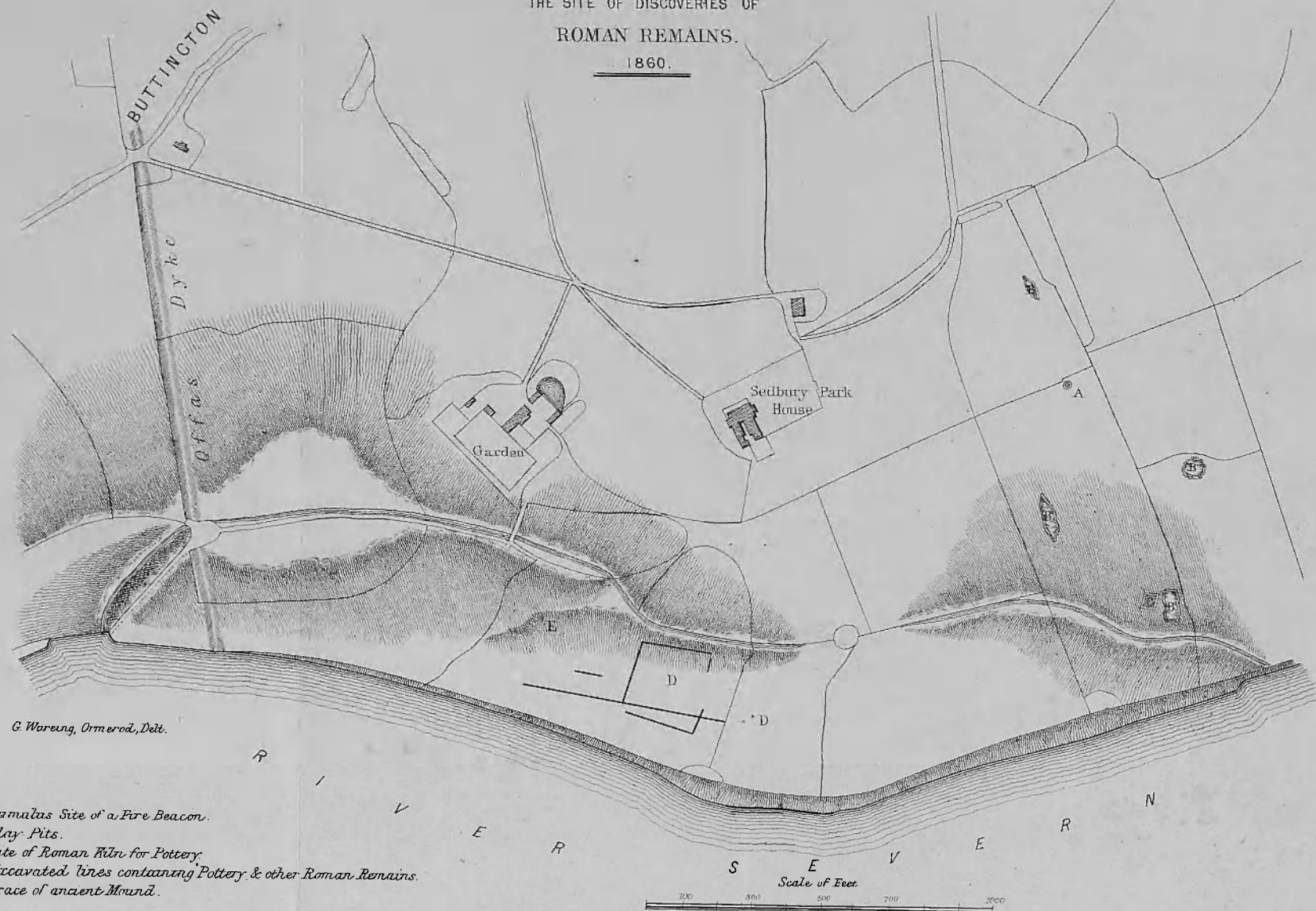


# PLAN OF A ROMAN POSITION IN SEDBURY

Within the  
*PARISH OF TIDENHAM,*  
THE SITE OF DISCOVERIES OF  
ROMAN REMAINS.

1860.



G. Wareing, Ormerod, Del.

- A Tamulus Site of a Fire Beacon.
- B Clay Pits.
- C Site of Roman Kiln for Pottery.
- D Excavated lines containing Pottery & other Roman Remains.
- E Trace of ancient Mound.

