



LI.—*Rutupiarum Reliquiæ, or, an Account of the celebrated Roman Station, Rutupiæ, near Sandwich, in the County of Kent, with Remarks on Julius Cæsar's Landing Place, in Britain.* By Thomas Charles Bell.

THE attempt of the present essay is to throw some light upon the history of the famous Roman Station, *Rutupiæ*, more commonly called Richborough, situate on an eminence about a mile and a half to the northward of the town of Sandwich, on the eastern coast of Kent.

Various have been the opinions respecting the place of Julius Cæsar's landing on his first expedition against Britain, some having supposed it to have been to the southward, while others, and as it should seem with more probability, from the accounts left us by Cæsar himself, that it must have taken place to the northward of Dover. This last opinion is much strengthened by a survey of the coast in that direction, where we find, as will afterwards be shewn, an open level country, such as would most likely be chosen by a skilful general for the landing of his troops.

Cæsar informs us that he landed at about eight miles from Dover, on an open level shore. At Dover the cliffs are remarkably high and perpendicular, and thus continue northward, but gradually decrease in height, until near Walmer, where the cliffs terminate, and the beach or level shore commences, and continues as far as Sandown Castle, about a mile and half further northward, where the sand hills commence.— These cover a tract of land extending from the beach into the country, upon an average of about half a mile, and along the shore northward almost to the mouth of the river Stour, or entrance into Sandwich Haven, nearly two miles further. They form a barren and very rugged tract, being composed of heaps of loose sand.

The whole of the land extending behind these, from Deal on the

south, to Woodnesborough Hill on the west, and from thence to Eachend, about a mile and a half on the road from Sandwich to Canterbury, and proceeding northward and forming a little bay, in which the valley of Goss Hall is now situated, round the headland of Richborough, is one continued level and marshy tract of country, with all the appearance of having been, not many ages since, overflowed by the sea, and forming an extensive but shallow bay.

With regard to the sand hills themselves, as their elevation is considerably above the level of the surrounding lands, it appears questionable whether these have been formed by an accumulation of sand continually thrown up by the sea since its retreat, and thus raising as it were an embankment against any encroachment on the land it had recently left ; or whether they originally existed as shoals like those of the Goodwin and other sands, does not appear to be essential to the present enquiry.

The object is to ascertain the exact place of Cæsar's landing ; and this, as has been ably shewn in a paper inserted in the *Mechanics' Magazine* for May, 1827, may be pretty clearly ascertained by comparing some observations Cæsar has left in his *Commentaries* with astronomical evidence by calculation, as an extract from the paper alluded to will clearly prove. "The first expedition of Cæsar into Britain took place in the year of the consulship of Pompey and Crassus, the 55th year before Christ ; and with respect to the time of the year, Cæsar expressly says, that a small part of the summer being left, he hastened over into Britain, and arrived on its coast about the fourth hour of the day, when he beheld the armed forces of the enemy drawn up in battle array on all the hills, to oppose him. The nature of the place was such, that the sea being environed with steep rocks, a dart could be thrown from the top of the cliffs to the shore. There is no doubt but this place was Dover, in front of which Cæsar arrived about ten o'clock in the morning ; here he remained at anchor until three o'clock in the afternoon, when having obtained a favourable wind and tide at the same time, he sailed along with them, and then landed upon an open level shore. Cæsar next informs us, that after he had been four days on the islands, a storm arose, which did great damage to that part of the fleet appointed to

