

CALSTOCK ROMAN FORT & MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT

Archaeological Investigations 2007–2023



Chris Smart

This booklet has been published by the Department of Archaeology and History at the University of Exeter as part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund project Understanding Landscapes. It is a revised and extended edition of a booklet first published in 2013 by the Tamar Valley AONB (now Tamar Valley National Landscape) as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund-supported Calstock Parish Heritage Project. It presents a compilation of information obtained from seventeen years of archaeological research (2007–2023) at the site, led by the author. Much of the information about pottery and finds, and environmental remains, is synthesised from the work of experts in those fields. The investigation of Calstock Roman fort has been made possible by grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Calstock Parish Council, Historic England, Leverhulme Trust, University of Exeter, Tamar Valley AONB, Calstock Local History Society, Cornwall Archaeological Society, Saltash Heritage, and donations by private benefactors. The excavations would not have been possible without the many thousands of hours contributed by volunteers, to whom this work is indebted. The fort site is situated on private farmland and consecrated ground. If visiting the site, please show respect when walking around the cemeteries, and do not trespass into the surrounding fields.

Written by Dr Chris Smart © 2024

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Front cover: A view looking west over the site, taken during the 2021 Community Excavation, showing St Andrew's Church and the landscape beyond. Archaeologists and volunteers working in this trench were uncovering remains of one of the fort's barrack blocks, and the eastern defences.

Photo: © John Motch



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THE LIE OF THE LAND	2
AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY	4
REMOTE SENSING	6
DIGGING FOR ANSWERS	8
BEFORE THE ROMANS: PREHISTORIC ACTIVITY	10
THE ROMAN ARMY ARRIVES	12
BUILT FACING THE ENEMY	14
ROMAN ROADS	16
AN IMPENETRABLE DEFENCE	18
LIFE INSIDE	20
ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY	22
MINERALS AND MINING	24
REGIONAL, NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL: ROMAN POTTERY USED AT CALSTOCK	26
DEPARTURE FOR THE NORTH	28
LATER OCCUPATION	29
MEDIEVAL CALSTOCK	30
POST-MEDIEVAL CALSTOCK	32
EXPLORING THE WIDER LANDSCAPE	34
RESEARCHING THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE: ACCESSIBLE RESOURCES	38

CONTENTS

THE LIE OF THE LAND



Looking north over Calstock. The present village, famous for its viaduct, has grown alongside the River Tamar but the parish church sits on the hill above.

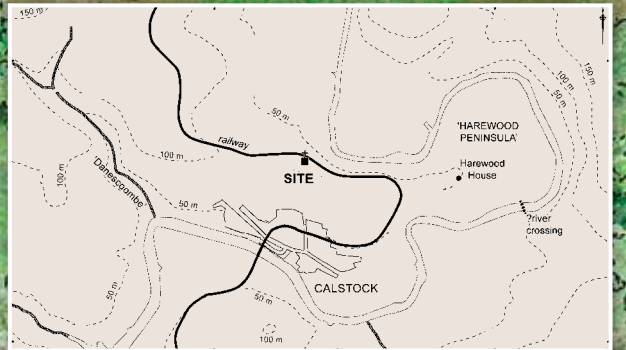
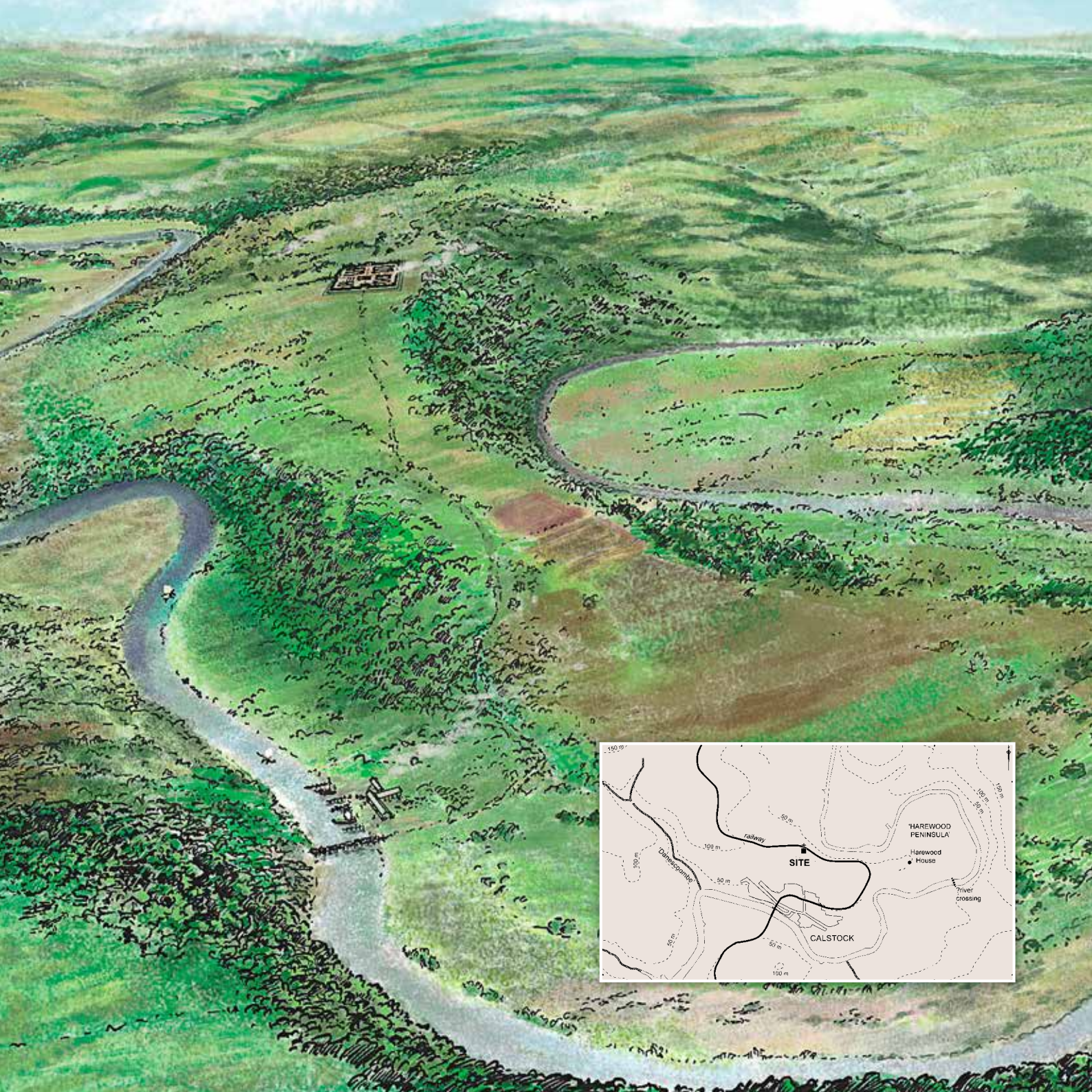
© Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2008; F83-107

The remains of Calstock Roman fort lie buried beneath St Andrew's Church and surrounding fields, on the northern outskirts of the historic riverside village of Calstock, in the Tamar Valley, South East Cornwall. The site is located twenty five kilometres upstream of Plymouth Sound at the present tidal and navigable limits of the River Tamar, south-west of Tavistock, Devon, and east of Kit Hill and Hingston Down. It occupies an elevated position on a prominent east-west ridge, between eighty and one hundred metres above sea level, and has commanding views across the surrounding countryside. This natural promontory is underlain by greenish-grey slates of the Upper Devonian period, with an intrusion of Lower Carboniferous sandstone forming a distinct scarp across the south-facing slope. Today, much of the local countryside is laid to pasture, which benefits from the free-draining loam soils.

The geological formation has forced the River Tamar to follow a distinctive loop in its north-south course. On its northern side, the ridge drops abruptly through woodland and rough pasture to the Tamar. To the south, the ground breaks into a steep slope towards Calstock village. The ridge has a gradual decline that begins near the hamlet of Albaston in the west, and reaches the Tamar at the end of the Harewood peninsula, two kilometres east of the parish church. Although the river is closer both to the north and south of the site, the eastward axis presents the least precipitous route to the river.

Opposite: An artist's impression of the Harewood peninsula, looking west, showing Calstock Roman fort in the middle distance. The hilltop was already cleared of woodland before the arrival of the Roman army, but the extent of native occupation in this region is poorly understood.

Illustration by Mike Rouillard



AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY



St Andrew's Church, Calstock. The earliest part of the present building – the nave – dates to the 14th century, but it is likely that a church existed here before that time. The church and its burial grounds lie on part of the Roman fort.

Opposite: The Roman fort was built upon a prominent ridge overlooking the Tamar Valley and would have occupied the skyline that, today, is dominated by the church tower.

Until 2007, nothing was known about the significance of this hilltop, or of any of the archaeological remains that are present, other than the curiosity that the medieval parish church sat detached from Calstock village. The Roman fort was an unexpected discovery made during a University of Exeter research project investigating the medieval silver mines of the Bere Ferrers peninsula, located on the opposite side of the River Tamar, in Devon. The 'Bere Ferrers Project' took a multidisciplinary archaeological and historical approach to investigate the royal silver mines, which were first opened in about AD 1292 under the reign of Edward I, and saw exploitation until the late fifteenth century AD. But why did this lead to an investigation of a remote part of Calstock, on the other side of the county boundary between Devon and Cornwall?

Late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Crown wage rolls and production accounts, exceptional in their survival, show that silver mined on the Devon side of the River Tamar was transported to Calstock for processing, as woodland there owned by the King was allocated for fuel. The documents suggest that not only did smelting occur near to the parish church, but that a ditched and banked enclosure provided security to the administration of the industry, and contained a two-storey 'King's Hall' with tiled roof, plastered and thatched buildings, a silver refinery, a smithy, stores and stables, amongst other buildings. It was built in the vicinity in about AD 1301, and lasted there until AD 1313/14. In the autumn of 2007, a geophysical survey was conducted in open pasture south of the church in search of this site. The results came as something of a shock, but not a disappointment – not a medieval industrial centre, but instead the outline of a large Roman fort.



