ROMAN PERIOD

INTRODUCTION

THE study of Roman Wales in the century from the foundation of the Cambrian Archaeological Association to the present time divides itself into two well marked periods. The division is marked roughly but sufficiently by the end of the nineteenth century. The same remark applies to the study of Roman Britain in general, and can be illustrated from publications. A series of volumes called *Early Britain* was published towards the end of the nineteenth century, and included in succession two volumes on the Roman period. The first by H. M. Scarth appeared in 1884, and was superseded by another by Edward Conybeare in 1903. When one passes from these to the smaller ' Collingwood ' (1923. Corrected 1934) one seems to have entered a different world. Conybeare's book might almost as well have been written in the eighteenth century under the influence of Horsley and Camden. It is founded on the literary authorities with some illustrations from excavations ; Collingwood is founded on the results of excavations illustrated by literary allusions. In the interval the archaeologists had dug up the history of Roman Britain, and they had done so under the influence of Haverfield, using the methods perfected by Pitt-Rivers. It was Haverfield's personality that revolutionized the study ; he found it, in his own words, ' the playground of the amateur '; he left it securely established on thoroughly scientific principles. The division was not between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, for that was merely an accident ; it was between the pre-Haverfield and the post-Haverfield periods.

EXCAVATIONS

Of the nineteenth century excavations little need be said ; perhaps it was fortunate that they were so few. An excavation of a Roman building in the castle grounds at Caerleon was a result of alterations that were being made in the property, and in 1855 Octavius Morgan dug up a bath building at Caerwent. Really that was all, for in 1908 Haverfield could write, ' " Scratch the earth and you will find the Empire " is as true in Wales as in any other land once ruled by Rome. Hitherto Welshmen have not scratched.'[1] One event, however, does deserve particular notice. In 1848, two years after the foundation of the ' Cambrians,' the Monmouthshire and Caerleon Antiquarian

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[1] *Military Aspects of Roman Wales*, p. 6 (reprinted from *Hon. Soc. Cymmrodorion Trans.*, 1908–09).

MAP OF

ROMAN WALES

WITH

ROMAN SITES AND ROADS

SHOWN IN RED

SYMBOLS

■ Legionary fortress

■ Auxiliary fort

□ Camp

● Town

◉ Village

▲ Villa

○ Settlement site

◆ Pottery

⨯ Mining site

⊥ Milestone

— Road certain

▬▬▬ Road uncertain

COPPER MINES

MONA INS
Anglesey

Holyhead

Prestatyn
VARAE
St Asaph
KANOVIVM
Caerhun
DECEANGL
Basingwerk
Flint
DEVA
Chester
SEGONTIVM
Caernarvon
Bryn-y-gefeiliau
Ffrith
Holt
Tomen-y-mur
Caer Gai
ORDOVICES
COPPER MINES
Llanfair Caereinion
Pennal
Caer Flos
Caer Sws
BRAVONIVM
Leintwardine
Castell Collen
Llanio
MAGNIS
Kenchester
GOLD MINE
Clyro
Dolaucothy
Llandovery
y Pigwn
y Gaer
GOBANNIVM
Abergavenny
Mon
Castle Flemish
MARIDVNVM
Carmarthen
TOBIVS FL.
Cwmbrwyn
Coelbren
Penydarren
BVRRIVM
Usk
VENTA SILVRVM
Caerwent
LEVCARVM
Loughor
NIDVM
Neath
Gelligaer
Machen
ISCA
Caerleon
Oystermouth
Ely
Cardiff
Liantwit Major

DEMETAE

SILVRES

1800 – 3000 feet
1200 – 1800 feet
600 – 1200 feet
0 – 600 feet

5   0   5   10   20   30   Scale of English miles

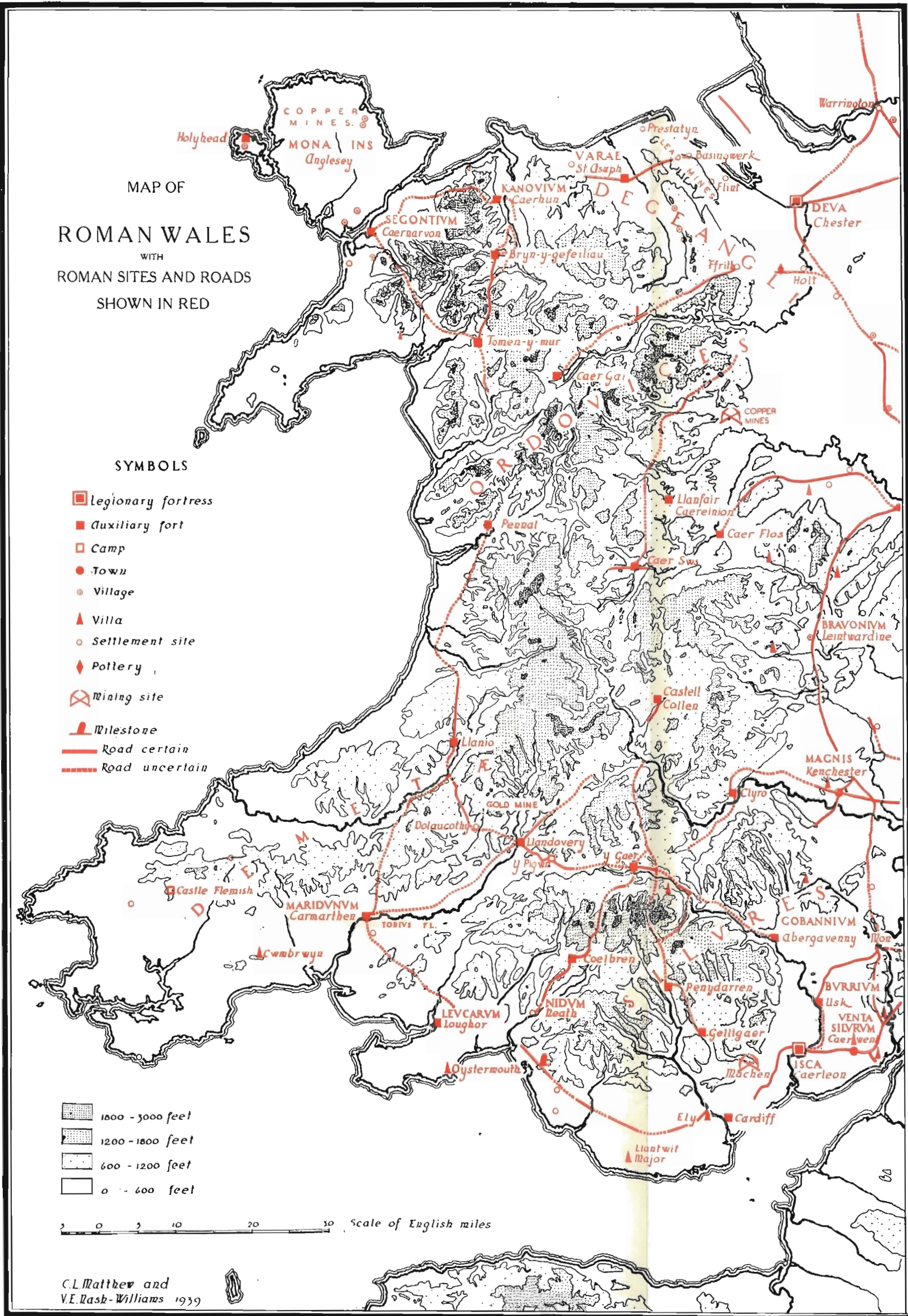C.L. Matthew and
V.E. Nash-Williams 1939

PLATE IV.   Map of Roman Wales
From *The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon, Monmouthshire*, by V. E. Nash-Williams.   By permission of the National Museum of Wales.

facing page 80

Association was started by a group of local antiquarians headed by Octavius Morgan and John Edward Lee. Its most notable achievement was the erection and maintenance of the Legionary Museum at Caerleon at a time when local museums were considered to be unjustifiable extravagances. In it were collected and preserved desultory finds from Caerleon, Caerwent and the neighbourhood, finds that would probably have been lost but for its existence.[1] An illustrated catalogue of the Museum was published by Lee in 1862 in a handsome quarto volume under the title of *Isca Silurum*.[2] It was much more than a catalogue, and was the best work on Roman Wales published in the nineteenth century.

The series of modern excavations began with the exploration of Gelligaer by the Cardiff Naturalists' Society in 1899 and the systematic excavation of Caerwent by the Society of Antiquaries in the same year. The memoir on Gelligaer was written by John Ward, at that time Curator of the Cardiff Museum. He was a gruff, self-educated, but competent archaeologist with a thorough knowledge of Roman Britain as is evidenced by his two volumes in Methuen's Antiquaries Books. Haverfield said that the excavation was of ' primary importance for the history alike of Roman Wales and of the Roman army.' Ward frankly recorded the mistakes that the excavators had committed and learnt to avoid. The main cause of error was that the excavation was superintended by members of the committee working on a rota with inevitable differences of knowledge, method and competence. The result was loss of record of important detail and lack of uniformity of method. The mistakes of Gelligaer established the necessity of unity of command, for a committee can no more conduct an excavation than it can fight a battle. In all subsequent excavations this basic error was avoided, and the change of method was facilitated by the foundation of the National Museum of Wales, for it could provide the skilled commanders.

