

CALSTOCK ROMAN FORT

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This booklet has been published by the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund-supported Calstock Parish Heritage Project. It presents a compilation of information obtained from five years of geophysical survey and archaeological excavation (2007-2011) at the site, led by the author. The investigation of Calstock Roman fort has been made possible by grants from the Leverhulme Trust, English Heritage, the University of Exeter, the Tamar Valley AONB, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Calstock Parish Council, Calstock Local History Society, Cornwall Archaeological Society, Saltash Heritage, and donations by private benefactors. 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 © 2013

Designed by Anthony Godber (www.anthonygodber.co.uk)

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Below: The mist rises over the Tamar Valley during the first excavation in January 2008.



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THE LIE OF THE LAND



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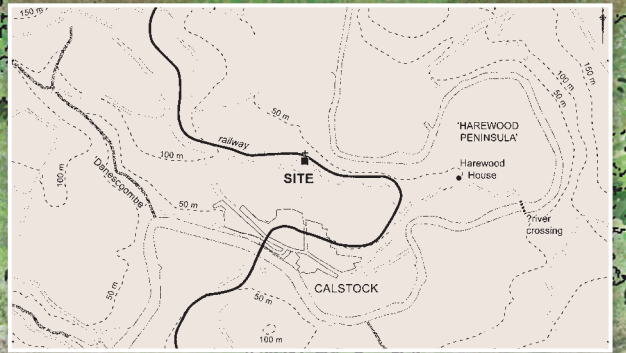
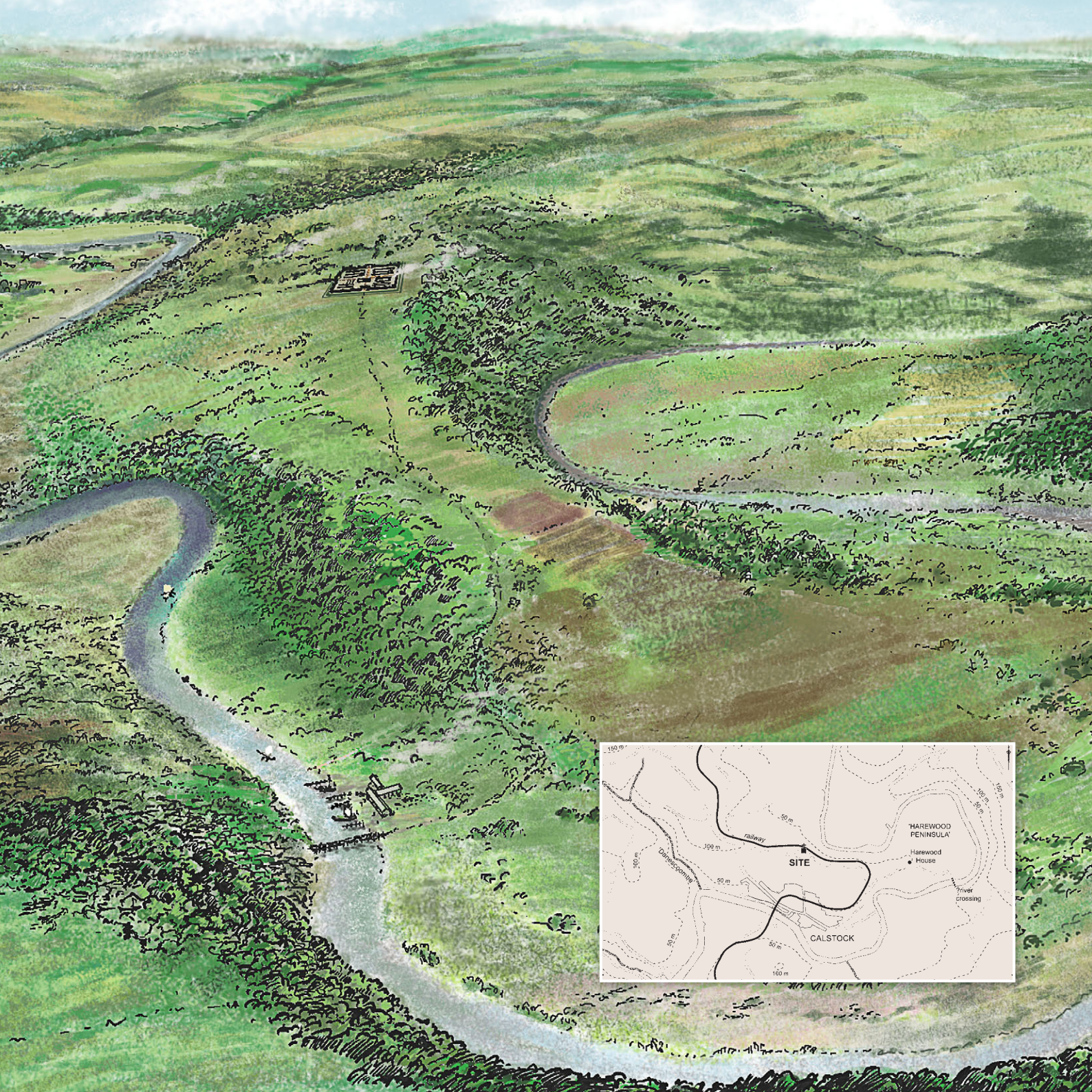
Looking north over Calstock. The present village, famous for its viaduct, has grown alongside the River Tamar but the parish church sits on the hill above.

