don't have written-- there's lots of people that don't have a written language. Because why? They didn't feel the need for it, I suppose. Some of you are linguists, can you answer that, because that's beyond my competence?

- Oh, Karen says they make a desert and call it peace. Russia in the Ukraine. It's what all empires do.

- Bernie says, "I thought the Manx language derived from the language spoken by the Vikings." No, no, no, no, no. It's Celtic, it's Celtic. The Romans were happy to leave the Gauls with their politics and

culture, provided they did not revolt. Yes, that's exactly, and that's exactly true.

- But it's also true, Clive, that the Gauls and the Celts in France, as in Britain, welcomed Roman culture. The middle classes simply adapted. The leaderships adapted to Rome. The craftspeople adapted to Rome, if we can call those middle class and trades people. People working on the land, that's interesting. Whoever rules, their life goes on as before. Although there weren't, there's a lot of historical argument again, about how many of the differences in agriculture were there in France before the Romans came and how many came with the Romans. That's another question. I'm going to try and talk about rural France at some stage during these number of weeks, and I'll try and answer my own question.

- Brian says, I hadn't been there, "There's a wonderful museum in Minton, dedicated to Gauls and the wars with Caesar." No bomb. Nobonne? Narbonne, Narbonne. That's some, I like Nobomb. No, Narbonne, no, hang on. I don't, I have no idea. I can't see that quickly. If it's Nobot at the bottom, it's Narbonne. I'm sorry, I can't quickly see it.

- Somebody said, Saul has said, "You mean Narbonne." That's what I think probably, but if you get a modern atlas, you can always relate or you simply Google the modern name of this Roman town.

- Oh, that's very nice of you, Tess. Give them the-- I have to read that. Tess says, "You would make a wonderful prime minister." Well, I'm waiting for the telephone call at any moment, but so far it hasn't come and I've been waiting a few hours.

- 914281 says, I love it when it's numbers, "South Africa still used Roman Dutch law. "You are not able to study law without studying Roman Dutch law." Absolutely and when I was at Oxford, Roman Dutch law was still on the syllabus and some South Africans and Zimbabweans, although then it was Rodicians, read Roman Dutch law. None of us ever touched Roman Dutch law. There wouldn't have been any purpose in doing so.

Q: "When the Celts were traders in Britain and France, were there Jews who were traders in Britain?"

A: I think the answer is we don't know, but I stand to be corrected on that. I think the answer is we don't know. The usual explanation is that Jews arrived in England with the Norman French and one of the-- I'm a numismatic, I collect coins, and one of the evidence of that is that many of the monies, that's the people who actually made the coins, a number of them have Jewish names and why? Because the Jews were financing William, and so when William takes England, they say, look, we've financed you, we can we mint the coins, which they then

did, which led later in the 13th century, in charges, in anti-Semitic charges, that the Jews were the ones who were making, clipping the coins for their own benefit or making coins and not declaring they'd made them. And so dreadful, dreadful story, shortly before Jews were thrown out of England, the dreadful story of how 300 were executed, mostly falsely, for doing the coinage. But that an that doesn't answer the question, but I think the answer is no, we don't know. And as usual, it's with the Norman French that the Jews arrive.

- Yes, many French Huguenots also arrived in South Africa. Mine arrived in Devon and were very poor. Actually, many of the Huguenots had trades. My family, well, my part of the family were poor. The other part became very rich, would be the other part, and they were engineers. The English people will know of Ransome and Marles. My French family were Marles, from the village of Marles, but my part of the family were agricultural workers just outside creditor. And they moved to Bristol because they bought a green grocer shop in Bristol, and the family in Devon supplied the Green Grocers by rail to the shop that the family ran in Bristol. That's the connection.

Q: "Was Julius Caesar Christian?"

A: Julius Caesar wasn't Christian, no, he wasn't. Well Christianity, Erica, reaches France, for example, in the first century A.D.. I don't know Erica, what nationality you are. If you are British, if you are English, then you can see various examples of Roman churches at Lullingstone Roman Villa in Kent there's Christian symbols. At Colchester outside the police station, funnily enough, there is a Christian Church. There's lots of evidence of Christianity and the Newton St. Loe mosaic has Christian motifs from Somerset, which is, if any Americans are listening and want to see it, that's in the British Museum.