bring over the cavalry, and that on the night it happened there was a full moon. This expression, considering that a small part of the summer only was remaining when the expedition was undertaken, incontrovertibly decides the day on which Cæsar landed. Calculating backwards from the full moon in May, 1827, we find that 23,259 lunations have elapsed since August 27, ten hours, fifty-one minutes P. M., fifty-five years before Christ, at which time, consequently, there was a full moon, and which must be that mentioned by Cæsar, as happening four days after he came into the island. It could not have been the full moon which happened on the 29th July, or that on the 26th September, nearly at noon, because, then he could not say, '*exiguâ parte æstatis reliquâ,*' when he was about to undertake the expedition; nor '*propinquâ die æquinoctii,*' when he was going to return to the continent. Cæsar, therefore, came in front of the cliffs at Dover on the 23d August, B. C. 55, according to the Calendar now in use, and after three o'clock in the afternoon of that day, sailed with the tide eight miles before he landed. Hence, we have only to determine which way the tide was running at that time. Now, at the time of full moon, the moon souths nearly at midnight, and in this instance, it is quite certain that it was the case within three or four minutes either way; and allowing three hours ten minutes, for the difference of southing in four days, the moon would be south on the 23d, at eight hours fifty minutes P. M. Hence, according to the rules laid down for calculating the time of high water, it was low water at Dover on the above day, at two hours eight minutes P. M.—Therefore, by three o'clock, especially if accelerated by a favourable wind, the flow-tide would be sufficiently up, which, running northward, as it does on the coast of Dover, carried Cæsar and his fleet that way. Consequently the plain open shore where the landing was effected, was north of the cliffs of Dover, and between the South Foreland and Deal. Thus, the place of Cæsar's landing, stands in no need of conjecture, but is almost as capable of demonstration as any of the propositions in Euclid."

It is, therefore, somewhere on the coast near Walmer, and before we arrive at Deal, that the landing of Cæsar's troops must have been

effected, since this spot, *the first open and level shore*, northward of Dover, is about the distance from that place at which Cæsar states his landing to have been effected. After landing, it is natural to suppose, that he would search for some commanding station, upon which he might fortify himself against the assaults of the enemy, and such a station, the only one, indeed, fitted for the purpose, would be found upon the headland of Richborough.

The country to the northward of Richborough, like that on the southward, is a level marshy tract, extending from near the site of the ancient town of Stonar along the Minster Level on each side the course of the river Stour as far as Sarr, on the road from Canterbury to Margate, and from thence on each side the course of the decayed river Wantsum, to the sea near Reculver, on the northern coast of this part of Kent. The whole of the tract on each side the Stour and Wantsum, being a marshy level, like that on the other side of Richborough, probably formed an immense estuary, widely separating the Island of Thanet from the main land. The mouth of this inlet of the sea seems to have extended from the Gore, on the eastern, and to Reculver on the western side, where projecting cliffs, or headlands, are still observable, and which must have been more particularly the case when the land was continued into the sea, several miles distant from the present shore; but which has, from time to time, been undermined and washed away, as appears both from authentic records, and from the evidence of many persons still resident near the spot.

Hence, Reculver, the *Regulbium* of the Romans, was probably a fortified station, commanding the entrance of the æstuary on the northern side, as the headland of Richborough did on the southern; and, if this view be correct, it will thus appear, that the castle of Richborough was erected upon a neck of land, at that time nearly surrounded by water, being connected with the main land only on its north-western side, and thus affording a place of great security.

The whole of the present immense tract of land from Richborough to Eachend, and from thence by Woodnesborough to Walmer, being upon nearly the same level, and covered with water, the present town of

Sandwich could not at that time have been in existence, nor indeed until many years after the retiring of the sea, which seems, from the accounts of the Saxon historian, Bede, was gradual, and probably occurred between the fourth and sixth centuries.

This is the more clearly borne out by the fact, that no Roman remains either of armour, utensils, or coins, are hitherto known to have been found at Sandwich, or within the marshy tract just described, while occasionally those of the Saxon, more particularly their skeattas and small silver coins are sometimes discovered; it is also evident from the quantities of marine shells, always the deposit of a retiring sea, which are found at a short depth from the surface, beneath the cliff upon which Richborough is situated, that the sea must, at some distant period, have flowed against its very base. Indeed, this is proved from the fact noticed in Boys' *History of Sandwich*, p. 865, where it is stated, that a few years ago, the workmen employed in digging the foundation of Richborough sluice, "after penetrating through what was once the muddy-bed of the river, that runs close by, in a more contracted channel than formerly, came to a regular sandy sea shore, that had been suddenly covered with silt, on which lay broken and entire shells, oysters, sea-weeds, the purse of the thornback, a small shoe with a metal fibula in it, and some small human bones; all of them, except the last article, with the same appearance of freshness as such things have on the shore at this day." Surely this must incontrovertibly prove that the sea, and that too, if we may judge from the discovery of the shoe and fibula, covered this tract during at least the earlier part of the time the Romans were in possession of Britain.