REMOTE SENSING



Geophysical survey of the fields below the church revealed the plan of the fort's southern half and a myriad of other archaeological features.



Upon excavation, one geophysical anomaly proved to be the remains of a medieval stone bank that, 1000 years after the Roman army departed, enclosed part of the hilltop.

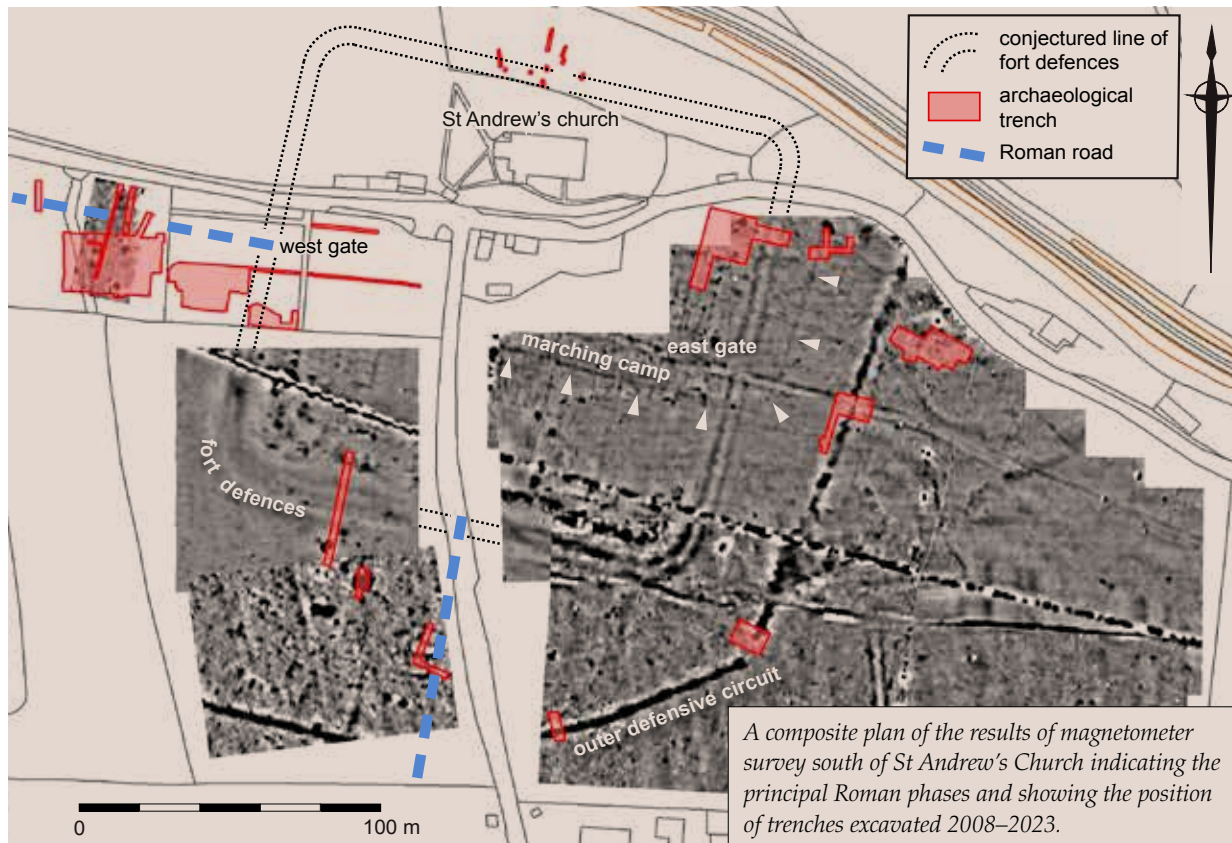
A crucial component of the archaeologist's arsenal of investigative tools is geophysical survey – a coverall term for a suite of non-intrusive survey methods that can identify and characterise buried remains. There are two principle types employed in the field, one being electrical resistivity, the basic principle of which is to measure the impedance of an electrical current passed through the ground between probes. Stone walls, for example, will restrict a flow of current, whilst a moist soil-filled ditch will aid conduction. Limited areas of electrical resistivity survey have been completed, but as the majority of features associated with the occupation of the hilltop are not stone-built, another technique, magnetic survey, has been widely used. A magnetometer detects variations in the strength and direction of the Earth's magnetic field, which can be altered through human action – the digging of holes and ditches or the heating of materials – of which there is plentiful evidence at the site of Calstock fort.

The two fields south of St Andrew's Church, either side of Church Hill, as well as land west of the current parish cemetery, have been surveyed in detail using a magnetometer, producing an image of what lies beneath, with the dark lines and 'blobs' relating to features dug into the ground – ditches, postholes and pits – and the lighter features showing areas of stonework or rubble. There is very little of the latter, but anomalies showing as a dark 'blob' with a light 'halo' are the signature of intense burning associated with ovens, hearths, and furnaces. The survey plot has enabled archaeologists to map out the buried remains. The southern half of the square Roman fort is clear to see, straddling both fields, along with rectilinear arrangements of foundation trenches for barrack blocks and the granary within, as well as a bank of ovens built behind the rampart. There is widespread activity outside of the defences, including domestic occupation and craft activity. There are also faint traces of a temporary marching camp, built before the permanent fort during the earliest military

One anomaly outside of the fort was revealed to be an iron smithing hearth that was in use during the 1st century AD. The intense heating has altered the natural ground, which was left hard and reddened.



incursions across the Tamar. A much larger enclosure ditch runs to the east and south of the fort and likely continued beyond the area surveyed to form a complete circuit, but the origin of this is curious. It sits awkwardly in relation to the fort's main gateways, blocking direct access and appears to have been dug by the Roman army to provide a second line of defence, enclosing all of the occupation and activity outside of the fort. Whatever the threat, with time the need for this defence waned and the ditch was filled in with rubbish generated by the army.



DIGGING FOR ANSWERS



Community excavations provided training for local volunteers in how to excavate, record and, crucially, discuss archaeology, as here in 2021.



Filming in the 'Dig HQ' tent for The Great British Dig, 2023.

Opposite: A small army of volunteers peeling back the final layers of topsoil to reveal the buried archaeology at the start of the 2019 community excavation.

There have been eight seasons of excavation at Calstock Roman fort. The first was an evaluation – a 'test' trench - in 2008, which intended to confirm the character of the geophysical anomalies; it was positioned to investigate the construction of the defences and to ascertain the nature and date of a suspected metal-working furnace on the southern side of the fort. A second season of open area excavation and evaluation trenching, funded by Historic England, was undertaken in 2009 in response to future destruction of archaeological remains by burials in unused areas of the civic parish cemetery.

A third investigation during 2010 consisted of a small trench positioned to investigate a large enclosure surrounding the fort. In 2011 the team welcomed the first public volunteers to excavate at the site, as part of the Calstock Parish Heritage Project, run by the then Tamar Valley AONB and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. These early excavations provided a tantalising glimpse of the archaeological potential of the site, and clear evidence that the local community embraced its investigation, including taking part themselves. This inspired a successful application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a longer project, Understanding Landscapes, which ran between 2017 and 2024. As part of that project there were four community excavations. In 2019, the team excavated an area outside the west gate of the fort, revealing evidence for a Roman road, timber buildings, and mineral prospectation. In 2021, and making up for a year lost to the Covid-19 pandemic, three large trenches were dug, one exploring a barrack block within the fort, one the entrance into the large enclosure that surrounds the fort, and one a circular ditch visible on the magnetic survey to the east of the fort. In 2022, the community excavation featured as part of the Channel 4 television programme *The Great British Dig*, and trenches were excavated to investigate activity outside of the fort, on the south and west sides.



The last excavation prior to the publication of this booklet took place in 2023, when a team of intrepid volunteers hand-dug trenches in the wooded slope north of St Andrew's Church in hope of finally pinpointing the exact line of the fort's northern defences – which they did!

But why do archaeologists do this? Careful excavation by hand, recovering artefacts and recording the archaeological features and deposits – ditches, pits, structural remains, as well as layers of debris from occupation – allows the subtle nuances of activity

to be discerned and a chronology of site use to be formed. Despite the many months that have so far been spent excavating, less than 1% of the archaeological complex has been investigated, and many questions remain unanswered. The physical record of the various archaeological investigations, the paperwork, drawings, photographs, specialist reports, and finds, are all preserved for study by future generations, and these are held in store at the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro.

BEFORE THE ROMANS: PREHISTORIC ACTIVITY



Adjoining fragments of Bronze Age Beaker pottery c. 2100 BC, were found in a small pit. The vessel has impressed decoration made using a comb and with the potter's finger nails.

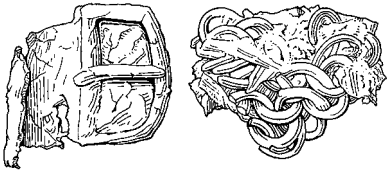
Opposite: A community excavation in 2011 gave local residents their first opportunity to excavate at the site; this work inspired the return of community excavations in 2019–2023.

The sheer scale of the Roman fort at Calstock, the diversity of imported goods found there, and the gravitas of the Roman Empire, may steer archaeological attention towards that period in the history of the hilltop, and that alone, but it was not a virgin landscape; excavation has shown there to be 4000 years of history buried beneath St Andrew's Church and the fields that surround it.

