

Augustus

First emperor of Rome

Born: 23rd September 63 BC, Velletri, Italy

Died: 19th August AD 14, Nola, Italy

Cause of death: Illness

Age: 77

Dates of reign: 27 BC–AD 14

Reason for becoming emperor: He won a civil war to become the first emperor.

Duration of reign: 41 years



Significance:

- His rule began a period of peace that lasted for 200 years.
- He created a permanent Roman army.
- He built roads, bridges and grand buildings. He said, 'I found a Rome of bricks; I leave to you one of marble.'
- He conquered many lands around the Mediterranean Sea.
- He created a police force, fire service and postal service.
- The month of August is named after him.

Interesting facts:

- He was the grandnephew of the Roman general and dictator, Julius Caesar.
- He changed his name from Octavian to Augustus, which means 'honoured', when he became emperor.
- All emperors added Augustus to their name.



Claudius

Fourth emperor of Rome

Born: 1st August 10 BC, Lyon, France

Died: 13th October AD 54, Rome, Italy

Cause of death: Poisoned by his wife so that her son, Nero, could become emperor.

Age: 63

Dates of reign: AD 41–54

Reason for becoming emperor: He was the uncle of Caligula and paid the Praetorian Guard to select him as the next emperor.



Image from: Wikimedia Commons/Public domain

Duration of reign: 13 years

Significance:

- He extended the Roman empire into North Africa in AD 41–42.
- He continued where Caligula left off and conquered Britannia in AD 43, making Britannia a province of the Roman Empire. He was honoured with two triumphal arches, one in Rome and one in Boulogne. The inscription says that he 'brought barbarian peoples beyond the ocean for the first time under Rome's sway.'
- He tried to outlaw the druids, Celtic priests who practised human sacrifice.
- He allowed the Britons to make client kingdoms. These were tribes who chose to follow Roman rule.

Interesting facts:

- He was the nephew of Tiberius.
- There is a legend that he rode an elephant through Colchester to celebrate his victory over Britain. The Romans used elephants in battle. Their enemies were afraid because they had never seen these huge creatures before.
- The Temple of Claudius was built in Colchester in AD 55–60.



Nero

Fifth emperor of Rome

Born: 15th December AD 37, Antium, Italy

Died: 9th June AD 68, Rome, Italy

Cause of death: Committed suicide when the senate condemned him to death and the Praetorian Guard abandoned him.

Age: 30

Dates of reign: AD 54–68

Reason for becoming emperor: His mother poisoned his stepfather, Claudius, so that he could become the emperor. He was 16 years old



Image from: Wikimedia Commons/Public domain

Duration of reign: 14 years

Significance:

- From AD 54 to AD 59, he reduced taxes and gave rights to slaves. He set up poetry, drama and sports competitions instead of supporting the deadly gladiator games. Later in his reign, he became murderous, executing his own mother and wife.
- Much of the Roman Empire rebelled against him. Boudicca, the warrior queen of a client kingdom, led a rebellion in AD 60–61 but was unsuccessful.
- Roman citizens believed that he started a fire in AD 64, which destroyed much of Rome. There is a legend that says he ‘fiddled while Rome burned.’ He rebuilt the city in the Greek style and started building a palace that, if it had been finished, would have covered a third of Rome.
- He blamed the fire on the Jews and Christians and ordered them to be killed by wild animals.

Interesting facts:

- He loved music, poetry and drama. He was ridiculed for performing on stage in AD 59–60.
- He had a 30m tall bronze statue of himself, called the Colossus of Nero, placed at the entrance to his new palace in AD 64–68.



Constantine

55th emperor of Rome

Born: 27th February cAD 280, Naissus, Serbia

Died: 22nd May AD 337, Ancyrona, Turkey

Cause of death: Illness

Age: 57

Dates of reign: AD 306–337

Reason for becoming emperor: Before Constantine's reign, the Roman Empire had separated into two sections: the eastern Empire and the western Empire. Constantine reunited the Roman Empire.



Image from: Wikimedia Commons/Public domain

Duration of reign: 31 years

Significance:

- He arranged the First Council of Nicaea in AD 325, where Christian beliefs were written down.
- He was the first Christian emperor. He made it illegal to kill Christians for their beliefs and built churches, including the church of St Peter in Rome, which was begun in cAD 326.
- In AD 330, he established a new capital of the Roman Empire at Constantinople.
- He reorganised the Roman army and conquered new people, including the Goths in AD 332.

Interesting facts:

- He came to Britain with his father, the previous emperor, Constantius. His father died in AD 306 and the soldiers in York proclaimed him as their new leader.
- The Constantine Arch was built in his honour in AD 312–315. A statue of Constantine holding a cross included the words, 'By this saving sign I have... restored liberty to the senate and people of Rome.'