The present course of the river Stour, which empties itself into the sea at Sandwich Haven, is very irregular. At Sarr, it crosses the road from Canterbury to Margate, dividing the Isle of Thanet from the main land, and running a north-easterly direction along the Minster Level, until it arrives at Ebsleet, where it turns, taking a south-westerly direction as far as Stonar-cut, close by the high-road from Sandwich to Ramsgate, in which direction it continues, with an inclination westward, unto about half a mile from Richborough, where it takes almost a direct

westerly course towards the Castle, a short distance from which it again turns to the northward, and recurves at a distance of about two hundred feet from the edge of the present cliff. The northern wall of the castle is in a direct line with the banks of this bending of the river, which runs from hence almost in a parallel direction, but at some greater distance from the cliffs. On approaching Sandwich, its course again becomes very tortuous, winding along the northern side of the town, and through the marshes until within a mile of the sea. It then again bends to the northward, and continues with many windings, almost in a parallel direction with the sea-shore as far as the Salterns, at Stonar-cut, on the right hand side of the road from Sandwich to Ramsgate, approaching within about a furlong of the course it had previously traced a mile to the north-eastward of Richborough. At this spot the river is united by Stonar-cut, over which the bridge passes for the road to Ramsgate, and the river continues in the same winding north-eastwardly direction until it empties itself into the sea at Shellness, forming a haven or channel among the shallows in the line of the cliff at Pegwell.

Relying on the supposition, that the sea once flowed up to the base of the walls of Richborough, and through the æstuary, between Thanet and the main land, it will readily be understood how it was, upon the retiring of the sea, that the river came to assume its present irregular course; more particularly if we suppose the retrocession of the waters to have occurred on a sudden. The Stour, which, as we learn from its ancient name, *Durwhern*, signifying a swift river, sweeping through the marshy district from Fordwich to Stourmouth, upon the retiring of the sea, readily wore itself a channel through the lower and softer soil of the bed of the æstuary, and in like manner around the head-lands of Richborough, and through the marshy level of Sandwich and Stonar, to the line of coast which then formed the shore.

The Castle of Richborough is situated on the highest part of the eastern edge of the eminence or headland, which we suppose to have been nearly surrounded by water, when the bay and æstuary existed. It seems to have been a parallelogram, or square, of about 480 feet on

each side. The northern wall, in its present state, is the most perfect, the foundation of it existing throughout, and the wall itself, particularly towards the east, is almost entire for 340 feet; as may be seen by the shaded lines on the accompanying plan, taken on a survey made in August, 1830. Good portions of the western and southern walls also remain; but the eastern is entirely destroyed, having fallen down with part of the bank, from being, perhaps, undermined by the sea, as the platform or table of land beneath the cliffs, walled up, as it were, with irregular masses of the building, clearly indicates. Huge masses of this fallen wall are also lying at a short distance from the eastern angle of the castle. The whole space covered, according to Boy's *History*, was 6A. 1R. 8P. of ground; and the area within the walls, 5A. 3R. 8P. The walls were protected at their angles by round projecting towers, and also by square ones, at irregular distances, along the sides. There are evidences of two of these in the western, and of two others in the northern wall; besides the *Porta Decumana*, a narrow and oblique entrance into the castle. They appear to have been solid nearly eight feet from the foundation, and afterwards hollow; and to have projected about the same distance from the wall. They were thought by Mr. Boys to have been designed for the purpose of containing some apparatus of defensive machinery, as several round smooth holes in the wall, of from four to nine inches in diameter, and penetrating various depths from eight feet to ten inches, would seem to indicate. In the western wall, 115 feet nearest the northern side, appears to have been a spacious opening, about twenty five feet in width, where some have been induced to think, from the exuvia of animals usually sacrificed to Diana, and which are abundant near this spot, that an altar or temple, to that goddess must have formerly existed, but instead of supposing such a situation to have been chosen for the performance of religious rites, when the castle must have been continually exposed to the attacks of the enemy, it seems more reasonable to suppose, that in this aperture a strong fortified gate, the principle entrance to the castle, was erected.