It would be tedious to catalogue the excavations of sites since the pioneer effort of Gelligaer, but those for South Wales up to 1928 have been catalogued conveniently by Dr Nash-Williams.[3] Of outstanding importance were those at Caerwent already referred to, the long series at Caerleon, Segontium and the Brecon Gaer by Dr R. E. Mortimer Wheeler, and Castle Lyons at Holt, excavated by T. Arthur Acton and described by W. F. Grimes. The net result has been that the history of Roman Wales, so far as it is possible to reconstruct it, has been dug out of the ground. Some sites remain unexcavated
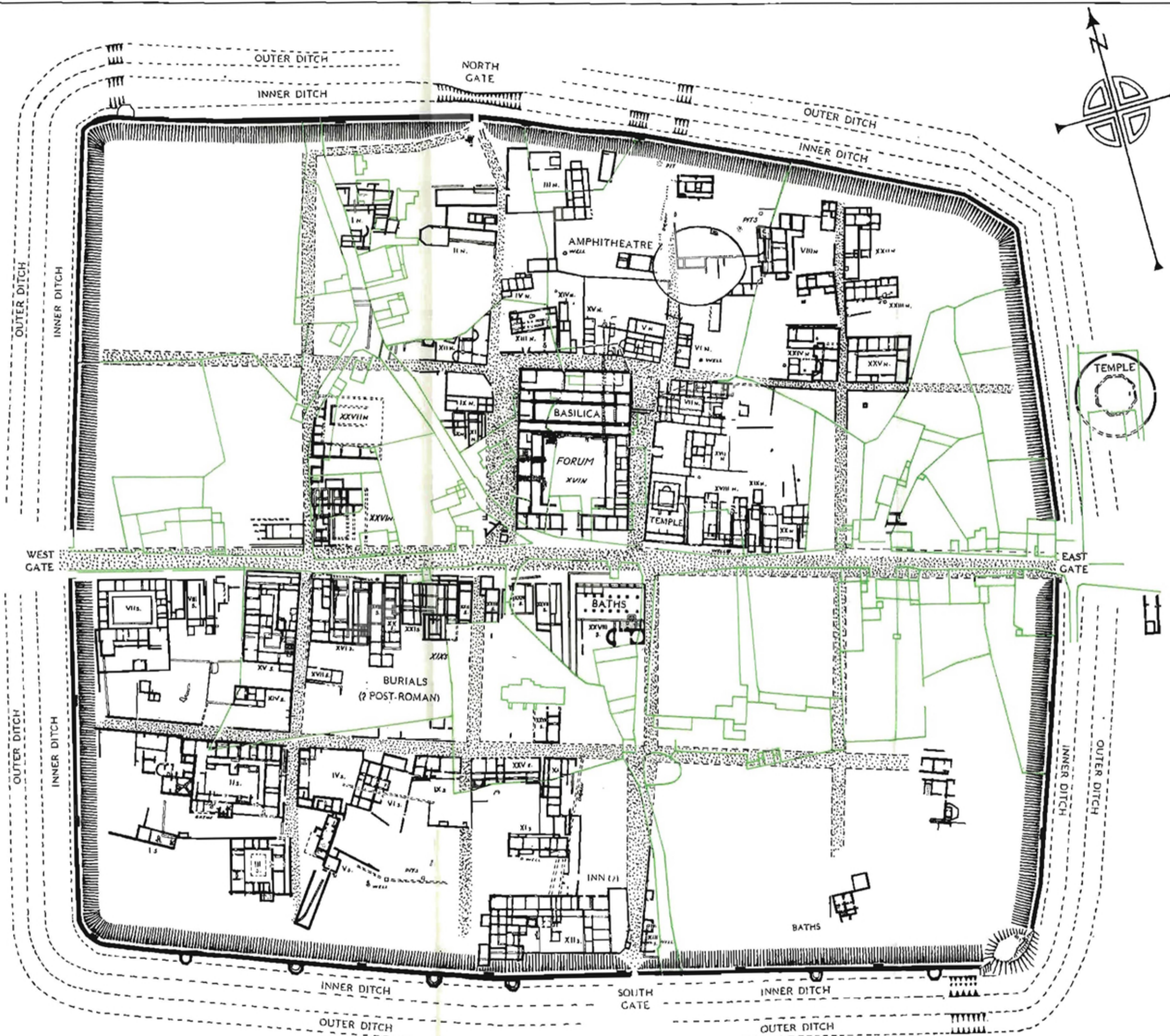
[1] The Museum was transferred to the National Museum of Wales in 1930.

[2] The title is of course a misnomer. The Roman name was Isca, and the tribal suffix was appropriate only to a cantonal capital ; it was never applied to a legionary headquarters, nor to a fort. Yet Haverfield used the erroneous version, and it is a great consolation to amateur antiquaries to learn that great scholars can make big mistakes.

[3] Topographical List of Roman Remains found in South Wales.' *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, IV, (1928), pp. 246 *et seq.*

CAERWENT (VENTA SILVRVM) GENERAL PLAN OF ROMAN TOWN

OUTER DITCH
INNER DITCH
NORTH GATE
OUTER DITCH
INNER DITCH

AMPHITHEATRE

BASILICA

FORUM
XVII

TEMPLE

WEST GATE
EAST GATE

TEMPLE

BATHS

BURIALS
(? POST-ROMAN)

INN (?)

BATHS

SOUTH GATE

OUTER DITCH
INNER DITCH
INNER DITCH
OUTER DITCH

OUTER DITCH
INNER DITCH

INNER DITCH
OUTER DITCH

SCALE OF FEET
METRES

100 50 0   100   200   300   400   500
50 20 10 0   50   150

V. E. NASH-WILLIAMS (AFTER F. KING), 1948.

PLATE V

facing page 82

and perhaps had better remain so, but the main story has been established, and is not likely to be modified except in detail.

GENERAL FEATURES OF ROMAN WALES

In a very real sense Roman Wales never existed. The conditions that made Wales an entity, though with a shifting and uncertain boundary line, belong to later periods of history. Nevertheless, the treatment of Roman Wales as a thing apart from the rest of Britain is not so acutely incongruous as the adoption of modern county boundaries for studying Roman Britain, because Wales possesses a large measure of geographical unity (pl. IV).

The division of Britain into highland and lowland was first formulated by Haverfield as the foundation of the Roman province into the military and civil regions.[1] Fox (*Personality of Britain*, p. 27 *et seq.*) enlarged upon Haverfield's hint, and demonstrated that the factor was dominant and permanent throughout the prehistoric and the historic periods. In Roman times the frontiers were in the highlands and, as according to Roman principles the military forces were stationed along the frontiers, the division of lowland and highland corresponded to the civil and military regions. At the same time it must be remembered that the division was in no sense absolute. No line of demarcation was ever drawn between the two regions, for the province was a unity under one governor. The highlands contain areas of lowlands, some of them fertile and attractive areas, and so the regions mingle both in the north of England and in Wales.

CIVIL OCCUPATION

CAERWENT (*Venta Silurum*)

Entering Wales from England along the southern routes, we come upon one of the largest of the lowland patches within the highland line. The coastal plain along the Severn Sea comprises south Monmouthshire with a long tongue extending up the Usk valley, the plateau somewhat strangely called the Vale of Glamorgan, the detached lowland area of Gower below the wood, and southern Pembrokeshire. The two latter regions were of small importance in the Roman period, but the others were a different matter. The conquest of the fierce tribe of the Silures was not completed until about 75, more than thirty years after the landing in Britain. Within a short time thereafter their cantonal capital was erected at Venta Silurum, almost adjoining the old tribal centre at Llanmelin.[2] This was in accord with the policy of Romanization and there were several exact parallels elsewhere in Britain. Venta Silurum or Caerwent was the only town in Roman Wales (pl. V). It was founded as

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[1] *The Roman Occupation of Britain* (1924), p. 93, *et seq.* Mackinder in *Britain and the British Seas* (1902) noted the fact, but did not emphasise its historical implications.

[2] For the excavation of Llanmelin, see 'An Early Iron Age Hill Fort at Llanmelin near Caerwent,' by V. E. Nash-Williams in *Arch. Camb.* (1933), p, 237.

' a pioneer city on a particularly treacherous frontier,' and remembering this fact the degree of its Romanization was remarkable. It is quite clear, despite suggestions that have been made to the contrary, that it was never a military fortress, and its whole plan and organisation was civil. Within the circuit of its defences the town formed a rough parallelogram about 50 acres in area, and the interior was neatly divided into 20 *insulae* formed by three longitudinal and four transverse streets. This was obviously the result of deliberate planning, and so was the location of the shopping and civic centre in the middle of the town. One feels that a precise and orderly Mediterranean mind was at work, and that there was no trace of the tribal slovenliness of hill top forts.

Noteworthy, too, in this remote outpost of empire was the size and character of the houses. They were for the most part of the four-sided court-yard type of Graeco-Roman origin transported to the cloudy dampness of the Severn Sea. They were definitely of urban character, for Caerwent was no straggling garden city like Silchester, but a trim and orderly town (pl. VI). The corridor or country type of house was not absent, and one of the largest, which was probably an inn, was of this character. In both types the size was remarkable. Venta Silurum had no slums.

The public buildings were appropriate to a provincial capital. The central *insula*, facing due south, was occupied by the forum and basilica, the market-place, the town hall, the law courts, and the council chamber—in a word the civic centre. Immediately opposite were the main public baths—the social centre—for Roman cleanliness always made the bath the focus of social activities. Near the north gate was another set of baths—surely an ample provision for a small town of 50 acres. An amphitheatre, possibly unfinished and probably of later date, lay somewhat curiously within the town, but its fragmentary character allows of little certainty. East of the forum lay a small square temple of the so-called Romano-Celtic type but nothing is known of its dedication. A building beyond the wall, and only partially excavated was probably another temple, and another building lying at a higher level was possibly a Christian Church of the sixth century.