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 across the river 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. A limited area of electrical resistivity survey has 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, 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, with one activity – iron working – already confirmed by the presence of a smithy south of the fort. There are also faint traces of a probable temporary marching camp, built before the permanent fort during the earliest military incursions across the Tamar.

One anomaly outside of the fort proved 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.



A much larger enclosure ditch runs to the east and south of the fort and may continue beyond the area surveyed to form a complete circuit, but the origin of this is curious; whilst it appears to have been backfilled during the Roman occupation, its character is difficult to reconcile as a military defence. One possibility is that it was already dug when the army first crossed the Tamar - an Iron Age stronghold perhaps?



DIGGING FOR ANSWERS



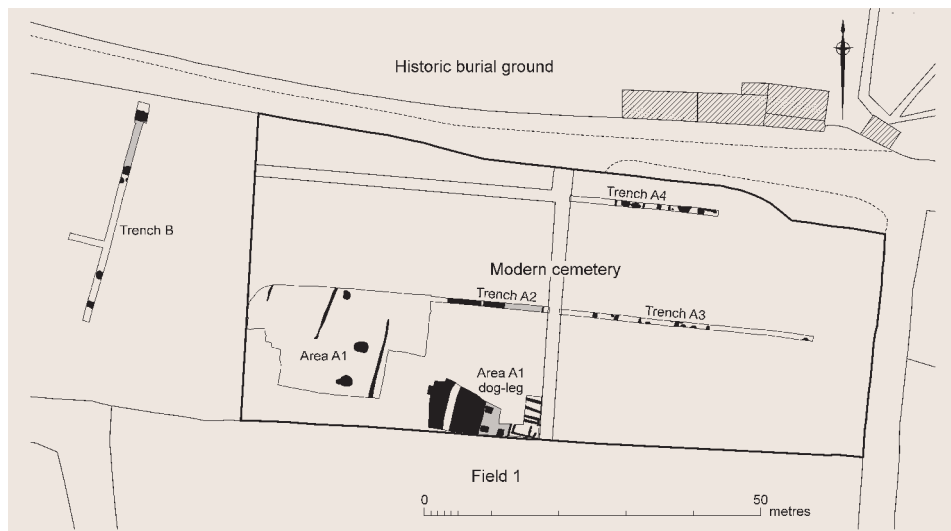
Excavation across the southern fort defences in 2008 – the medieval stone bank can be seen and the line of this followed that of the fort’s outer ditch.

Right: It was soon realised that use of the parish cemetery was destroying this important site. In 2009, English Heritage funded the excavation of unused areas that revealed many Roman features (shown in black).

Opposite: Archaeological excavation is a destructive process. Meticulous records are made to enable future generations to study the remains found on the site of Calstock Roman fort.

