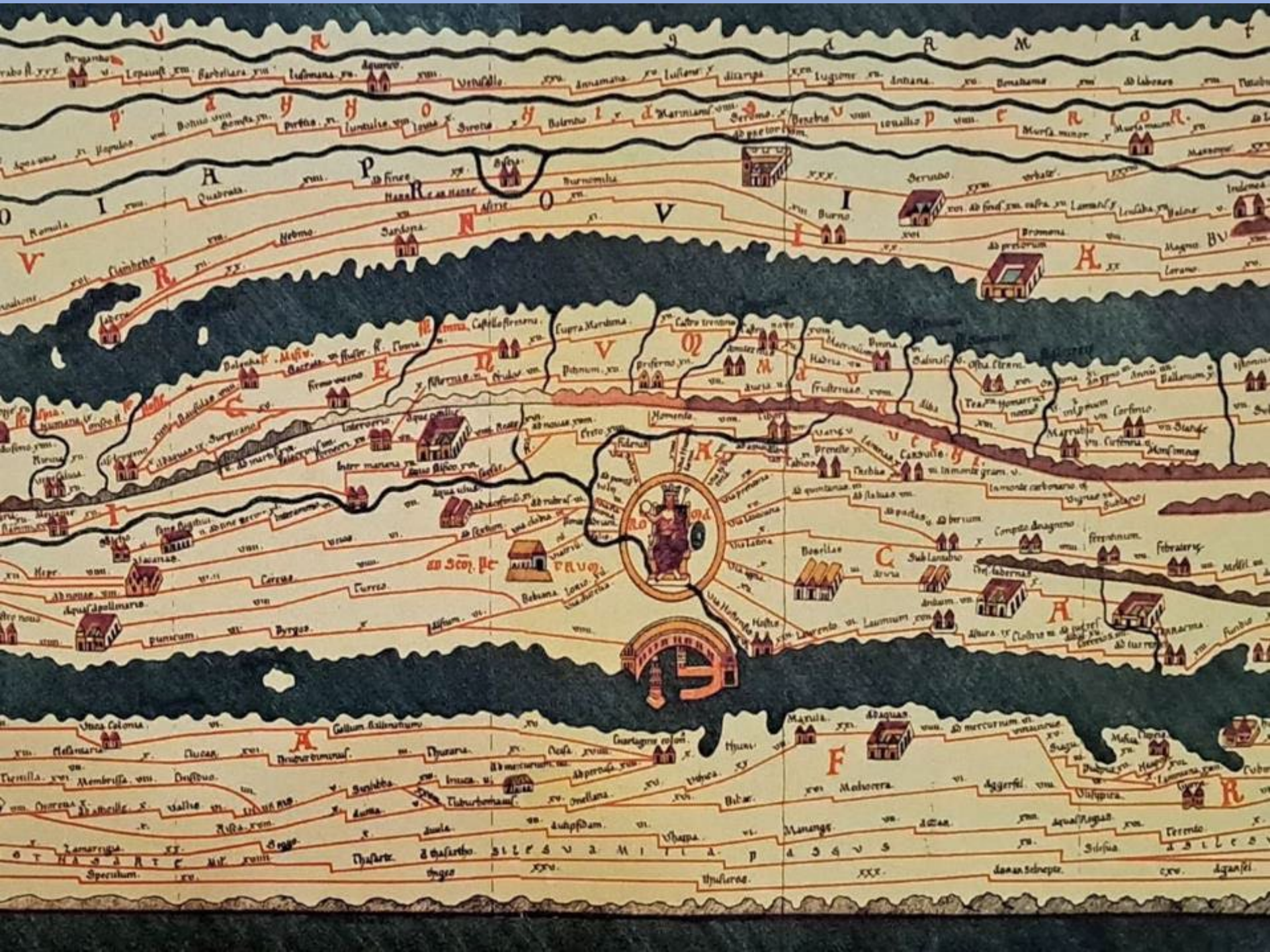


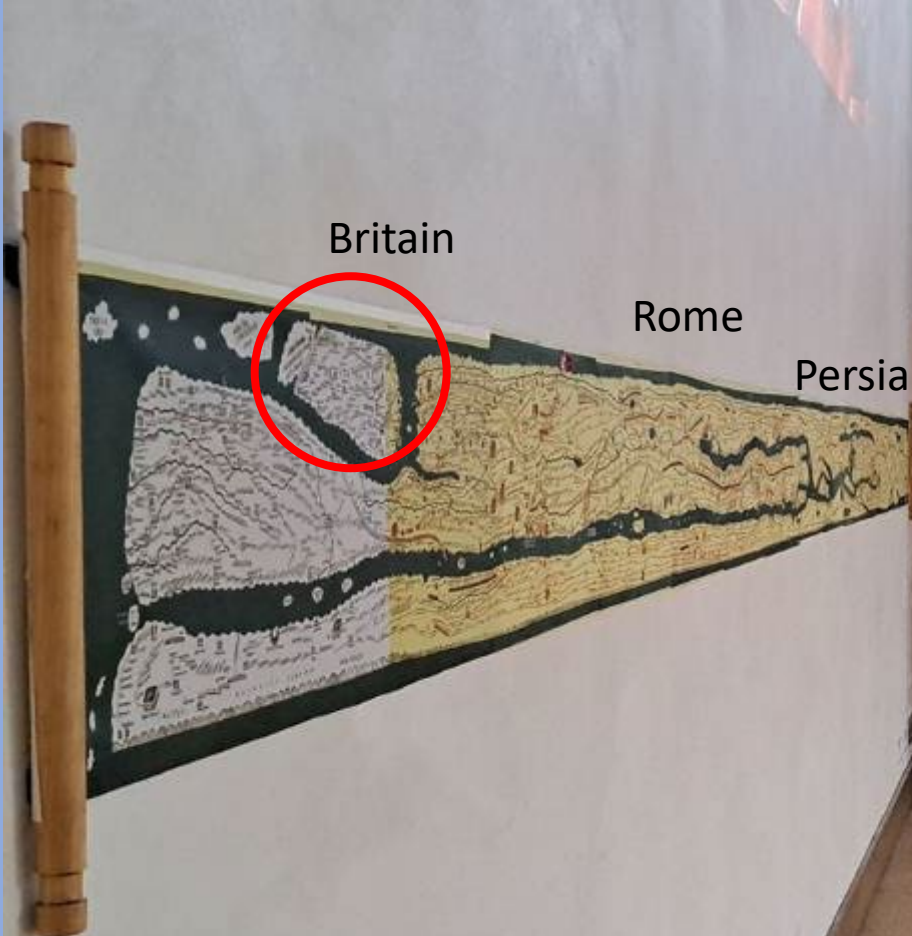
# Chepstow Roman Bridge

## Why here? -



John Burrows  
19 October 2024





Britain

Rome

Persia



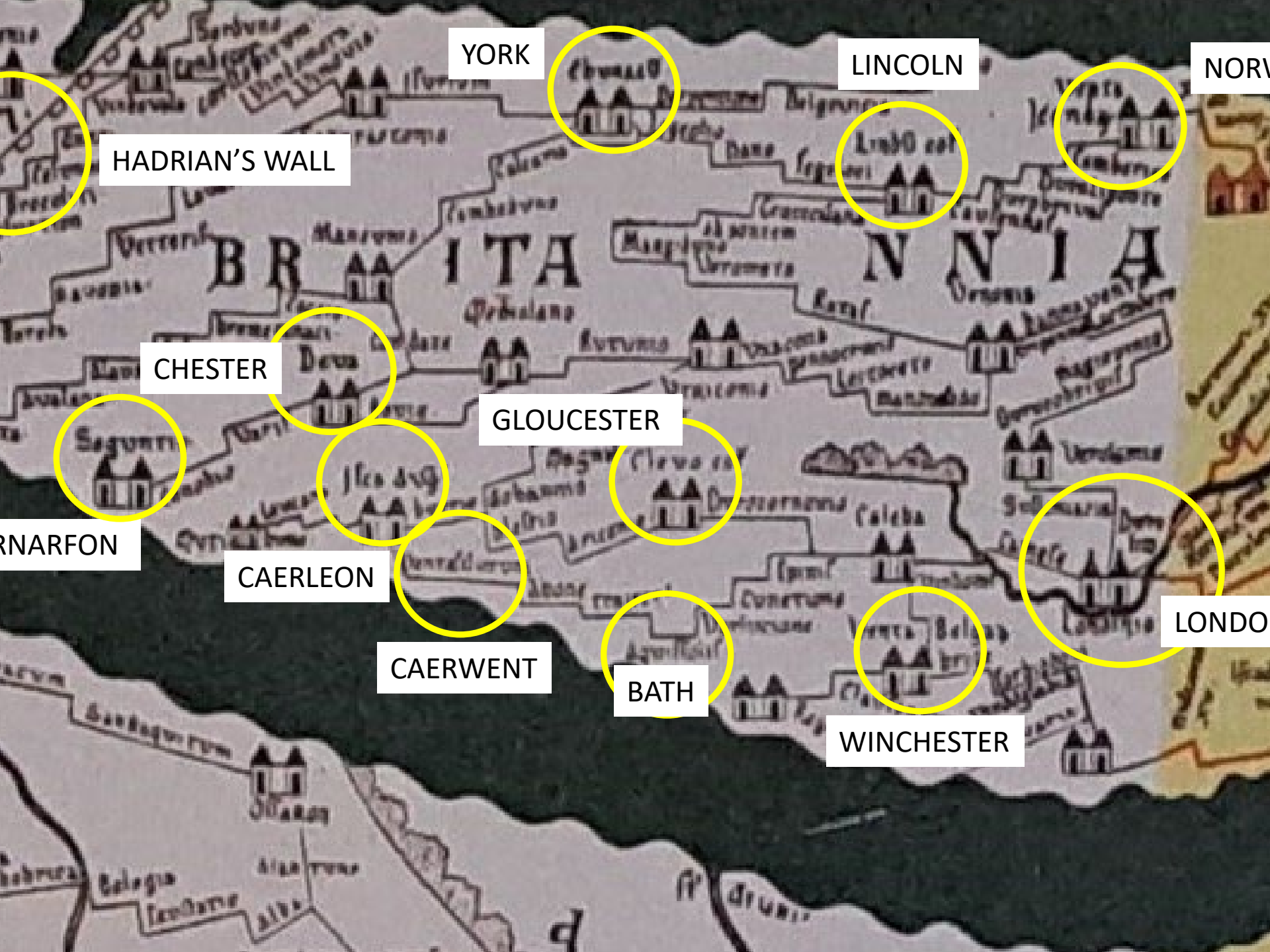
Grenzenloses Imperium

UNESCO-Welterbe - Grenzen des Römischen Reiches

Das Römische Reich war ein Weltreich, das sich über fast alle Kontinente erstreckte. Es umfasste die gesamte Mittelmeerregion, Teile von Europa, Asien und Afrika. Die Grenzen des Reiches waren durch eine dichte Netzwerke von Straßen und eine starke Militärpräsenz gesichert. Die Karte zeigt die Ausdehnung des Reiches zu seinen weitesten Grenzen hin.

Roads across the Roman Empire from Britain to the Persian Gulf. A copy of a C13th copy of the C4th Roman road map now called 'the **Peutinger Map or Table**' (6.2 metres/ 20 feet long) replicating a drawing on the side of a building in Roman Rome.





YORK

LINCOLN

NORW

HADRIAN'S WALL

CHESTER

GLOUCESTER

ARNARFON

CAERLEON

CAERWENT

BATH

WINCHESTER

LONDO





Chester

Wroxeter

Gloucester

Silchester

Winchester

London

Bath

Caerleon

Caerwent

Sea Mills

Hereford

Abergavenny

Usk

Ross



# Antonine Itinerary

🌐 25 languages ▾

Article Talk

Read Edit View history Tools ▾

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Antonine Itinerary** (Latin: *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti*, "Itinerary of the Emperor Antoninus") is an *itinerarium*, a register of the stations and distances along various roads. Seemingly based on official documents, possibly in part from a survey carried out under Augustus, it describes the roads of the Roman Empire.<sup>[1]</sup> Owing to the scarcity of other extant records of this type, it is a valuable historical record.<sup>[2]</sup>

Almost nothing is known of its author or the conditions of its compilation. Numerous manuscripts survive, the eight oldest dating to some point between the 7th to 10th centuries after the onset of the Carolingian Renaissance.<sup>[3]</sup> Despite the title seeming to ascribe the work to the patronage of the 2nd-century Antoninus Pius, all surviving editions seem to trace to an original towards the end of the reign of Diocletian in the early 4th century.<sup>[3]</sup> The most likely imperial patron—if the work had one—would have been Caracalla.<sup>[1]</sup>

## *Iter Britanniarum* [ edit ]

*Further information:* [List of Roman place names in Britain and Roman roads in Britannia](#)

The British section is known as the *Iter Britanniarum*, and can be described as the 'road map' of Roman Britain. There are 15 such itineraries in the document applying to different geographic areas.



*Iter Britanniarum*, displayed as a road map. The plotted routes and stations are approximations. The Antonine Wall and Hadrian's Wall are shown.



Below are the original Latin names for sites along route 14,<sup>[8]</sup> followed by a translation with a possible (but not necessarily authoritative) name for the modern sites.<sup>[5]</sup>

**Iter XIV (Itinerary 14)**

Latin ablative	Translated possible site name	Distance		
		Roman (mile)	Metric (km)	English (mile)
<b>Item alio itinere ab Isca Calleva mpm ciii sic</b>	<b>An alternate route from Isca Silurum to Calleva Atrebatum thus</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>95</b>
<a href="#">Venta Silurum</a> mpm viiii	<a href="#">Caerwent</a> , Monmouthshire	9	13	8
<a href="#">Abone</a> mpm xiiii	<a href="#">Sea Mills</a> , Gloucestershire	14	21	13
<a href="#">Traiectus</a> mpm viiii	perhaps <a href="#">Bitton</a> , near Willsbridge, Gloucestershire	9	13	8
<a href="#">Aquis Solis</a> mpm vi	<a href="#">Bath</a> , Somerset	6	9	5.5
<a href="#">Verlucione</a> mpm xv	<a href="#">Sandy Lane</a> , Wiltshire	15	22	14
<a href="#">Cunetione</a> mpm xx	<a href="#">Mildenhall</a> , Wiltshire	20	30	18.5
<a href="#">Spinis</a> mpm xv	<a href="#">Speen</a> , Berkshire	15	22	14
<a href="#">Calleva</a> mpm xv	<a href="#">Silchester</a> , Hampshire	15	22	14

## Examples [ edit ]

Below are the original Latin **ablative forms** for sites along route 13,<sup>[4]</sup> followed by a translation with a possible (but not necessarily authoritative) name for the modern sites.<sup>[5]</sup> A transcriber omitted an entry, so that the total number of paces did not equal the sum of paces between locations.

### Iter XIII (Itinerary 13)

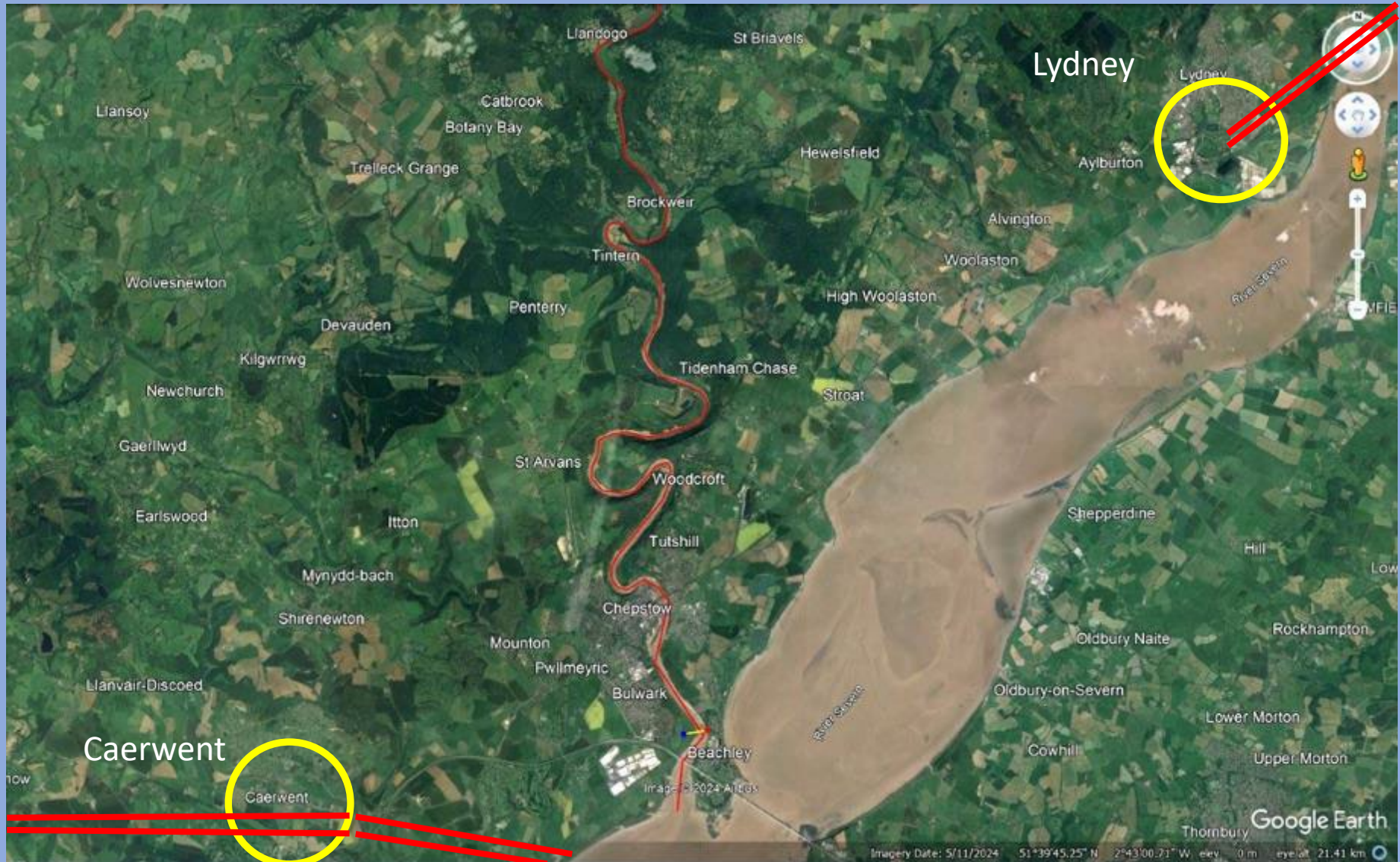
Latin ablative	Translated possible site name	Distance		
		Roman (mile)	Metric (km)	English (mile)
<b>Item ab Isca Calleva mpm<sup>[6]</sup> cviii<sup>[7]</sup> sic</b>	<b>A route from Isca Silurum to Calleva Atrebatum thus</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100</b>
Burrio mpm viii	Usk, Monmouthshire	8	12	7.5
Blestio mpm xi	Monmouth, Monmouthshire	11	16	10
Ariconio mpm xi	Bury Hill, <a href="#">Weston under Penyard</a> , Herefordshire	11	16	10
Clevo mpm xv	<a href="#">Gloucester</a> , Gloucestershire	15	22	14
(no entry - mpm xx)	perhaps <a href="#">Corinium Dobunorum</a> at modern <a href="#">Cirencester</a> , Gloucestershire	(20)	(30)	(18.5)
Durocornovio mpm xiiii	perhaps <a href="#">Wanborough</a> , Wiltshire	14	21	13
Spinis mpm xv	<a href="#">Speen</a> , Berkshire	15	22	14
Calleva mpm xv	<a href="#">Silchester</a> , Hampshire	15	22	14



The Roman road from **Caerleon** to **Gloucester** had to cross the Usk, the Wye, and the Severn. The Wye Valley Gorge was the biggest problem.

← **Caerleon**

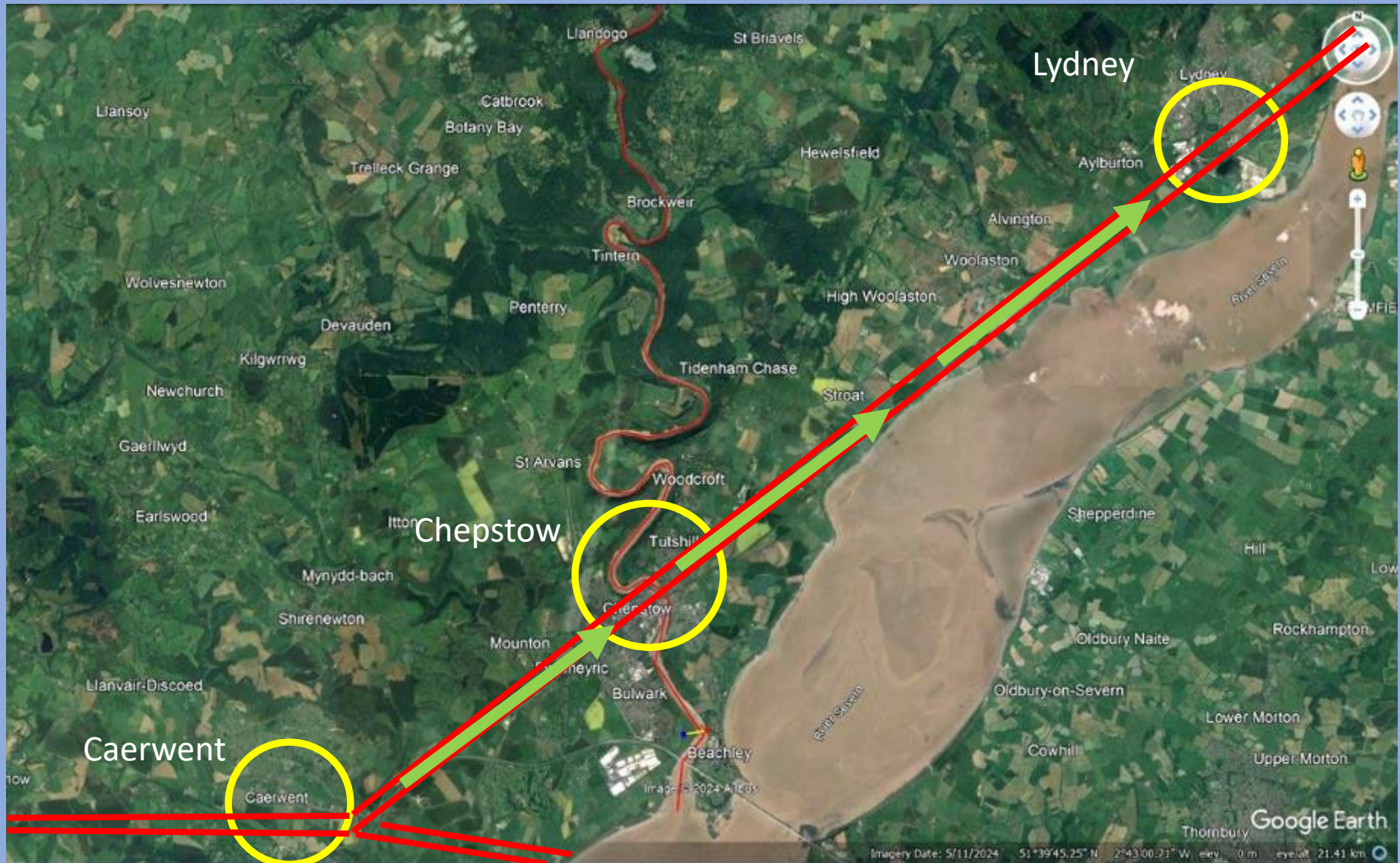
**Gloucester** →



The Roman road from **Caerleon** to **Gloucester** had to cross the Usk, the Wye, and the Severn. The Wye Valley Gorge was the biggest problem.