- Now, how do you spell Narbonne? N-A-R-B-O-N-N-E, Narbonne. N-A-R-B-O-N-N-E.

Q: "Does it become Marseilles?"

A: No, Marseilles was Massilia and is separate. On the map, you can see Narbonne is shown as Narbo and to the east of it, Massilia, which is Marseilles. So not the same. Oh, and somebody's answered it for me. I should read down, because you are so quick.

- Somebody, Sheila said,

Q: "Why, what's the problem with BCE?"

A: Well, it's because I've never used it and I stick with what I know.

- Karen says, "Before the commoner era the way I was taught it."

Karen, you must be a child. I didn't know children were allowed on Lockdown.

– Sheila says,

Q: "Are you saying King Arthur did not exist?"

A: No, he didn't. It may be it may be a whole list of different people that existed, but he's known in tales from Brittany to Scotland.

– Oh! I hope I pronounce your name correctly. Is it Yehudit? I apologise if I pronounce it. That's a very interesting--

Q: "Well, will you discuss Clovis King of the France?"

A: Yes, next on Tuesday.

– "Of whom, according to Debrett's, I am a descendant." Wow! So you could claim the throne of France. I think you should write Macron. How fantastic is that? No, I will definitely be talking about Clovis.

– Oh, David, what an excellent comment!

Q: "Is not Narbonne going from a business district to agricultural land, the goal of the environmental movement?"

A: What an interesting question. Comment? Oh, will I say something about-- Look, yes, definitely. But we're a long way off that yet Norman, but I will.

– Yes, Barbara. I remember Caesar's Gallic Wars at school, haven't thought about them for 70 odd years. I enjoyed that. I thought you were going to say, and I wish I hadn't remembered them now. I just remember those awful lessons and I did A level, which is the last set of exams in England, for those outside of England and I did Tacitus's Agricola. I actually, it was more interesting because it was a, it was actually about Britain, but it was much more difficult Latin, but it was quite short, much shorter than the Gallic War. So for the A level exam, you could actually learn the whole book in the Penguin translation and because I have a photographic memory or I did then, it wasn't too difficult.

– Yeah, I understand about not using the word Christ. Okay. Okay, I understand I get the message. 839965272118gf. It's just that we, it's okay. So I'll try and use CE and BCE and then perhaps that will... Karen, I'm not a professor. We don't use those titles in Britain. I'm mister. Yeah, you're right. Doing things in 1R is tricky. I have to leave things out. You can always read. I mean, I'm a great believer that the adult education should lead you into watching something on the TV or on Netflix or whatever, reading a book, just reading a

magazine, a history magazine.

- Oh, Helene, that's a good question.

Q: "Is there a correlation between the fact that Wales in French is payes de Galles?"

A: Yes, it is. Yes, yes, you're right.

- I believe Rome became Christian in the third century. No, no, no, no. That's when it becomes the state religion. Christianity is here in the first century. After all, St. Paul reached Rome very shortly after the events in Palestine.

- Rose said Christianity, Helen taught us Christianity by 80 ACE, AD and maybe even a little later. No, yeah, well yes, true. But by the first century, which that covers, it is in Gaul, I promise you.

- Oh, I'm not, and I'm not saying what colour my shirt is. No, I can't, I mean, I'm in artificial light. I can't see. I think, I probably come to a halt after all of that. So we probably have.

- [Host] Great and we'll see you next week. Thanks everyone.

- You will, can I just say to folks, next France talk, which is the Dark Ages, Clovis and Charlemagne, et cetera, is next Tuesday. Monday, I've been asked to talk about it from a historical point of view. Can leadership be taught, can leadership be taught? Interesting. A lot of Roman stuff, a lot of British stuff, and a lot of, I hope, interesting stuff. So see you Monday, wee you Tuesday, see you whenever. Keep well everyone, bye!