There were as usual four gateways. The western and eastern gates on the central street, which was also the main through road, have disappeared completely, but substantial portions survive of those on the north and south. Both were blocked with masonry in late Roman times, probably when Roman troops were being withdrawn from Britain, and security was declining.

No description of Caerwent, however short, would be complete without a reference to the famous inscribed stone found in 1903. The revealing words are those at the end, ' *ex decreto ordinis respublica civitatis Silurum.*' For a time this remained the sole example of its kind in Britain, but in the 1924–27 excavations at Wroxeter the great dedicatory inscription of the forum was found almost intact, and that used the term ' *civitas Cornoviorum.*' The significance of these few words lies in the fact that from them we can deduce the nature of the

government of the area.   In the Mediterranean region the unit of government was the town, and the surrounding countryside was attached to the town and governed by it ;   far from the town being ' the exotic product of an unstable civilisation ' it was the very essence of the structure ;   in short it was a city state.   In Gaul, and, as we now know, in Britain, the unit was not a stable town but an elusive tribe.   Nevertheless Roman policy, following tendencies that had become evident before the conquest of Britain, accepted the tribe as the unit but gave it a central capital.   So we have the commonwealth of the community of the Silures, but its executive organ, the tribal council transformed into a senate (*ordo*), was located in the town.   The tribal area was made to look as much like a city state as possible, and the transformation was so successful that the name of the town often spread to the region it controlled.   The Silures vanished, but Romano-British *Venta* gave its name to medieval and modern *Gwent*.

The feature that captivates the imagination of every visitor to Caerwent is the town wall, ' one of the finest stretches of Roman masonry surviving in the island,' now happily under the guardianship of the Ministry of Works.   At first, like the forts, this fenced city was enclosed within an earthen bank and two ditches, but at an uncertain date, possibly early in the third century, the original bank was replaced by a high wall.   In consists of a core of roughly-bedded limestone fragments between two faces of squared stone.   A number of shallow internal projections may have carried stairways leading to the rampart walk, or may have supported defensive engines.   At a date not earlier than 330 a number of polygonal bastions were added to, but not bonded into the wall.

The addition of the bastions to the wall, and the subsequent blocking of the north and south gates showed an apprehension of danger, possibly from Irish raiders.   But there is no real evidence that Venta Silurum came to a violent end.   It may have sunk into quiet desolation by the fifth century or even earlier, or, on the other hand it may have persisted in a shadowy existence. There is no decisive evidence in either direction.   The legend that the Irish saint Tathan settled here early in the sixth century is significant, and is supported by the evidence of the influence of other Irish saints in South Wales.   The suggestion of Leland is most apposite : ' a great lykelyhod ys that when Cairguent began to decay then began Chepstow to florisch.'   Caerwent had no sea communications and sank into a village ; Chepstow was on a tidal river and so became the chief market town of its district.   Roman Wales did not look to the sea until it was compelled to do so.

THE COUNTRY HOUSES

Caerwent was the only town in Roman Wales, and the evidence shows that other civil occupation was for the most part confined to the south-eastern segment of the country.   On geographical grounds this is not difficult to understand.   The parts of Britain adjoining Wales north of Wroxeter and the

PLATE VI. Roman town of *Venta Silurum* at Caerwent (Mon.). (p. 82)

(Reconstruction by Alan Sorrell, A.R.W.S., in consultation with the Department of Archaeology of the National Museum of Wales). By permission of the National Museum of Wales.

Watling Street were heavily forested and sparsely peopled, and there was little expansion thence into the military region. Contrariwise the parts east of the Lower Severn showed a remarkable development of country life, and as the lowlands of Monmouthshire and Glamorgan can be regarded as detached portions of the English plain, it was to be expected that there, if anywhere, country life would have expanded. So it happened, but the development was sparse and sporadic. Of the major homesteads there were only three.

Far up the Usk valley at Llanfrynach, near Brecon, are the remains of an extensive villa. It was partially excavated in 1775 and has not been touched since.[1] The excavations disclosed a complete set of baths with two furnaces, a corridor, and four mosaic pavements. The coin-finds covered the third century and extended well into the fourth. It is a problem why a house of such pretensions should have been sited so deeply in the military region and so far from any civilian neighbours, even in the attractive Usk valley. Traces of ancient iron-working in the neighbourhood may indicate the reason, but that is merely conjecture. Perhaps the owner was a fore-runner of Walter Savage Landor at Llanthony and liked to be lonely.

The other two greater villas were in the Vale of Glamorgan. The smaller was at Ely near Cardiff on a low-lying and rather marshy site. It was close to the main road from Caerleon to Carmarthen upon which the perverted genius of Charles Bertram conferred the spurious but most attractive name of *Via Julia Maritima*. The plan was somewhat unusual because the buildings were in two separate portions with a courtyard in between. A bath house was constructed with a verandah in front in one portion, and to the second portion was added a complete set of baths. Iron smelting was undoubtedly carried on at this place, but may not have been its primary purpose. The buildings were erected early in the second century, probably within 50 years of the foundation of Caerleon. The most interesting feature was the alteration carried out round about 300. The second range of buildings, including the baths, was demolished and the original house surrounded by a complete set of banks and ditches. It was in fact converted into a moated grange. It was certainly the first example of its kind in Wales, and parallels of its period are hard to find in Britain or Gaul. The Roman, however, seldon selected a low-lying site for his country houses where a moat was feasible. He liked to live above the valley mists.

The villa at Llantwit Major is nowhere near a valley or its mists. It lies above the village on the Lias limestone plateau of the Vale of Glamorgan. A partial excavation was made by John Storrie in 1888, when two rooms were cleared and an elaborate mosaic pavement revealed. In 1938 and 1939 a more thorough investigation was carried out by Dr Nash Williams, but the operations were interrupted by the war and consequently no complete

[1] *Archaeologia*, VII, p. 205 ; Jones, *Breconshire*, p. 462.

excavation report has yet been published. It was clearly a large and wealthy establishment, so much so that one wonders whether other villas in the attractive Vale either remain to be discovered or have been lost irretrievably. The striking fact is the isolation of the villas at Llanfrynach, Ely, and Llantwit. Ely indeed was within visiting distance of the fort at Cardiff, but the others appear to have had no neighbours.

The enclosure is a rough square measuring about 100 yards each way and covering an area of about 2 acres. The buildings were ranged round a central cobbled courtyard. The remains were in excellent preservation with the floors intact and the walls decorated with ornamental plaster up to 7 feet in height. It is noteworthy that the stone for the columns and roof-finials had been imported from across the Severn Sea. The floors of the principal room were of mosaic, and the hypocaust or central heating arrangement was elaborate and extensive. Altogether it was a fine country house.

Provisionally the finds indicate a foundation early in the second century, and an occupation lasting well into the fourth.

One interesting problem raised by the villa has not yet been fully resolved. During the 1888 excavations 41 human skeletons were discovered together with the bones of three horses, and four more skeletons were found by Dr Nash-Williams. It was thought that these finds indicated that the life of the villa ended in a sack and massacre, probably by Irish raiders ; but the skeletons unearthed in 1939 showed deliberate interment with Christian orientation and were made when the structure was ruinous. It does not follow that all the bodies were buried at leisure or at the same time, and the argument can hardly apply to the three horses. A suggestive solution of the mystery has occurred to the present writer, but this is not the place to elaborate it.

THE LESSER CIVIL SITES

The three large villas, and it must be emphasised that there are only three at present known, are the evidence of a strong Romanizing influence on the fringes of the mountain zone. Between these developed and self-contained establishments and the native settlements were a few houses of an intermediate character, perhaps the homes of small squires trying to be in the fashion. They are few in number and an indication of their positions must be sufficient. On the summit of Portskewett Hill, near Chepstow, was an habitation site showing walls and painted wall-plaster in association with Roman coins and pottery. A small homestead was unearthed at Oystermouth in an attractive situation, but at a considerable distance from any known Roman road. Further west in Carmarthenshire two sites have been discovered. At Abercyfan, 2 miles south of Carmarthen, an eighteenth century record speaks of ' a remarkable fine tessellated pavement, with a prodigious quantity of silver and copper coins of the Lower Empire.' At Cwmbrwyn, 10 miles south-west of Carmarthen, a small stockaded farm—the site was about half an

acre in extent—was excavated by John Ward in 1906. It had been much robbed, but may have contained a hypocaust. In north Wales a small bath-building at Tremadoc, and some buildings that may have been civil at Prestatyn, are the only evidence of Roman life apart from the military occupation and industry.

THE NATIVE SETTLEMENTS

Wales was a military region, and such partial Romanization as occurred was confined to the territory of the Silures. The native tribes acquired just as much Roman culture as they fancied or could afford, and were probably left very much to themselves. The cultures, in this region at least, did not mix easily. The Roman and the Romanized were dwellers in towns or settlements whose life was based on agriculture ; Wales was then as always a predominantly pastoral and heavily-forested country.

Our knowledge of the native settlements has been greatly increased in the last thirty years. In the third century conditions in the Empire were becoming increasingly difficult, and in our country the Irishman was developing from a nuisance into a menace. In a ' most notable paper,' Dr Willoughby Gardner[1] showed that many of the great hill-forts of the prehistoric iron age were occupied intensively and refortified powerfully during this period. Some of the settlements on the contrary were quite open, but both were settlements and not forts. When the towns of the lowlands were enclosed within high walls, the fencing of settlements nearer to the danger zones was an obvious precaution. In all these places the Roman influence can be traced in the method of fortification, and the finds date them to the Roman period, but the huts were all of the circular stone type, characteristic of the prehistoric western tradition. The native mind could not rise to the level of the Roman house.