In 2011, a small team of archaeologists and community volunteers peeled back the topsoil in the field south-east of the church to reveal three small pits, no more than 30cm in diameter and grouped closely together. Later human activity, including centuries of agricultural use, had truncated these so that only the lower parts – no more than 15cm – survive. Nevertheless, these ephemeral features yielded evidence for activity at the end of the 3rd millennium BC, during the Early Bronze Age. The fragmentary remains of a pottery vessel, probably made locally and decorated with an incised chevron pattern, was found in a pit along with charred hazelnut shells. Evidence from across Britain suggests that nuts were an important source of calories and protein, and here they provide a useful indicator of local hazel woodland, perhaps growing along the wetland edge of the tidal Tamar. Finds of this date are scarce in the lowlands of this region, particularly those of a domestic nature. Funerary monuments – the burial mounds – of these communities survive on the exposed moors, and examples of Neolithic and Bronze Age date have been recorded on Kit Hill and Hingston Down, where they served as prominent features in the landscape, perhaps demarcating territories. On lower ground, a Bronze Age Beaker within a cist was exposed in a field at Harrowbarrow, only a short distance from Calstock, and further discoveries may increase understanding of the extent of prehistoric occupation, and of the relationship between the living and the dead.



THE ROMAN ARMY ARRIVES



Finds of metalwork are rare – these often corrode – but parts of the Roman military dress, including buckles and ring-mail armour, have been found at Calstock.

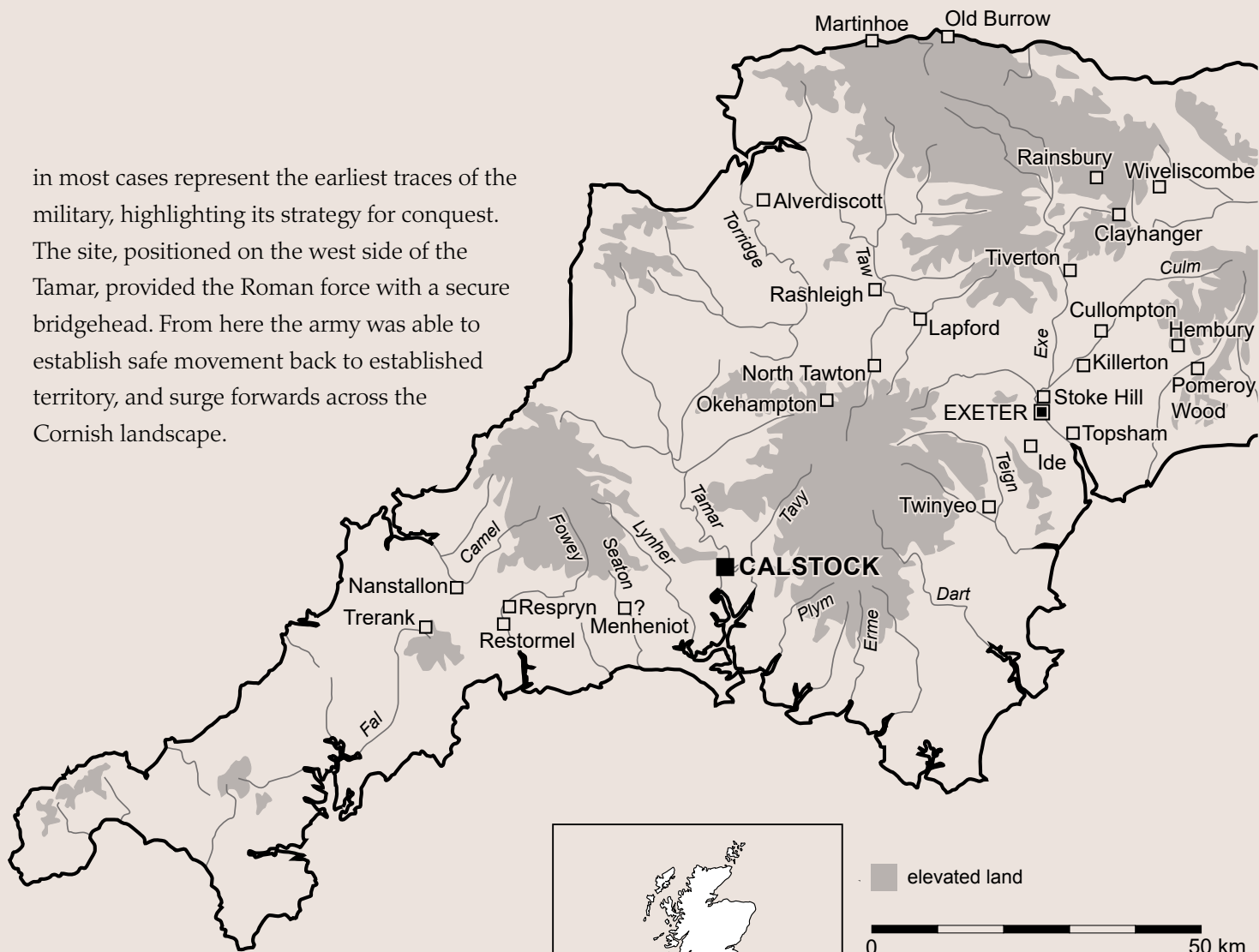


Re-enactors show attire as it would have appeared in the 1st century AD. On the left we see an auxiliary soldier, a lower-order conscript, and on the right, a legionary.

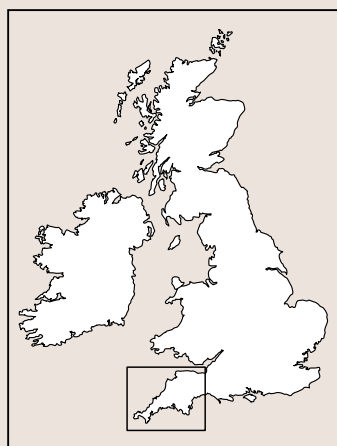
In AD 43, twenty-thousand men landed on the South Coast, probably in Kent. This was the Roman invasion of Britain, finally achieved under the authority of Emperor Claudius. The invasionary force was grouped into four Legions, each of five thousand soldiers, who, within three or four years, had subjugated much of lowland Britain. The Legions were supported by auxiliary units – troops that did not hold the status of citizens of Rome and whom hailed from provinces across the Roman Empire. Vespasian, who in AD 69 became Emperor himself, commanded the Second Augustan Legion (*Legio II Augusta*) as it fought battles across the south, finally advancing on the Iron Age Dumnonii peoples, in what is now Devon and Cornwall, by the end of the decade. Archaeological evidence suggests that a Legionary fortress had been established at Exeter between AD 50 and 55, although temporary camps and auxiliary forts may have been founded before this date, during the campaigns to conquer the South West. Of the dozens of auxiliary units that served in Roman Britain, we do not have concrete evidence for which ones were based in the South West in the second half of the first century AD, though excavations in the front range of barracks at Calstock suggest that it was probably a part-mounted unit with a mixture of cavalry and infantry – a *cohors equitata*.

A network of earth and timber-built forts were built at strategic points, often controlling crossings of principal rivers, across the region, and although not all were necessarily built at the same time, many show evidence of a broadly similar period of occupation. Some sites, such as that overlooking the River Taw at North Tawton, have a complex history of military use, with multiple phases of rebuilding and remodelling during the thirty years that the army were present within the region. Excavation at Calstock suggests that the Roman army had founded its permanent fort there by about AD 50, but probably not before. The ‘marching’ camps identified at a number of these sites, including Calstock, were built rapidly by the army as it pushed forwards to make new gains, and

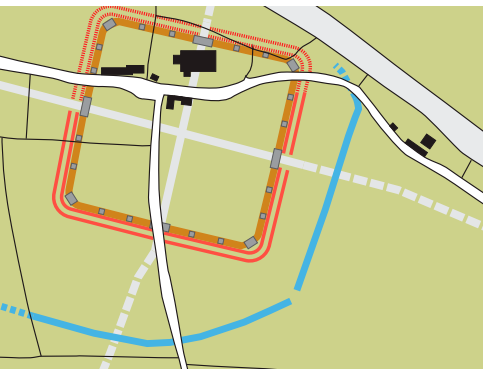
in most cases represent the earliest traces of the military, highlighting its strategy for conquest. The site, positioned on the west side of the Tamar, provided the Roman force with a secure bridgehead. From here the army was able to establish safe movement back to established territory, and surge forwards across the Cornish landscape.



A map showing the location of Calstock in relation to other Roman military sites – temporary camps, permanent forts, and the legionary fortress at Exeter – in South West Britain. Most controlled historically-important river crossings. The gaps in the distribution – notably those in the south of Devon and the far west of Cornwall – may not reflect the overall number and further discoveries may yet be made.



BUILT FACING THE ENEMY



The Roman fort (red), with gates and watchtowers, was crossed by two main streets. The surrounding enclosure (blue) may have Iron Age origins. The church, buildings and present fields (black) give a sense of scale.



In 2022, a trench dug through the road revealed the various layers of foundation stone and fine metalling that it comprised. The strong orange-brown soil beneath this represents the pre-Roman land surface.

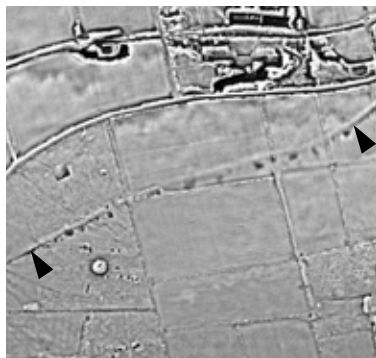
The fort at Calstock is square in plan, measuring 170m along each axis, rather than rectangular. A 'playing card' shape was normal for auxiliary forts in Devon, such as Bolham near Tiverton and North Tawton, so in this regard it is interesting to note that the square plan of Calstock, as well as the two smaller forts in Cornwall, at Restormel, near Lostwithiel, and Nanstallon, near Bodmin. The reasons for this architectural difference are not clear, and not only could it be linked to topography, function and garrison size, but it may also suggest that individual units within a legion had a preferred 'blue print' for the forts that they built. The pottery evidence – discussed later in this booklet – suggests the transfer of auxiliary soldiers attached to *Legio II Augusta* direct to Scotland, where similar square-plan forts are also found.