← **Caerleon**

**Gloucester** →

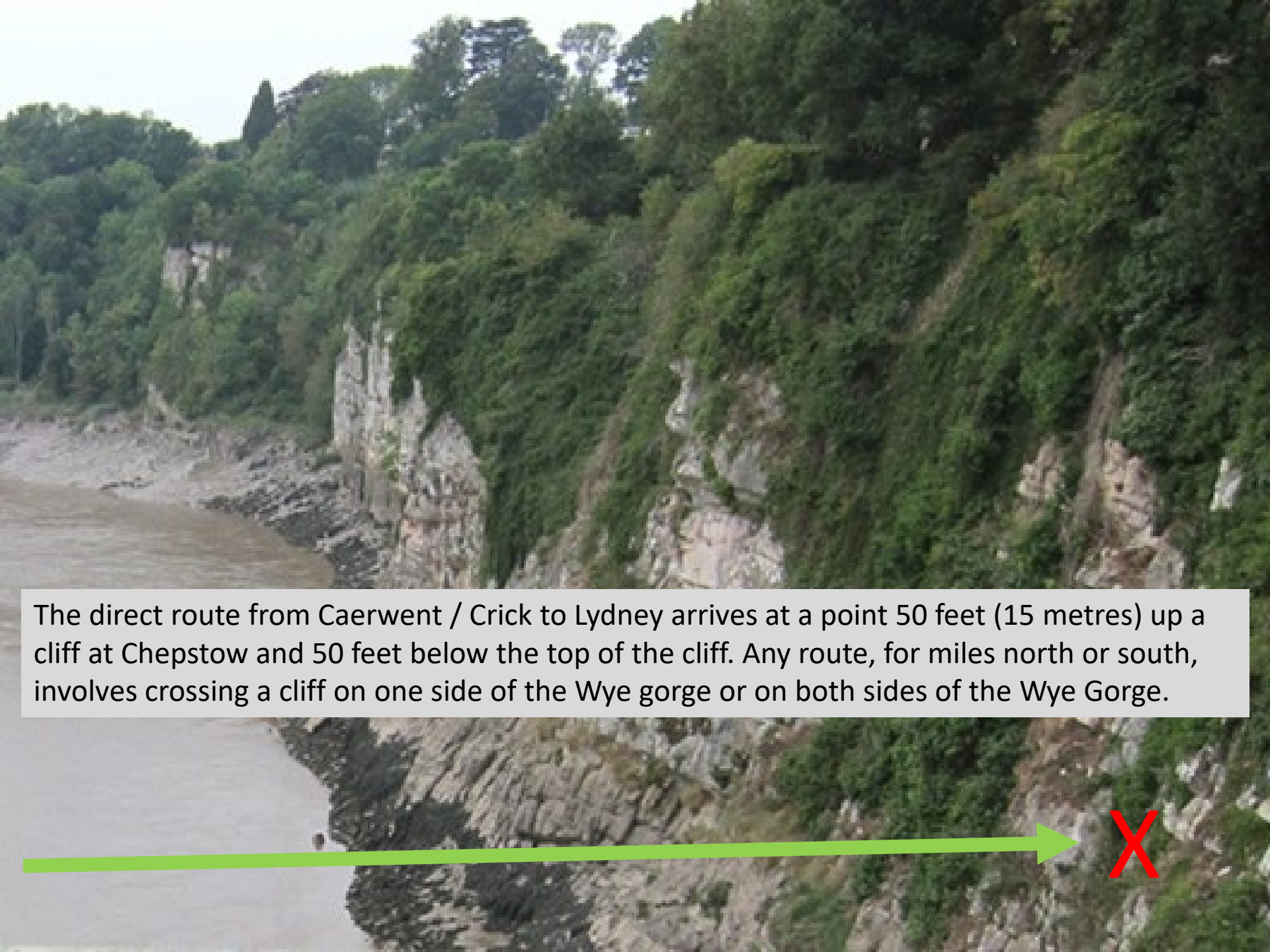


Wye Valley Gorge Cliffs  
In White



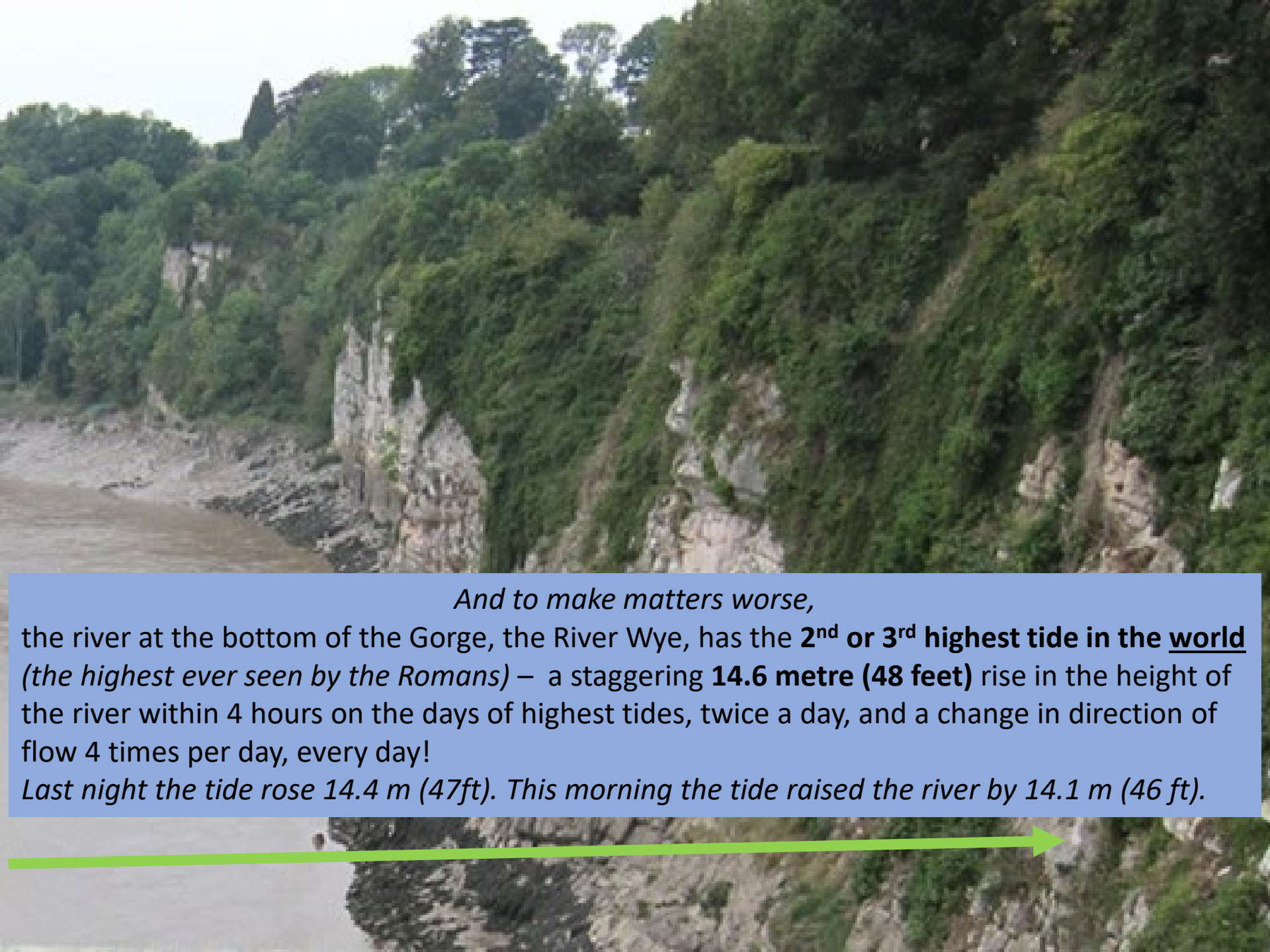
Google





The direct route from Caerwent / Crick to Lydney arrives at a point 50 feet (15 metres) up a cliff at Chepstow and 50 feet below the top of the cliff. Any route, for miles north or south, involves crossing a cliff on one side of the Wye gorge or on both sides of the Wye Gorge.

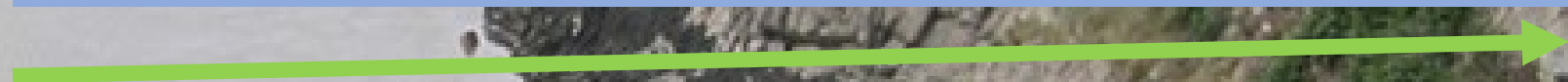




*And to make matters worse,*

the river at the bottom of the Gorge, the River Wye, has the **2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> highest tide in the world** (*the highest ever seen by the Romans*) – a staggering **14.6 metre (48 feet)** rise in the height of the river within 4 hours on the days of highest tides, twice a day, and a change in direction of flow 4 times per day, every day!

*Last night the tide rose 14.4 m (47ft). This morning the tide raised the river by 14.1 m (46 ft).*





1. 'Elizabethan II' crossing (1966)
2. Hardwick (Shipyard – Tallards Marsh) (not tried)
3. 'Victorian' crossing (1852)
4. Norman/Medieval crossing (1067/1220)
5. Roman crossing

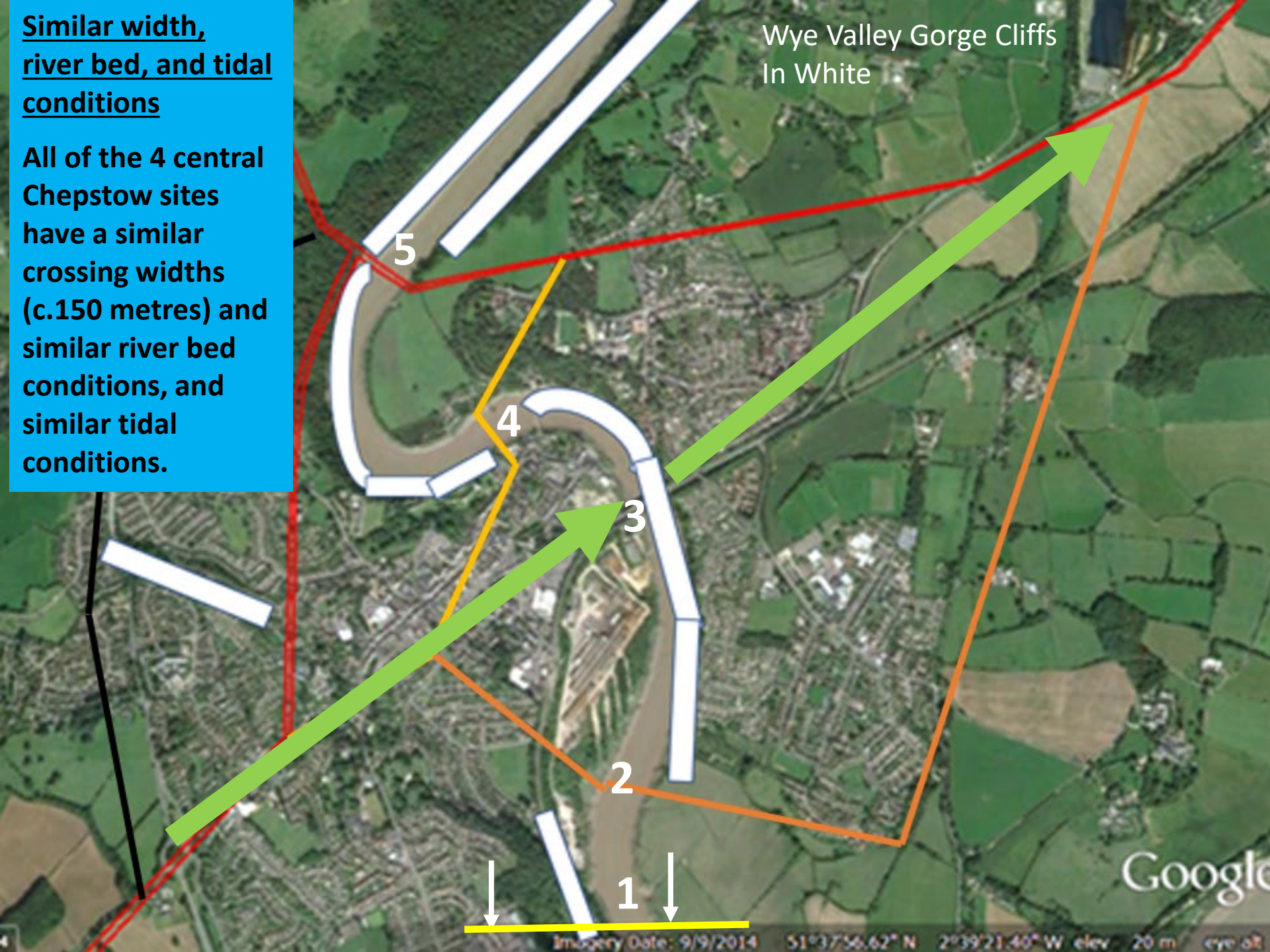
### 3. VICTORIAN ROUTE



**Similar width,  
river bed, and tidal  
conditions**

**All of the 4 central  
Chepstow sites  
have a similar  
crossing widths  
(c.150 metres) and  
similar river bed  
conditions, and  
similar tidal  
conditions.**

Wye Valley Gorge Cliffs  
In White



Similar width,  
river bed, and tidal  
conditions

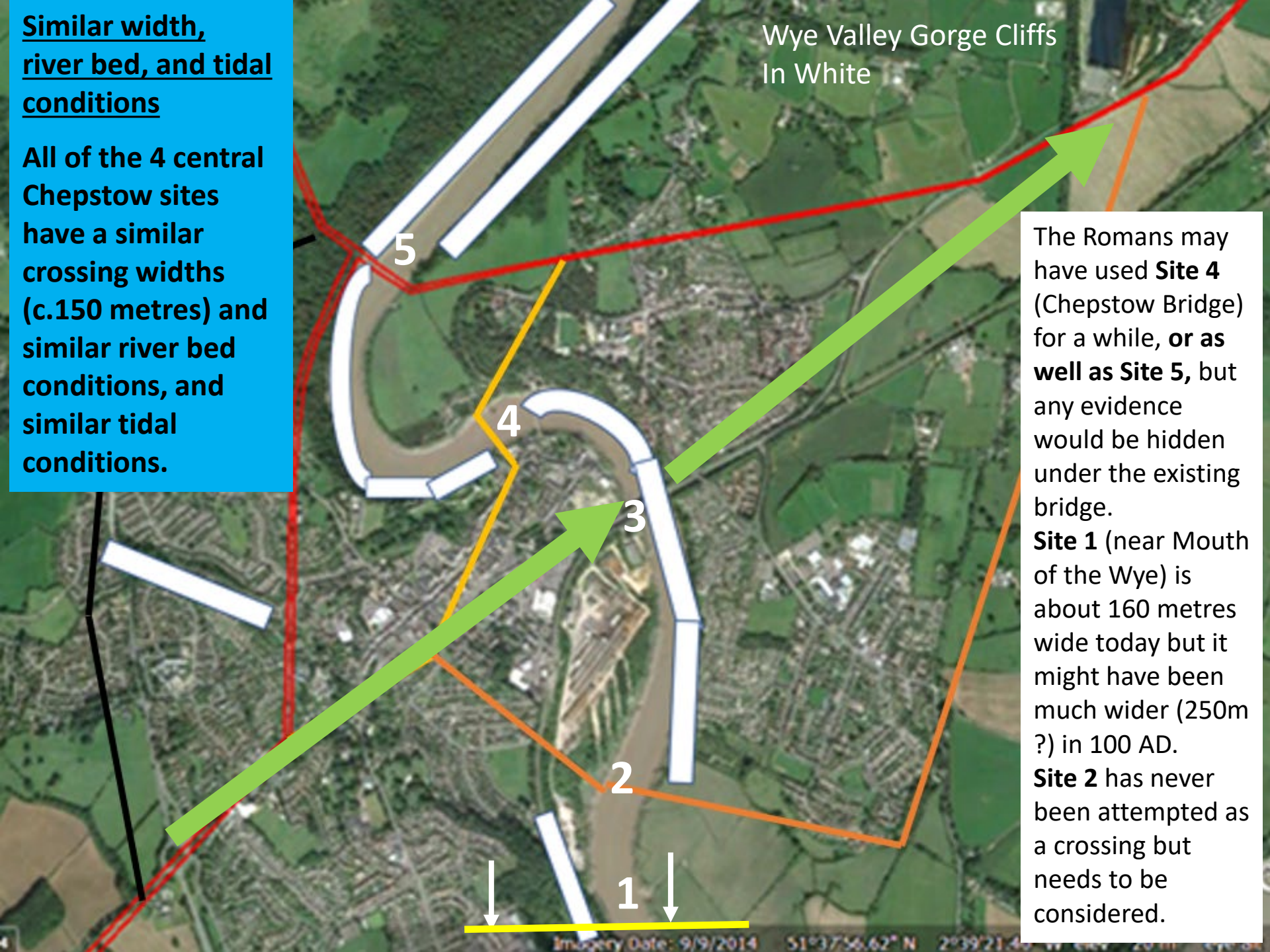
All of the 4 central  
Chepstow sites  
have a similar  
crossing widths  
(c.150 metres) and  
similar river bed  
conditions, and  
similar tidal  
conditions.

Wye Valley Gorge Cliffs  
In White

The Romans may have used **Site 4** (Chepstow Bridge) for a while, or as well as **Site 5**, but any evidence would be hidden under the existing bridge.