In south and central Wales few of these sites are known, or have been explored. A village on the little island of Gateholm, off the coast of Pembrokeshire, must, strangely enough, have had a considerable number of inhabitants, and the imposing site of Moel Trigarn in the north of the same county was honeycombed with circular pit dwellings. In north Wales the sites are more numerous, and the exploration has been more thorough. The most famous and the best preserved is the stone hill-fort of Tre'r Ceiri, high up on the Rivals (Yr Eifl) overlooking the Lleyn peninsula. There was clear evidence that it was built during the second century and not earlier. It could hardly have been erected without the permission, or at least the connivance, of the Roman authorities, and its erection marks a reversal of Roman policy. At the time of the Conquest the hill-forts were vacated compulsorily and their inhabitants accommodated in the towns. Dorchester superseded Maiden Castle, and Caerwent Llanmelin, and so on, but by the end of the second

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[1] ' The Native Hill Forts in North Wales and Defences ' by Willoughby Gardner in *Arch. Camb.* (1926), p. 221.

century Wales had been so thoroughly pacified and its people had become so friendly that they could be trusted completely to assist in keeping off the Irish raiders.

Similar evidence from Braich-y-dinas on Penmaenmawr, from the earthworks in the Clwydian hills, and especially from the great work at Dinorben, near Abergele, reinforce the story of Tre'r Ceiri, and point to native peoples constituted into an irregular militia working in active conjunction with the Roman government ; at least that is Wheeler's theory.

Another side of the picture is afforded by the irregular groups of huts, called villages by courtesy, of which there are many examples in Anglesey and Caernarvonshire. The finds show that they were occupied during the Roman era, but if they were enclosed at all, the boundary banks or walls were of negligible military value. Wheeler suggested that ' it can scarcely be an accident that all those villages lie within effective reach of the fort of Segontium,' but the suggestion hardly seems to cover the facts. The Anglesey sites were across the Menai Straits, and Tre'r Ceiri is nearer to Segontium than some of them. Yet Tre'r Ceiri was heavily fortified and they were not. The problem calls for more detailed investigation than can be given to it in this place.

We may, however, conclude with some confidence that those native settlements acquired or suffered little real Romanization. Their inhabitants envied and procured some Roman things, and attempted to imitate some Roman arts, but that was all.

MINING AND INDUSTRY

The reputation of British mines may well have been one of the motives that induced Claudius to undertake the conquest, and if the reality fell short of the expectation every effort was made to exploit Britain's mineral wealth. The mines of the Empire belonged to the State, and were sometimes worked directly, but more often leased to prospectors. Iron was mined extensively, as in the preceding prehistoric iron age, in the Forest of Dean, but that is beyond ' the boundary line of Cymry.' There is plenty of evidence of ancient mining and iron-smelting in Monmouthshire and Glamorgan, but much of it cannot be dated precisely. In 1752 a deposit of iron cinders found near Miskin in Glamorgan was clearly of Roman date, and the paving both of the Cardiff fort and of the Ely villa with iron slag gives evidence that is perfectly definite, and various possibilities are suggested by other sites. Lead and copper were certainly mined in north Wales, and pigs of lead and cakes of copper have been found in various places that indicate a Welsh origin and a Roman dating.[1]

The most famous of all the Roman mining sites in Wales is undoubtedly the gold mine of Dolaucothi in northern Carmarthenshire, which has been reopened in recent years with much expectation but no great result. It is

[1] The evidence has been summarised so fully in Wheeler's *Prehistoric and Roman Wales*, p. 268 *et seq.*, that it has not been considered necessary to repeat it here.

said to have been ' the only recognisable justification of the claim of Tacitus that gold was amongst the rewards of victory of the Roman conquest of Britain.' Some excavations in 1831 revealed tessellated pavements and hypocausts for heating—quite possibly the relics of the pit-head baths of the miners and officials. No other buildings have been observed, but excavation has been sporadic. The open-cast workings are numerous and obvious, but perhaps the most impressive memorial is the water conduit, no less than 7 miles long, for the most part excavated in the solid rock and presumably completed by wooden troughs carried on trestle bridges. The hoard of gold objects said to have been found at the end of the eighteenth century is one of the finest from any Romano-British site and is deposited in the British and Carmarthen Museums.[1]

The works are impressive from their size and extent, but perhaps even more so from the evidence that they afford of peaceful conditions. The objects can be dated to the early second century. The site is on a road leading from the fort of Llandovery to that of Llanio, but both are many miles away. There may have been a military or police guard at the mines, but there is not the slightest trace of a fort ; so that apparently within fifty years of the conquest of Wales, a gold mine could be worked in the middle of the country with the very slightest amount of military protection. The Roman peace was indeed pervasive.

Of industries other than mining there are many traditions but small evidence. There is no doubt that brick or pottery kilns were widely distributed in Roman Britain, but three sites only have been recorded in Wales. One was a kiln attached to the fort at Gelligaer, a second an undoubted site at Trawsfynydd in Merioneth which has not been excavated, and the third the works of the Twentieth Legion at Holt. This is probably the most important site of its kind in all Britain, and the ' indispensable monograph ' written upon it by W. F. Grimes is the first systematic account of Romano-British pottery-making as a whole.[2] The history of the site was unfortunate. It was rediscovered by A. N. Palmer, of Wrexham, in 1907, and then excavated over a period of years until 1915 by T. Arthur Acton at his own expense. No report was published, but in 1925 the material was acquired by the National Museum of Wales. The excavator died almost immediately afterwards. None of his notes were found, some of the plans were missing, and most of the objects lacked labels. Grimes, therefore, had to work under great difficulties.

It is quite clear that the factory was a works-depot of the Twentieth Legion at Deva and the buildings were legionary work. The forms used testified to the Roman character of the products. The potters were men of

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[1] There is an admirable account of the site and the finds, including references to unpublished documents, by R. C. Bosanquet in Roy. Comm. on Anc. Mons., *Carmarthenshire* (1917), p. 25 *et seq.*

[2] Holt, *Denbighshire* (= *Y Cymmrodor*, XLI (1930)). This memoir had not been published when Collingwood wrote his *Archaeology of Roman Britain* (1930).

limited range, their artistic perception was moderate, and their aims were severely practical. Above all, if not Italian, they were severely ' classical ' in their ideas. Their work shows no trace of Celtic forms or motives.

The works were at their busiest in the early years of the second century, until the general reorganisation of Wales from 120 to 140. The buildings comprised a barracks for the workers, a good corridor house with hypocausts, evidently the residence of the works managers, the inevitable evidence of Roman cleanliness—a fine bath building,—and the works themselves. A double-flue kiln for pottery is quite unique, and in addition there were three kilns for pottery and three for tiles. An eighth kiln for pottery was a later insertion. The kilns had been altered considerably in the course of their life, and curiously enough the majority were ' daubed up ' ready for firing when they were abandoned. That accounts for the comparative excellence of their condition, because the process of firing is destructive of kilns of this type. The decision to abandon must have been taken at very short notice.

The evidence from Holt suggests its establishment at the end of the first or beginning of the second century, when the fortress at Deva was being rebuilt in stone. Then there was a cessation of activity from the reign of Hadrian and during the Antonine period when the Welsh garrisons were removed to the northern frontier for the building of the walls. The early third century (Septimius Severus) shows some revival of activity and then the picture suddenly fades out.

MILITARY OCCUPATION

THE WELSH FRONTIER

So we pass last to the subject that might perhaps more logically have been discussed first, the military occupation of Wales. Wales was essentially part of the Highland zone, and its occupation was therefore first and foremost military in character. The forts are by far the most numerous and impressive of the relics of Roman occupation. But the Welsh frontier was unique, it differed in one essential aspect from every other frontier in the Empire.

The Roman system of frontier-defence was fundamentally static ; until the reorganization under Diocletian (285–305) the Empire possessed no mobile field army that could be moved to any threatened region. Everywhere the arrangement was intrinsically the same, and can be described properly as a frontier in depth, a frontier region but not a frontier line. In the first place on the edges of the civil region were the great base fortresses, each housing a legion—the essence of Roman military power—and an ample magazine of supplies. Spread out in a zone of varying depth in front of the bases was a network of forts, usually three to seven acres in extent manned by units of auxiliary troops from 500 to 1,000 strong, either a cohort of infantry or a ' wing ' of cavalry. Between the forts were often halting stations of smaller size,