The distinct meander in the River Tamar and the steep slopes to the north and south provide a natural defence, which was an ideal site to establish a fort, protecting the lowest crossing point and highest navigable reaches of the river. The fort was built to face the enemy and the direction of advance, meaning that the main gateway was on the western side of the fort, beneath what is now the parish cemetery. It is possible that mounted cavalry were stationed in barracks in the forward half of the fort, positioned here to enable rapid dispatch along the westwards road built by the army, traces of which survive as a prominent ridge in the cemetery and field beyond. This road would have provided a route along the southern lowlands of Cornwall, linking Calstock with Restormel. The route of this road, and several others, remained lost to the passage of time until advances in archaeological prospection allowed for their discovery.

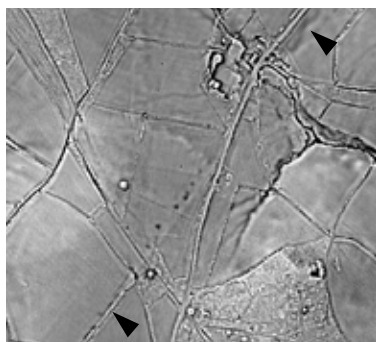
Right: In 2019, a trench was dug 70m away from the fort's west gate. This showed that the road was just as well made as nearer the fort, with the initial stages of hand excavation revealing the fine metallated surface of it.



ROMAN ROADS

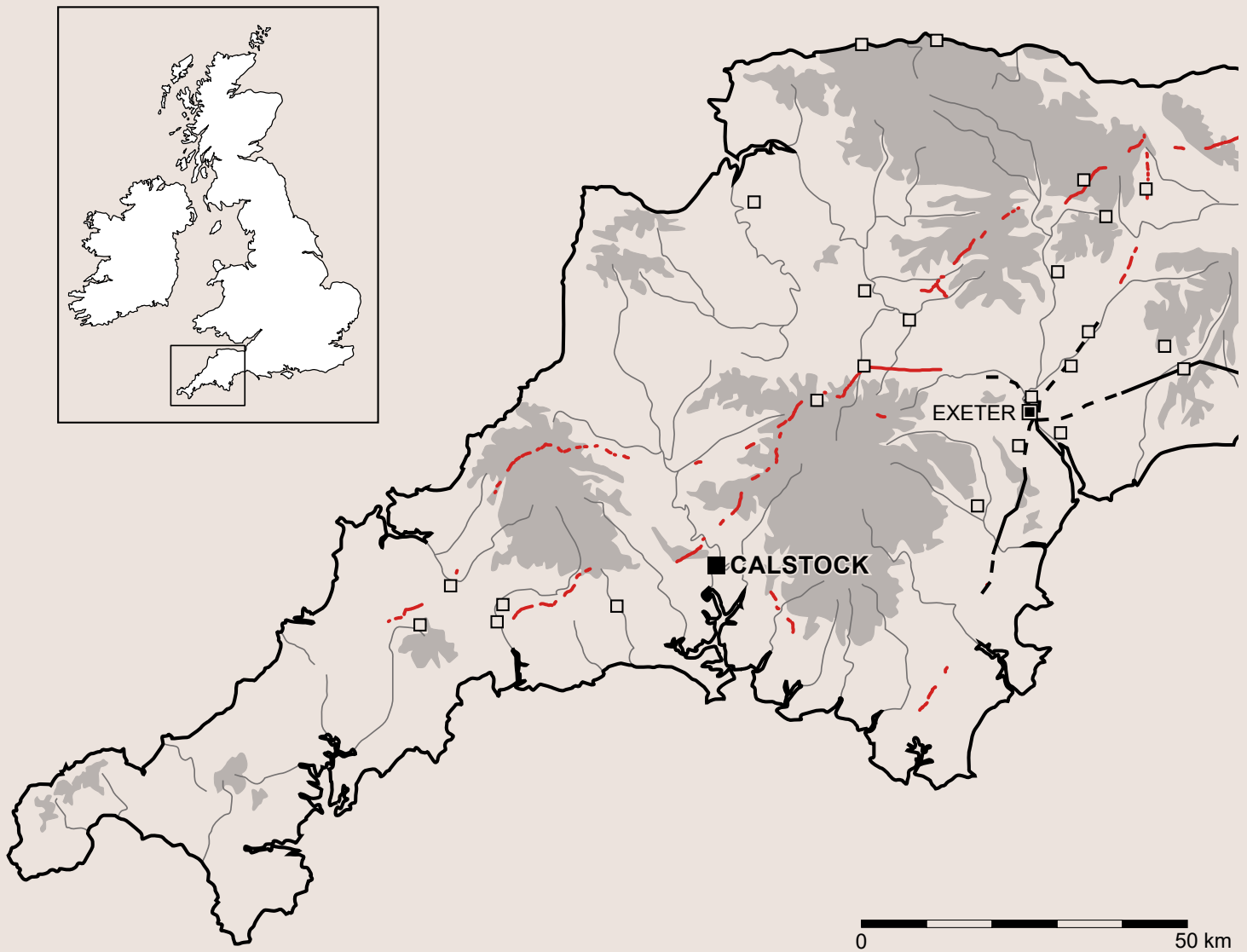


LiDAR data revealed traces of a probable Roman road crossing Hingston Down, 5km west of the fort at Calstock. A raised agger, the cambered surface of a Roman road (showing as a lighter line in the data), was made using stone from quarry pits dug on the south side of it (the dark spots shown in the data).








Remnants of agger flanked by quarry pits marking a Roman road approaching Restormel fort from the east. This section of road almost certainly linked with that seen on Hingston Down and connected the Roman garrisons at Calstock and Restormel.

The availability of a new source of data to archaeologists – LiDAR – has transformed the way in which earthworks can be mapped and understood. LiDAR is a means of producing a highly detailed topographic map of the land surface using a laser scanner, commonly mounted on a small aircraft. Earthworks, undulations in the ground caused by the presence of man-made features beneath the surface, can relate to a wide variety of types of site from different periods in time – for example, prehistoric burial mounds, Iron Age and Roman enclosed settlements, lost medieval field boundaries, shrunken and deserted medieval villages and farms, to name a few. In 2020, the Understanding Landscapes project team and its volunteer community began systematically searching this data for new archaeological sites in Devon and Cornwall and in doing so discovered traces of a long-lost road network, believed to be of Roman date. The characteristics of these are distinctive – raised road surfaces or agger, flanked by the depressions of roadside ditches and quarry pits from which the road-building material was dug. Until researchers began scrutinising LiDAR data, secure evidence for a Roman road network stopped not far beyond Exeter, but now it is possible to chart the presence of these roads around the north and south sides of Dartmoor, crossing the River Tamar, and heading far down into Cornwall, both to the north and south of Bodmin Moor. Whilst some of the roads will have been founded by the army – that connecting Calstock and Restormel forts is such an example – the roads may have been kept in use throughout the Roman period, or even built after the army had left the region. The work also shows how the South West was connected by a road running diagonally across central Devon, linking the region to ports on the River Parrett in Somerset. With time it is likely that more of this road network will be found, perhaps by chance through archaeological excavations ahead of development, as well as key places in the Roman South West that it once linked.



A map showing the extent of newly-discovered Roman roads in South West Britain. Advances in the availability and use of LiDAR data has allowed archaeologists and volunteer researchers to systematically search for earthwork traces of lost Roman roads – with striking success. It is now clear that the region was equipped with an extensive network of well-built roads, many of which connected Roman military sites.

-  Roman road mapped from LiDAR
-  Roman road known or posited pre-LiDAR
-  elevated land
-  Roman military site
- 

AN IMPENETRABLE DEFENCE



The fort's rampart measured up to 6m across and probably stood 3m high. The mottled soils seen in this photograph are due to degraded turves and rotted brushwood laid down as a foundation for the rampart.

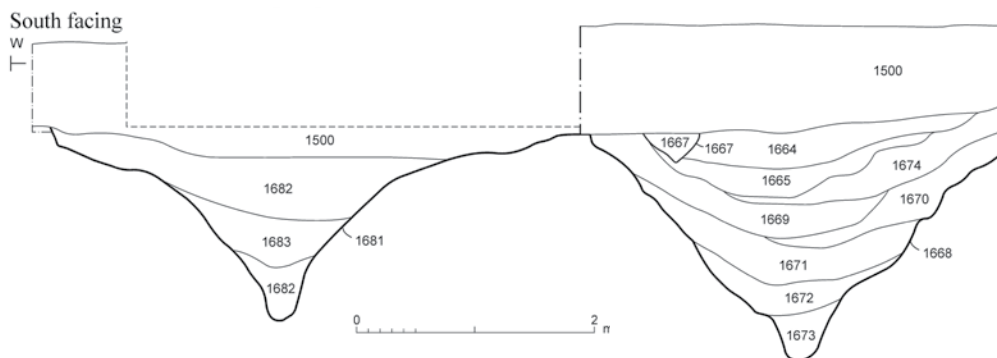


Watchtowers were built at an equal spacing around the perimeter of the fort. These towers projected above the rampart and were supported by large posts set fast in huge pits (seen here).

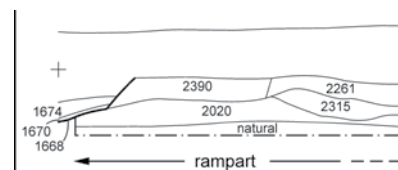
There can be little question about the defensive capabilities of the fort at Calstock, or of the long-term military presence intended by its construction. The site was enclosed by two large ditches, v-shaped in profile, that each measured over four metres across and had been dug as much as two metres into the solid slate geology. The ditches ran immediately next to one another in a continuous circuit, only broken by the roads exiting the fort. The stone and soil dug from the ditches was cast up on the inside to form a broad rampart that may have been raised up three metres in height, not taking into account any timber palisade on top of it. To give the rampart extra stability the soldiers had first laid roughly trimmed poles – the trunks of young trees cut locally – on the ground, and also reinforced the outer face with stacks of turf to prevent slumping back into the inner ditch. The ditches would have been cleaned out periodically in order to maintain their depth, and a distinct channel – about the width of a spade – formed at the bottom of each. Traditionally, these channels have been interpreted as ‘ankle breakers’ – an intentional defensive measure. An indication of how well the ditches were kept clean, and therefore military discipline, is that during excavation archaeologists found very few artefacts – pieces of broken pottery for example – in the soils filling them.