**Site 1** (near Mouth of the Wye) is about 160 metres wide today but it might have been much wider (250m ?) in 100 AD.

**Site 2** has never been attempted as a crossing but needs to be considered.







GLOUCESTER

NEWPORT

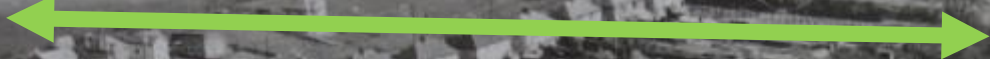




1852

← GLOUCESTER

NEWPORT →





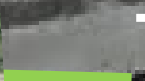


← GLOUCESTER

NEWPORT →



Pont du Gard Aqueduct





Google

4. NORMAN/MEDIEVAL ROUTE

GLOUCESTER ←

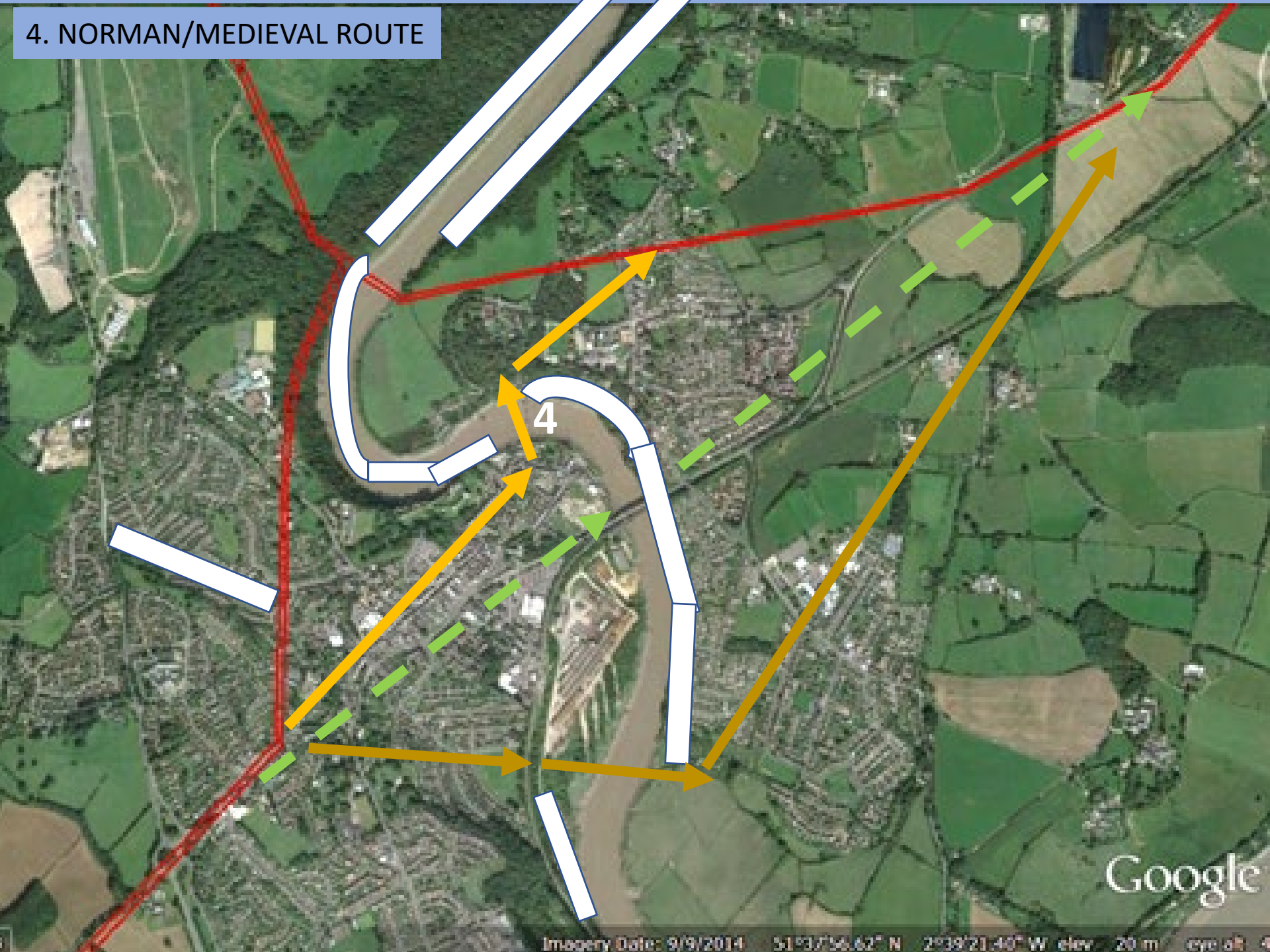
NEWPORT →



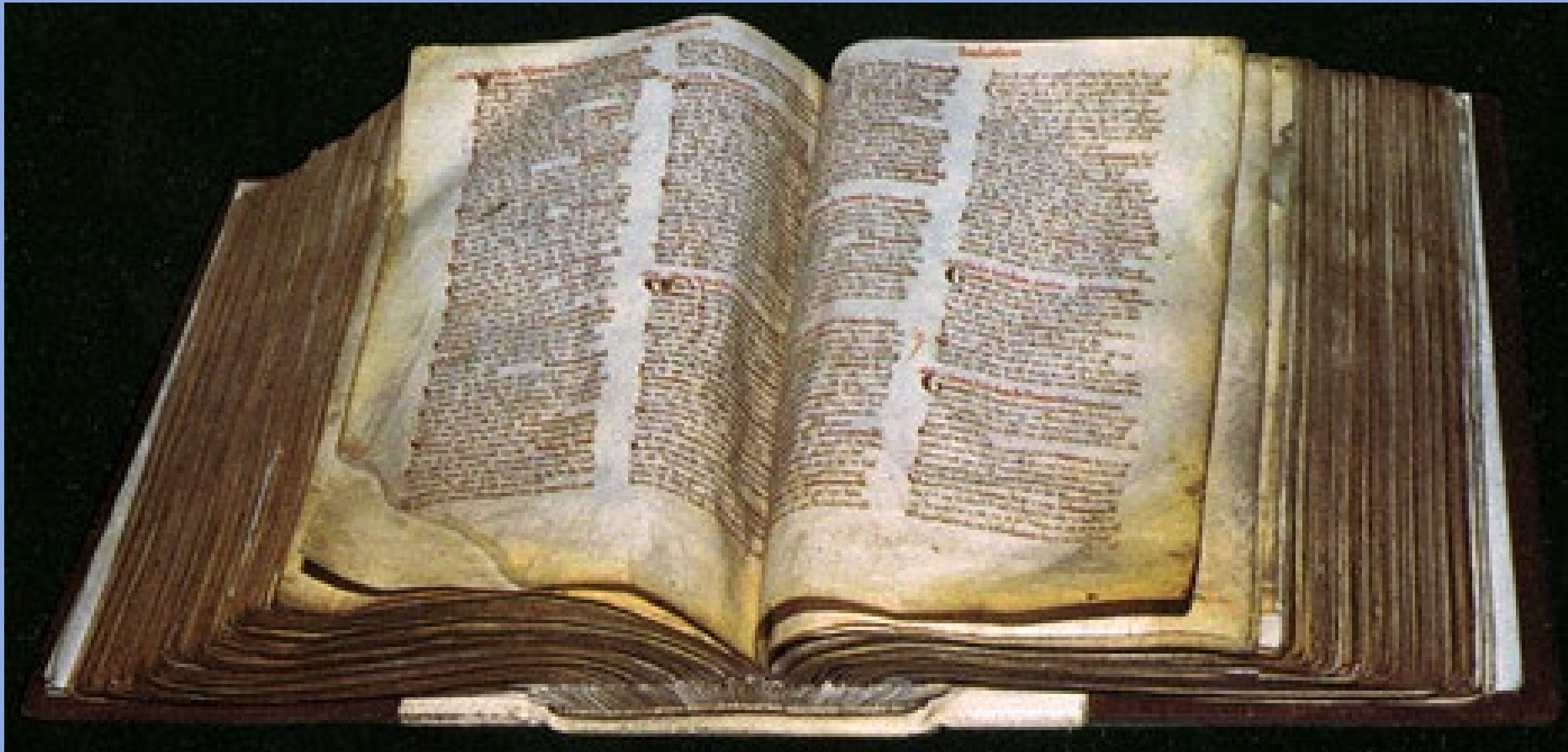
Pont du Gard Aqueduct



# 4. NORMAN/MEDIEVAL ROUTE



## The Domesday Book 1086-87



Estrighoel (Chepstow) is recorded in the Gloucestershire section of the Domesday Book 1087. In just 5 abbreviated words it explains why 950 years ago the Castle of Estrighoel was built where it was, and the town grew there, and the Medieval bridge was built there.

**But none of this was relevant to the Romans who had a different agenda!**

# Striguil (Chepstow) in the Domesday Book 1086/87 AD

7 in Burgo ciuitatis sunt Wastate. xiiii. domus.

1 **C**astellu de Striguhotel fecit Willelms comes.  
2 7 eius tempore reddeb. xl. sol. tantu donauit in silua in euntib.  
3 Tempore u Rogeru filie. reddid ipsa uilla xx. lib.  
4 7 medietate habeb Rad de Limesi. Modo ho rex mag. xii. lib.  
Ano redditione de carleton. 7 i. caruca que ibi e 7 in pis  
cartas in Waue 7 buscha. exeunt vii. lib 7 x. solid.  
In Wales sunt. iii. harduicel. Lamecare 7 potesbuiet 7 Dman.  
In his sunt. vii. car. 7 xi. uilli dimidi. 7 xx. bord. cu. vi. car.  
P his. iii. harduicel. uoleb habere. c. solid Rog de iure.  
Sub Wasuue pposito sunt xiii. uille. Sub Elmui. xiiii.  
uille. Sub Bleio sunt. xiii. uille. Sub Dbel sus. xiiii. uille.  
Hi reddunt. xl vii. sextaria mellis. 7 xl. porc 7 xl. i. uaccas.  
7 xxviii. solid p accipitrib. Tot hoc uill. ix. lib 7 x. sol. 7 iii. den.  
De una Wasta tra. redd Wito balistari. i. sext mell. 7 i. porc.  
B qdric ioculator regis ho. iii. uillas. 7 ibi. v. car. nil redd.  
Morin. i. uilla. Chenesi. i. fil. Wasuue. i. Sells bept. i.  
Abraham pbr. ii. uillas. hi hnt. vi. car. 7 nichil reddunt.  
Hos misit. W. comes ad esuead Grifin regis. licentia regis. W.  
Sub eis pposita sunt. iii. uille Wastate p roge Caraduech.

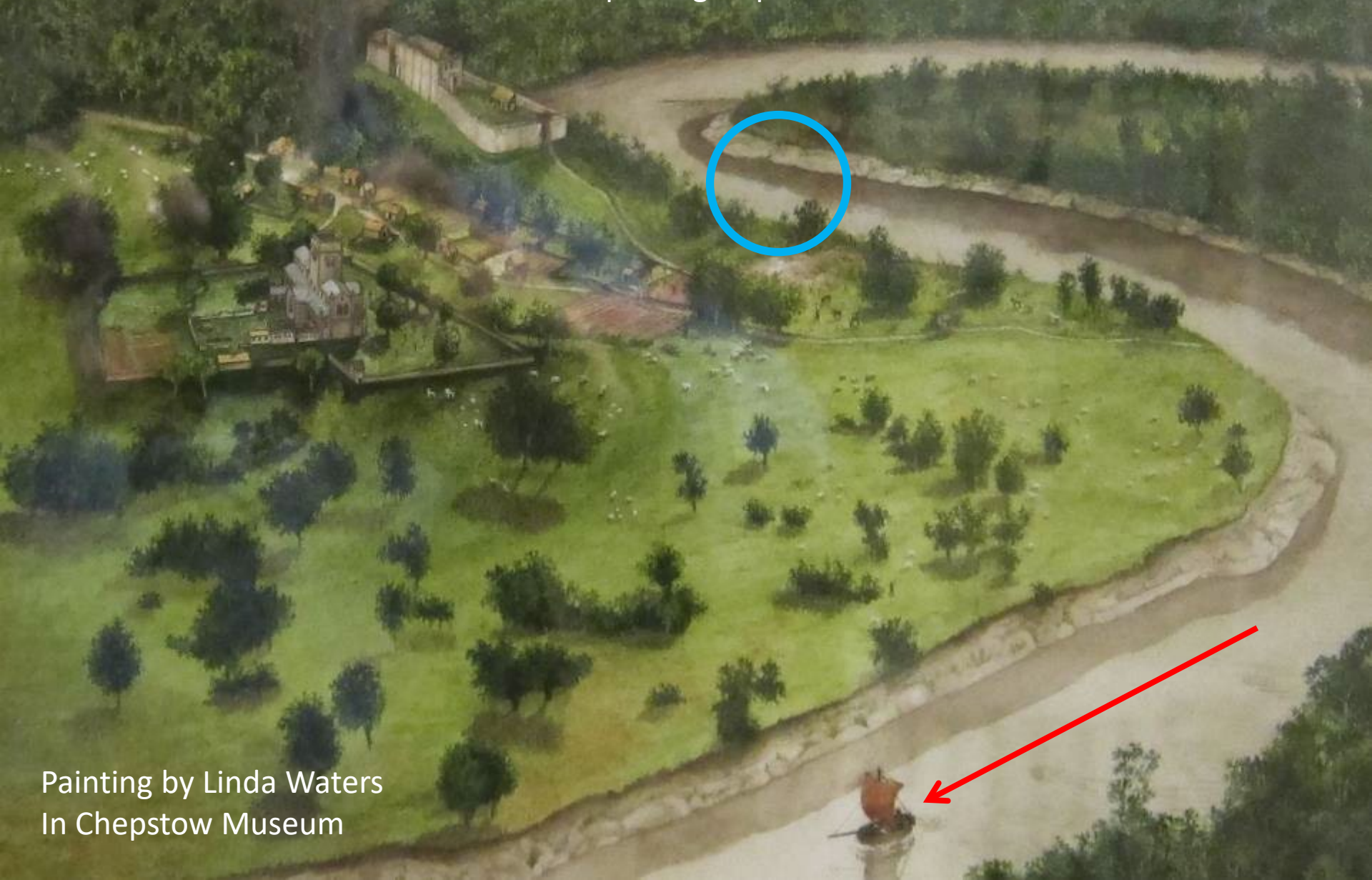
7 Turstan filii Rolf hnt me buscha 7 Waia. xvii.  
carucas. De his sunt in dno. iii. 7 dimid. alie sunt homin.  
Ibi. xi. bord sunt. 7 molin de vii. sold. Val. ix. lib tot.  
De hac tra. v. carue 7 dimid. caluonant pposita regis.  
di centes qd est Turst sine dono supsa.  
Ist Turstan ho. vi. carue tpe ut buscha. 7 ibi boesa  
hnt. iii. car. 7 molin redd. xo. sol. 7 dimid pscaria  
de. x. sol. Tot uat. Liiii. sol 7 vi. den.  
Alured hispan ho in feudo. ii. caruat tpe 7 ibi. ii. car  
in dno. Ist. a. ho In Wales vii. uillas. que fuer  
Wille comital 7 Rog filii ei in dno. he reddo vi. mell  
sextaria. 7 vi. porc. 7 x. solid.

1. Castle of Striguil was built by Earl William
2. And in his time he paid only 40 shillings  
*'de navib'us in silva'm euntib'*  
*'from ships going into the forest'*

3. In the time of his son Earl Roger this town paid £16 (8x that paid by his father)
4. And Ralph de Limesy had half.  
Now the King has £12 from it.



*And in his time he (Earl William) paid ( King William I) only forty shillings **from ships going into the Forest** — Domesday Survey 1086/Book 1087*  
The Normans wanted to raise tax from passing ships and needed to be close to the river.



Painting by Linda Waters  
In Chepstow Museum

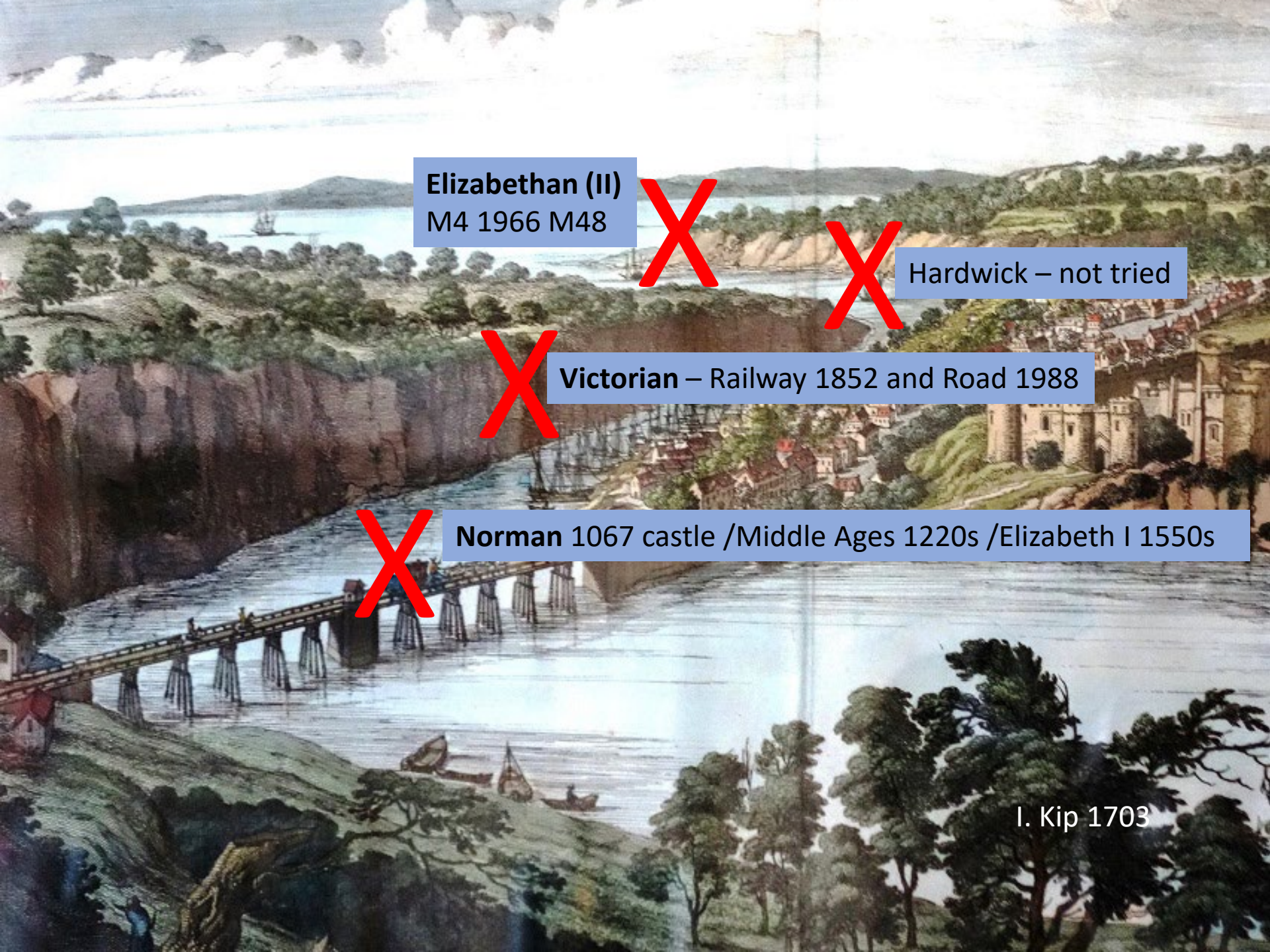




I. Kip 1703



I. Kip 1703



**Elizabethan (II)**  
M4 1966 M48



Hardwick – not tried



**Victorian** – Railway 1852 and Road 1988

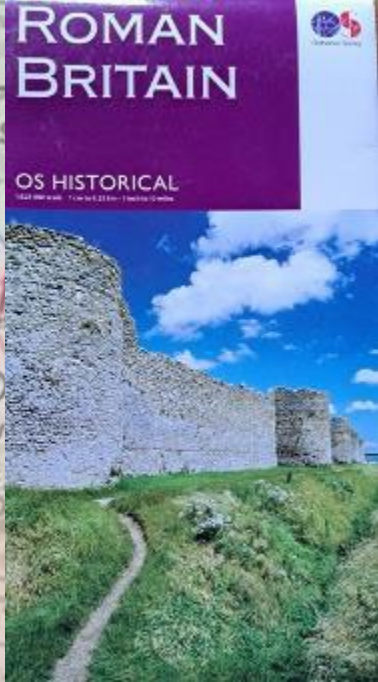
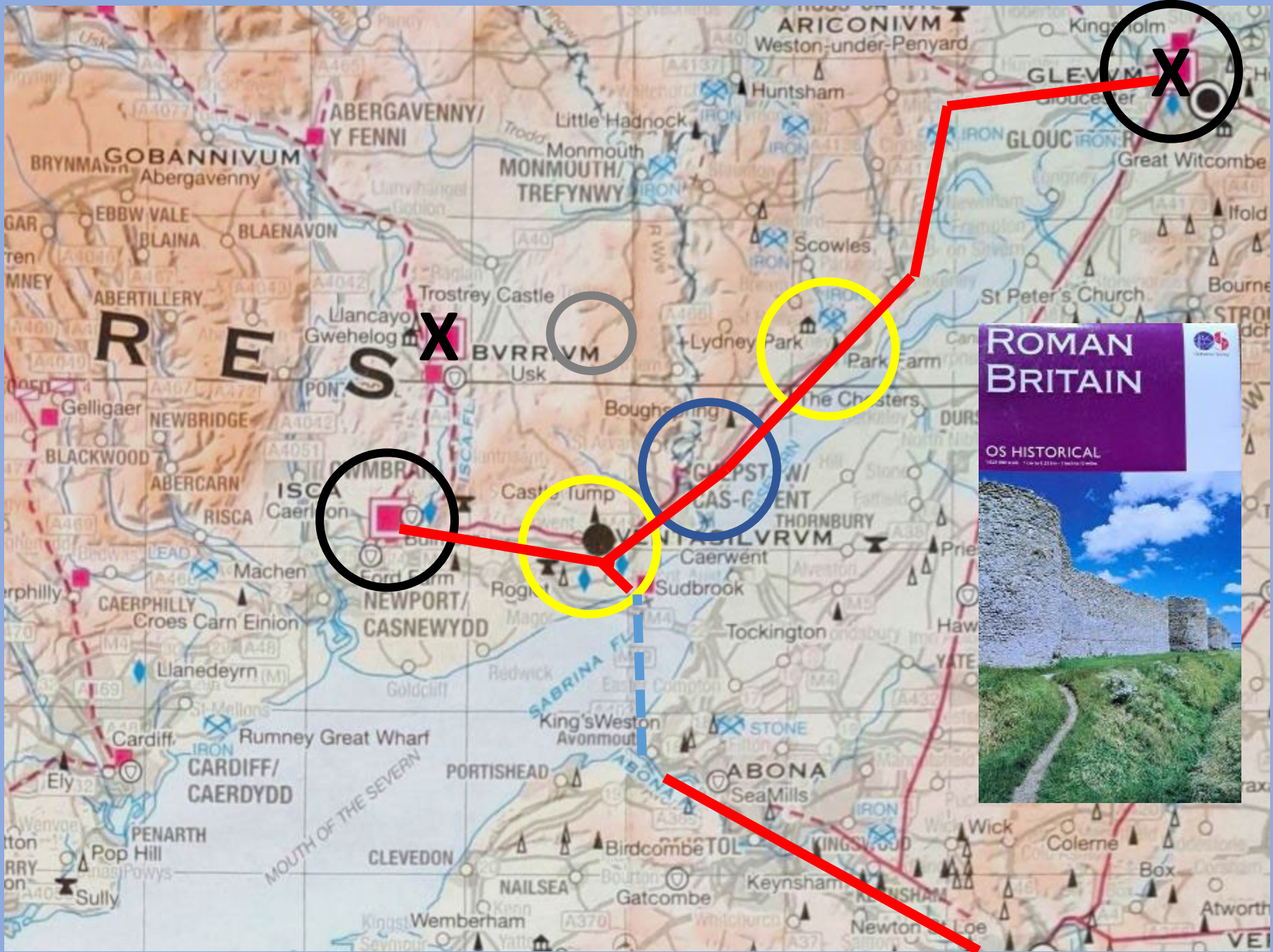


**Norman** 1067 castle /Middle Ages 1220s /Elizabeth I 1550s

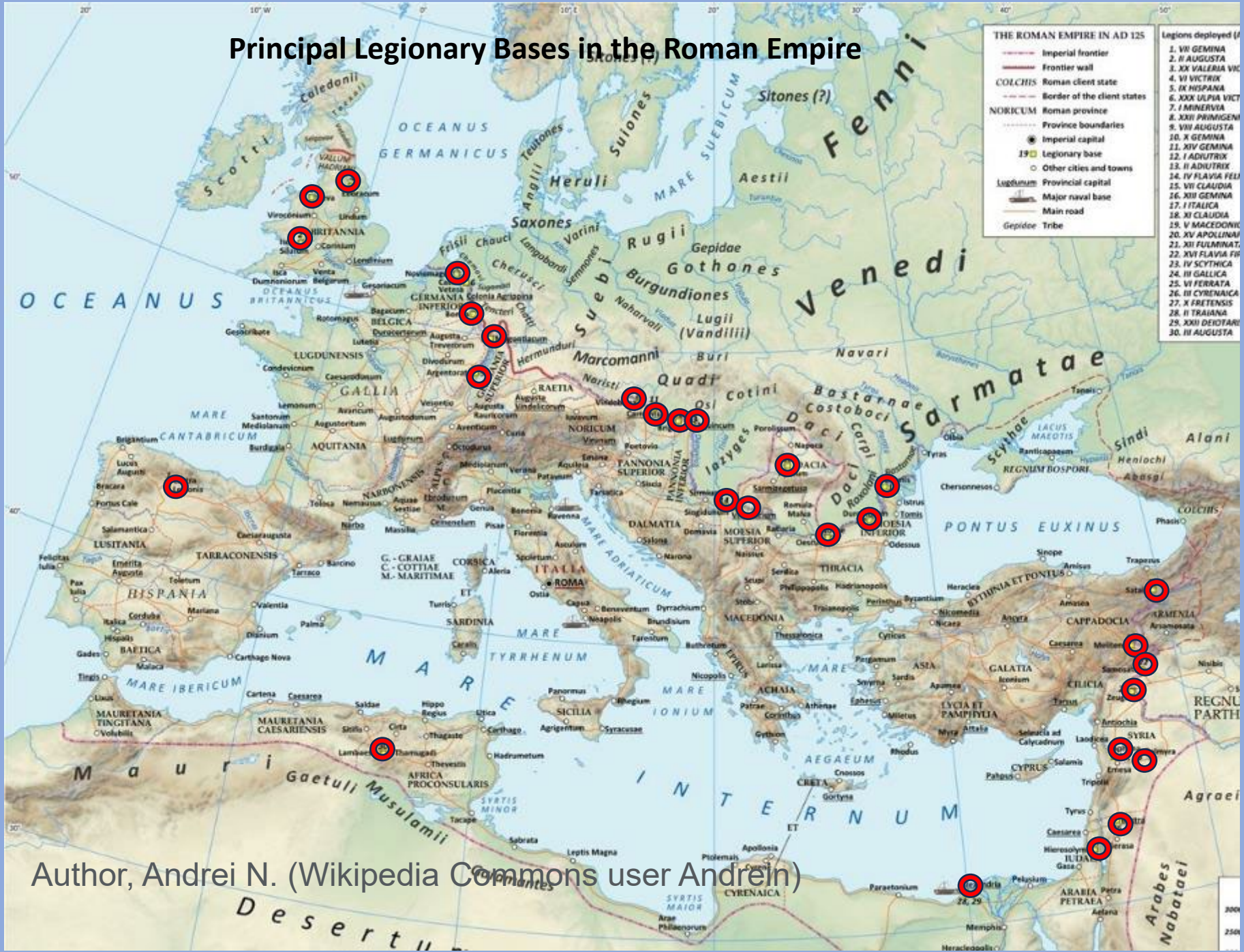
I. Kip 1703

## 5. THE ROMAN ROUTE





# Principal Legionary Bases in the Roman Empire



**THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN AD 125**

- Imperial frontier
- Frontier wall
- COLCHIS Roman client state
- Border of the client states
- NORICUM Roman province
- Province boundaries
- Imperial capital
- Legionary base
- Other cities and towns
- Legionum Provincial capital
- Major naval base
- Main road
- Gepidae Tribe