About 265 feet of the southern wall is still remaining, but very much dilapidated, the whole of the facings being thrown off by ivy, and

exposure to heat and moisture. It has also been purposely undermined in many places, to serve, as it should seem, as a shelter for cattle, depasturing in the neighbouring fields. The foundation is partly remaining, from the end of the wall to the edge of the cliff, about 75 feet distance.

There does not appear ever to have been a ditch, or other fortification around the building; and the foundation of the walls is very superficial; from which it is supposed to have been erected upon some great emergency. The walls, to the height of six feet, are between eleven and twelve feet in thickness; and afterwards only ten feet eight inches; they are composed of a mixture of large bolders, or beach stones, sandstone, blocks of chalk, and ochrestone, cemented together with a mortar formed of lime, grit, large and small pebbles, sea shells, and fragments of baked bricks. The walls are faced on both sides with square masses of grit, and Portland stones, and which, in many places, are disposed in the herring-bone fashion. On the outside of the northern wall the facing is most perfect, and there we see, at intervals of three or four feet, double rows of large flat tiles, exceedingly well burnt, and differing in dimensions from fourteen inches by seven and three-quarters, to seventeen inches and a half by eleven and a half. These do not go through the wall, but merely, for the most, to the depth of two tiles. The walls are nowhere perfect, their greatest height as they now stand, is at the northern side, and there it is about twenty-three feet.

Within the area of the castle, towards the north-east corner, is an underground platform of masonry, one hundred and forty-five feet long, one hundred and four wide, and five feet thick, composed of bolders and coarse mortar. In the middle of this, is the base of a structure in the form of a cross, rising a little above ground, and considerably above the platform upon which it is erected; the shaft running north and south, is 87 feet long, and seven and a half feet broad, the transverse one, is 22 feet in width, and forty six feet in length. To what purpose this could have been erected, is at present a matter of much uncertainty, some having supposed it to have supported a lofty sea mark for the mariner, while others, and perhaps with equal probability, have supposed

it to have been commemorative of Saint Augustine's arrival in Britain, and landing at this very station.

Where the city of *Rutupia* was situated, whether it consisted of the space within the walls, or extended over the plain behind the castle, is now as much a matter of enquiry as that of the purpose for which the cross we have just spoken of was erected. No traces of the city are known at this time, nor have, indeed, for several hundred years past to have been discovered. Indeed, the causes of change to which this part of the island has, for the last 2,000 years, and since the building of Richborough Castle, been subjected, have been so many and powerful, and the writers upon such matters, for the first eight or nine hundred years of that period, so few or so brief in their narratives, that we cannot wonder why so little of its history remains. The present remains of its walls, probably owe their existence to their ponderous and rock-like nature, and to their great extent.

In the absence, however, of all historical records, some conjectures perhaps may be admitted. War, and its attendants, are the principal causes that have swept away even more extensive and powerful cities than we can suppose *Rutupia* ever to have been, and of which nothing but the names remain, not even their sites being near so well ascertained as that of *Rutupia* at the present time. That war has been almost the sole cause of the decay of this place, can hardly be doubted, since, more particularly within the area of the castle, we have ample proofs that a great slaughter must at some time have taken place, from the vast quantities of human bones discovered at about two or three feet beneath the surface. Indeed, from an inspection of the eastern cliff, it will be seen, that the stratum next below the vegetable mould consists almost entirely of human bones, mixed with made earth, rubble, limestone, chalk, and flints; and at one place beneath this, for an extent of thirty or forty feet along the cliff, is a stratum of four inches in thickness, composed entirely of ashes and human bones. Not unfrequently, whole skeletons are discovered, lying in various directions, in these strata. Coins, and other antiquities are also very frequently found, particularly in the stratum of ashes. It will be seen, also, that the

stratum is deepest at nearly midway between the northern and southern walls of the castle, and that immediately beneath this is the natural soil, a solid pit sand, interspersed with sea shells.