The defences were embellished by fortified gateways at each of the entrances, and watchtowers along each side of the fort and on each corner. The excavated evidence indicates that there were two watchtowers positioned about 25m apart between each gateway and corner of the fort. The watchtowers extended beyond the top of the rampart and were supported by four tree trunks, raised before the rampart was constructed. The spacing of the pits in which the timbers were set indicates that the platform they supported had an area of about 3m square, and although it is not possible to establish their overall height, they would have certainly offered a good vantage over the surrounding countryside, and also north and south along the Tamar valley.

During the lifetime of the fort a second set of defences were created, comprising a substantial ditch and rampart, seemingly to provide security for the occupation and activities that existed outside of but close to it. It has an unusual configuration in that it appears to deliberately block direct access to the eastern gateway. It has an entrance offset from the south-east corner of the fort, meaning that anyone wanting to gain access from the east, had to weave through the secondary line of defence. Unlike the ditches of the fort, which were kept clean, this large ditch became filled with refuse, and archaeological excavations of it have produced large quantities of pottery, ironwork, glass, and personal objects. It is possible that this outer defence had a short life relative to the fort, being built hurriedly in response to a specific threat – and a plausible context is the Boudiccan Revolt, c. AD 60-61. The Roman historian Tacitus writes that the Governor of Britain, Gaius Suetonius Paulinus, calls for *Legio II Augusta* to leave the South West and march north to assist with overpowering Boudicca; but the call went unanswered and the Legion did not go. Was this because it, and its auxiliary units, were engaged with their own troubles in Devon and Cornwall?



The ditch that was dug as a secondary line of defence was deeper than a person is tall. The different coloured lenses of fill each represent a separate dump of rubbish cast into the ditch after it went out of use.



The material for the rampart came from two substantial, v-shaped ditches that ran around the perimeter of the fort and had been dug into solid geology. The different soil horizons visible within each ditch were a result of deliberate backfilling by the army.

LIFE INSIDE



Part excavation of an oven revealed the charcoal left from its final firing overlain by layers of later debris.



Excavation in 2021 revealed the parallel foundations of a barrack block that stood in the NE quarter of the fort.

The interior of the fort, equal in size to three football pitches, was not an open space but was occupied by many timber buildings set out along a grid of roads and walkways. Upon entering the west gate of the fort, it was possible to proceed ahead along the main internal road towards the fort's administration block and shrine, known in Latin as the *principia*. Today, this point lies beneath the barns opposite the church. Flanking this road on either side were barrack blocks, each in the region of fifty metres long, oriented north to south, and some of these may have been stable barracks for cavalry. There were also barracks behind the *principia*, at the rear of the fort. Excavation of part of one of these barrack blocks in 2021 revealed that it had replaced an earlier building of unknown function. What might a barrack have looked like? The archaeological features left behind suggest that the barracks were built using timber posts set upright in long trenches, and these would have formed the frame of a structure. The walls might have been made of wattle and daub, or timber planks, or a combination of both. A lack of tile or slates found during excavations might suggest that the barracks were roofed with organic materials that have decayed, such as wooden shingles or reed thatch. However, a remarkable artefact found in 2021 provides a soldier's-eye view of a building within the fort. A small stone disc, that probably served as a gaming counter, was found to have been etched with a depiction of one side of a rectangular framed building with a tiled roof, probably the end of a barrack or store building. St Andrew's Church sits over the northern half of the fort, concealing the position of the commanding officer's accommodation, which would have been the most lavish. Food preparation would have been an almost industrial operation and banks of ovens were built into the rear face of the earth rampart, where the risk of fire to timber buildings was least. Bread was an important part of the diet, and each soldier received a daily grain ration, stored centrally in the fort's granaries, which at Calstock were built on the southern side of the *principia*.

There would have been at least one workshop inside the fort, where manufacture and repair of tools, structural fittings and military equipment took place. One such building has been partially excavated; it was built out of timber, against the inner face of the rampart south of the western gateway. We can imagine an iron smith at work here, repairing strip-armor and mail shirts, or producing nails, rivets and hooks for the maintenance of the fort. The sparks of hot iron dispersed during hammering - hammerscale as it is known - had accumulated around a central point, probably the location of his anvil. Nearby, a collection of debris was found buried in a small pit, and this included hobnails, ring mail fragments, and buckles, which probably represent sweepings from the workshop floor. Whilst repair and recycling was undertaken, broken military equipment and tools were disposed of alongside regular domestic rubbish. The refuse tipped into the large outer enclosure ditch included an array of metal items, for example bronze tweezers, an iron axe-head, and an inlaid scabbard for a dagger.



Above: A simple etching, probably of a barrack block and done by a soldier, is one of the most interesting and rare finds made during all seasons of excavation at Calstock. It is one of only a handful of contemporary depictions of a building known from Roman Britain.

Below: The foundation trenches of a timber-built workshop were identified behind the rampart on the western side of the fort.



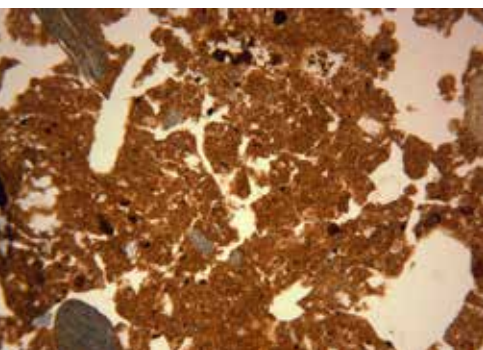
An artist's impression of how the fort may have looked from the south. The long barrack blocks filled much of the interior.

Illustration by Ley Roberts, Limekiln Gallery, Calstock

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY



Samples of the pre-Roman soil horizon were taken in small tins for analysis in laboratory conditions.



The samples were impregnated with resin and thin sections were mounted on slides. At high magnification, the micro-structure of the soil can be seen, which allows its origin to be established.

Archaeologists are able to reconstruct past environments, identify the types of flora and fauna present in a landscape, and discern how these were manipulated and exploited by man, by studying the micro- and macroscopic remains of plants, insects and snails, mammals, birds and fish, as well as the soils within which these are found. Despite a comprehensive programme of sampling for these, the body of environmental evidence is less than hoped for, and this is due to a combination of poor preservation and the positions within the fort from where samples have been taken. The acidic soils found in this part of the Tamar Valley have eroded any shell and bone that may have been present, as well as much of the fragile pollen dispersed in antiquity by plants and trees.

Pollen from pre-Roman soil sealed beneath the rampart of the fort indicates that the hilltop was already cleared, and probably farmed, prior to the arrival of the Roman army in about AD 50. Further back in time, however, the character of the lower soils suggests that they developed within a stable woodland environment, but their age is not known. The soil directly beneath the rampart had been heavily trampled during its construction, and we can see from this, and from the recognition of turves surviving stacked against the face of the rampart, that the turf was stripped during building works.

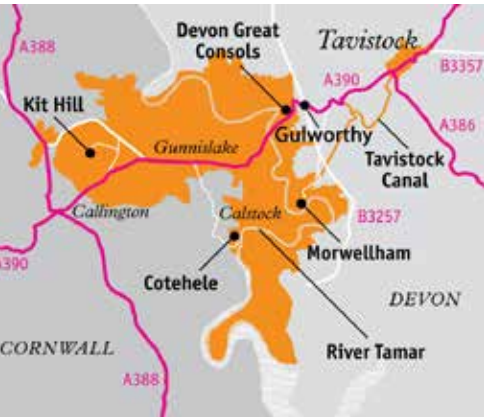
The fort sat within an open grassland landscape upon which, presumably, sheep and cattle were grazed, but there is evidence to suggest that barley and wheat were cultivated locally. Although grain imports from elsewhere in the Roman Empire would have flowed along the official military supply chain, it is probable that existing native farmers were pressed to increase agricultural productivity to contribute to the food needs of the army. The position of the large granary block, in which the fort's grain supply was stored, can be seen on the magnetometer survey of the site and the closely-spaced foundation trenches indicate the sheer weight of cereals stored here.

A significant quantity of wood charcoal was recovered from structural, domestic and industrial deposits, and the study of this suggests that woodland resources were selectively managed. The available pollen evidence shows that there was little woodland in the immediate vicinity, and even some of the steep slopes may have been sparsely covered, but local woodlands should be envisaged. Oak was the most dominant species, used widely for construction, but also converted into charcoal to fuel metalworking. Hazel, which was likely to have been cut from coppice, was also used for building, particularly for making wattle. Domestic fires, for cooking and heating, were fuelled by diverse wood species, some of which may have been the trimmings left from specialised uses of oak and hazel, accompanied by cutting of scrub. Gorse was traditionally used to fire bread ovens, as it produced a short-lived but intense heat, and this was true at Calstock, where the surrounding moorland would have produced this resource in abundance. Environmental evidence provides an exceptional window into the diet of past communities, but can also offer a perspective on chronology. A bread oven that had been built against the southern rampart of the fort retained charcoal from its final firing, and this contained oak buds from twiggy material used as fuel, implying that it was last used between autumn, when the buds have formed, and early spring, when oaks come into leaf. It is likely that this is the time of year when the fort was decommissioned, and the auxiliary unit stationed there left.

A significant quantity of wood charcoal has been recovered and the study of this suggests that woodland resources were selectively managed.