**Legions deployed (I)**

1. VII GEMINA
2. II AUGUSTA
3. XX VALERIA VIC
4. VI VICTRIX
5. IX HISPANA
6. XXX ULPIA VICT
7. I MINERVA
8. XXII PRINCEPS
9. VIII AUGUSTA
10. X GEMINA
11. XIV GEMINA
12. I ADUATRIX
13. II ADUATRIX
14. IV FLAVIA FELIX
15. VII CLAUDIA
16. XIII GEMINA
17. I ITALICA
18. XI CLAUDIA
19. V MACEDONICA
20. XV APOLLINARIA
21. XII FULMINATA
22. XVI FLAVIA FIDELIUM
23. IV SCYTHICA
24. III GALLICA
25. VI FERRATA
26. III CYRANAICA
27. X FRETENSIS
28. II TRAIANA
29. XXII DEIOTARIANA
30. II AUGUSTA

Author, Andrei N. (Wikipedia Commons user Andrein)

# Principal Legionary Bases in the Roman Empire

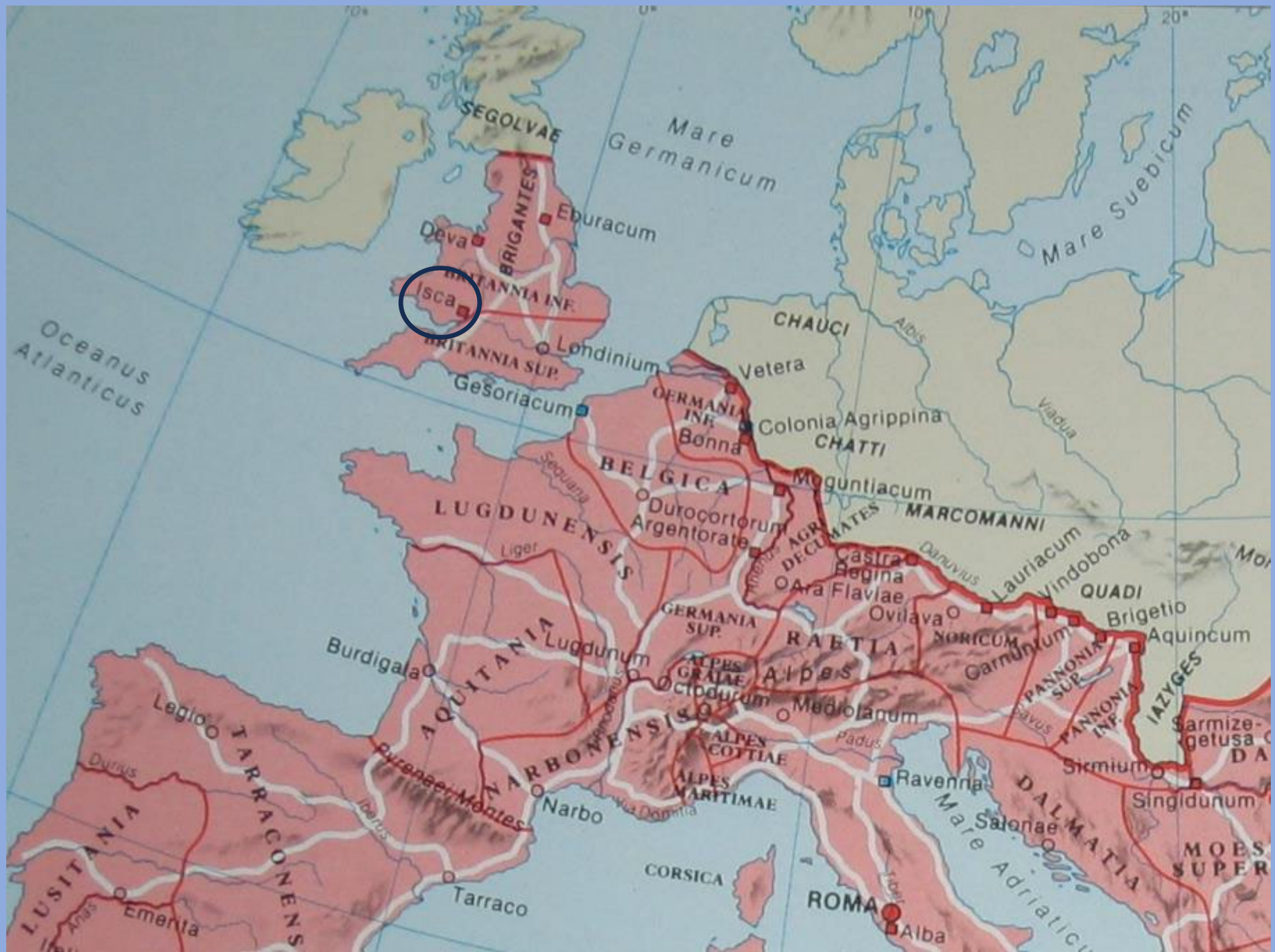


## Roman Legionary Bases c.35 bases in 16 countries

Germany	4 (12 in all but only 4 long term)
Turkey	4
Britain	3 York, Chester, Newport (Caerleon)
Syria	3
Egypt	3
Austria	3
Hungary	2
Bulgaria	2
Serbia	2
Israel	2
Spain	1
France	1
Romania	1
Switzerland	1
Algeria	1
Italy	1

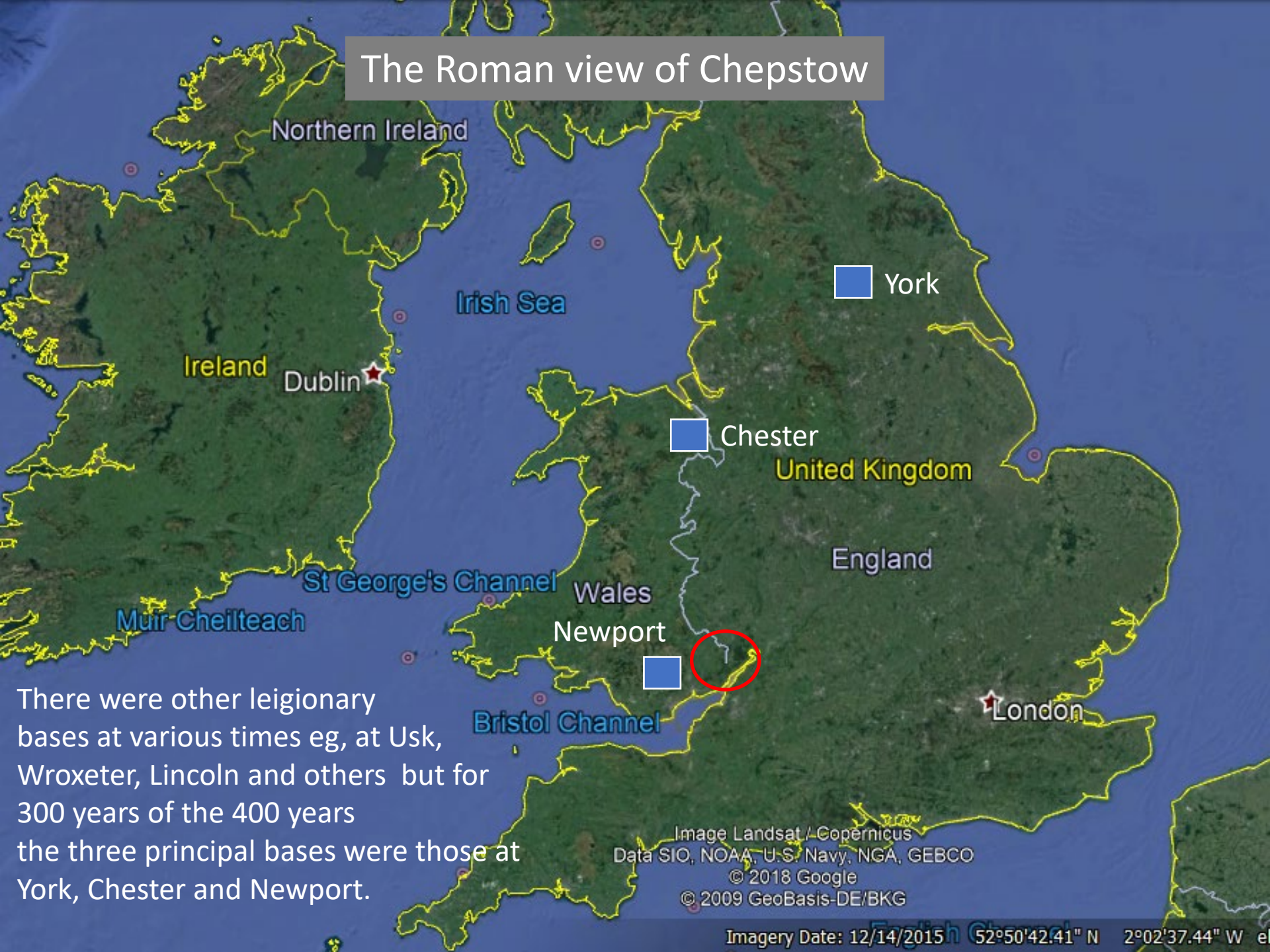
The whole of Western Europe is covered by just 8 Legions of Rome's 35 Legions  
 – 3 in Germany; 1 in Eastern France;  
 1 in Northern Spain; and 3 in Britain  
 – one of which is at Newport/Caerleon  
 - it is important.

Source: Wikipedia List of Roman Legions and Bases  
 – retrieved 29 September 2024





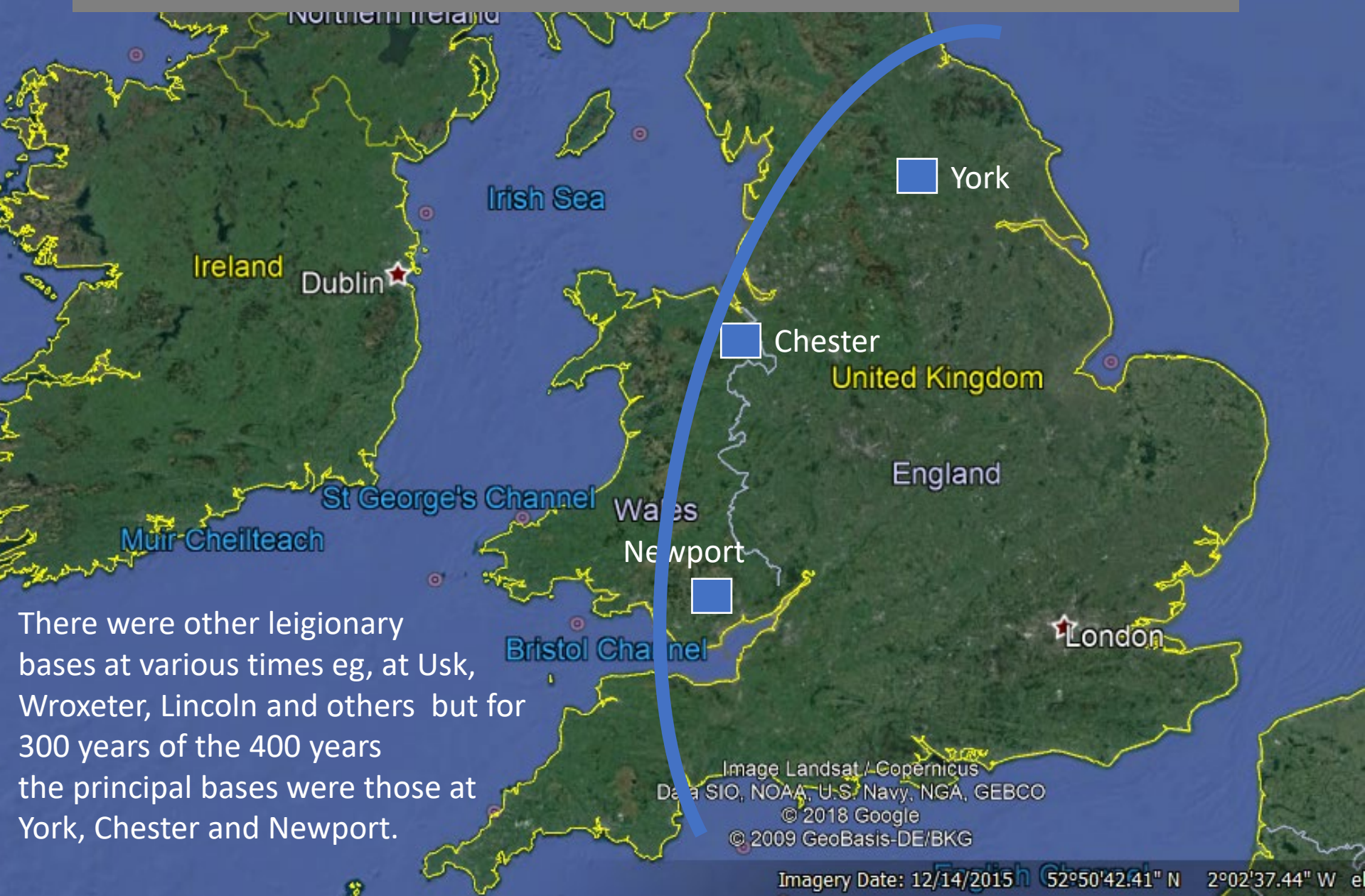
# The Roman view of Chepstow



There were other legionary bases at various times eg, at Usk, Wroxeter, Lincoln and others but for 300 years of the 400 years the three principal bases were those at York, Chester and Newport.

Image Landsat / Copernicus  
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO  
© 2018 Google  
© 2009 GeoBasis-DE/BKG

Roman Control of Britain for 300 years of the 400 years by 3 legions – based at York, Chester and Newport (Caerleon)



There were other legionary bases at various times eg, at Usk, Wroxeter, Lincoln and others but for 300 years of the 400 years the principal bases were those at York, Chester and Newport.

Image Landsat / Copernicus  
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO  
© 2018 Google  
© 2009 GeoBasis-DE/BKG



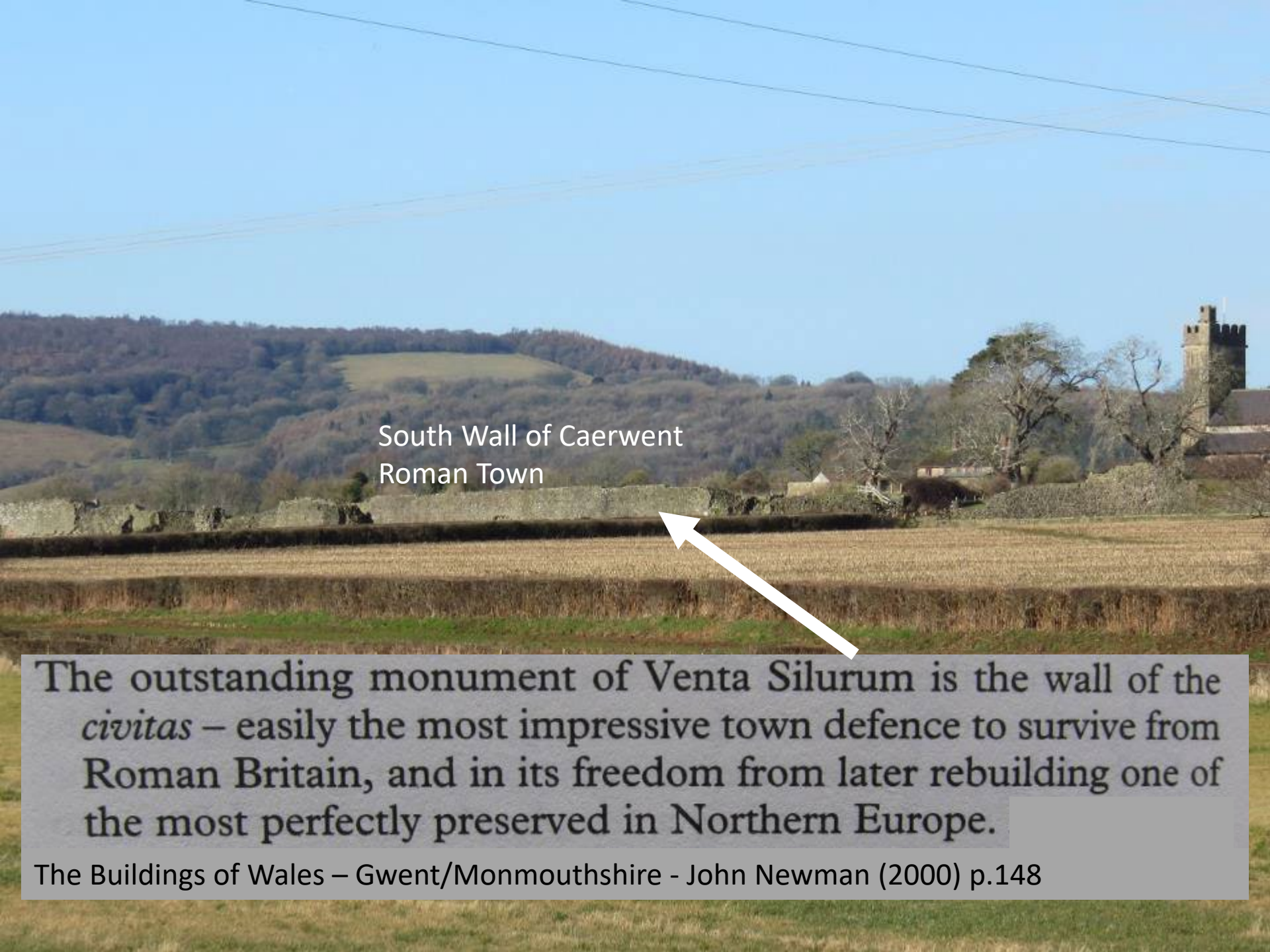
## City of the Legion

**AMGUEDDFA  
CYMRU**

### Our Museums

National Museum Cardiff  
St Fagans National Museum of History  
National Waterfront Museum  
Big Pit National Coal Museum  
National Slate Museum  
National Wool Museum  
National Roman Legion Museum

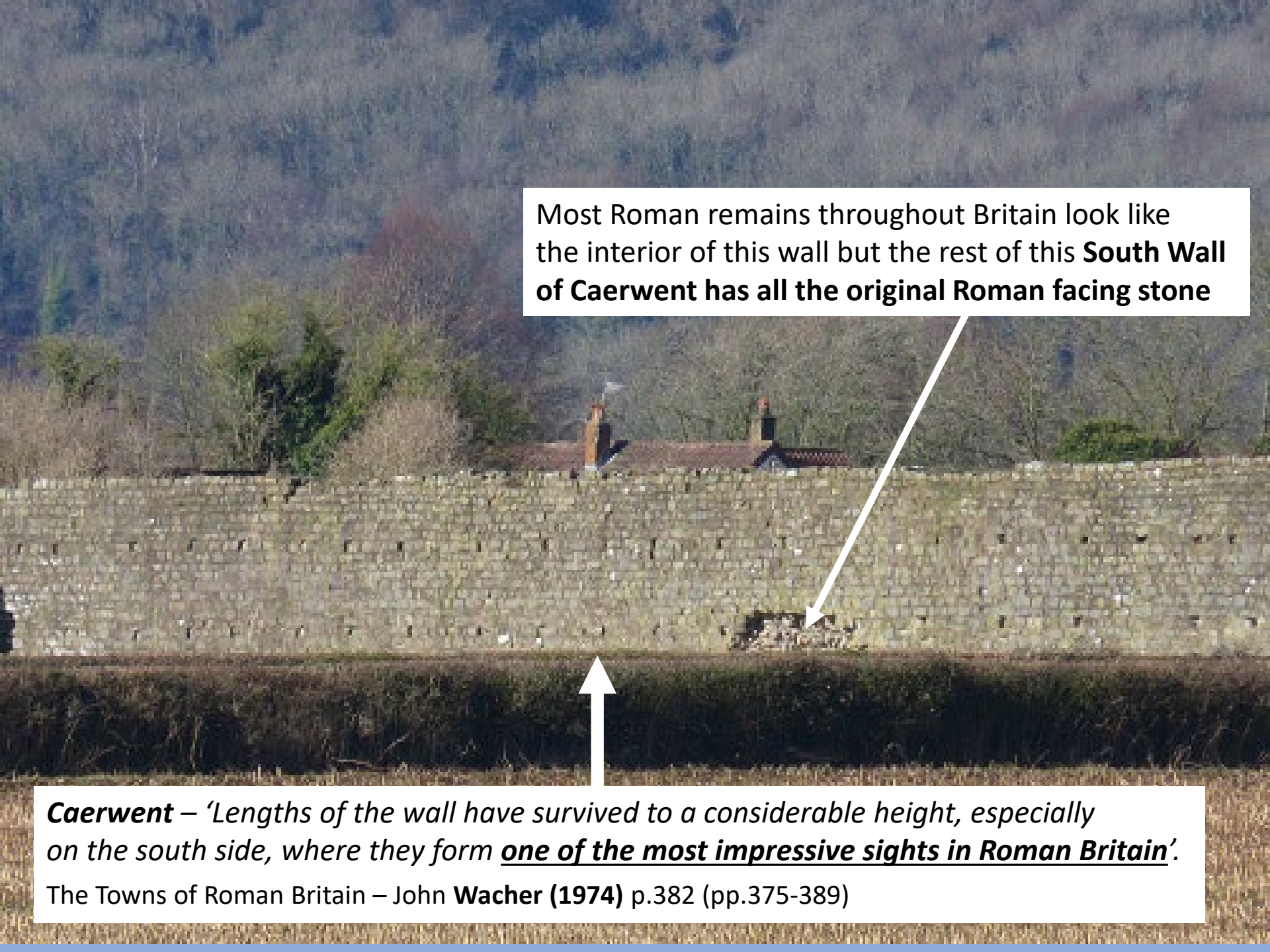
Image – Museum of Wales  
National Roman Legion Museum



South Wall of Caerwent  
Roman Town

The outstanding monument of Venta Silurum is the wall of the *civitas* – easily the most impressive town defence to survive from Roman Britain, and in its freedom from later rebuilding one of the most perfectly preserved in Northern Europe.