Geophysical survey of the fields surrounding St Andrew’s Church provided good evidence for the nature of the archaeology to be found there, most obviously the Roman fort. Archaeology is a tiered process, often beginning with non-destructive and non-invasive methods, but excavation is often the only way to fully understand the age and character of buried remains, in this case of a multi-period site. The detail provided by excavated evidence really puts ‘flesh’ on the ‘bones’ of the story.

There have been four seasons of excavation at Calstock Roman fort. The first was an evaluation – a ‘test’ trench - in January 2008, which intended to confirm the character of the geophysical anomalies; it was positioned to investigate the character 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 English Heritage, was undertaken in January to March 2009 to mitigate the future destruction of archaeology by burials in unused areas of the civic parish cemetery.



A third investigation during October 2010 consisted of a small trench positioned to investigate a large enclosure surrounding the fort. The latest season, in October 2011, was a community-focussed excavation supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's 'Calstock Parish Heritage Project', which gave local residents the opportunity to experience their archaeology first-hand.

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 weeks that have so far been spent in excavation, significantly less than 1% of the archaeological palimpsest 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.

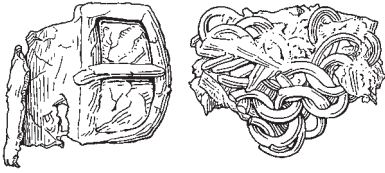
The sheer scale of the Roman fort at Calstock, the diversity of imported goods found there, and the gravitas of the Roman Empire, may steer archaeological attention towards that period in the history of the hilltop, and that alone, but it was not a virgin landscape; excavation has shown there to be 4000 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 expand on the extent of prehistoric occupation, and of the relationship between the living and the dead.

A community-focussed excavation in 2011 gave local residents the opportunity to learn archaeological techniques and first-hand experience of the site.



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.

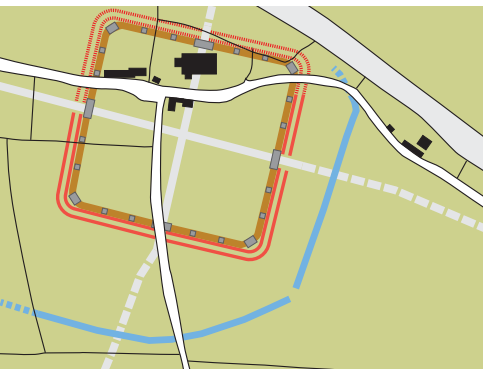
In AD 43, twenty-thousand men landed on the South Coast, probably in Kent. This was the Roman invasion of Britain, finally achieved under the authority of Emperor Claudius. The invasionary force was grouped into four legions, each of five thousand soldiers, who, within three or four years, had subjugated much of lowland Britain. 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 Durotriges and 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.

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 further across the Cornish landscape.



A map showing the location of Calstock in relation to other Roman military sites – camps, forts, and the fortress at Exeter – in South West Britain. Most controlled important river crossings. The lack of sites known in the South Hams of Devon and in Cornwall may not reflect the real distribution and many 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.



Excavation of the road make-up revealed the orange-brown soil of the pre-Roman land surface.

Although the northern part is obscured by the church and cemetery, the fort at Calstock appears to be 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 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, though its course is now lost.

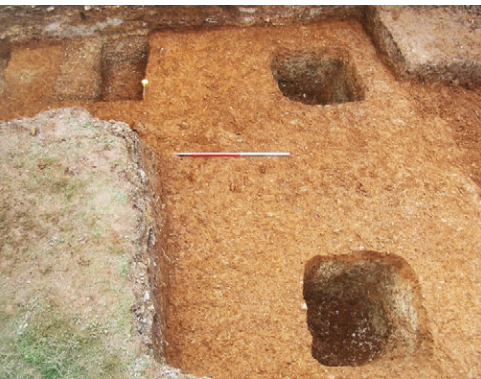
Right: The Roman road was formed by layers of stone capped by fine gritty metalling that here can be seen as a prominent feature at the top of the trench. It followed the crest of the ridge and was wide enough for two-way traffic.



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.