MINERALS AND MINING



A landscape with World Heritage status – the Tamar Valley Mining District coloured in orange.



Looking west over the site of Devon Great Consols, with Cornwall behind, showing the scarring left by mining and mineral processing.

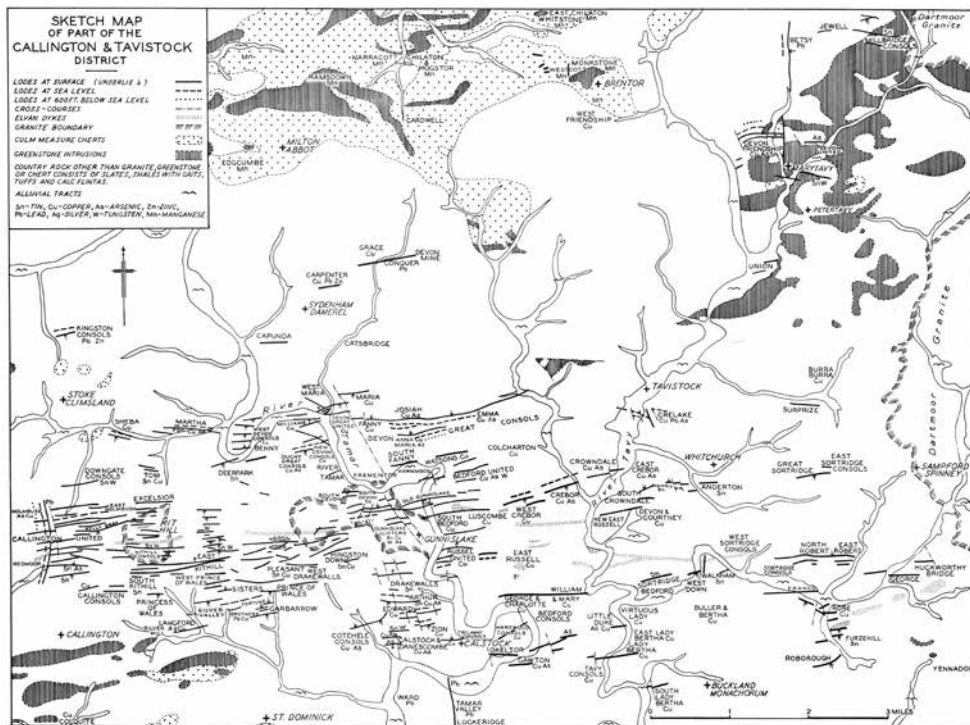
Photo: © Cornish Mining World Heritage Site/
Adam Huntington-Whiteley

Calstock sits within the heart of the Tamar Valley Mining District of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape, a designated World Heritage Site. The area has this status for good reason – it bears an extraordinary wealth of minerals. Metals such as copper, tin, lead, and silver abound. There is abundant historical evidence for the exploitation of these deposits from the medieval period onwards; Edward I opened mines on the nearby Bere Peninsula exploiting silver and lead in the late 13th century, and the rich copper deposits mined at Devon Great Consols, little more than 4km upriver from Calstock, saw it become the largest global producer of copper by the end of the 19th century. Lodes bearing copper, lead, and silver lay directly beneath the Roman fort, and in the immediate vicinity. In order to identify and understand earlier exploitation, in times before plentiful surviving documentation, we are largely reliant on archaeological evidence but, with mining being an inherently destructive process, later works will have impacted on what went before.

Over many decades, archaeologists and historians have debated the attraction of Britain's mineral resources and the role that they played in prompting and financing the expansion of the Roman Empire across her shores. The possibilities for this are bolstered by literary accounts of a pre-existing knowledge of the Isle's resources. By the late Iron Age, Greek geographer and historian *Strabo* lists gold, silver and iron amongst exports from Britain in the century leading up to the Roman conquest. *Tacitus* records that mineral resources were 'spoils of war' *pretium victoriae* – and archaeological evidence demonstrates that the Roman army was quick to advance into areas of rich mineral potential, for example the *Legio II Augusta* had moved to establish direct control over the exploitation of the silver-rich lead ores at Charterhouse on Mendip by AD 49 and the gold deposits as Dolaucothi in Carmarthenshire by c. AD 73/4.

When the Roman fort at Calstock was first discovered there was considerable debate about its potential role in the exploitation of local minerals, but direct evidence was not forthcoming. As the fort was built on a strategic point on the River Tamar – at the lowest crossing point and navigable limit – the presence of minerals may be coincidental. The geophysical surveys and excavations have all focussed on the immediate locality of the fort, and therefore there remains significant potential for there being evidence beyond the areas investigated for the physical extraction of ore,

and for processing of the metals. A breakthrough came in 2022 when excavation found that a clay-lined pond to the south of the fort had been infilled with mixed rocks, including various formations only found deep underground in mineral veins. Critically, the presence of diagnostic pottery confirmed that this infilling took place during the occupation of the Roman fort, and that the rock formations can be linked to the silver/lead-bearing ores of the local landscape. This provides the first tantalising evidence for Roman mining in the Tamar Valley.



A map showing the concentration of mineral lodes, mainly of copper, tin, lead, and silver in the wider landscape around Calstock, published by H.G. Dines in 1956.

REGIONAL, NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL: ROMAN POTTERY USED AT CALSTOCK



Whilst archaeologists take finding old objects for granted, for most volunteers this is a new and exciting experience. The Roman army buried much of their waste, including broken tableware, in pits in the ground, much to the delight of this happy pair who, in 2019, got to excavate the contents of one such pit.

Comprising over 2200 pieces and weighing in at over 28kg, the Roman pottery dug up at Calstock Roman fort between 2008 and 2022 had been brought from far and wide. The ceramic assemblage contains a range of imported material, including samian ware from the workshops at La Graufesenque and Montans in southern France and Lezoux in central France, fine drinking cups from Lyon in France, mortaria from the Rhone Valley and Oise/Somme region of northern France, amphorae from several locations across the Roman Empire, and Gallo-Belgic terra rubra and terra nigra from between Reims, France and Trier, Germany, alongside regional products.

Samian pottery, the distinctive glossy red tableware found on Roman sites across Britain and the wider Empire, was produced in plain and decorated forms, most often bowls and cups. The forms and decoration can be quite closely dated, as can the makers' marks which were sometimes stamped on such vessels. At Calstock for example, pots stamped by *Niger ii* and *Modestus* have been found. Previous research has provided the dates when these potters were working. Remarkably, the larger part of a samian bowl that would have graced the table of officers and the commander had been found by a gravedigger many years ago and were kept as a curiosity in his shed. This is now reconstructed and sits alongside the pottery since uncovered by archaeologists. A decorated cup depicting sparring gladiators would have been a reminder of an entertainment activity enjoyed at home or on previous postings.

The presence of sherds of amphorae, the large pottery vessels manufactured to transport liquids and sauces, show that some soldiers (probably the officers) could access the Romanised foods that they enjoyed back home. At Calstock we have olive oil and fish sauce amphorae from southern Spain, wine amphorae from France and even a carrot-shaped amphora from the eastern Mediterranean, a type believed to have been used for preserved palm fruit or dates.

One striking aspect of the pottery collection is the relatively high proportion of gabbroic vessels made from clays found on the Lizard in West Cornwall. This was also a feature of the pottery found at Nanstallon Roman fort, near Bodmin, which suggests a higher reliance, or indeed demand, on this indigenous industry for military supply this far west. This implies that local sourcing was pursued to a higher than usual degree on the fringes of the Empire. Gabbroic pottery was already being traded along the southern coastline of Cornwall and West Devon during the Iron Age, and was reaching ports such as Mount Batten, overlooking Plymouth Sound, before the arrival of the Roman army in the region. There is little to argue against the supposition that these existing supply routes were exploited by the military, and continued to flourish because of it.

Right: Two sherds from the same Samian bowl in the hand of a volunteer – the first person to touch these for nearly 2000 years - decorated with gadroons, and sprays of different style leaves. A hole drilled in one of the sherds suggests that the bowl may have been repaired with a lead staple.



DEPARTURE FOR THE NORTH

The Second Augustan Legion relinquished military control of the fortress in Exeter in about AD 75, which subsequently was developed as an important civilian town, a *civitas*. From Exeter, the Legion marched north through the tribal lands of the Durotriges, Belgae, Dobunni, in what is now Somerset and Gloucestershire, to establish a fortress in Silurian territory at Caerleon, in South Wales. Some units of the Legion may have been moved directly to Scotland where campaigns began in earnest in about AD 80, taking with them pottery made in the vicinity of Exeter, which has been found at Camelon near Falkirk. *Legio II Augusta* went on to play a major part in the construction of Hadrian's Wall, which began in AD 122.

Not all forts in the South West were decommissioned at the time as the Exeter fortress, and a garrison was maintained at Calstock until at least AD 77-79, during the reign of Emperor Domitian, the date of the latest coin found at the site. The fort was not 'moth-balled' in case of future civil unrest, or left to slowly decay. The demise of Calstock was as measured as its creation. Wooden buildings were broken down, and any useable timber sold-on or transported, with the remainder burned on site. The rampart was levelled, infilling the defensive ditches during the process, and the turves used to face it have been preserved as they were tipped back into the inner ditch. This was not only an exercise in discipline, but it also rendered the site indefensible by would-be aggressors. After twenty-five or thirty years of continuous occupation by auxiliaries of the Legion the character of the hilltop rapidly changed, and no longer was it dominated by towering defences. It had lasted at least one generation, and for younger members of the native population it would have been all that they had known, but the shadow of the Roman army was now abating. The South West, officially at least, was now part of the Roman province *Britannia*.