The Buildings of Wales – Gwent/Monmouthshire - John Newman (2000) p.148



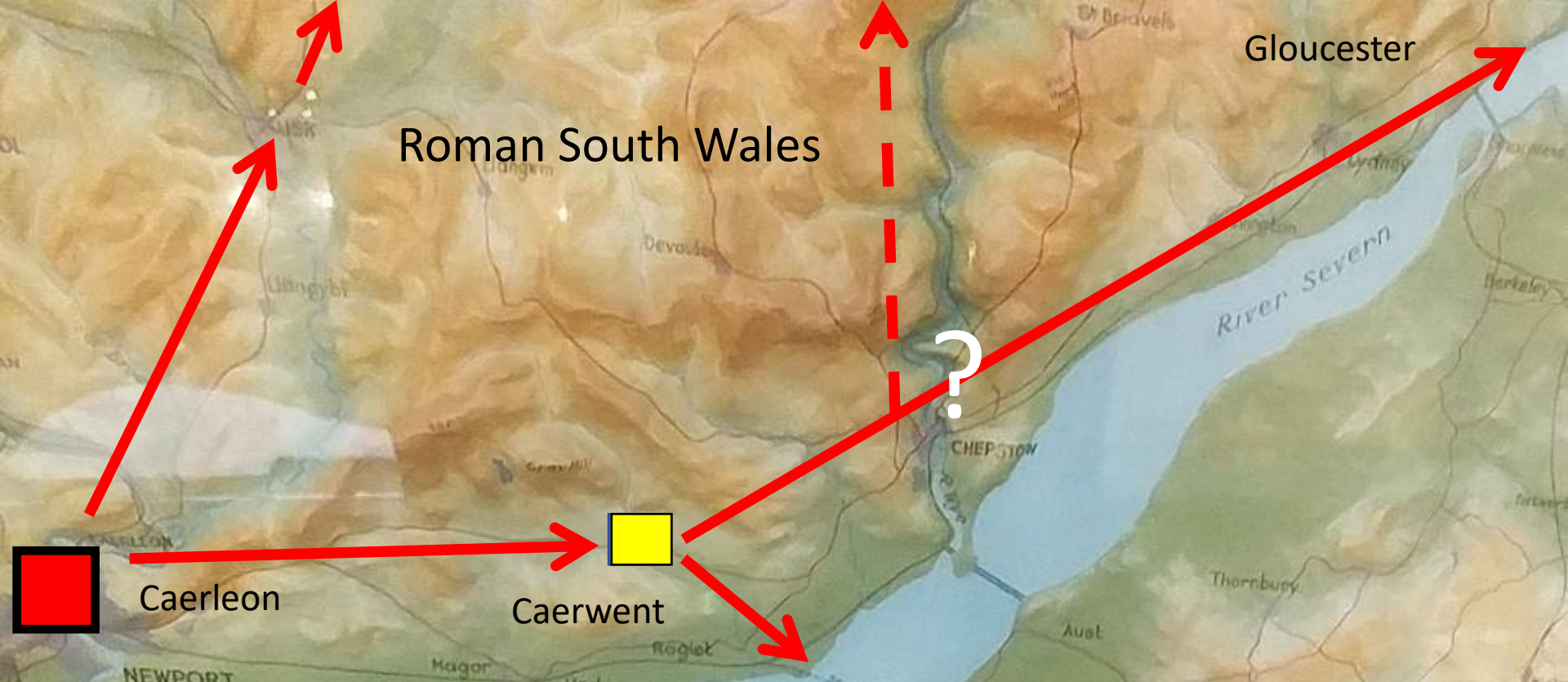
Most Roman remains throughout Britain look like the interior of this wall but the rest of this **South Wall of Caerwent** has all the original Roman facing stone

**Caerwent** – ‘Lengths of the wall have survived to a considerable height, especially on the south side, where they form one of the most impressive sights in Roman Britain’.

The Towns of Roman Britain – John **Wacher (1974)** p.382 (pp.375-389)



South Wall of Caerwent

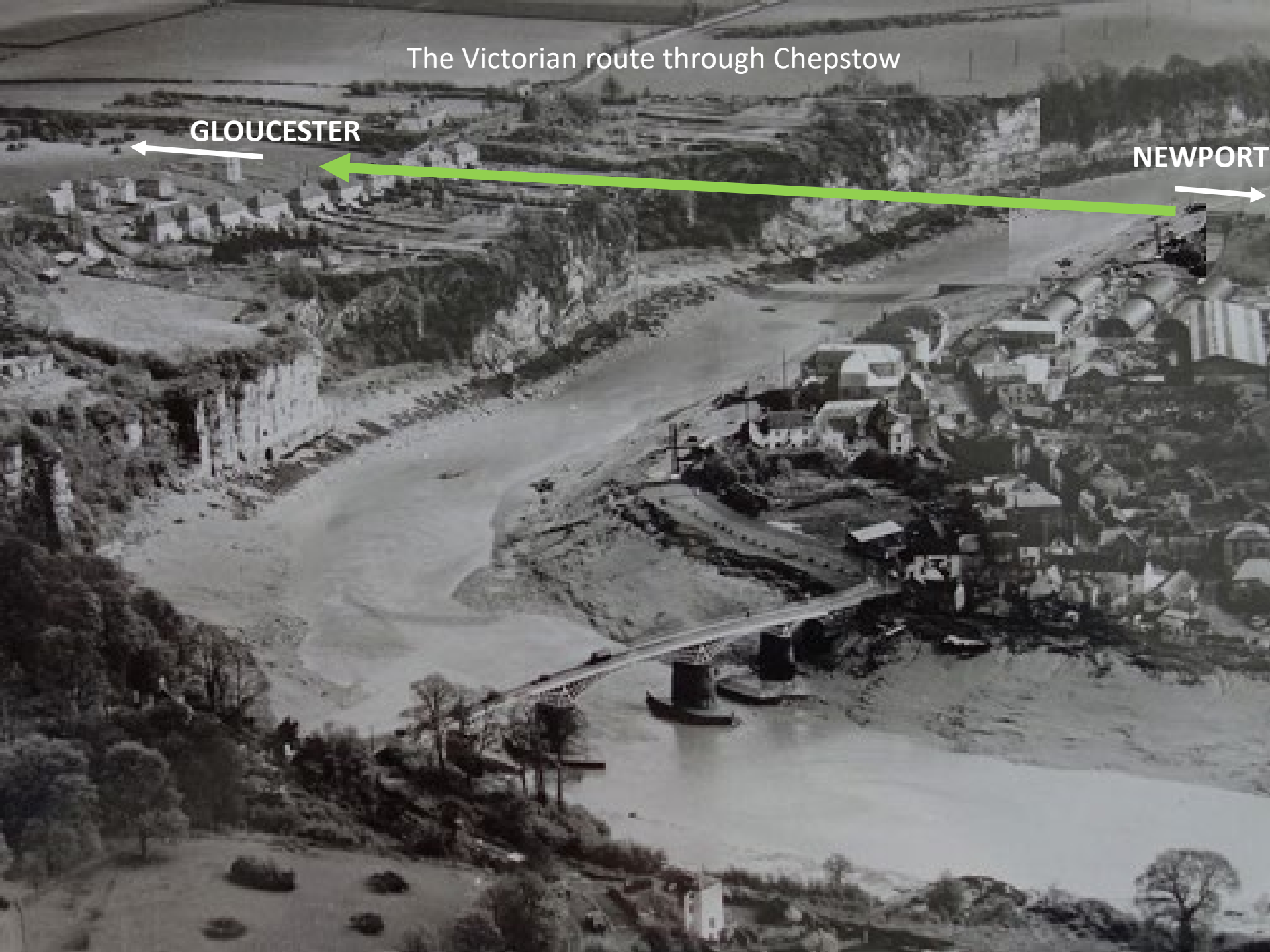


It is likely that the Romans weren't that interested in Chepstow,  
as they already had:  
a major legionary base at Caerleon;  
a significant Roman town at Caerwent; and  
sea and river connections at Sudbrook –  
but they had to cross the River Wye in the Chepstow area  
to get to Lydney and Gloucester.

The Victorian route through Chepstow

GLOUCESTER

NEWPORT





# The Norman/Medieval route through Chepstow

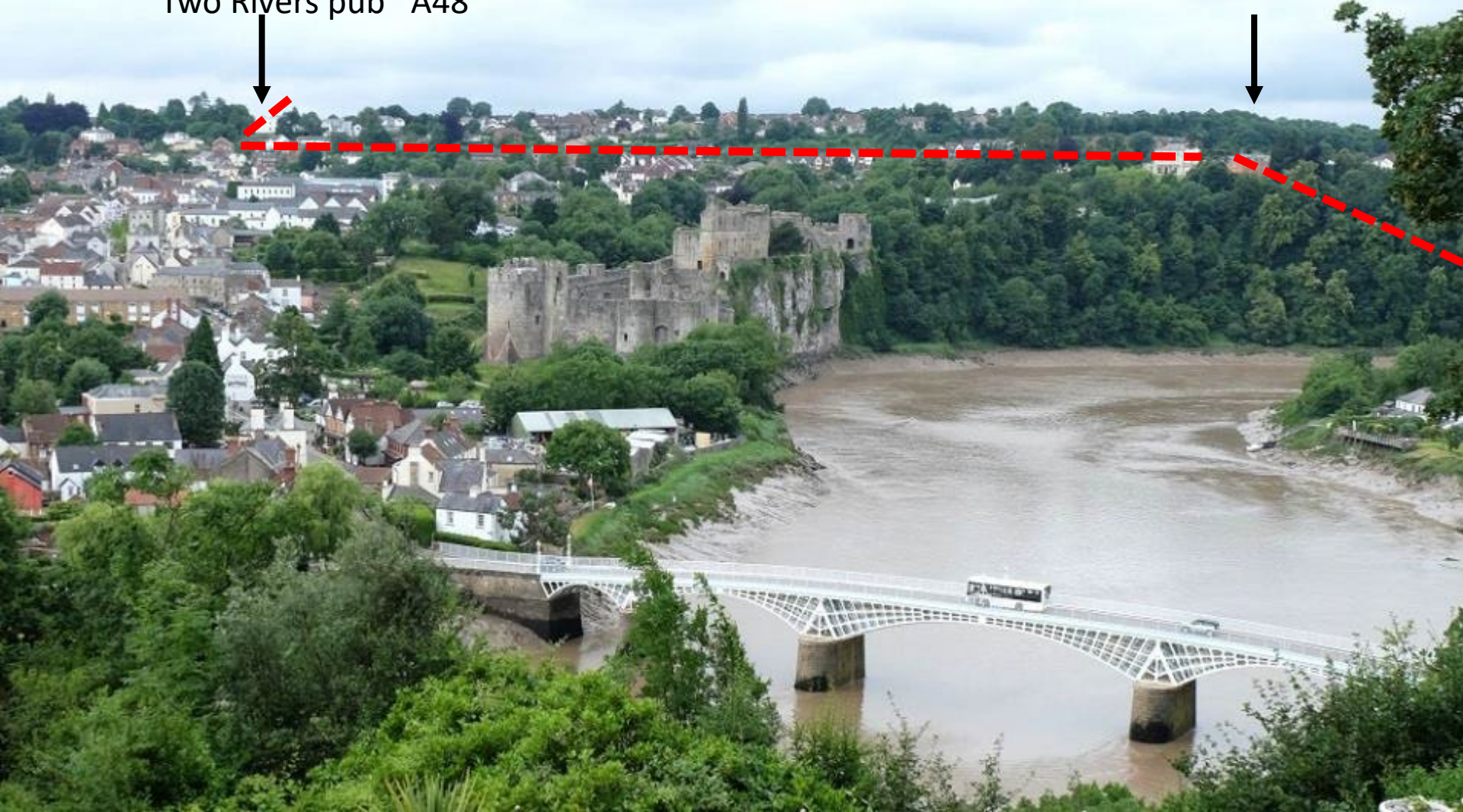


## The Roman route through Chepstow

Staying on the high ground with extensive views of the whole area and of the river to the north, beyond the bends.

High Beech Roundabout  
Two Rivers pub A48

Chepstow Leisure Centre





12.6 miles (4 hours on foot) from Caerleon;  
4.6 miles (1.5 hours) from Caerwent;  
Lydney 9 miles (3 hours); Gloucester 10 hours plus rest time.



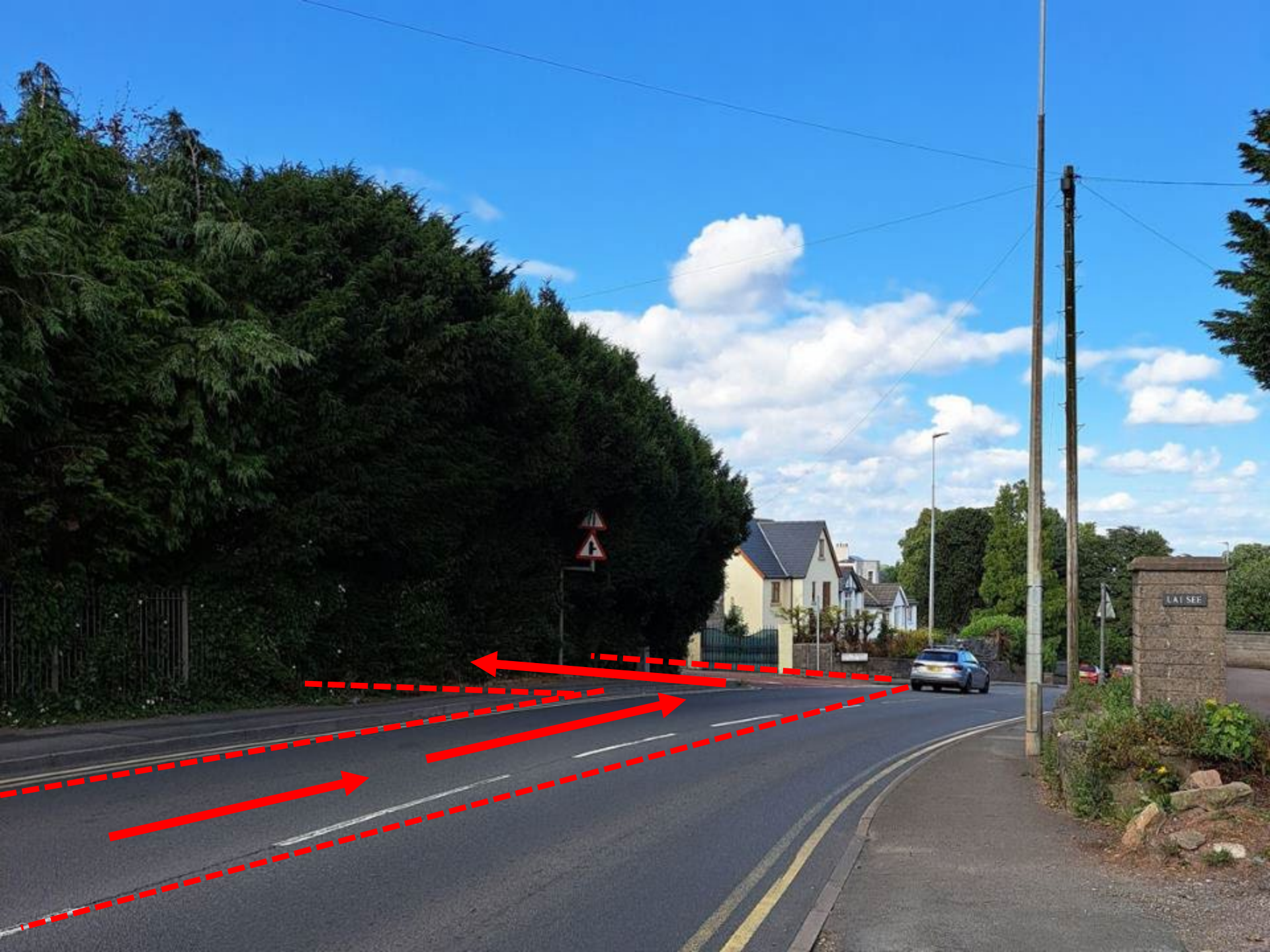


THE TWO RIVERS  
ALCESTER

2 PINTS OF  
ESTRELLA  
BARN  
FOR £7

40  
Narrow Road Ahead

CHS  
VW  
VW



Vauxhall Road



Vauxhall Road





FITZOSBORN CLOSE  
CLOS FITZOSBORN



Vauxhall Road



Chepstow School/Leisure Centre Car Park  
Roman road drops down cliff side causeway to bridging site



Chepstow School/Leisure Centre Car Park  
Roman road drops down cliff side causeway to bridging site





RECEPTION

YNGYRFA



**CHEPSTOW  
SCHOOL**

INSPIRING LEARNING  
YNNYDDOLI DYFODU



In June 2016 Ivor Cavill of Chepstow, and then Chairman of Shirenewton History Society, gave me a copy of this article of 1972 about the Roman Road up the side of the Wye Gorge.

***‘the most dramatic relic of Roman engineering near Chepstow.***

## ROMAN ROADS NEAR CHEPSTOW by Brigadier J. R. E. Hamilton-Baillie, M.C.

THREE ROMAN ROADS meet near Chepstow. Their lines approaching the town are well established (see Sketch Map A):

- a) From Newnham through Lydney and Tutshill down to the old Roman bridge rather north of the present Wye bridge.
- b) A continuation of this road on the same general alignment from Pwllmeyric through Crick to Caerwent.
- c) A road from Monmouth through Trelleck, approaching Chepstow on the line of an old sunk lane near Piccadilly, just east of St. Arvans.

These roads are all shown as Roman on the Ordnance map. In Marjory's *Roman Roads in Britain* the first two are included in his road 60a and the road from Monmouth is numbered 6d.

I have, however, nowhere found any satisfactory description of the way the roads joined in or near Chepstow.

Sir Joseph Bradney: *A History of Monmouthshire* (Part I of Vol. IV) says:

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Having walked the ground I am convinced neither account is correct, though Bradney is rather nearer than Marjory. Marjory is unlikely to be correct because the main road past the racecourse, south from St. Arvans is a turnpike, built in 1760 outside Piercefield Park, to replace the older road that ran through the Park from Crossway Green to St. Arvans. The straight connection from The Lions Lodge corner to St. Kinmarks Lane is quite modern. St. Kinmarks Lane itself, and its continuation to the St. Lawrence roundabout is no doubt ancient, but the right angled turn back onto the main alignment at St. Lawrence that both accounts imply seems awkward.

**Severn and Wye Review,  
Volume 2, no. 2, Winter 1972**  
Editor Ivor Waters,  
published for the  
Chepstow Society  
by Phillimore



To turn now to the continuation westward of the main Roman road we must start again from the western end of the bridge. From here starts the most dramatic relic of Roman engineering near Chepstow. This is the terraced roadway, cut into the rocky hillside that climbs on a beautifully even and quite easy gradient up the side of the Wye gorge in a southerly direction. It climbs about 200 feet in 600 yards and though heavily overgrown with trees is in excellent condition, and easy to follow.

Evidently this must be the line of the main Roman road, though this means that it is this

# ROMAN ROADS NEAR CHEPSTOW

## by Brigadier J. R. E. Hamilton-Baillie, M.C.

THREE ROMAN ROADS meet near Chepstow. Their lines approaching the town are well established (see Sketch Map A):

- a) From Newnham through Lydney and Tutshill down to the old Roman bridge rather north of the present Wye bridge.
- b) A continuation of this road on the same general alignment from Pwllmeyric through Crick to Caerwent.
- c) A road from Monmouth through Trelleck, approaching Chepstow on the line of an old sunk lane near Piccadilly, just east of St. Arvans.

These roads are all shown as Roman on the Ordnance map. In Marjory's *Roman Roads in Britain* the first two are included in his road 60a and the road from Monmouth is numbered 6d.

I have, however, nowhere found any satisfactory description of the way the roads joined in or near Chepstow.