and the whole array was connected by a network of roads. Beyond the forts would be a patrolled area with a few outposts of which Castle Flemish in Pembrokeshire is a good local example. From the second century onwards the more unsecure frontiers were secured by lines of fortifications erected at enormous cost, of which Hadrian's and the Antonine Walls in Britain and the German *limes* are prominent specimens. Perhaps it is too much to say with Wheeler that these were ' symbols of defeat,' but at least they were evidence of weakness.
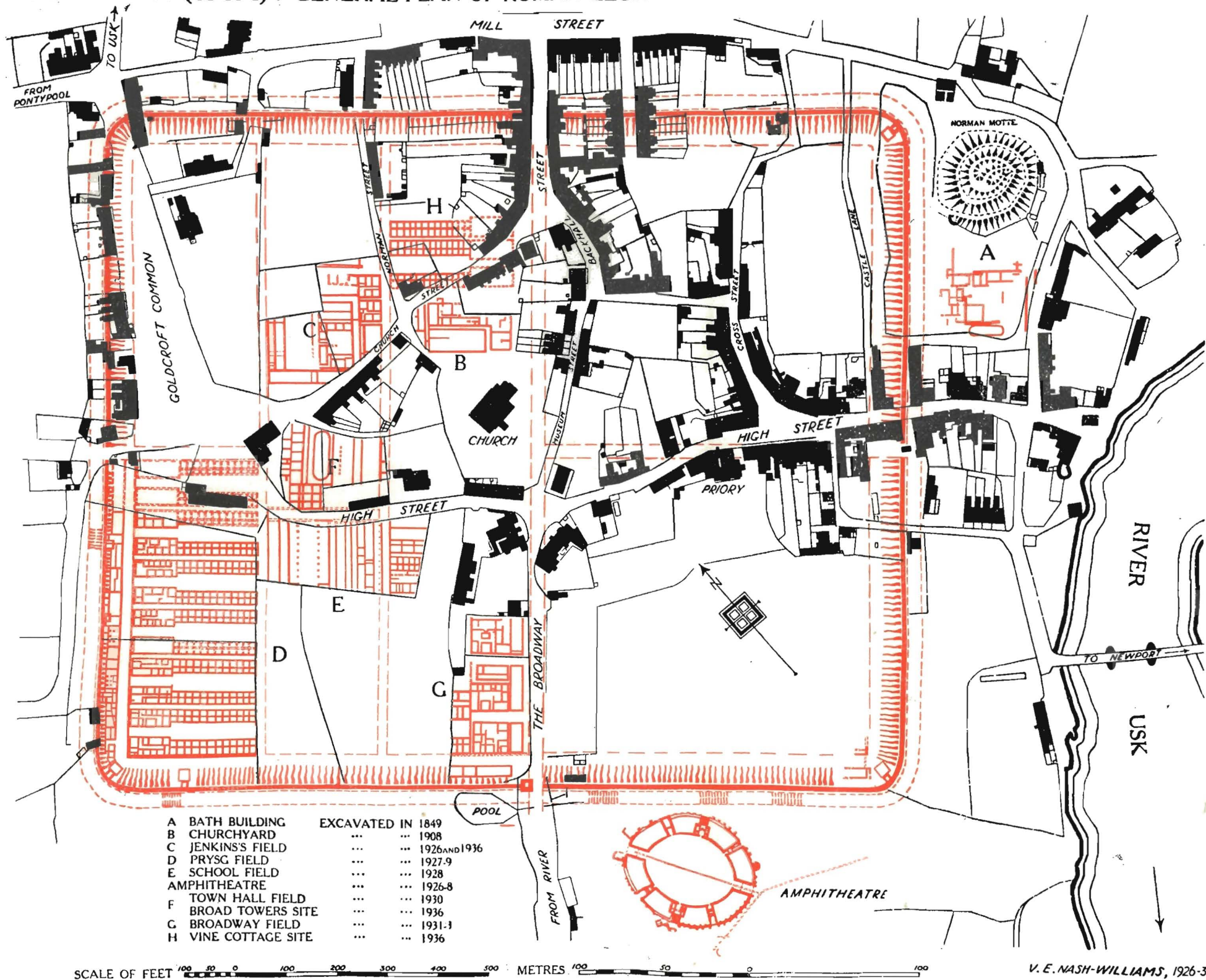
In Wales we can view the system in its entirety. The frontier zone forms a rough parallelogram with its four corners at Caerleon, Chester, Caernarvon and Carmarthen, and west Wales and the Lleyn peninsula as areas of patrol. but the characteristic that makes the Welsh frontier unique was the fact that beyond the frontier zone there was nothing but the sea and Ireland in the distance. There was perhaps no other frontier in the whole Empire where such conditions obtained. The Welsh, alone among the Roman frontiers, faced the sea and not the enemy. The planners who designed the scheme seem to have been influenced by two ideas. The resistance of the Silures had been long and tenacious, and that pointed to the necessity for an effective occupation of the area. The plan was admirably effective for that purpose, but because they did not realise that there was no frontier to defend, they were led by military conservatism and red tape to adopt the standard form of frontier defence. The result was over-organisation and wasteful expenditure. The forts built to last for centuries were in many cases reduced to a care and maintenance basis within fifty years of their construction, because the tribes had been quieted and there was no enemy without the gates. If a select committee on public expenditure had existed in Hadrianic and Antonine Rome it would have made some pungent remarks on the waste of public money in Wales. At a later date the Irishman began to be troublesome, but a different system was necessary to deal with him. The reconstruction of Segontium and possibly of Maridunum, and the erection of the ' Saxon Shore ' type of fort at Cardiff in the fourth century are evidence of the measures taken to meet the new peril from beyond the seas. But as originally designed Roman Wales was over-fortified and over-organised. The commanders were dealing with a unique problem and they failed to recognise the fact.

CAERLEON (*Isca*)

The two great base fortresses that sustained the Welsh frontier were at Chester (*Deva*) and Caerleon (*Isca*), and they housed the Twentieth and Second Legions respectively. For practical reasons, but quite illogically, it is proposed on this occasion to omit all mention of Chester and to describe Caerleon alone.

Writers on the subject have concurred in extolling the excellent strategic position of Caerleon, but they have failed to explain its subsequent fate. Of the

CAERLEON (ISCA): GENERAL PLAN OF ROMAN LEGIONARY FORTRESS

MILL STREET

NORMAN MOTTE

TO USK

FROM PONTYPOOL

GOLDCROFT COMMON

NORTON STREET

CHURCH STREET

MUSEUM STREET

BACK HALL

CROSS STREET

CASTLE LANE

A

H

C

B

F

CHURCH

HIGH STREET

PRIORY

HIGH STREET

E

D

G

THE BROADWAY

RIVER

USK

TO NEWPORT

FROM RIVER

POOL

AMPHITHEATRE

		EXCAVATED IN	
A	BATH BUILDING	...	1849
B	CHURCHYARD	...	1908
C	JENKINS'S FIELD	...	1926 AND 1936
D	PRYSG FIELD	...	1927-9
E	SCHOOL FIELD	...	1928
	AMPHITHEATRE	...	1926-8
F	TOWN HALL FIELD	...	1930
	BROAD TOWERS SITE	...	1936
G	BROADWAY FIELD	...	1931-3
H	VINE COTTAGE SITE	...	1936

SCALE OF FEET 100 50 0 100 200 300 400 500   METRES 100 50 0 100

V. E. NASH-WILLIAMS, 1926-36.

PLATE VII. Roman legionary fortress of *Isca* at Caerleon (Mon.), general plan

From *The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon, Monmouthshire*, by V. E. Nash-Williams. By permission of the National Museum of Wales.

three legionary stations in Britain, York and Chester have continued all along to be the sites of important towns, while Caerleon has never been anything but a village. This raises an important problem which the present writer hopes to discuss on another occasion, but at present it must be passed with a mere mention. There is no doubt at all of the excellence of the strategic position of Caerleon *under the conditions that obtained in Roman times.* Situated several miles from the mouth of the Usk, but yet on the tidal waters, it was accessible to the sea and safe from it. From the far eastern end of the mountain mass of south Wales it could use two convenient roads. The southern control road passed within reach of the coast through the Vale of Glamorgan to Neath and Loughor and so to the south-western corner of the quadrilateral at Carmarthen. The northern control road passed up the Usk valley through Usk and Abergavenny to the Brecon Gaer, thence through the Trecastle gap to Llandovery in the Towy valley and so again to Carmarthen. Two switch roads, one from Cardiff and the other from Neath, to the Brecon Gaer passed right through the mountain mass and completed the design. The plan was so perfect that as far as our scanty records tell us it was never necessary to use it. Its mere existence was sufficient. But the conditions that obtained in Roman times never existed afterwards. The Roman plan assumed a strong central power directing abundant forces ; but medieval governments were weak and poor and their armies were recruited with difficulty and maintained precariously. In south Wales the king did not even employ royal forces, but relied on the interested efforts of the Marcher Lords. Caerleon was too far from the sea to be a convenient port, and so it sank insensibly into insignificance.

This great fortress, like the town of Caerwent, occupied an area of 50 acres (pl. VII). Its arrangement followed the normal plan of a legionary fortress in use generally throughout the Empire.[1] The evidence shows that it was first built about the years 75 to 80 immediately after the final defeat of the Silures by Julius Frontinus. The original construction was defined by the usual ditch and palisaded clay bank with internal buildings of wood. Shortly afterwards a bath-building and an amphitheatre were built in stone outside the enclosure, and then from about the years 100 to 110 the whole fortress was reconstructed in stone. It replaced timber in all the internal buildings, the clay bank was cut back to be backed by a stone wall, and the palisade was replaced by a rampart complete with towers and sentry walk.

The second century was marked by the construction of the two frontier walls in the north and a general withdrawal of the garrisons from Wales. The third century was marked by growing unrest throughout the Empire, and the position in Britain became sufficiently serious to necessitate the presence of

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[1] *The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon*, by V. E. Nash-Williams (National Museum of Wales). The existence of this valuable hand-book enables one to reduce the present description to a mere sketch. A similar book on Caerwent would be a precious addition to our literature.

the Emperor Septimius Severus in person. There was an overhaul and reconstruction of the Welsh forts including the two legionary stations. These facts are substantiated by the evidence of the remains from Caerleon. The second century, from about 120, was a time of decay, though part of the barrack-buildings (in the *retentura*) continued to be occupied. Early in the third century an inscribed slab of Severus records the restoration of an important structure then in ruins, and there is like evidence that about the same time the amphitheatre was extensively reconditioned, and the evidence, spasmodic as it is, attests a continued condition of activity. A century and a half after Severus a slab of the time of Valerian and Gallienus (254–260) records the building from the ground up of the barracks of the seventh cohort, and an inscription dated about 270, probably from the suburbs, specifies that one Postumius Varus, the commander of the legion and a man of senatorial rank restored the Temple of Diana. This evidence is decisive on the question of occupation. Men do not rebuild barracks from the ground nor restore temples, unless they anticipate that they and their successors will be making a long stay.