LATER OCCUPATION

There is nothing yet known to suggest that the site was occupied later in the Roman period, although enclosed settlements of the period, commonly called 'rounds', are known across the region, with local examples in the neighbouring St Dominick parish. Two Roman coins, of an unknown type, were reputedly found near the foreshore of the Tamar, and a fourth century nummus – a low value coin - of the Emperor Constantine was found at St Annes Chapel, and these scant finds indicate local activity beyond the military period. We cannot be certain whether the hilltop once occupied by the fort was left to regenerate scrub woodland, or if it was reclaimed as farmland. The key factor here will have been the local population density – which is poorly understood. It is not until the eighth century AD, perhaps 700 years after the departure of the Roman army, that there is definitive evidence for re-occupation of the hilltop.

Below: Looking south across the hilltop, with the present-day village of Calstock situated on the bank of the River Tamar. With fertile soils and proximity to the river it is hard to imagine this landscape was unpopulated for hundreds of years after the Roman army departed.



MEDIEVAL CALSTOCK



A large 11th/12th century cooking pot was found in a pit near to the medieval timber buildings.



The same medieval cooking pot after reconstruction for museum display. Sooting can be seen around the base of the vessel and this is a result of cooking over fire.

Excavation in the parish cemetery uncovered the remains of medieval activity spanning five hundred years. The settlement pre-dates the Battle of Hingston Down that took place in AD 838, at which a combined force of Cornish and Vikings fought against King Egbert's West Saxons, and its occupants would have witnessed the setting of the River Tamar as the Cornish boundary by King Athelstan in AD 928. The site was also occupied at the time of the Norman Conquest, when the manor of Calstock was granted to the Count of Mortain, William the Conqueror's half brother, throughout Stephen of Blois' twelfth-century 'Anarchy', and during the rise of the Plantagenet kings under Henry II.

Bar-lug pottery, a distinctive form of cooking pottery used in Cornwall during what used to be commonly called the 'Dark Ages', has been found. The burned food residue adhered to one vessel has been radiocarbon-dated to the eighth century. It is likely that communities living here at that time dwelled in timber round houses, although no certain examples of this date have yet been identified. Occupation in the ninth century is attested by the presence of an iron smithy, recorded as part of the community excavation in 2011, charcoal from which was radiocarbon-dated. It is probable that the smithy was one part of a farming community that had established itself here, but the status of the site is not known. Rectangular timber buildings, one built in the eleventh or twelfth century, and replaced by a second of cruck-frame construction in the later twelfth or thirteenth century, and both of considerable size, were excavated to the southwest of the church. The occupants of the earlier of the buildings were using large cooking vessels manufactured on the Blackdown Hills in East Devon but, later, this pottery was replaced by vessels manufactured in South East Cornwall, with characteristic granitic temper within the clay, and from the developing North Devon potteries. An arrangement of large postholes, excavated in 2021 to the south of the church, were set out in a near-identical plan and likely represent another medieval timber building.

Evidence of this evolving medieval settlement has been found at separate places 200m apart, indicating that it could have once been spread over sufficient an area to be called a 'village', which had developed alongside the parish church, and could legitimately claim to be the original Calstock. Many questions remain unanswered. Was there an early medieval religious building here, built centuries before the present church? Why was a medieval church and settlement built on top of a Roman fort? When did settlement by the church decline? When was the present-day settlement of Calstock first established? These questions, and many more besides, will stimulate debate for generations to come.

Below: Parallel rows of post holes were recorded in 2009 in the parish cemetery and these supported posts within the walls of an 11th-12th century timber-framed longhouse. Further excavations in 2019 a short distance west, identified a similar row on the same orientation, suggesting at least one other longhouse stood alongside it.'



POST-MEDIEVAL CALSTOCK

All evidence so far considered suggests that the medieval settlement that once flourished around St Andrew's Church dwindled by the 13th century, and it was only the church that retained its position, stood proudly on the hilltop above the River Tamar. A series of unexpected discoveries made during excavations in 2021 and 2023 has shed light on activity in the 16th and 17th centuries. A trench excavated at the highest point in the field south of the church revealed the top of a mineshaft, with recesses cut to house the frame of a windlass – the device used to haul material up and out of the mine. Due to safety concerns only a small amount of the uppermost material was removed, and this contained pottery and clay tobacco pipe, showing that the very top of the shaft had probably been capped between 1650 and 1750. But, when was the mineshaft dug? That is less easy to determine although a coin of Elizabeth I was found in the same area, dated to 1570, and it may have therefore been operating in the late 16th century. Rock hewn from this mine appears to have been used to retain a levelled platform now in woodland north of the church, indicating landscaping around the church in the late 16th or 17th century. Shortly after 1579 it is recorded that Piers (Peter) Edgecumbe, owner of nearby Cotehele, was granted a lease from The Company of Mines Royal to mine for copper, lead, silver, and gold in Cornwall and Devon. Might this mineshaft be evidence of an attempt by Piers to extract copper at Calstock? Coincidentally perhaps, a very rare surviving seating plan for the church dated to 1587/1588, has a rear pew reserved for Piers Edgecumbe, and the family is thought to have added the Edgecumbe Chapel on the east end of the southern aisle thirty years prior in 1558.



The obverse and reverse of a silver three halfpence coin minted in 1570, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The bust of the monarch, who introduced this denomination of coin, is depicted facing to the left.

Whilst St Andrew's Church is said to have been consecrated in about 1290, the earliest parts of the standing building are less old, dating to the late 14th century. It is believed that the church was re-roofed in about 1420, and archaeological discoveries might support this. During excavations on the north side of the church in search of the defences of the Roman fort, archaeologists found numerous pieces of ridge tile, incised with a crow's foot pattern, of a type that would have been used in the 15th century. Given the discovery of these so close to the church it was thought likely that they came from its roof but why were they there in such numbers? The answer lay in a now forgotten episode of more recent history, revealed by an article in the newspaper *The Western Morning News and Daily Gazette* from February 18th 1939, detailing the need for urgent and extensive restoration to the roof. It reports that for 200 years death-watch beetle had been attacking the church's timbers and, shortly after the congregation had left on Christmas Eve 1938, a rafter came crashing through the ceiling. The article is accompanied by a photograph of Reverend Simcock examining a heap of debris, including '15th century woodwork', in the very spot where in 2023 archaeologists recovered the ridge tiles. The 1939 account was hopeful that £2000 could be raised not only to re-roof the church, but to preserve the rare timberwork, but one guesses the outbreak of war in coming months limited the capacity for all but essential works.



The head of a mineshaft revealed in 2021. Neither time nor safety considerations allowed for its excavation beyond that seen here.



Right: Until 1939, much of the medieval roof structure of the church, including rare woodwork, survived. Events of that year saw the roof partly collapse and, with the outbreak of war, little seems to have been done to preserve the carved wood, despite the hopes of Reverend Simcock as reporting in the local press at the time.

Rich Discovery In Church
ANCIENT CARVING
Calstock Restoration Problems

For about 200 years the death-watch beetle has been attacking the beams of the Parish Church of St Andrew, Calstock but only in the last few months has its presence been apparent.

Behind the plaster which has hid most since the 17th century the roof from view been biting deep into the timber, and says the rector (Rev. J. A. Simcock) and other Church authorities are confronted with the problem of raising money for the restoration of the roof.

Although the rector had for some time suspected that the roof was weakening, it was not until Christmas was breaking, positive

EXPLORING THE WIDER LANDSCAPE

It is hoped that this booklet has provided the reader with an introduction to the changes wrought on one West Country hilltop over the past 5000 years, showing how evidence for past human influence on the landscape is all around us. Some of it lay buried, some ruined or remaining only as lumps and bumps in the ground, yet much survives in use – the fields, farms, villages, churches and country houses that surround us today. There are other places in the vicinity of Calstock that visitors can experience the heritage of different periods in time, some with a tangible link to the story uncovered through the excavations presented here.

Cadsonbury

A visitor to Cadsonbury cannot fail to be struck by its dominant, defensive position, high above the River Lynher. This is the site of a large Iron Age hillfort surrounded by a single rampart and ditch;



Photo: © Steve Larcombe (airarchaeology.org)

it is the nearest pre-Roman fortification of this size to Calstock. No archaeological excavations have ever taken place at the site, but it would be normal to expect it to have been built between the 5th and 3rd centuries BC. With the sounds of *Legio II Augusta* marching through neighbouring countryside, and auxiliaries setting up camp at Calstock, might Cadsonbury have been a place of refuge sought by the local population?

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/cornwall/cadsonbury

Cotehele

Cotehele is a fine example of a late medieval and Tudor-era country property – now owned by the National Trust but once the family seat of the Edgecumbe family. In return for his support of Henry VII at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, Richard Edgecumbe was knighted and rewarded. Over the next 80 years, the family's prosperity saw the



Photo: © Chris Smart



Photo: Kit Hill, Tamar Valley National Landscape © Tobi O'Neill/TON Drone Services

transformation of Cotehele into the famed Tudor house that remains today. With a view directly across to St Andrew's Church, was it from here that Piers Edgcombe and his successors plotted to open a copper mine on the hill above Calstock village?

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/cornwall/cotehele

Kit Hill

Visit Kit Hill Country Park (pictured above) and, whilst standing high on the granite hilltop gaze out across the Tamar Valley, take in the tapestry of different field patterns, including long curving fields, formerly part of the medieval open fields which

surrounded Harrowbarrow. Neolithic and Bronze Age communities constructed burial mounds on Kit Hill, and the lower slopes saw Cornish, Viking, and Saxon bloodshed during the 9th-century Battle of Hingston Down. Did the early medieval community living at Calstock take part, or did they keep a low profile? The rough ground is pockmarked with traces of quarrying for granite and mining for tin, but how early did these industries begin? At least one of Calstock's Roman querns – a stone for grinding grain – is made of granite matching that beneath Kit Hill.

www.cornwall.gov.uk/parks-leisure-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/country-parks/kit-hill-country-park

Bere Peninsula

By spending a few hours exploring the seclusion of the Bere Peninsula, you can step back in time and ponder a medieval landscape that, between the 13th and 15th centuries, was a key source of silver in England. Opened in 1292 the Bere mines bolstered the coffers of Edward I – Edward Longshanks – during wars with Scotland and France. Footpaths follow the line of the mineral lodes in many places, and it is possible to see hollows which mark the position of mining pits and shafts. The village of Bere Alston was founded in response to the growing mining population and was possibly the first planned mining settlement in medieval England. With excavations at Calstock finding evidence of Roman mining, might that have been of silver and lead from the Bere Peninsula?