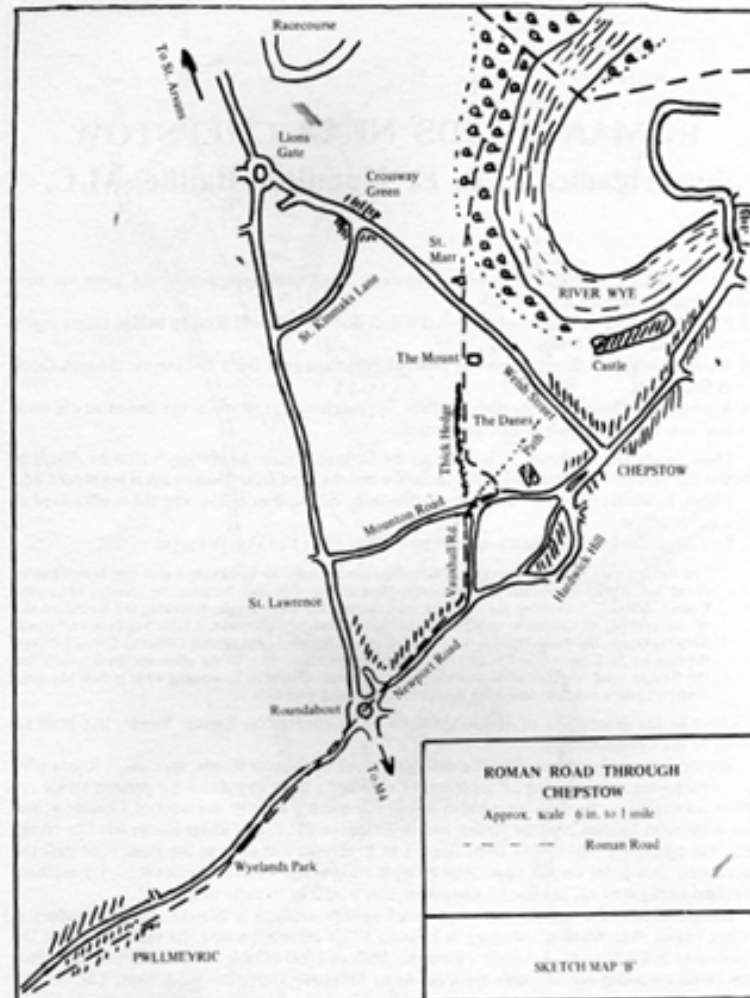
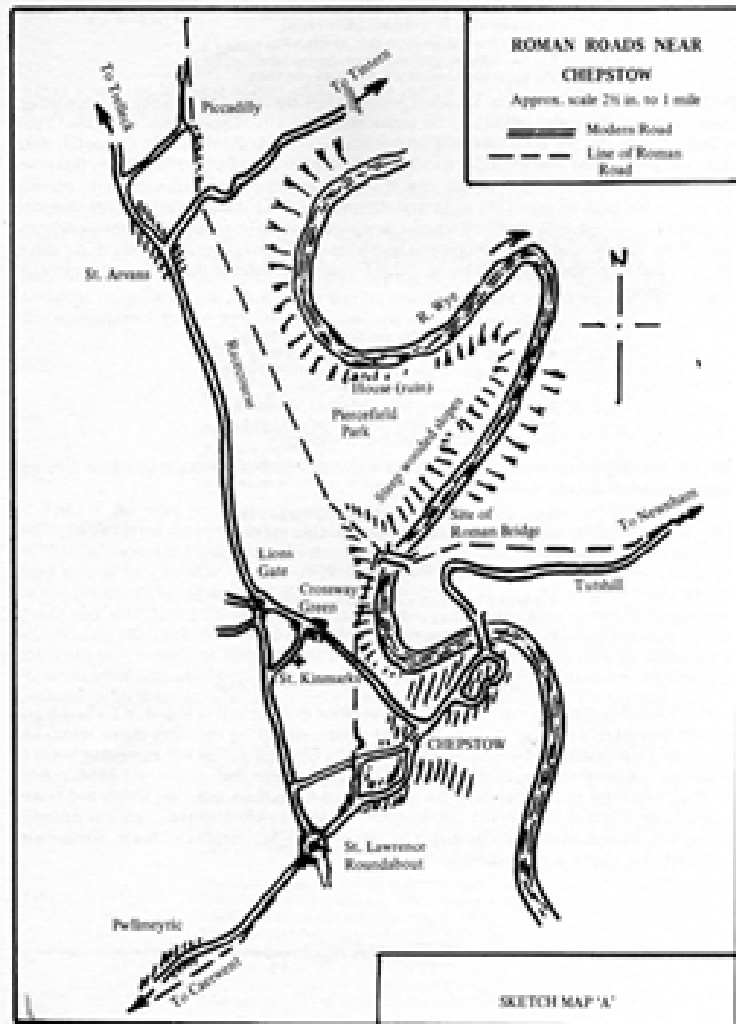
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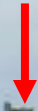






Chepstow Castle

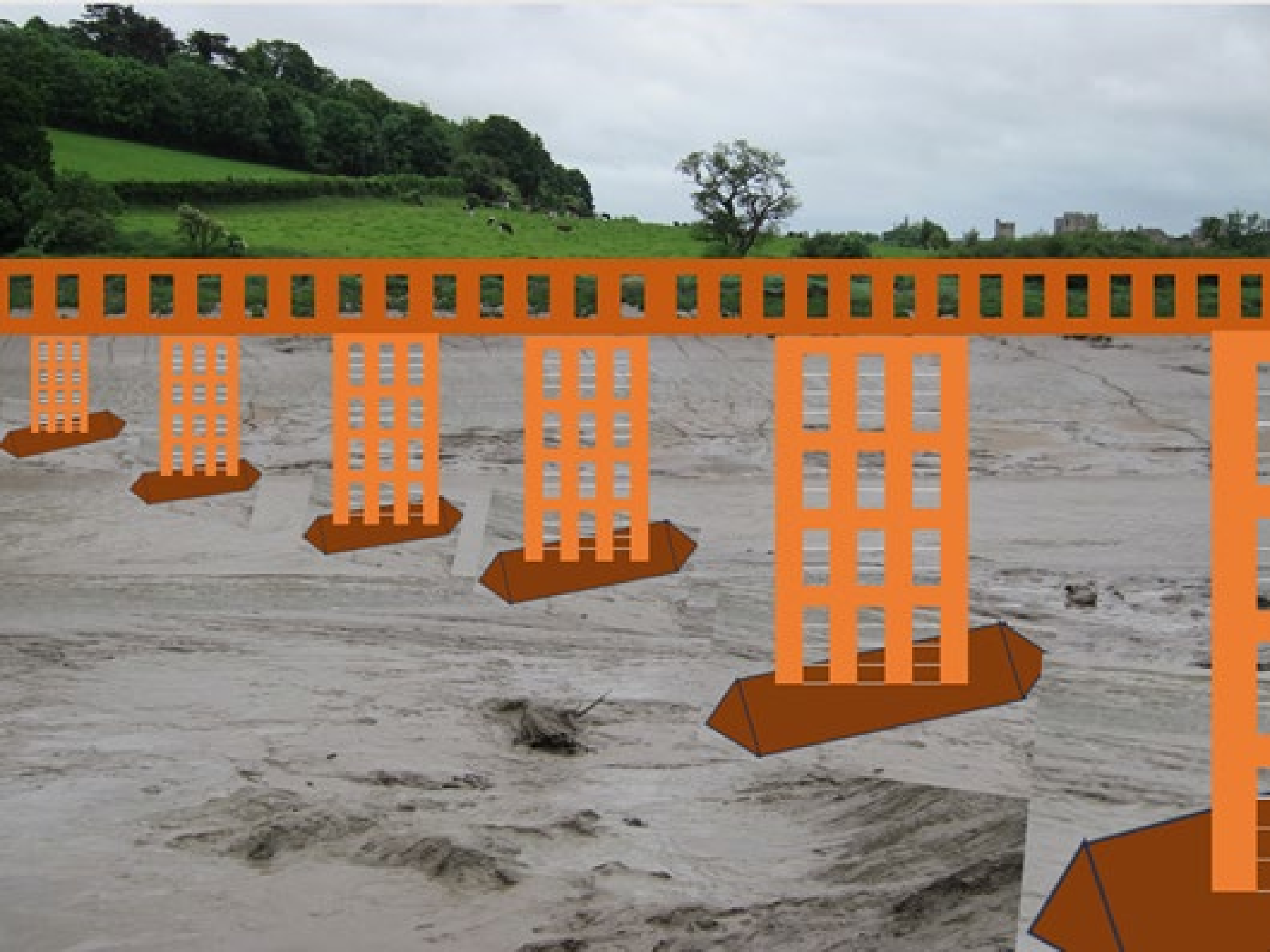
Priory

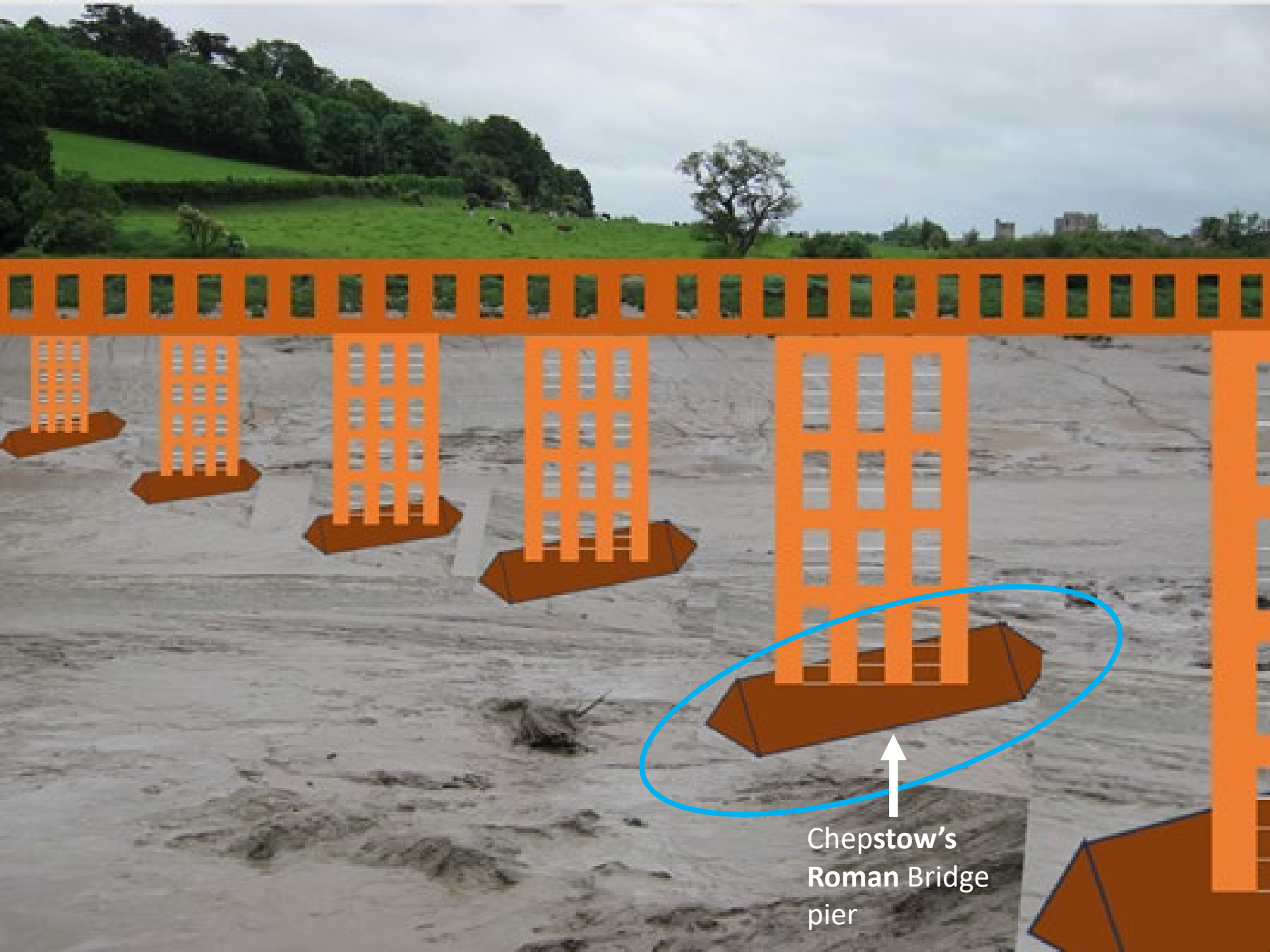


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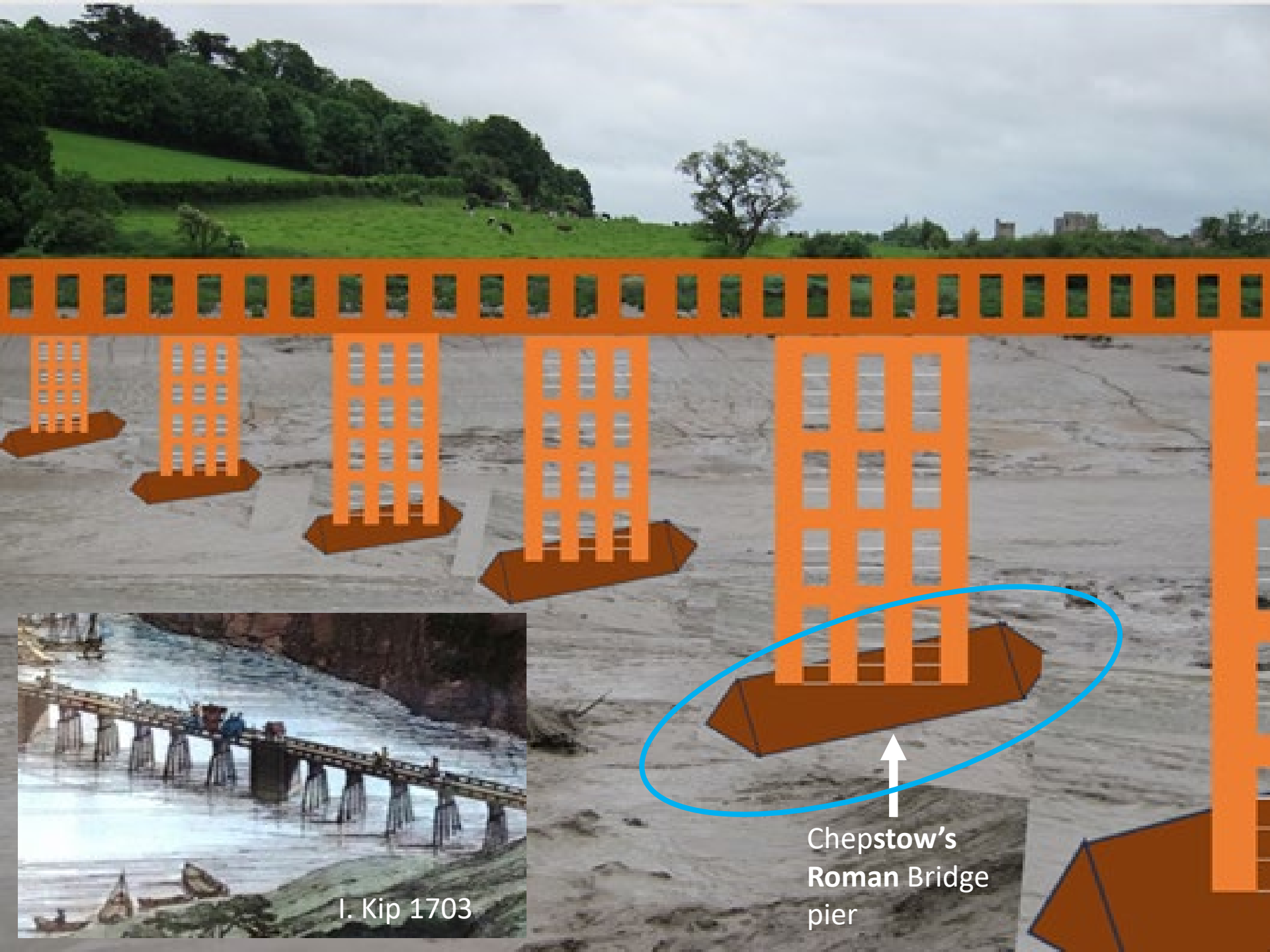
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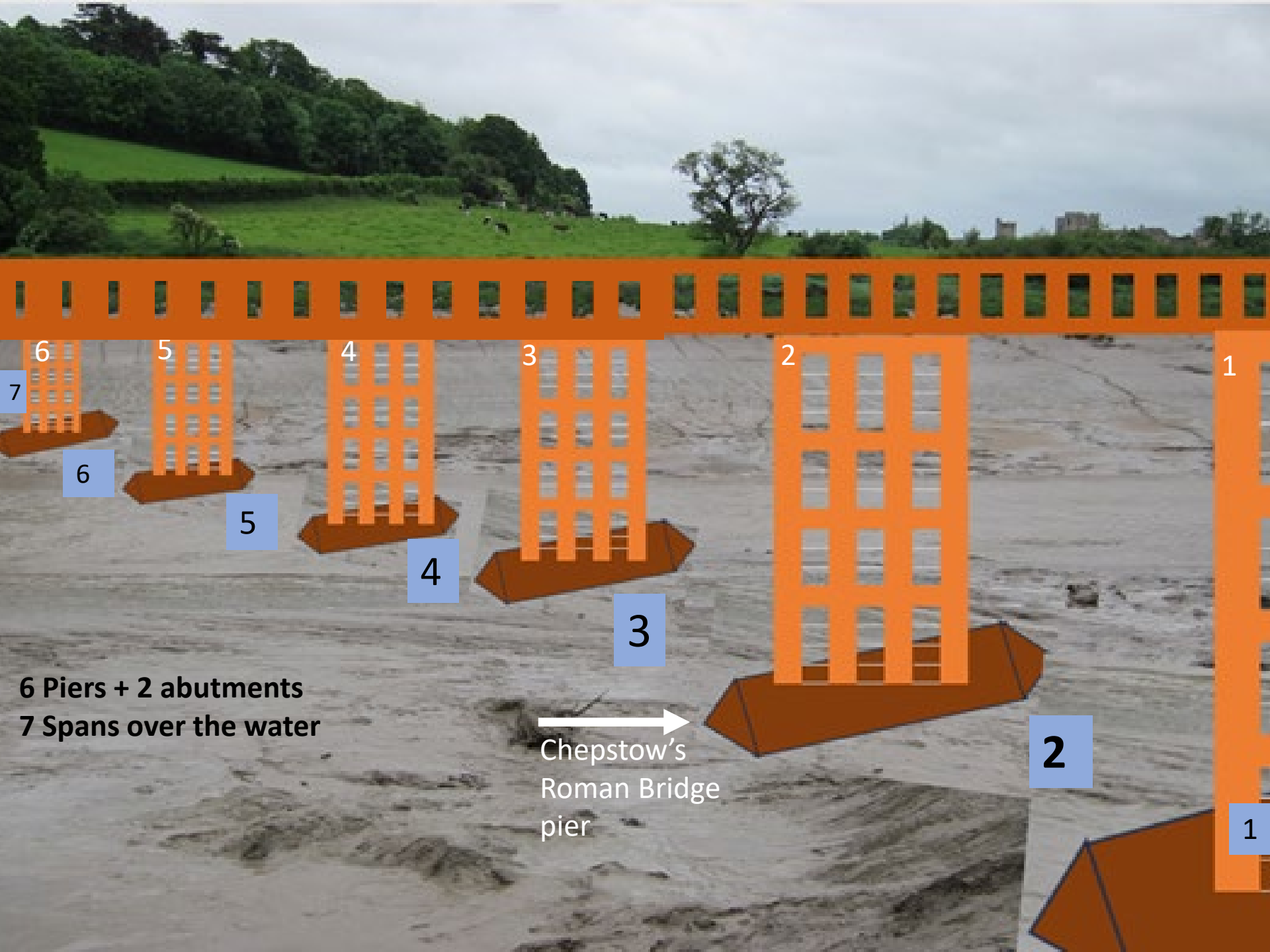
Chepstow's  
Roman Bridge  
pier



I. Kip 1703

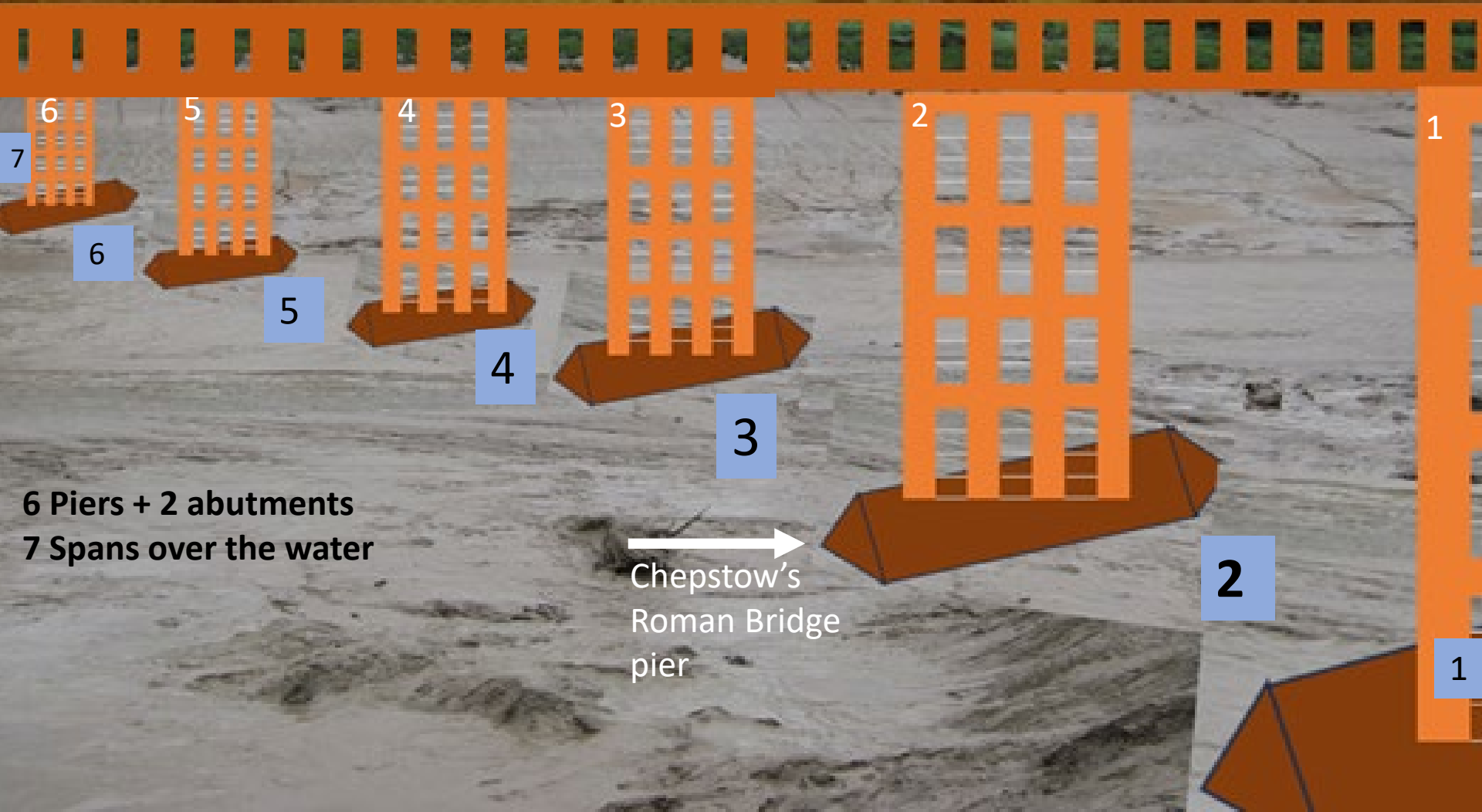


↑  
Chepstow's  
Roman Bridge  
pier

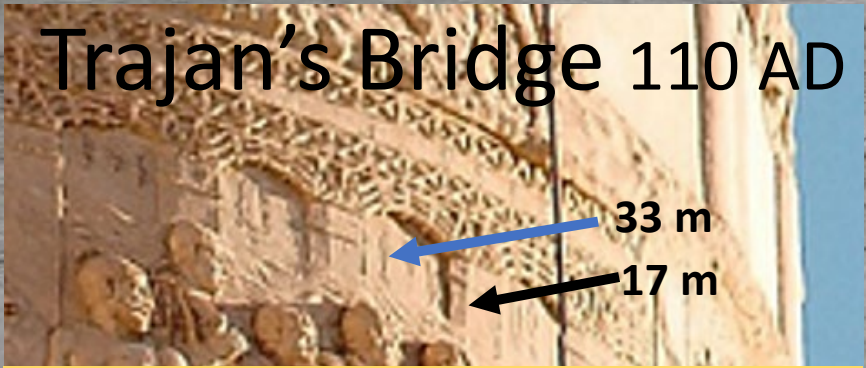


**6 Piers + 2 abutments**  
**7 Spans over the water**

→  
Chepstow's  
Roman Bridge  
pier



The Romans could build up to 33 metre spans in wood or stone but a wooden arch of 33 metres would require a large and complex wooden arch which would need to be based on substantial stone piers (17 metres wide) as at **Trajan's Bridge** over the Danube. Shorter spans are much more likely. At Piercebridge 11 metre wooden spans were used.