These are the latest precise dates that can be given, but it is clear that some of the central buildings were occupied up to 350, and it is quite possible that life subsisted later in the little town beyond the limits of the fortress. ' The coin evidence carries us down to the end of the fourth century and possibly beyond.' The position after the Saxon Shore system was established to meet the menace of raids from overseas is partly conjectural and partly certain. We may infer but can only conjecture that a detachment of the legion was sent to garrison the reconstructed fort at Cardiff, but in the final stage before ' the departure of the legions ' the *Notitia Dignitatum* places the Second Legion at Richborough (*Rutupiae*) in Kent, then the centre of the Saxon Shore series of forts.

A description of the fortress itself could not be made intelligible without greater detail than this paper permits, and it is the less necessary because the reader can be referred with confidence to Dr Nash-Williams' monograph supplemented by his catalogue of the Roman inscribed and sculptured stones.

THE AUXILIARY FORTS AND ROADS

We now propose to take a series of journeys round the network of forts that held the frontier region of Wales. They all conformed to a standard pattern with local variations (Fig. 11). In size they varied from about three to seven acres, according as they were intended to accommodate a cohort of auxiliary infantry or a ' wing ' of cavalry, bodies 500 or 1,000 strong. Military tradition prescribed the form of such forts which obtained throughout the frontier regions of the Empire. Facing the main internal road or *via principalis* were erected the headquarters building(*principia*), the commandant's house (*praetorium*), which was probably an officers' mess as well, and the

granaries (*horrea*), for Roman military regulations prescribed that a supply of corn sufficient to last for a year should be maintained in every fort.   In the end-spaces between the central buildings and the walls, the *praetentura* and *retentura* of the architects, were arranged the barrack-buildings that housed the garrison. The normal forts had four gates because they were constructed as bases for offensive action and not as units for passive defence.   Outside the fortified enclosure was that invariable symbol of Roman cleanliness, the bath-building.

The forts were rectangular with rounded corners.   They were contained by earthen banks, constructed round about the years 80 to 90, and usually had a berm and two V-shaped ditches beyond the bank.   At the end of the first or beginning of the second century the earthen bank was faced externally with a stone wall, which allowed the bank to be heightened to give an extended outlook and better command.   Corner towers, and often intermediate towers as well, strengthened the defences.
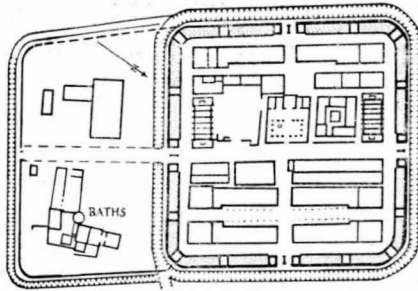
Their history as well as their construction followed a normal sequence. The first earthen defences contained timber buildings, but generally when the stone walls were added to the banks, the buildings within were likewise rebuilt in stone.   Until about the years 120 to 140 the occupation was intensive, but then the garrisons were withdrawn for the northern defences of the Hadrianic and Antonine walls.   The forts were reduced to a care and maintenance basis, though the care was often superficial and the maintenance neglected. Some were never effectively re-occupied at all. This sequence emphasises the remarks made above upon the over-elaboration of the Welsh frontier defences. Taking the Brecon Gaer as an example ; its splendid walls were built to last for centuries, parts of them have in fact lasted for two millenniums, yet the period of intensive occupation was less than fifty years.

It would be tedious, therefore, in a paper of this kind to attempt a description of each fort in detail, especially as excellent excavation reports are available, so only points of particular interest will be mentioned.

(a) *The Southern Control Road*

The road book known as the Antonine Itinerary records a route from Isca to Maridunum, but the distances given are clearly insufficient and there is strong probability that a fort has been omitted.
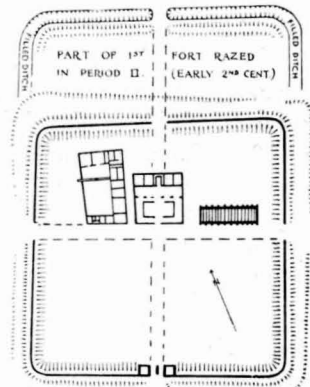
Cardiff is an undoubted Roman fort and, though not mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary, may be the *Rhato stat hybius* of Ptolemy.   The enclosure of the Roman fort was converted by the Norman invaders into the bailey of their castle and a huge rampart of earth was thrown over, and preserved, the Roman walling.   The finds have been scanty but sufficient, and some of them indicated the existence of a civil settlement to the south of the fort.   The position near the head of the tidal waters of the Taff was excellent, and indeed obvious.   The fort was almost square and contained an area of $7\frac{1}{2}$ to 8 acres. In the fourth century it was completely reconstructed with bastions on the
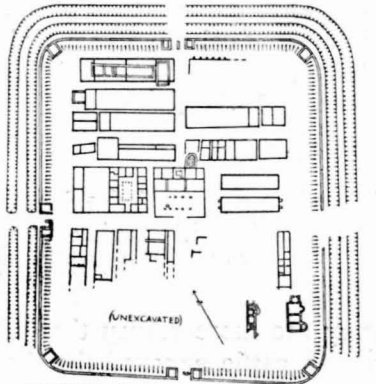
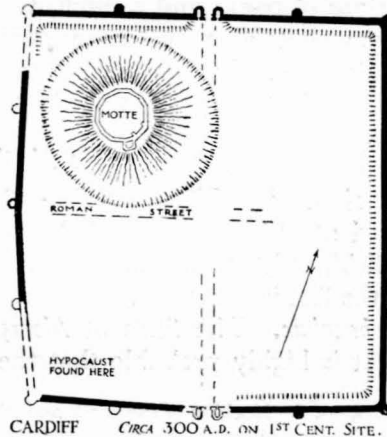GELLYGAER, GLAM. - ANNEXE, FORT and CAMP. EARLY 2ND CENTURY.

BATHS

(THIS PART NOT EXCAVATED)

BATHS
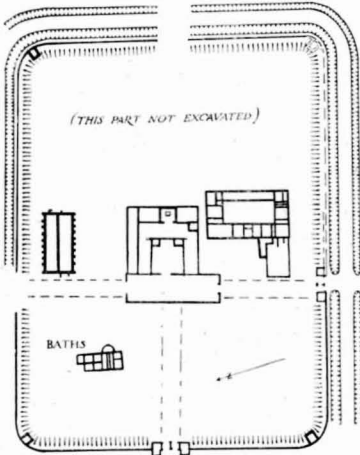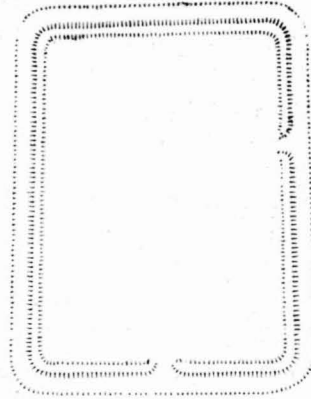
BRECON GAER. 1ST & EARLY 2ND CENTURIES

PART OF 1ST IN PERIOD II | FORT RAZED (EARLY 2ND CENT)

CASTELL COLLEN, RAD. 1ST & EARLY 2ND C.

(UNEXCAVATED)

CARNARVON (SEGONTIUM) 1ST~4TH CENTURIES.
SCALE OF FEET 0 100 200 300 400
METRES 0 50 100

MOTTE

ROMAN STREET

HYPOCAUST FOUND HERE

CARDIFF CIRCA 300 A.D. ON 1ST CENT. SITE.

Fig. 11. Roman forts in Wales. (p. 93)
(After R. E. M. Wheeler, *Prehistoric and Roman Wales*, fig. 100. By courtesy of the Clarendon Press).

lines of a Saxon Shore fort. The reduction of the number of gates to two[1] attests the adoption of a defensive strategy far removed from the offensive operations of the conquest.

The north gate with its bastions stands clearly marked, and the walls are preserved in some places to a height of sixteen feet. In Lord Bute's reconstruction every piece of the Roman walling has been preserved and stands out clearly from the modern work. It is most impressive to see the wall of a Roman fort, a fragment of a medieval town wall, and a great mound castle overlooking the busy streets of a modern industrial town.

Bomium. This is the first fort from Isca on the Antonine Itinerary but no trace of it has yet been discovered. Some years ago the present writer, led by a suggestive place name, made a preliminary excavation, but without result.

Nidum. Both the name and the direction of the converging roads make it certain that this fort was at Neath. The finds have been limited to a few coins. The castle is the most probable site but this is nothing more than a conjecture.

Leucarum. This is certainly Loughor (Llwchwr), and the most probable site that of the Norman castle adjoining the railway station.[2] The bath house was discovered when the railway was constructed and, according to Colonel Morgan, arched over and left intact under the lines of rails. Pottery, coins, and a Roman altar are strong confirmatory evidence.[3]

Maridunum. 'The existing vestiges are of the slightest,' but there is no possible site except Carmarthen for the Maridunum of Ptolemy and the Itinerary. The site is a rectangle between Priory Street and East Parade, now built over, and covered an area of about 3 acres. Upon or close to this site have been found the remains of a Roman building, faint but unmistakable indications of banks and a ditch, two altars, an inscribed stone of the fourth century, a chatelaine, and a considerable number of coins. The finds indicate occupation from the first century to the fourth. Further excavations, if they could be undertaken, might elucidate the matter further.

