

# VESPASIAN



**T. Flavius VESPASIANUS** (Emperor 69-79 AD) was born in AD 9, the son of a tax collector and mule breeder. He embarked on a successful career in the Roman army and, by the time of Claudius' invasion of Britain in 43 AD, he was an experienced general who given the command of the Second Legion. Advancing along the south coast of England, Vespasian's troops were responsible for the task of storming the great native Hill Forts such as Maiden Castle (below).



Back in Rome, Vespasian was promoted, becoming Governor of North Africa, but then disgraced by the new Emperor Nero (for falling asleep during one of Nero's musical recitals!) and was sent into semi-retirement. In his middle 50s, he was recalled to command the army sent to suppress the Jewish revolt in Palestine, which, with the help of his elder son Titus, he did successfully, issuing 'Judea Capta' commemorative coins only after he became Emperor.

While still in Palestine, he heard of the suicide of Nero and the chaos that followed. His own army proclaimed him as the new Emperor and he advanced to Alexandria in Egypt where he could control Rome's wheat supply. His troops then advanced into southern Italy and began marching towards Rome.

VITELLIUS (a notorious glutton), who was the third Emperor in the course of a year, was murdered by the Romans when they heard that Vespasian's troops had invaded southern Italy. The Senate then proclaimed Vespasian Emperor.

A popular, down-to-earth, wise and just ruler, he tried to heal the wounds of the Civil War, raised taxes to restore the economy and spent money on public buildings (including the Coliseum - below).



On Rome's north-west frontier, Vespasian initiated the conquest of northern Britain.

In his eleventh year as emperor, Vespasian fell ill. Near death, he couldn't resist a final joke, stating: "Methinks I'm becoming a god!" He then declared that an emperor should die standing and struggled to his feet before collapsing and dying.

He left an empire that was enjoying peace and prosperity, and with a well stocked treasury. Vespasian is one of only two Emperors whose tomb has not been found (the other is Claudius).

Vespasian was followed as Emperor in turn by each of his sons, **TITUS** (79 - 81 AD) (below left) and **DOMITIAN** (81-96 AD) (below right). Together, these three Emperors are known as the **Flavian Dynasty**.