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OBSERVATIONS ON DISCOVERIES OF ROMAN REMAINS IN SED-BURY, WITHIN THE PARISH OF TIDENHAM, GLOUCESTERSHIRE, AND ON THE SUPPOSED SITE OF A ROMAN MILITARY POSITION THERE, NEAR THE CONFLUENCE OF THE SEVERN AND WYE.<sup>1</sup>

By GEORGE ORMEROD, D.C.L., F.R.S.

THE object of the present memoir is to identify the precise locality of a military position on the right bank of the æstuary of the Severn, where Roman remains have lately been discovered in great abundance, which is surrounded by lines of British and Roman communications, and is near to all the supposed ancient passages of the Severn. The object is limited, at present, to preserving a notice of this recent discovery and of the characteristics of the locality.

The exact site is marked in the map which accompanies these observations, and also in a plan drawn with reference to other objects of antiquity, and contained in vol. xxix. of the *Archæologia*, pl. ii. p. 16. It lies between the tumulus there indicated, which has been a fire-beacon, and the Sedbury cliffs; but it is necessary, first, to notice the geological character of the ground, since the selection of it for military purposes would turn on the facilities for defence given by these peculiarities.

The cliffs, which form the barrier between this high platform and the Severn, rise to the height of nearly 200 feet above its low water mark, and consist of new red sand-

<sup>1</sup> Communicated to the Section of Antiquities at the Meeting of the Institute in Gloucester, July 21, 1860.

stone overlaid with lias covered by transported red marle and gravel. These beds are nearly horizontal, and being almost unbroken by faults in the part described, the lias clays formed a natural reservoir, and impounded the water previous to that recent drainage which led to the discovery of the remains described in the present memoir. A few years ago, the adjoining fields, on the northerly side, were almost impassable after heavy rains, and in earlier days must have formed an absolute marsh, affording a defence on the land side, as the lofty precipices would give defence towards the æstuary. The oblong parallelogram, thus defended, would be divided from this former marsh by two small brooks which run towards N.E. and S.E., or nearly so, to deep dingles at those extremities, and would complete the defence of an elevated platform of about twenty-six acres.

It is not intended to claim for the military position, thus described, any identity with a Roman station in its more peculiar sense, namely, that of the Itinerary of Antonine; neither does the writer vary, on account of these later discoveries, from what he has already written respecting the ancient communications with Venta Silurum from the left bank of the Severn,<sup>2</sup> which have been admitted by Mr. Octavius Morgan in his excellent memoir on that celebrated fortress.<sup>3</sup> It is due, however, to any antiquary who may respect the authority of Richard of Cirencester, to state, that the distances of the newly discovered position, in Sedbury, from Aust on the left bank of the Severn, where some have been disposed to place Richard's *Sabrina*, and from Caerwent on the right bank, exactly tally with those in the well-known passage in the "Diaphragmata," relating to *Sabrina*, *Trajectus Statio*, and *Venta Silurum*. There can be no doubt that this position in Sedbury would protect the vicinal line from Aust to Blestium or Monmouth, and that the intersection of this with the vicinal road from Glevum to Venta would give easy communication with the last-named station, which, under difficulties of passage, might be an alternative occasionally desirable. The line given by Richard,

<sup>2</sup> Memoir on the British and Roman Roads communicating with Caerwent; Transactions at the Meeting of the Institute at Bristol in 1851, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Excavations within the walls of Caerwent in 1855. By Octavius Morgan, Esq., M.P., F.S.A. *Archæologia*, vol. xxxvi. p. 418.

according to Bertram, mentions SABRINA, from which, "*by traject*," you enter into Britannia Secunda, and into the STATIO TRAJECTUS, III. miles, and thence to VENTA SILURUM VIII. miles.<sup>4</sup> It is proper to note this striking coincidence, more striking as the position in Sedbury has been hitherto totally unknown, and to leave the matter for further discovery and consideration.

We may now turn to the Roman or Britannico-Roman lines of communication which environ this position on every side, but without dwelling on the passages of the Severn towards Caerwent, to the south of Aust. These would be,—

1. The before-mentioned vicinal line from Aust, continued on the right bank of the Severn through Beachley and Sedbury towards Blestium or Monmouth.

2. Another line from Glevum towards Venta Silurum, intersecting the last, and grazing Sedbury on the north west, respecting which much additional information has lately been collected.