(b) The Northern Control Road

Burrium. 'At Usk a meeting of valleys offers a natural site for a Roman fort, and at Usk much that is Roman has been found.' This statement by Haverfield, written in 1909, still sums up our knowledge of the subject. The site of the fort is uncertain.

Gobannium. The finds at Abergavenny are more scanty than those at Usk. It is highly probable that the Norman castle annexed the site of the

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[1] Compare the blocking of the north and south gates at Caerwent.

[2] The Normans liked to adapt Roman forts, *e.g.* Caerleon, Cardiff, possibly Neath, Abergavenny, Tomen-y-Mur, and so on, though Tomen-y-Mur was probably a Welsh imitation of a Norman motte.

[3] For some unknown reason the map in the *History of Carmarthenshire* makes the conjectural Roman road from Carmarthen to Neath follow the modern road and cross the Loughor river at Pontardulais, thus leaving out Loughor altogether. The text gives no explanation of this aberration,

fort and obliterated it, but, though the evidence is slight, no other site can be suggested for Gobannium. The route of the Itinerary now proceeds to Kenchester (*Magna*) on its way to Wroxeter (*Viroconium*), but our control road diverges up the Usk valley.

The Gaer in Cwmdu. This site is in the Rhiangoll valley between Tretower and Bwlch. It was described in Jones' *Brecknockshire*, but Haverfield expressed doubts of its Roman origin, and it has not been marked on the O.S. map of Roman Britain. The present writer found Roman roofing-tiles on the site and is preparing a short paper on the subject. It may have been a posting station rather than a fort, but the evidence of its Roman character is strong, much stronger, except for the name, than that for Abergavenny.

The Brecon Gaer. Here we have one of the most famous of all the Roman forts in Wales. Moreover it was fully excavated by Mortimer Wheeler in 1924 and 1925 and described by him in an admirable memoir.[1] It is situated 3 miles west of Brecon, on the slope of a hill overlooking the confluence of the Yscir and the Usk. The dimensions of the fort were 460 by 630 feet and its area slightly less than 7 acres. It was occupied for a time at least by a regiment (*ala*) of Vettonian Spanish cavalry.

A most conspicuous feature was the bold external projection of the western gateway. Wheeler could find no other certain example of this in Britain, and was obliged to travel as far as Africa to find analogies. He concluded that it was an architectural flourish rather than a tactical feature, and he proceeded to make some extremely valuable remarks on the evolution of Roman military architecture, which unfortunately cannot be repeated here.

A most unusual feature was a bath building *within* the fort, but that was probably erected when it was manned by a caretaker garrison. Still more unusual were the larger buildings outside, discovered almost by accident. Their purpose is a matter of guesswork, but they are demonstrably contemporary with the period of intensive occupation of the main fort. The Gaer was an important road junction, and perhaps a guest house is as good a suggestion as any.

Y Pigwn. Passing from the Brecon Gaer towards Llandovery on the 'commanding but inhospitable' slopes of Trecastle mountain are two large Roman earthworks, one within the other. There is no question of their Roman character, and they have no relation at all to the series of permanent forts. They are of large size nearly 37 and 24 acres respectively, so that the forces that occupied them were of legionary strength. The banks are scarcely 18 inches high. Probably they represent two moments in the first conquest of Wales, and their preservation is due to the fact that the barren summit, 1,350 feet above sea-level, has never been ploughed.

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[1] *The Roman Fort near Brecon* (= *Y Cymmrodor*, xxxvii (1926)). Curiously enough the Gaer was not mentioned by Horsley, nor in Camden before Gibson's edition.

Llandovery. Enclosing the church of Llanfair-ar-y-bryn, about half-a-mile north of Llandovery, is a typical Roman rectangular earthwork. It has suffered to some extent from ploughing, but the finds that have been made, and for the most part lost, from time to time, and its character are sufficient evidence of Roman origin. The fort contained an area of about 5 acres. It competes with Llanio for the honour of being the *Luentium* or *Loventium* of Ptolemy.

A road to Carmarthen from here must have existed but its course is conjectural.

(c) *The South Wales Switch Roads*

The existence of the two switch roads traversing the heart of the mountain mass marks the essential difference between the Roman conquest of South Wales backed by a strong central power, and the Norman Conquest effected by private adventurers acting under the nominal permission of a weak central government. Both roads were directed to the Brecon Gaer, the western from Neath and the eastern from Cardiff. On the western road was one intermediate fort.

Coelbren. This fort was situated half way between Neath and Brecon, 12 miles from Neath and 14 from Brecon. It is about half-a-mile from Coelbren railway station. It was excavated by Colonel Morgan in 1904. Its area was nearly 5 acres, and it stood at a height of 730 feet above sea-level. No trace of stone buildings was discovered, and the fort was constructed of an earthen rampart laid on timber foundations, with double ditches beyond the rampart. The few finds pointed to a first century date and an early abandonment.

On the eastern switch road were two forts that may have been either contemporary or successive.

Gelligaer. As has already been noted, this was the site of the first full-scale excavation of a Roman fort in Wales. It was nearly square with an internal area of just under 3 acres, and an ample bath building outside. The rampart was of earth faced with masonry on both sides, an interesting mark of the gradual transition from earthwork to stone building. The internal buildings were entirely of stone, and there was no evidence at all that they had replaced previous buildings of wood. The finds pointed to a building very early in the second century, and to an occupation that ended at the latest about 140 and possibly earlier. Gelligaer was later than most of the other Welsh forts and had an extremely short life. No direct evidence was discovered as to its occupants, but the inclusion in the plan of six barrack-buildings and another building possibly identifiable as a stables would seem to suggest that it was garrisoned by a cohort of mixed infantry and cavalry 500 strong.

An earthen camp in the immediate vicinity of the fort was probably erected to house the builders during its construction.

Penydaren. This fort lies on a spur of ground above the town of Merthyr Tydfil in the park of Penydaren house. Finds were made in the eighteenth century and the construction of a new football ground in 1902 was the occasion of some excavations.

The small finds, which included much pottery but only two coins, pointed to a date for its erection about 85, with nothing later than the first years of the second century. This contrasts significantly with Gelligaer, and Haverfield postulated the conjecture that they were successive, *i.e.* that Penydaren was abandoned when Gelligaer was erected. This suggestion is supported by the apparent substitution of one Roman road for another.[1] His interesting argument cannot be elaborated here, but he concludes, ' the one fact before us at present is that the Gelligaer road and the Penydaren fort cannot easily be brought into satisfactory geographical relationship.'

(d) *The Western Road*

A road must have run from *Maridunum* to *Segontium* and *Kanovium*, and sections of it are certain. The road was designed as part of the frontier system and has no definite relation with the coast. Before following it we may just mention an outpost in Pembrokeshire.

Castle Flemish. This little earthwork straddles the boundaries between the parishes of Ambleston and Castlebythe. It stands at an elevation of 500 feet in an open position except towards the north. It forms an irregular quadrangle with straight sides and rounded corners and covers an area of about 2 acres. In three December days in 1922 Mortimer Wheeler carried out a trial excavation. The finds were few but sufficient. They suggested a date not later than the period of Hadrian and possibly earlier. There was no trace at all of building in stone. An outpost beyond the line of forts for a frontier patrol or a police headquarters, seem to be the most likely suggestions of its purpose.

Llanio. The course of the road traversing the Carmarthenshire hills and hence leading up the Teifi valley from Carmarthen to Llanio is uncertain, though the one from Llandovery past Dolau Cothi is more definite. The fort of Llanio was situated near their junction, about 3 miles south of Tregaron. No vestige of it remains, but a bath house situated between the fort and the river was partially excavated in 1887 and left exposed. Five inscribed stones make the existence of the fort a certainty. One refers to the Second Cohort of Asturians, and three others are centurial stones. A straight stretch of road for some 9 miles northward from Llanio is undoubtedly Roman.

Pennal. The site of this fort overlooking the tidal waters of the Dovey is ' such as Roman soldiers loved,' and though there are few surface indications visible to-day, and no excavations of any importance have been made, it

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[1] Haverfield, *op. cit.* pp. 96–7.

would be unreasonable scepticism to reject the recorded evidence of a quantity of finds and visible remains. It can be accepted as the site of a Roman fort.

Tomen-y-Mur. There is no doubt at all about this fort situated in the parish of Maentwrog in Merioneth.   It is on a most exposed site just above the 900-foot contour, 2 miles north of Trawsfynydd, and built on a layer of glacial drift.   Sporadic and incomplete excavations have been undertaken, and the destruction of the masonry to provide material for field walls has continued up to the present time.   The fort was of normal character, but among its unusual features are the mutilated remains of an amphitheatre.   This is said to be the only example of its kind attached to an auxiliary fort, but life in this lonely, cold and exposed place may have made some form of amusement essential. Another is a curious rectangular enclosure which has been conjectured to be an unfinished scheme for levelling a parade ground.   A third is a set of seven barrows stated to be of Roman date.

The inscribed stones make an impressive showing as there are nine of them, the largest number found on any Welsh auxiliary fort.   Eight are centurial stones, and the ninth is a mere fragment of an inscription in good lettering set in a frame.