33 metre span wooden arches of Trajan's Bridge on 17 m stone piers - Trajan's Column, Rome. Photo: Matthias Kabel





ENGLISH HERITAGE  
**PIERCEBRIDGE**  
ROMAN BRIDGE



The stonework foundations are all that remain of the bridge that once carried the Roman road, Dere Street, across the River Tees, and on towards Piercebridge Fort. It is one of only a small number of Roman bridging sites in the country where remains are still visible.

**Keep the story of England alive.**

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Dogs allowed on leads.  
Intentionally damaging this monument is a crime.  
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Customer Services 0370 333 1181



Piercebridge  
North Yorkshire /  
County Durham



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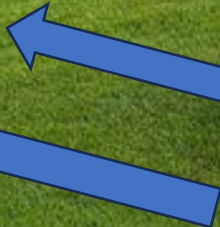
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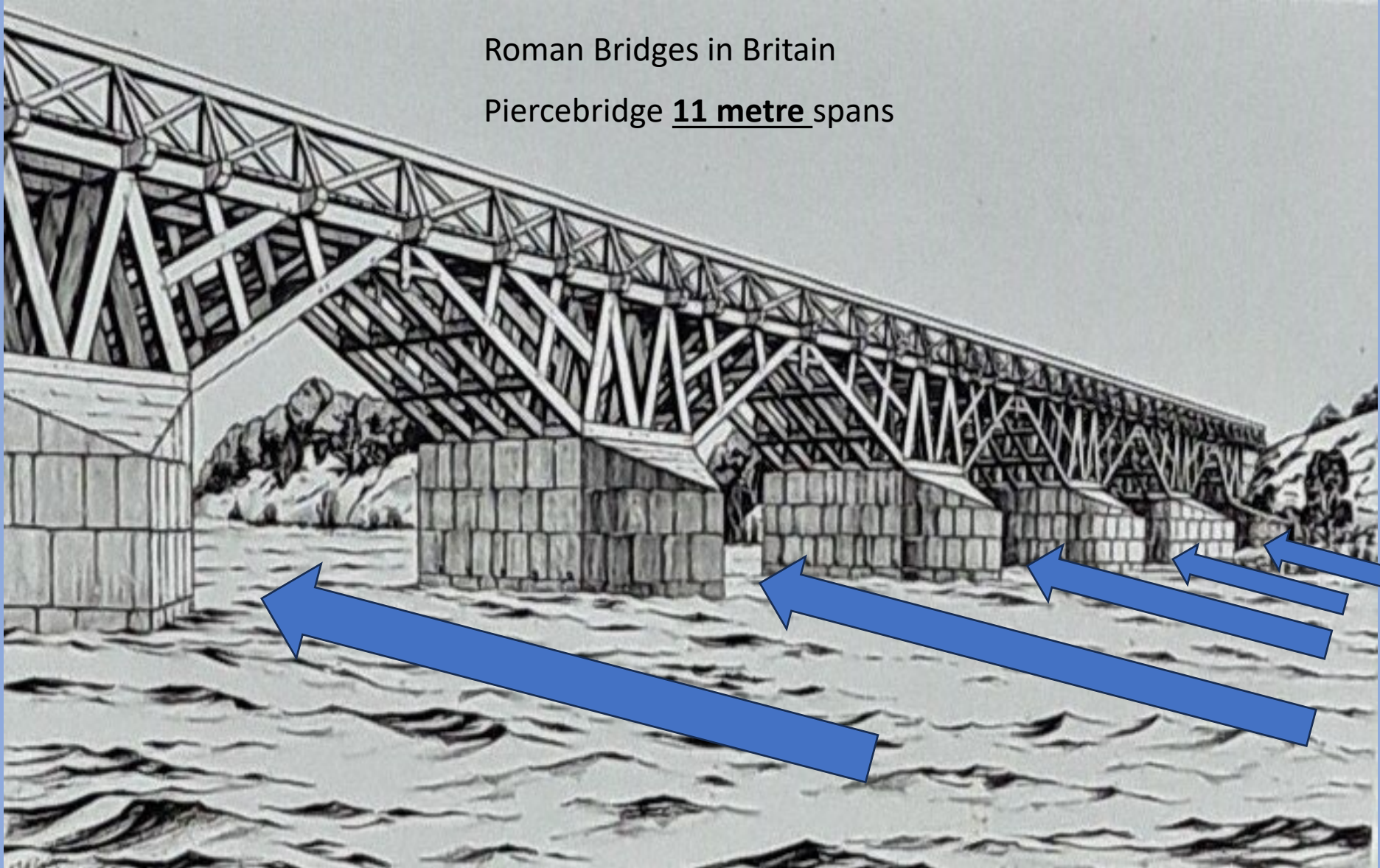
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Roman Bridges in Britain

Piercebridge 11 metre spans



Piercebridge Roman Bridge over the River Tees – artists impression – English Heritage

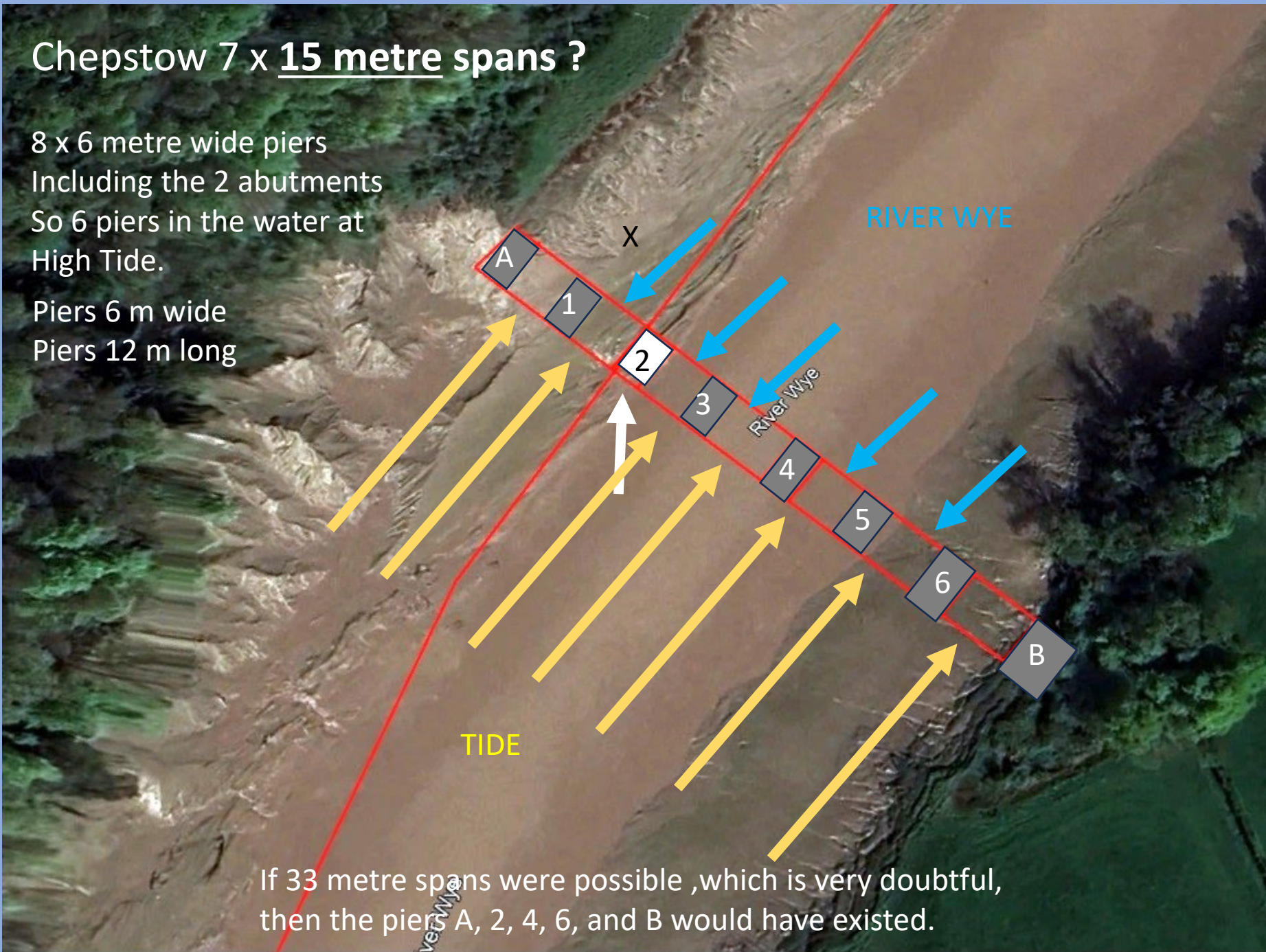
**70 metre (230 feet) crossing**

2 spans of **10 metres** each; 3 spans of **11 metres** each; and 4 piers of 4.4 m = 70 metres

# Chepstow 7 x 15 metre spans ?

8 x 6 metre wide piers  
Including the 2 abutments  
So 6 piers in the water at High Tide.

Piers 6 m wide  
Piers 12 m long

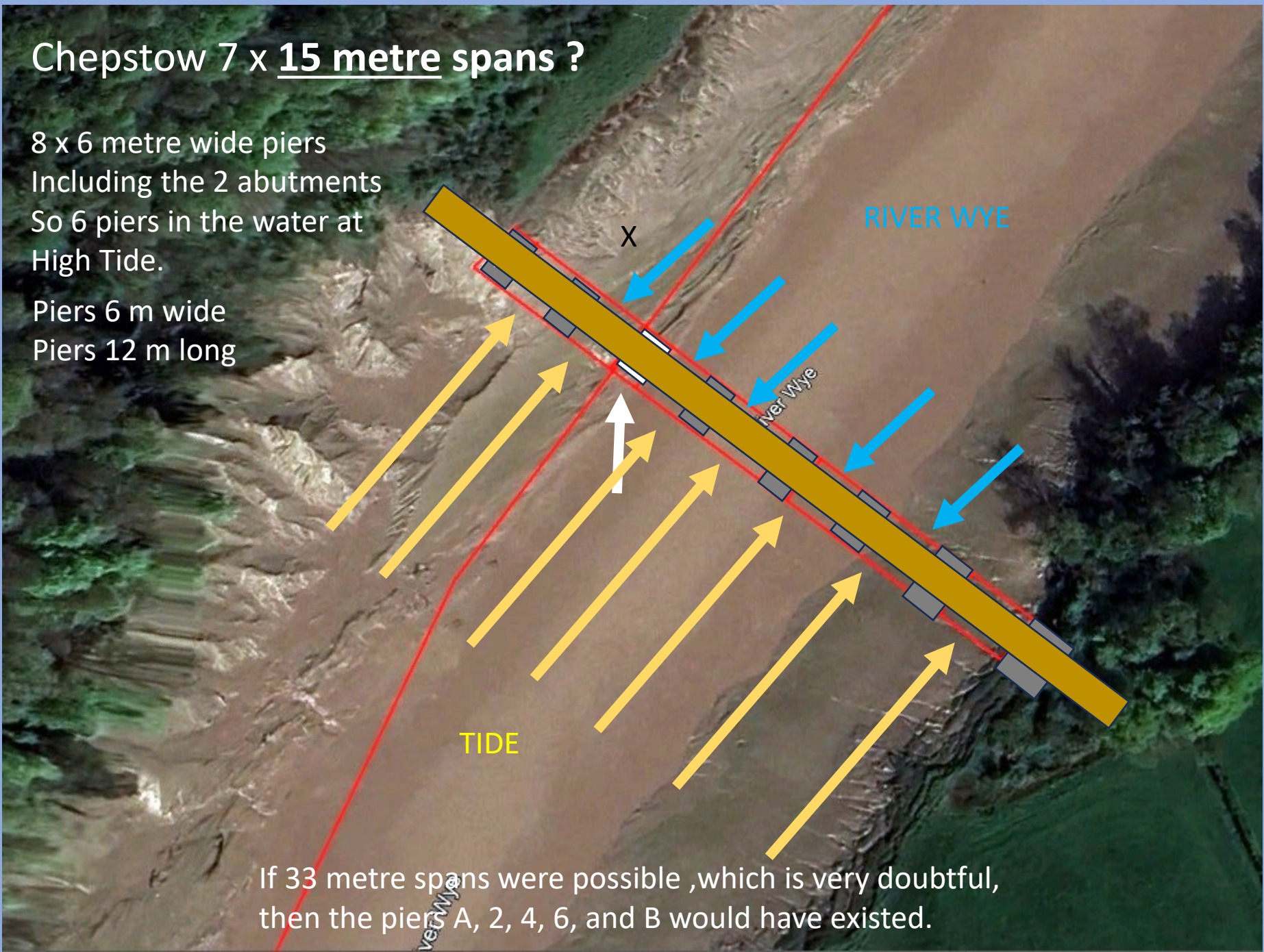


If 33 metre spans were possible ,which is very doubtful,  
then the piers A, 2, 4, 6, and B would have existed.

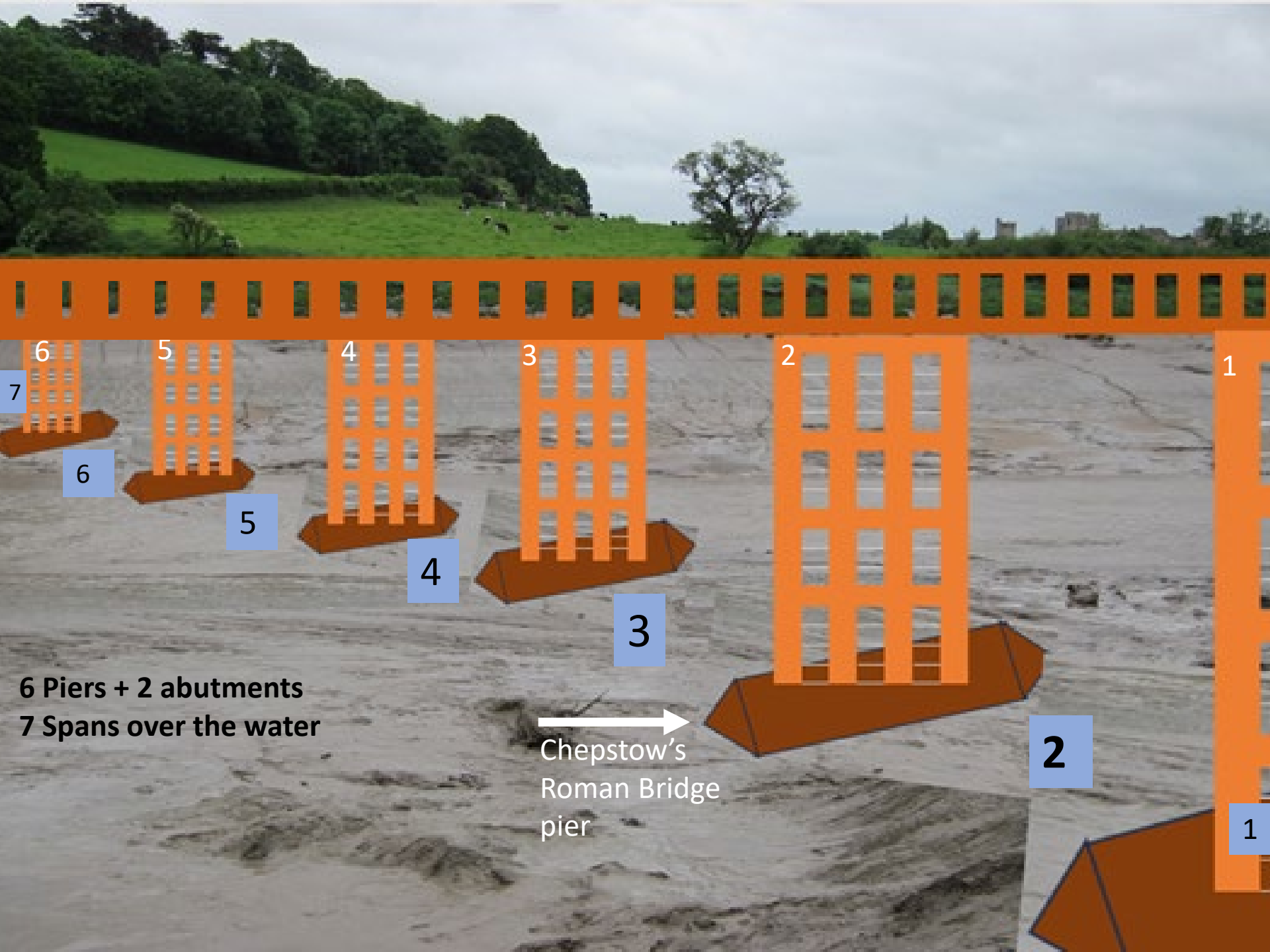
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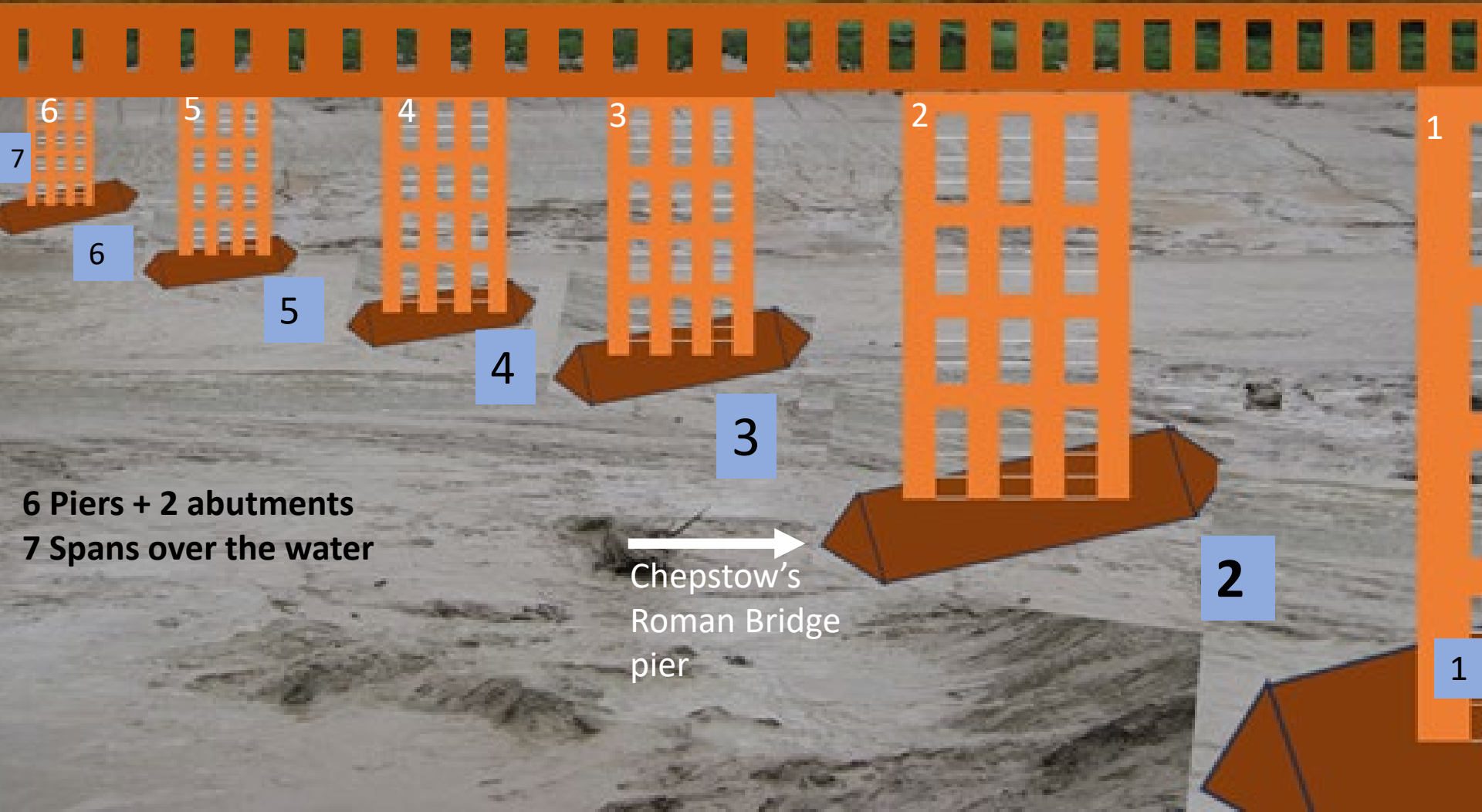


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**6 Piers + 2 abutments**  
**7 Spans over the water**

→  
Chepstow's  
Roman Bridge  
pier





High Tide

Tidal range (LW to HW) c. 12 metres (40 feet)



