



Queen Boudica

Miss White's inspirational woman is Queen Boudica. Queen Boudica was the warrior queen of the Iceni whose rebellion against the Romans was roundly – if belatedly – quashed. Boudica raised a rebellion, which united the Iceni with a handful of tribes usually inclined to be at war with each other, seeking revenge after a series of brutal acts by the Romans. The final straw had been the public humiliation and scourging of the proud queen, recently widowed and thus deprived of her protector-husband, King Prasutagus. Boudica's daughters, whose ages are unrecorded, were raped by Roman soldiers. According to some sources, other members of her family were enslaved. This was the immediate cause of Boudica's rebellion in AD 61.

After a series of surprise victories for the Britons, the conflict came to a head, probably somewhere between Verulamium (St Albans) and Londinium (London), at the Battle of Watling Street. The crack Roman general Suetonius Paulinus had decided to take a break from burning druids in Wales to come and put an end to the insurrection in the south. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, in the hours before the decisive battle Boudica rode a war-chariot up and down the ranks, willing her band of warriors to victory. Yet for all her vitriolic anger and indignation, she and her followers were eventually – inevitably – routed by the most powerful empire Europe had known. Boudica poisoned herself so as to avoid slavery or worse.