Caer Llugwy.   This is the name given by its excavator to a fort and annexe on the farm of Bryn-y-Gefeiliau (' the hill of the smithies ') between Bettws-y-coed and Capel Curig.[1]   In 1920 and 1922, excavations, incomplete, but thorough as far as they went, were carried out by J. P. Hall and W. J. Hemp. The fort resembles Gelligaer closely both in its constructions and in its dating, though the masonry at Caer Llugwy is much rougher, and does not show the finish of legionary craftsmanship.   No evidence was recovered in the trial excavations as to the identity of the garrison.   One interesting feature was the existence of ancient, and probably Roman lead-workings near Pont-ty-Hyll close to the fort.

It seems to be clear that the western road bifurcated at Tomen-y-Mur, and that one branch went by way of Caer Llugwy to Caerhun and the other past Beddgelert to Caernarvon.

(e) *The Northern Road*

Segontium is the subject of one of the most vivid and inspiring memoirs ever written upon an archaeological site—R. E. M. Wheeler's *Segontium and the Roman Occupation of Wales* (1924). It shares the fortune of Caerleon in having a special museum upon its site.   As the north-western corner of the main frontier quadrilateral its position was of special significance and its history is equally so.   It began after the manner of the other Welsh forts with an earthen bank and timber buildings constructed about the year 75, then in the early years of the second century came the reconstruction in stone, and from about 120 it was abandoned, at least partially.   But under Severus

[1] *Caer Llugwy*, by J. P. Hall.   Ed. by F. A. Bruton (Manchester), 1923.

in the early years of the third century Segontium, with the legionary bases and a few of the lesser forts, was reconstructed. It is noteworthy that at this time the administrative quarters were enlarged, and rendered more comfortable by the addition of a heated room. This re-occupation continued during the greater part of the third century, but about 290 there was a complete evacuation and partial destruction. Finally, between 350 and 365 yet another rebuilding took place, which can clearly be equated with the creation of the fourth century Saxon Shore fort at Cardiff. About 380 or 390 the occupation also ceased and this time the abandonment was final. Roman Britain was ending.

Kanovium (Caerhun) is 21½ miles east of Segontium and was planned to command the tidal estuary of the Conway. It is situated on an open site well above the river, and a little below the junction of a small tributary. The bath building between the fort and the river was excavated by Samuel Lysons in 1801 and recorded in *Archaeologia*, and between 1926 and 1929 the fort was excavated fully by P. K. Baillie Reynolds. There has never been any doubt about it at all and its successive owners have guarded the site jealously. Its history was that of the Welsh forts during their first two periods, *i.e.* the original building in earth and timber in the first century, and the stone reconstruction early in the second. Then there was the removal of the garrison between 120 and 140 with some deliberate dismantlement, but no subsequent re-occupation in force. No indication of the name of the garrison unit was discovered. Interesting features of Caerhun were the existence of a civilian settlement of a very primitive character adjacent to the fort and occupied at the same time, and the existence of a dock on the tidal river which was probably contemporary with the Roman occupation.

Varae, according to the Antonine Itinerary, was 18 Roman miles from *Kanovium*. Antiquaries have been guessing at its position for centuries, and no certainty has yet been attained. It is highly probable that the site was at St. Asaph in the Clwyd valley, but more cannot be said. From *Varae* to *Deva* (Chester) the distance was 32 Roman miles.

(f) *The Mid-Wales Forts*

We have now traversed three sides of the outer perimeter of the Welsh frontier system, as well as the South Wales switch roads. *Deva* we propose to leave aside on this occasion, and the roads connecting the two bases of *Isca* and *Deva* are for the most part beyond Offa's Dyke—' the boundary line of Cymry.' It remains therefore to mention the forts within the outer line.

The upper Severn valley is an obvious line of entry into the mountain mass, utilized alike by the Iron Age people, and the Romans.

The Forden Gaer[1] occupies an obvious strategic point on the road from Wroxeter, as it overlooks the ford of Montgomery, so notorious in medieval

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[1] The site is named *Caer Flos* on the older O.S. maps. Sir John E. Lloyd gives an amusing account of the origin of the mistake in his lecture, ' Wales and the Past. Two Voices,' p. 13.

times. Partial excavations were carried out in the years 1927 to 1929 by F. N. Pryce, for the Powysland Club. The results were quite unexpected. The finds indicated an occupation, possibly as a halting camp, at the time of the first conquest (*circa* 75), but it lasted for a short time only, and seems to have ended in a fire. The Hadrianic period provided evidence of increasing occupation when the garrisons of the other Welsh forts were being withdrawn. In the Antonine period (*circa* 160) it was rebuilt with a turf and clay bank of large dimensions but no walls of stone. The occupation was intensive into the reign of Severus (died 211) when another reconstruction took place apparently after another fire, and the coin-series indicated that some garrison was maintained there as late as 380. These conclusions are tentative and await a complete excavation. No other site would provide more material for the history of Roman Wales.

Caersws was excavated by R. C. Bosanquet in 1909, but as T. Davies Pryce wrote in 1932, ' the full account is yet to come.' Unfortunately it has never appeared, and the fullest description is a paper by Pryce in the *Montgomeryshire Collections* for 1932. Caersws may claim to be the strategic centre of mid-Wales, for there is no other place at which so many roads meet. The story of the fort itself may be called normal. It was originally an earthen fort of the ' conquest ' type, about 6½ acres in extent, and capable therefore of accommodating a cohort of the largest size. The rampart was faced with stone, and the central buildings reconstructed in stone at the beginning of the second century. The garrison was reduced about 120, though there was evidence of occupation to the end of the century. The bath house between the fort and the river was excavated inadequately in 1854, and is now surmounted incongruously by the railway goods shed. Considerable evidence of a civil settlement was discovered during the excavations. No evidence was recovered of the name of the unit that garrisoned the fort.

Castell Collen, on the river Ithon, a tributary of the Wye, ' looks across the water to all unconscious Llandrindod Wells, a mile away to the south.' It seems isolated, as the roads leading to it are conjectural, but it must have been connected with Llandovery and Caersws, and possibly also with the town of *Bravinium* at Leintwardine. It was a first century fort and occupied at least to the end of the third century. The usual stone reconstruction took place early in the second century, when the rampart was faced with stone and the central buildings, but not the barracks, rebuilt in the same material.

The most interesting feature of this site was the reduction in the area of the fort, and it was conjectured that this reduction was contemporary with the rebuilding in the time of Trajan. Eric Birley, however, has given cogent reasons for attributing the reduction to a later period, possibly in the reign of Severus ; but the question can only be settled by further excavation.[1]

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[1] Eric Birley, ' Three Notes on Roman Wales,' *Arch. Camb.*, 1936, p. 81.

Caer Gai is situated near the western end of Lake Bala, above the 600-foot contour in a striking position. It is one of the smaller forts, just 4 acres in area. It has never been excavated, but there is no doubt whatever of its Roman origin. There have been some small finds, but the most distinctive was a votive or sepulchral stone with a good inscription, which indicates that at some time or other the fort was garrisoned by the First Cohort of the Nervii.

The roads leading to it are entirely conjectural, but it is probable that it was connected both with Tomen-y-Mur and with Chester. It is distinctly curious that the whole Dee valley seems to be void of Roman remains from the neighbourhood of Chester until one arrives at this little fort near its source. It may have been deeply forested and practically uninhabited at that time.

(g) *The Fortlets*

This concludes our itinerary of the Welsh forts, but a few small stations are worthy of mention, in addition to Castle Flemish already referred to. The little fort between the main fortress and the river at Caernarvon and the fort of Caer Gybi at Holyhead are each just about an acre in extent, and are most easily explained as shelters for the coastal patrols watching to intercept Irish invaders in the last days of Roman rule. The Roman station at Prestatyn discovered in 1933 possessed a defensive ditch, but may have been a civil settlement of some kind. It appears to have been occupied from the second to the fourth century.[1]

Y Gaer in the parish of Llanfair Caereinion is a little camp less than half an acre in area, but its construction and the few small finds place its Roman character beyond doubt. A similar camp of the same name in the parish of Carno is in all probability also Roman. The 18 tiny camps on Llandrindod common measured and mapped in 1811 but now destroyed completely are conjectured by Birley to have been exercises in army training.[2] The earthwork known as Caer Gaer is in the parish of Llangurig, above the river Tarenig before its junction with the Wye. It stands at a height of about 1,250 feet. Trial excavations were carried out in 1913. Two gateways were indicated by post-holes, and these coupled with the rectangular form of the banks indicated a Roman origin. The finds were negligible. It was probably erected and used for an early and forgotten campaign. At Painscastle, near Clyro, the earthwork known as the Gaer is rectangular and almost square. It covers an area of 20 acres and is conjectured to be an expeditionary camp of the class of Y Pigwn.

(h) *The Roads*

The subject of the Roman roads is one upon which speculation has run riot, and ascertained fact is correspondingly scarce. The older O.S. maps

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[1] R. Newstead, ' The Roman Station at Prestatyn,' *Arch. Camb.*, 1937, p. 208 ; 1938, p. 175.

[2] E. Birley, *loc. cit.* p. 69.

are peppered with Roman roads which embody the imaginings of local antiquaries before the Survey possessed an archaeological department.   It is to be hoped that later revisions will remove most of them.   The Sarn Helen running for about 8 miles north from Llanio can be regarded as a certainty, and so can another Sarn Helen running across the Glamorgan hills in the neighbour-hood of Coelbren, and many others are of high probability.   There are useful remarks in many of the monographs dealing with particular sites, but in the main no substantial advance in our knowledge has been made since Codrington published the third edition of *Roman Roads in Britain* in 1918.   The word that occurs most often in the small section of that work devoted to Wales is ' supposed.'   A scientific study of some, if not all, of the Roman roads is a thing greatly to be desired.   H. J. RANDALL.