Below: *Arsenic works at Devon Great Consols.*

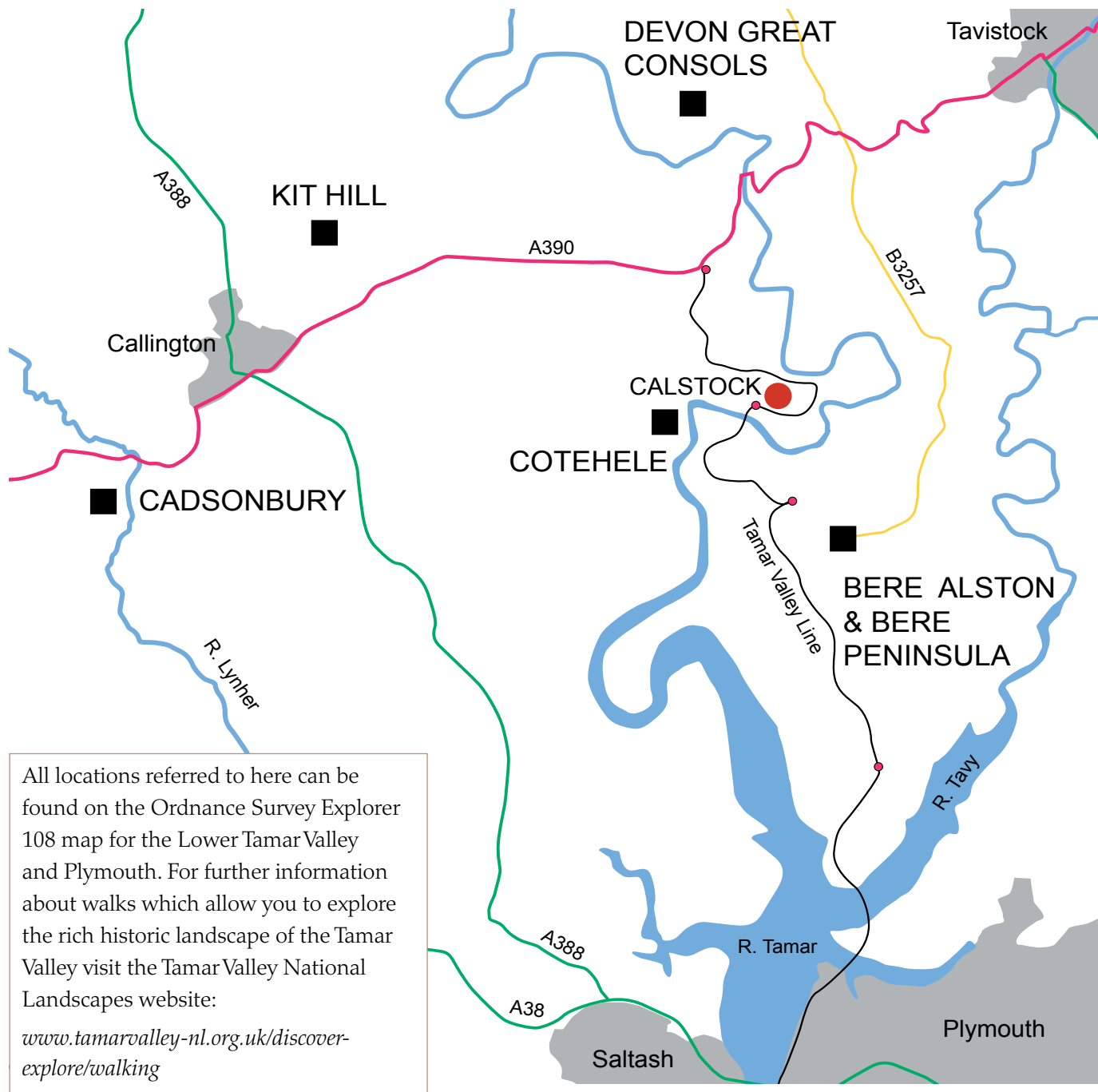
Photo: © Chris Smart



Devon Great Consols

Use the Tamar Trails to explore 25km of pathways through a landscape shaped by the mining of tin, copper and, later, arsenic. In the Tamar Valley tin is found above copper, and was mined from at least the late 15th century, possibly as part of Tavistock Abbey's estate, and between the 16th and 18th centuries when it was owned by The Bedford Estate. As men dug deeper, the year 1845 saw discovery of a rich vein of copper ore, and Devon Great Consols became the most productive copper mine in the world, a title it also claimed by the end of the century as the largest producer of arsenic globally. With at least 500 years of intensive mining, finding archaeological evidence for the earliest surface workings is a difficult task – but might tin have been worked here as early as the Roman period?

www.tamartrails.co.uk



All locations referred to here can be found on the Ordnance Survey Explorer 108 map for the Lower Tamar Valley and Plymouth. For further information about walks which allow you to explore the rich historic landscape of the Tamar Valley visit the Tamar Valley National Landscapes website:
www.tamarvalley-nl.org.uk/discover-explore/walking

RESEARCHING THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE: ACCESSIBLE RESOURCES

Records of known archaeology and heritage

Most English Counties and Unitary Authorities maintain a database of known heritage, including archaeological sites and findspots, listed buildings and scheduled monuments. Once widely called 'Sites and Monuments Records' these are now more commonly called 'Historic Environment Records' on the basis that the term reflects all physical evidence for past human activity. These contain records spanning tens of thousands of years, from the Palaeolithic to the Cold War.

This data can be accessed for research but is also fundamental to decisions made by planners and environmental agencies about development and land management. Both the Historic Environment Record for Devon, and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record, have online mapping portals where the data they hold can be viewed by anyone.

Both web-based map viewers also contain options for viewing different historic map backdrops, from the 1830/40s Tithe Surveys to Ordnance Survey maps of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Devon

www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/the-devon-historic-environment-record

<https://map.devon.gov.uk/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=71fe583c7004410ca8cdc62e0e9b2577>

Cornwall

www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/conservation-and-environment-protection/strategic-historic-environment-service/cornwall-and-isles-of-scilly-historic-environment-record

https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=1&xcoord=162690&ycoord=64380&wsName=CIOS_historic_environment&layerName=

National registers

Historic England Archive: holding over 12 million photographs, drawings, reports and publications from the 1850s to the present day, covering the whole country. Use these collections to learn about your local area and to research individual buildings and archaeological sites, as well as discover England's changing urban and rural landscape

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/>

The National Heritage List for England: an up to date register of all nationally protected historic buildings

and sites in England – listed buildings, scheduled monuments, protected wrecks, registered parks and gardens, and battlefields.

<https://historicensland.org.uk/listing/the-list>

Heritage at Risk Register: a register, updated annually, of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England whose condition and management is of concern, and that are in a state of deterioration or vulnerability.

<https://historicensland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register>

Historic maps

Historic maps are an invaluable resource to anyone investigating the historic landscapes as they provide information about what changes have occurred with the past 150 years or so, what heritage has been lost (by comparing to modern mapping), and specifics such as place- or field-names. An excellent source of historic Ordnance Survey maps is provided by the National Library of Scotland, where in addition it is possible to view older geology maps, aerial photography, and LiDAR data side-by-side.

<https://maps.nls.uk>

Place-names

Britain has a historic landscape with a rich linguistic heritage. The names of places in which we live and work today often have origins that can tell us about what the landscape was like in the past, and who might have lived there. Useful online resources are provided by the Institute for Name-Studies at the University of Nottingham.

<http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk>

<https://epns.nottingham.ac.uk>

Primary archives

Researching historic landscapes, especially when the focus is on the medieval and later periods, can be greatly assisted by the consulting of original documents, plans, charts, and maps, and even old photographs. Whilst it is not unknown for archive material relating to a specific place to be held in unlikely locations – often due to places once being part of large landed estates – most relevant material will either be held in a county or regional repository, or the National Archives, all of which are accessible to the public.

The National Archives are housed in Kew, London, and the public can visit and view much of the primary material curated there. The catalogues are searchable online, which means that it is possible to research what may be relevant before travelling.

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

The home for Cornwall's archives is Kresen Kernow in Redruth.

<https://kresenkernow.org>

Archives for Devon and the City of Exeter are held in the Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter.

<https://swheritage.org.uk/devon-archives/visit/devon-heritage-centre>

Archives for the Archdeaconry of Barnstaple and of North Devon and Torridge District Councils are held in the North Devon Record Office, Barnstaple.

<https://swheritage.org.uk/devon-archives/visit/visiting-barnstaple>

The holdings both of these can be searched online via the South West Heritage Trust:

<https://devon-cat.swheritage.org.uk>

Archives relating to the City of Plymouth are held at The Box, Plymouth.

www.theboxplymouth.com/collections/archives-and-local-studies

The holdings of The Box can be searched online:

<https://web.plymouth.gov.uk/archivescatalogue>

In addition to these four repositories, Calstock has its own Parish Archive with extensive holdings of original and copies of maps, plans, documents, and photographs, from the medieval period to 20th century. Calstock Parish Archive is housed in Albaston Cemetery Chapel and is open to the public.

www.calstockhistory.org.uk

A suggestion when searching for archives relating to a specific place in Devon or Cornwall – due to the nature of historic landowning and record keeping, it is often worth searching multiple archives by place-name, even if outside of the county where it is located. For example, you will find documents relating to Ipplepen, Devon, in Kresen Kernow, and documents for Calstock, Cornwall, in the Devon Heritage Centre and The Box.

