

The History of Tattoos

From ruffians to royalty; from sailors to socialites; from pilgrims to punks: tattoos have been etched into bodies throughout history.

Tattooing occupies a deep, sometime troubling, place in British history and the British popular imagination but tattoos are not at all a modern invention.

In Tudor times, artists and writers created grotesque, fanciful images of 'Ancient Britons' with bright blue bodies and fierce body art. These were inspired by fantastical accounts of Pict warriors by Roman historians, who were horrified and fascinated by accounts of these apparently barbaric tribes.

Although this was probably non-permanent body painting, the idea of 'ancient Britain' and tattooed bodies was so powerful that it became fixed in the popular imagination.