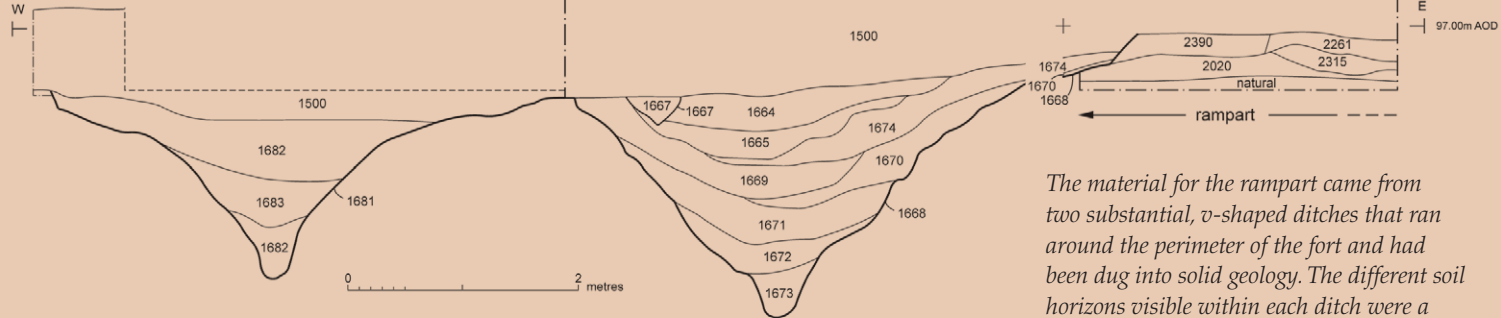
Watchtowers were built at an equal spacing around the perimeter of the fort. These towers projected above the rampart and were supported by large posts set fast in huge pits (seen here).

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.

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.



South facing



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.



Above: Parallel foundation trenches for walls of the barracks were revealed during excavation in the cemetery.

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



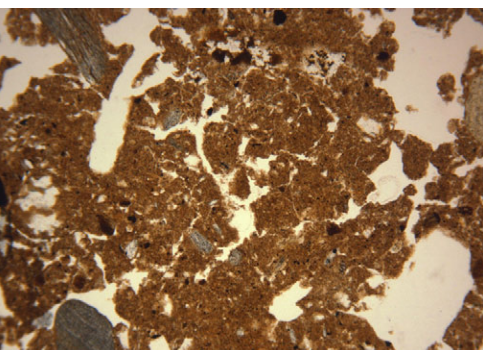
An artist's impression of how the fort may have looked from the south. The long barrack blocks filled much of the interior

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 in springtime.

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



REGIONAL, NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL



The neck of a Roman flagon brought from Exeter.



A Roman mortaria – a mixing bowl – during and after reconstruction for museum display.

Comprising over 1100 pieces, weighing in at over 10kg and representing at least 775 individual ceramic vessels, the collection of Roman pottery dug up at Calstock Roman fort between 2008 and 2011 had been brought from far and wide.

The ceramic assemblage includes the usual range of imported material, including samian from the factory at La Graufesenque in Southern France, mortaria from the Rhone Valley and Oise/Somme region of northern France, Spanish amphorae, and Belgic terra nigra, alongside regional products. The samian pottery, the distinct glossy red tableware found on Roman sites across Roman Britain and the wider Empire, came as both plain and decorated forms, most often bowls and cups. The style of decoration aids specific dating of each type, but makers frequently stamped these wares – for example, Niger II and Modestus on Calstock vessels – and the years that these potters worked is often known. 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 had been kept as a curiosity in his shed, but is now reconstructed and sits alongside the pottery since uncovered by archaeologists.

The most striking aspect of the pottery collection is, however, the predominance 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, and carries the implication that local sourcing was, perhaps more than usual, promoted 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 made use of by the military, and flourished because of it.

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 auxiliary soldiers 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 Roman *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 St Dominick parish, and perhaps in the north of Calstock parish on Greenscoombe Hill. 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.

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 archaeology exercise 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 these 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. Evidence of this 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 the site home to the Lord of Calstock manor? 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 the parish cemetery and these supported the posts of an 11th/12th century timber-framed longhouse.

Back cover: Backfilling of the 2008 trench did not mark an end to archaeological investigation and the archaeologists returned for three more digs, in 2009, 2010 and 2011.