From these facts, it seems not unreasonable to suppose, that the area of the castle was at one time, perhaps, almost entirely built over; and although it may startle our modern ideas of a city, to imagine that the town of *Rutupiae* existed within the circuit of the present walls, we cannot refrain from suggesting that such appears to us to have been the case. The Roman colonial towns are well known to have been confined within a small compass, and to have been protected by strong walls.— If, therefore, the city existed elsewhere in the neighbourhood of the castle; as on the western side, for instance, according as some suppose, how is it that we have no traces either of its walls or of its buildings? Was it likely to occur that the Romans, the masters of the world, equally wise as powerful, would have built their city without walls, on a spot so likely to be attacked by an enemy, while they took such especial care, as the thickness of the walls of this castle sufficiently indicates, for the protection of their garrisons? Or can we suppose, that the walls of the city were more likely to be utterly demolished than those of a strong hold, which it is always the first endeavour of an enemy to annihilate? We are of opinion, therefore, that the area of what is now considered to have been the castle, was in fact the site of the city, and that this, having at some time been taken by the enemy, the inhabitants were massacred, and the town itself reduced to ashes. If this were not the case, how is it that we find such disorder in the arrangement of the soil, which is a mixture, in fact, of the ruins of buildings, and human remains. With regard to the stratum of ashes in the cliff, before noticed, some may argue, perhaps, that this, as the Romans were accustomed to burn their dead, was formed from some such burning of remains after a conflict; but to this it may be replied, that, had such been the case, we should not have found whole skeletons of unburnt bodies in the very stratum itself, which the author of the present essay has himself discovered. And more, if it be admitted, that these bodies were afterwards buried, we should not have found them disposed in every direction; a

certain proof of the bodies having been buried without care or distinction. Indeed, their situation is such as might be supposed would result from the destruction of a town and the general massacre of its inhabitants.

In connection with the city of *Rutupia*, we have also to notice the Amphitheatre, distant from the south-west angle of the ruins about 460 yards. Its centre bears south 46 degrees west; is now about 11 feet deep, and measures from the north-west to the south-east point, about 68 yards; in the opposite direction, it is 70 yards, and 7 feet deep. It was no doubt, at one time, very considerably deeper, the margins being worn away, and the interior filled up by the operations of husbandry, the plough being annually driven over the soil.

Among the best evidences of the antiquity of a place are the coins, remains of armour, and other reliques found about it and its vicinity.—With such evidences the castle of Richborough and its neighbourhood abound. About twenty or thirty years ago, Mr. Boys, the antiquarian of Sandwich, and author of the history of that place, accompanied by several other gentlemen, made researches here, particularly within the area of the castle, and near the cross before alluded to, and discovered a subterraneous passage, in which were found various articles of Roman armour, coins, and other antiquities. A beautiful glass lachrymatory, now in the possession of a gentleman resident in Sandwich, has since been found in the soil within the walls of the castle; and coins of almost all the Emperors, from the Cæsars downwards to the time of the departure of the Romans from this island, are repeatedly turned up by the plough. Of these, the coins of the Constantines, Gallienus, and Valens, are the most common. Here have also been found some of that kind of coins which are generally considered to be more ancient than those of Constantine, and are made of the metal called electrum, which was of brass, and contained about one fourth of gold. They are generally concavo-convex, or hollow on the one side, which is the reverse, and bear either Pagan symbols or a horse, and the word *Tascio* around it; the other side has a head, sometimes crowned with laurels.—Others, also, of the same kind of metal, but still more ancient, have

been found here ; one side of them is rugged and unstamped, and the other has a horse or wheel, or some such symbol.

Upon these reliques, it appears unnecessary to make further remark in the present tract ; the fact of their being frequently discovered on the spot, sufficiently proves that they were used there, and in some abundance ; and that the place itself was populous, and commanding subjection from the surrounding country.