3. Two other lines, tending towards Caerwent, being in continuation of a very ancient passage from the left bank of the Severn, coincident with Gale's "Traject or ferry over Severn" from "Oldbury." This was first clearly identified by Seyer,<sup>5</sup> and it is still used as an occasional passage from Oldbury to two several inlets or "pills" with gravel landing places at each end of the Sedbury cliffs. Lines of ancient ways can be clearly traced, through the woodlands of Sedbury, from these landing places to points of junction with the two vicinal Roman roads last mentioned, and they complete the circuit of roads around it.

We now come to the recently discovered Roman remains and to the site of them, surrounded by these various lines of early communications. It could not be supposed that a conspicuous site, thus girt with communications, commanding a view of the greater elevations from Bromsgrove to the Quantock Hills, of the Ostorian camps on the Cotswold range in front, and of a vale rich in the Roman settlements indicated in Lysons's Woodchester Map, and of every possible traject of the Severn æstuary, would be left unoccupied by

<sup>4</sup> Iter. xi.—"Ab Aquis, &c. . . . Ad Sabrinam, VI. unde trajectu intras in Britanniam Secundam et Stationem Trajectum, m.p. III. Venta Silurum VIII."

—Ricardus Corinensis, lib. i. cap. vii. in Bertram's Tres Scriptorum, p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> Memoirs of Bristol, vol. i. p. 78.

the neighbouring garrisons. It was therefore no surprise, a few years ago, to discover the remains of a kiln, between the tumulus or beacon before-mentioned and the Sedbury cliffs, with its dilapidated walls and fractured grinding stones, and very numerous fragments of Roman pottery lying near the general surface, or in the excavated claypits marked in the plan which is given in illustration of the present memoir. But it was reserved for the last autumn to make fresh discoveries.

On opening drains to the depth of four feet, in the grounds near the cliffs, to the south of the tumulus before-mentioned, Roman pottery was discovered in each successive cutting, in the lines marked on the plan, at the points where the draining excavations crossed the *deeper* ancient lines. The pottery, hitherto found in these later excavations, includes some cinerary urns, one of which resembles a Cirencester vase, which has been published ; but the greater part consists of *amphoræ*, *lagenæ*, *ollæ*, and *mortaria*, of ordinary



Roman Pottery, discovered at Sedbury.  
Outside Diameter of central basin 9½ inches.

Roman ware, more or less fractured, and also Samian with stamps of the makers.<sup>6</sup> There are also remains of lead, of vases repaired with lead, coal, cinders of coal and of wood, and

<sup>6</sup> The following names occur,—DOCCIVS · F ·—noticed elsewhere, as in plates of Lydney remains, Gloucestershire; also in

London, given in Mr. Roach Smith's list of marks in his *Roman London*, p. 102;—M · INNA · probably inverted, as

ROMAN ANTIQUITIES DISCOVERED IN SEDBURY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.



Urns of Red and Grey Roman Ware, found in 1859, on the supposed site of a Military position, near the confluence of the Severn and the Wye.

Height of the largest Urn, about  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Height of the two-handled Urn, 7 inches.

glass. One square, defined by excavated lines seventy yards in length on each side, and exhibiting choicer remains in its excavations, seems to have been an inclosure set apart for superior occupants. With these remains were found very numerous bones, of which, those of cows, calves, and sheep, are identified, many of them bearing marks of the knife and of the action of fire.

Various tiles have been found, according exactly with those at Caerwent in patterns, curves, and indentations; but as no mortared foundations have been discovered, it is conjectured that the soldiers occupying the position, either occasionally guarding the beacon and the look-out over the passages, or using it, as is highly probable, for the purposes of *Castra Æstiva* connected with Caerwent and its Legio Augusta Secunda, had tents only. Such temporary occupation for the purpose of summer camps is well explained in Whitaker's Manchester, Book I. chap. VI.

It may be desirable to recapitulate that the defences of the area are the cliffs towards the Severn, a morass formerly existing on the land side, and steep slopes at each end. On the summit at the southerly end are remains of a mound which may either have been an ancient territorial limit, or relics of an earlier military work. The northerly slope has been made much steeper by artificial escarpments.

Examination may possibly be resumed hereafter, the late shallow diggings having been limited to the requirements of agricultural improvements, but the results may be one step towards commencing investigations on the Silurian side of the æstuary of the Severn, in extension of those which Mr. Baker so successfully completed among the opposite outposts of BRITANNIA PRIMA.

NN are reversed in the impression, and to be read—ANNI·M·—or, according to Mr. Roach Smith's List, ANVNI·M·—;

and—DEGNOMI—Mr. Roach Smith gives —DECFMI·M· and —DECVMINI·M·— as occurring in London.