

Supreme Court clears Boudica of terrorism in classic day for justice

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Law



Boudica's rebellion was justifiable, the Supreme Court was told, because the Romans had acted so violently towards her
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A mother of two from Norfolk walked free from the Supreme Court last night after being acquitted by a jury of committing terrorist acts involving the death of some 80,000 civilians and the sacking of three cities. By a margin of ten to one, the 50-strong jury accepted the argument that her trail of carnage down the A12 was a justified act of self-defence against “a rotten and illegitimate Roman government”.

Boudica, 2,000 (give or take), known in some quarters as Boadicea, pleaded not guilty to the charge under the Terrorism Act 2000 that between the first day of January 60 and January 62 she had “used action involving serious violence against persons, namely the inhabitants of Camulodunum, Londinium and Verulamium” in an attempt to repel the government of Rome and advance the cause of Iceni secession.

The prosecution, brought on behalf of the Senate and People of Rome, was led by Alison Morgan QC, who has been involved in recent terrorism prosecutions including the attempted bomb attacks in London on July 21, 2005, and a plot to bomb the London Stock Exchange. She was leading counsel in the case of Khairi Saadallah, who murdered three in a terrorist attack in Reading in June last year.

Morgan urged the jury not to fall for Boudica's image as a flame-haired saviour of Britannia. "Do not buy the hype," she said, claiming that Boudica was in part acting in revenge for her late husband, Prasutagus, making the Emperor Nero co-heir to his estate, and that while the Romans had flogged the queen and raped her daughters "that cannot justify an act of mass murder".

The Romans were running a functioning government, Morgan argued, and Boudica's actions were therefore insurrection. "It is important to acknowledge the principle that protects us all from serious violence perpetrated because one individual feels they are entitled to take action," she said.

Opening for the defence, Thomas Grant QC, said "this brave woman" had been the victim of "scurrilous Roman propaganda" and had been resisting an illegitimate occupier. "I am confident that a British jury will do justice to a Briton," he said. "What have the Romans ever done for us?" Apart, he conceded, from the aqueduct.

He said that after she made a "mild protest", the Romans had acted so violently towards her that her revolt was "the only conceivable response".

Boudica was finally defeated at the Battle of Watling Street by the Roman governor Gaius Suetonius Paulinus. She is said to have committed suicide by poisoning herself, though was looking in good health in the dock, if not quite how Cassius Dio described her: "In stature very tall, in appearance most terrifying, in the glance of her eye most fierce and her voice was harsh."

The moot trial was presided over by Lord Justice Stephens, a Supreme Court judge, who told Boudica that she was at liberty to reclaim her spear from security and retire to her plinth by Westminster Bridge "without any stain on your character and remain as a national symbol of an inspirational hero".

This was the sixth trial of a classical figure at the Supreme Court to raise awareness of and funds for the education charity Classics for All. Previous trials featured Socrates, Brutus, Antigone and Gaius Verres, the corrupt governor of Sicily, while in 2019 the jury rejected a petition by an Athenian to divorce his wife, Lysistrata, for unreasonable conduct. They decided she had the right to end war between her city and Sparta by encouraging women to withhold sex from their husbands, as described by the playwright Aristophanes in 411BC.

Classics for All was founded in 2010 to reverse the decline in the [teaching of the ancient world](#) and its languages in state schools. It has since worked with almost 100,000 pupils in 1,000 schools, half of them primaries, training more than 3,300 staff to teach a classical subject alongside their own specialism. Last year, 102 pupils who had been supported by Classics for All were accepted to read classics at university. More than 40 per cent of the schools involved in the scheme have higher than average numbers of pupils on free school meals.