6

5

4

3

2

1

→  
Chepstow's  
Roman Bridge  
pier



100 AD

1,000 years later

Chepstow Norman  
Chepstow Norman  
Priory 1067 Castle 1067



# SURVEILLANCE

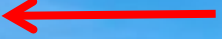






# View from the highest part of Chepstow Castle

Leisure Centre Car Park



Line of the Roman road



Site of Roman crossing



Norman and Medieval Castle







View from the Roman route through Chepstow near Chepstow School/Leisure Centre

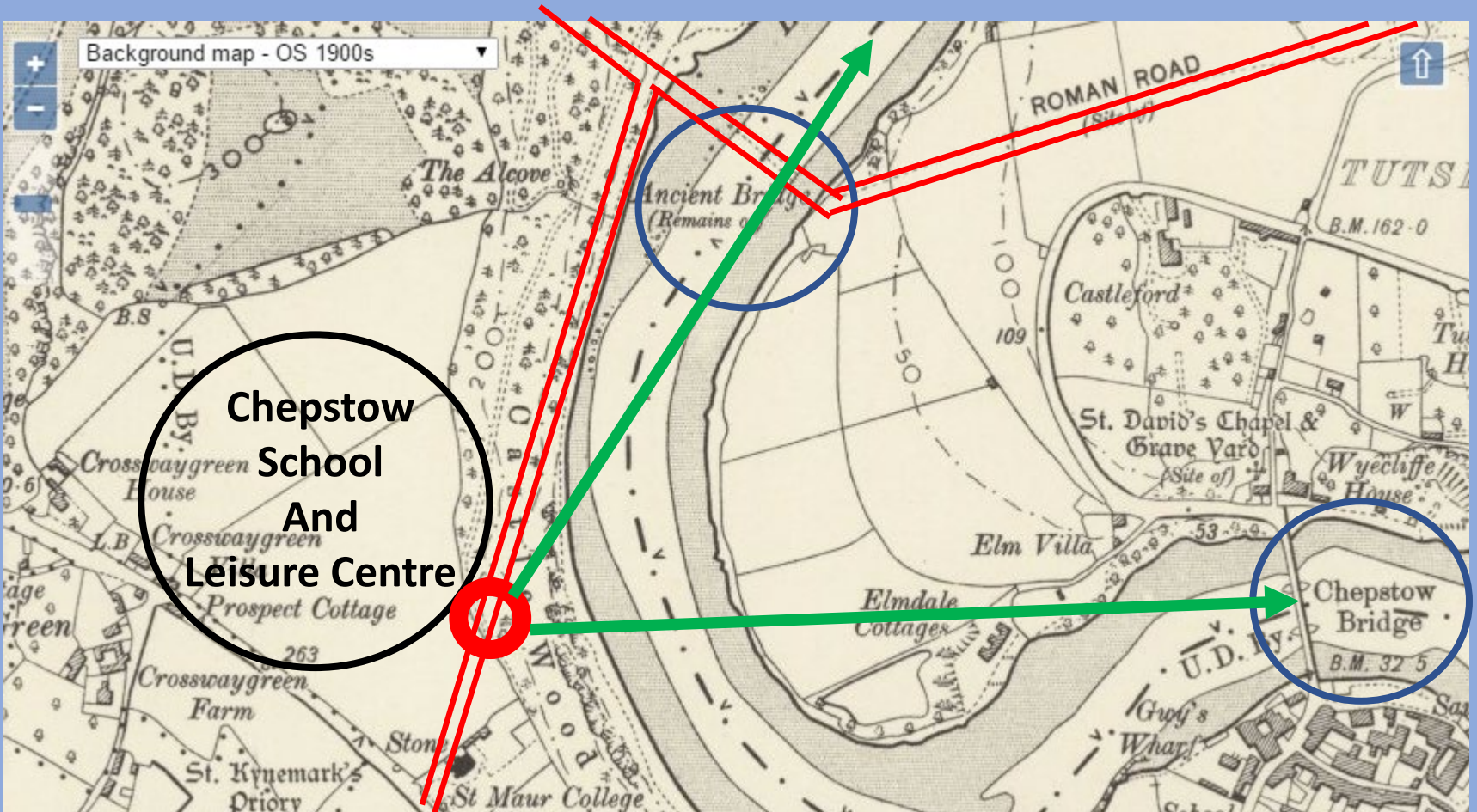






## River Wye

View from the Roman route through Chepstow near Chepstow School/Leisure Centre





Piercefield

Lancaut

Wintour's Leap

Tutshill

Sedbury

Chepstow

View from the Roman route through Chepstow near Chepstow School/Leisure Centre

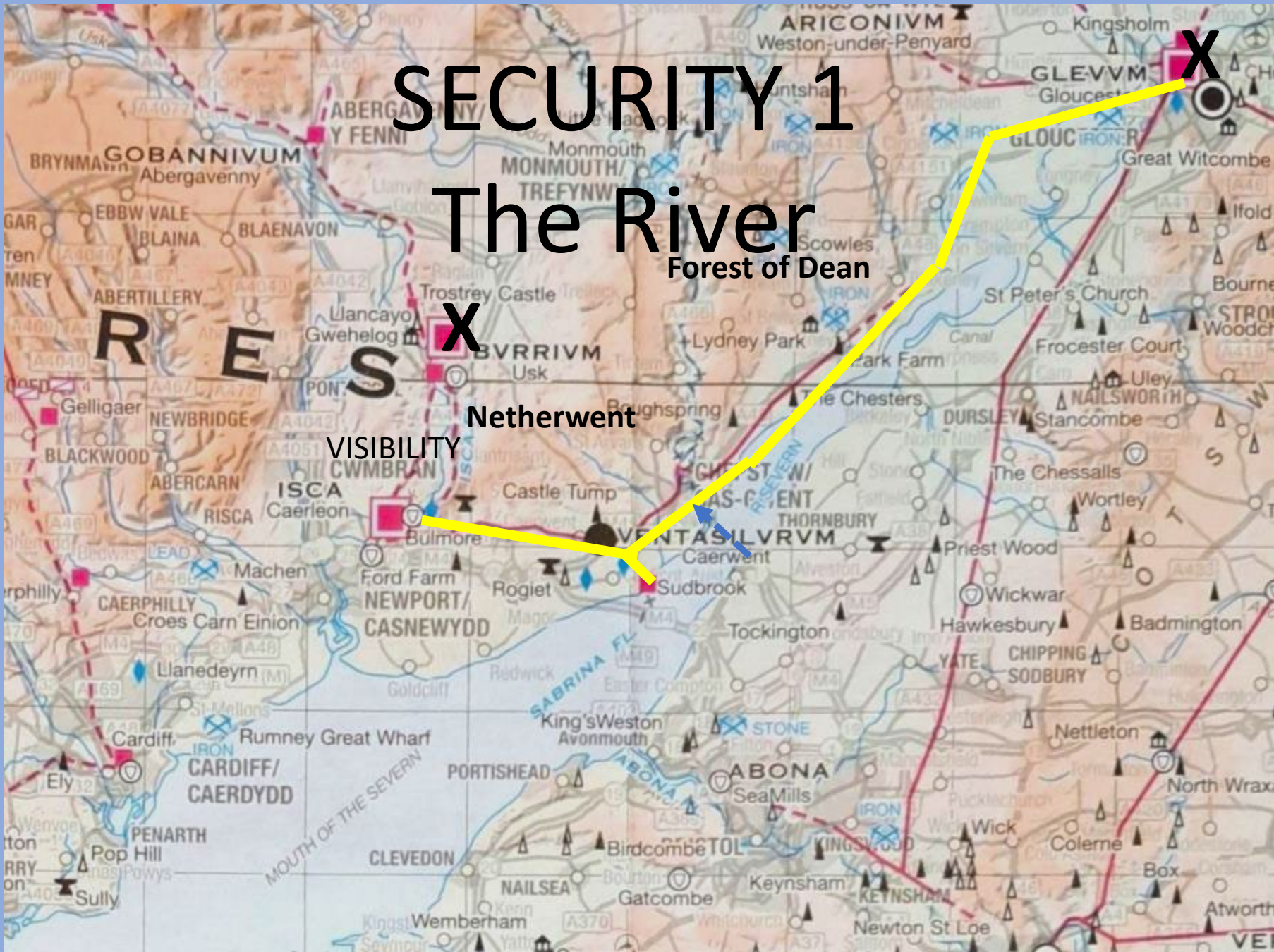
# SECURITY 1

## The River

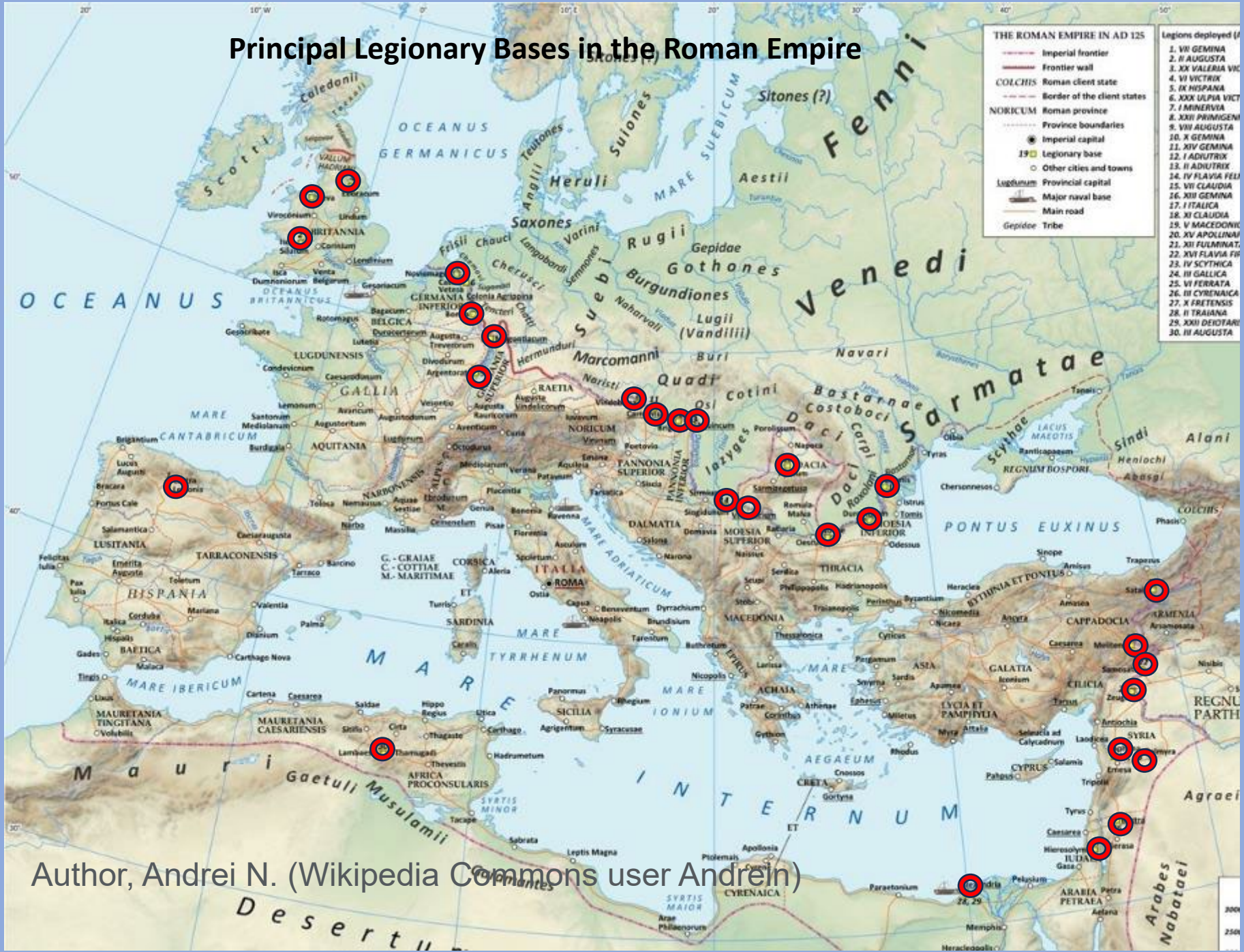
Forest of Dean

Netherwent

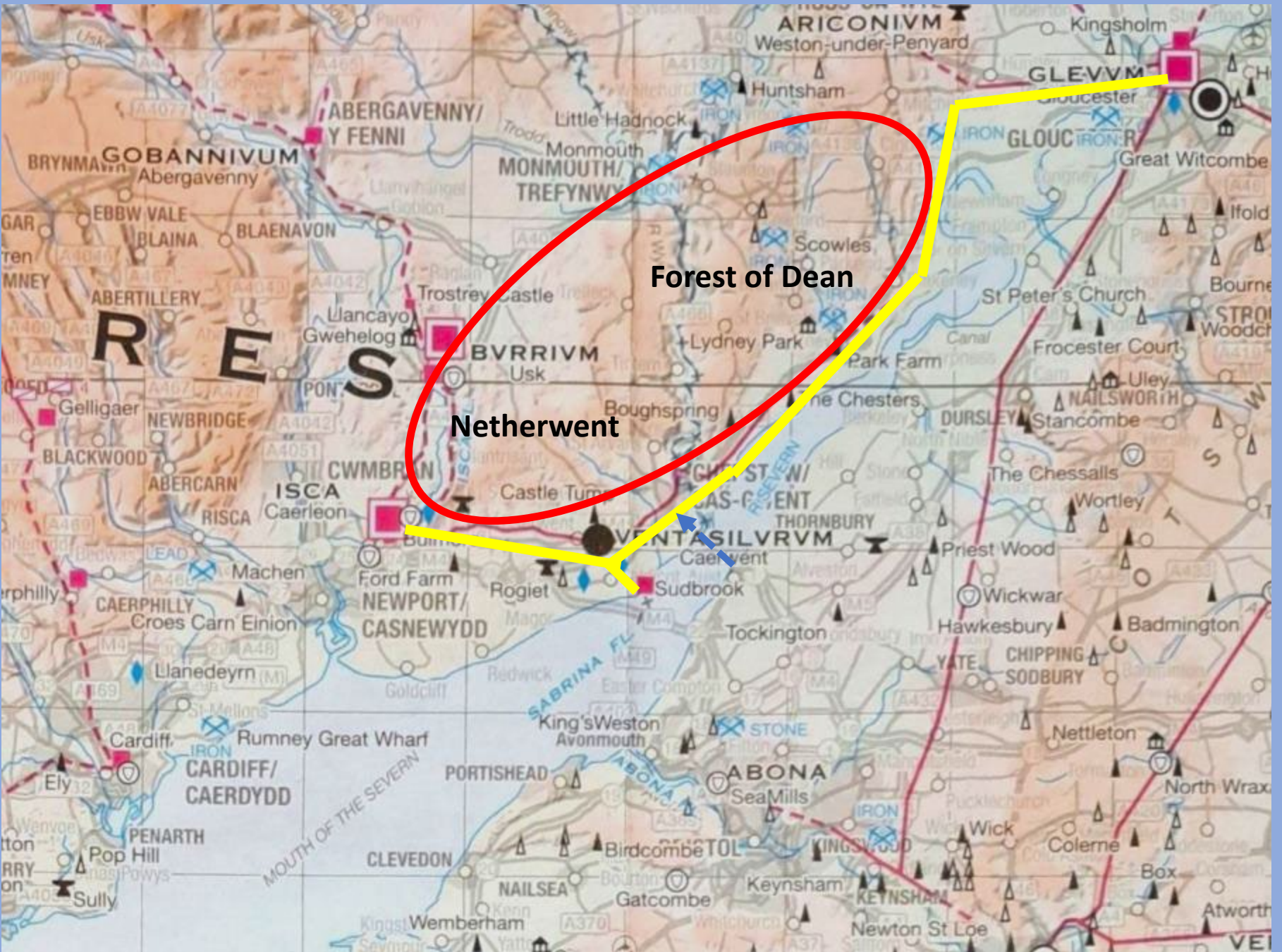
VISIBILITY



# Principal Legionary Bases in the Roman Empire

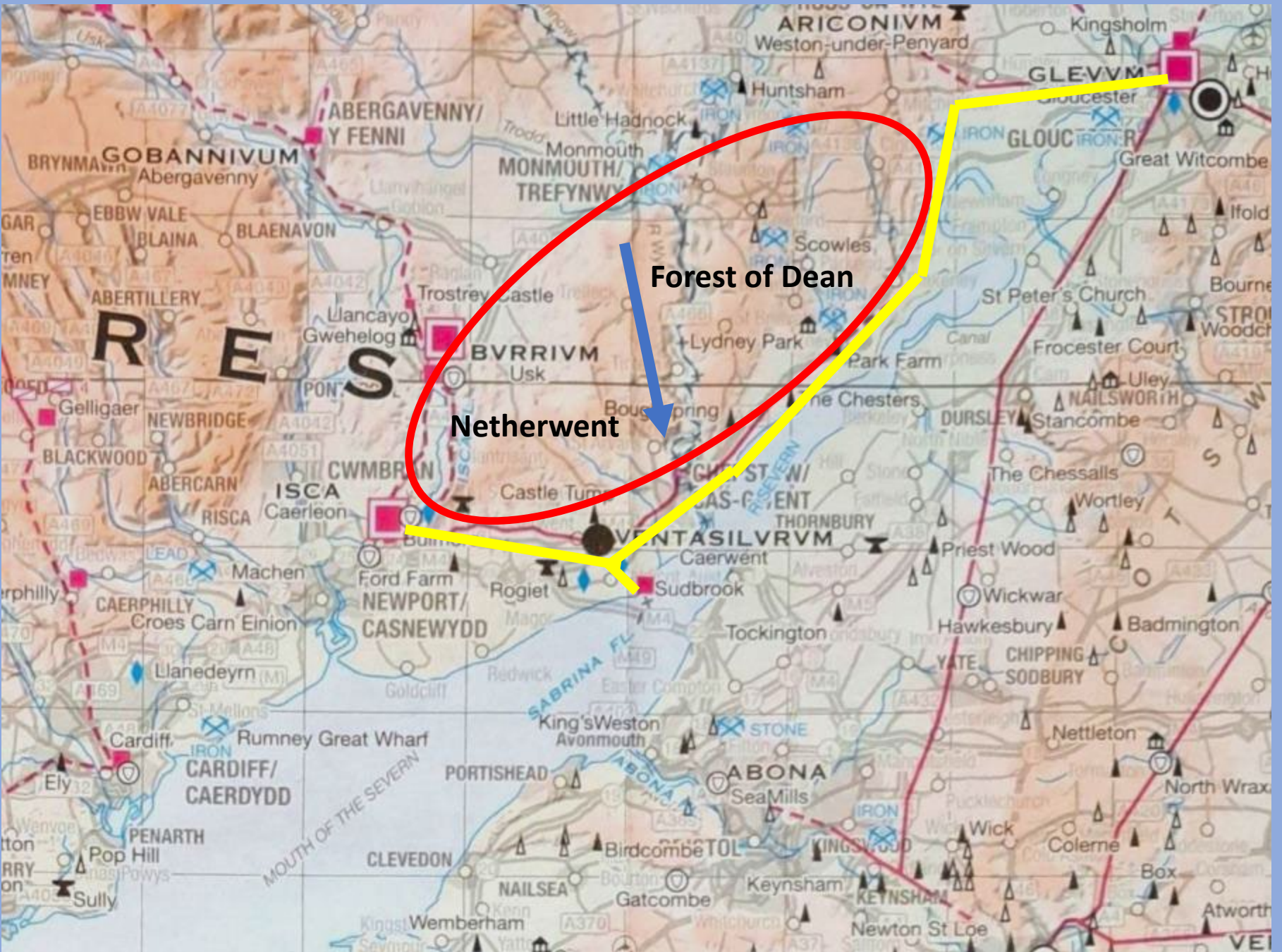


Author, Andrei N. (Wikipedia Commons user Andrein)



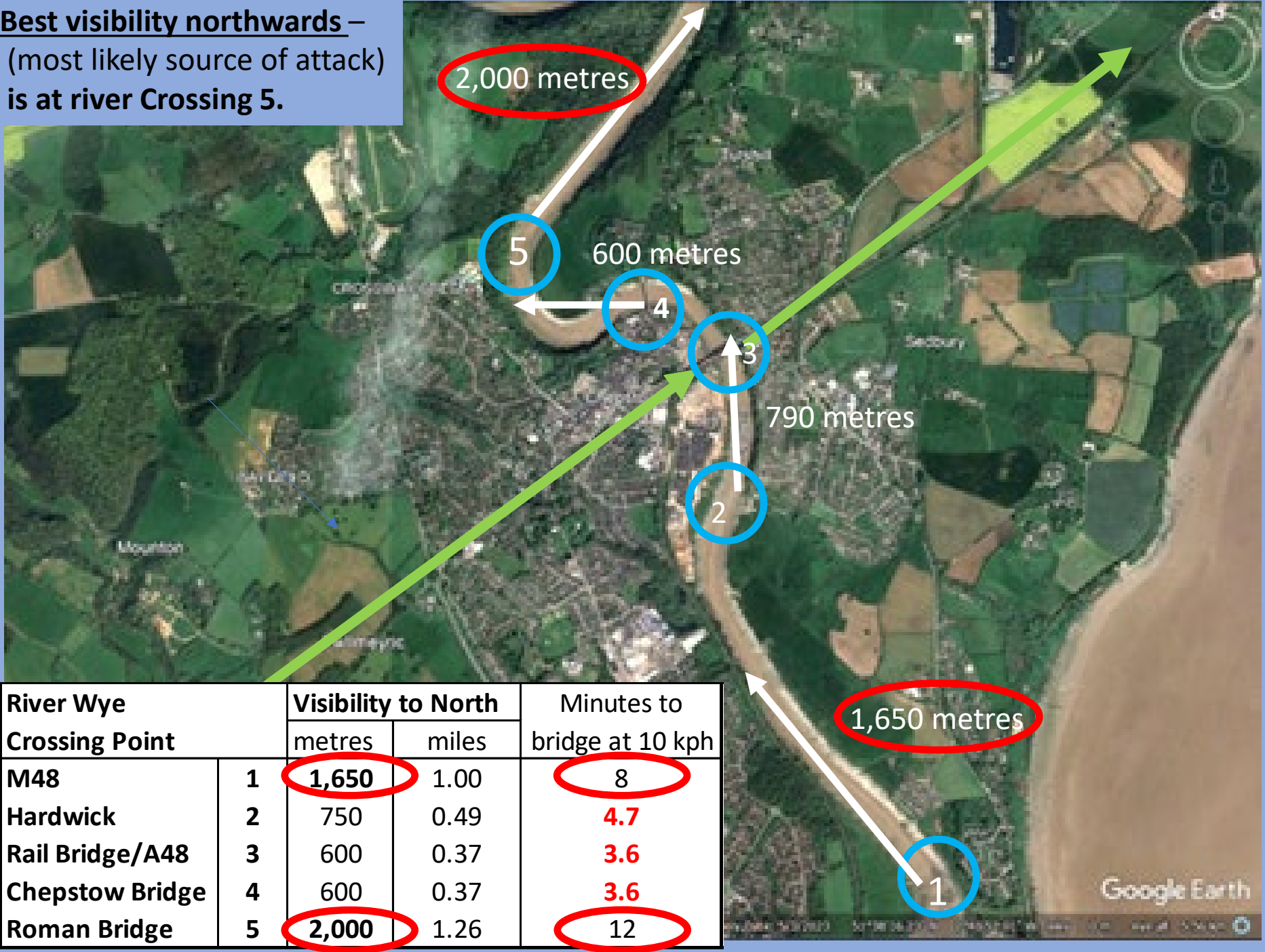
Forest of Dean

Netherwent





**Best visibility northwards –**  
 (most likely source of attack)  
 is at river Crossing 5.



River Wye Crossing Point		Visibility to North		Minutes to bridge at 10 kph
		metres	miles	
M48	1	<b>1,650</b>	1.00	<b>8</b>
Hardwick	2	750	0.49	<b>4.7</b>
Rail Bridge/A48	3	600	0.37	<b>3.6</b>
Chepstow Bridge	4	600	0.37	<b>3.6</b>
Roman Bridge	5	<b>2,000</b>	1.26	<b>12</b>

**Best visibility northwards –**

Risk of attack  
**Fast moving water flowing southwards from the Forest to the sea as the tide ebbs would be a security concern particularly as the highest Spring Tides every month would be flowing South mid - morning to early pm when the bridge is most likely to be in use.**

**The Romans would want maximum river visibility to the North as any river attack on the bridge is likely to come from the North, aided by the ebbing tide**



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The Roman route stays true to the SW-NE 'desire line' of the overall route but **avoids all 4 bends of the River Wye at Chepstow**, and stays high up until it has to descend to the safest crossing point which has the longest view North of the river/Gorge.



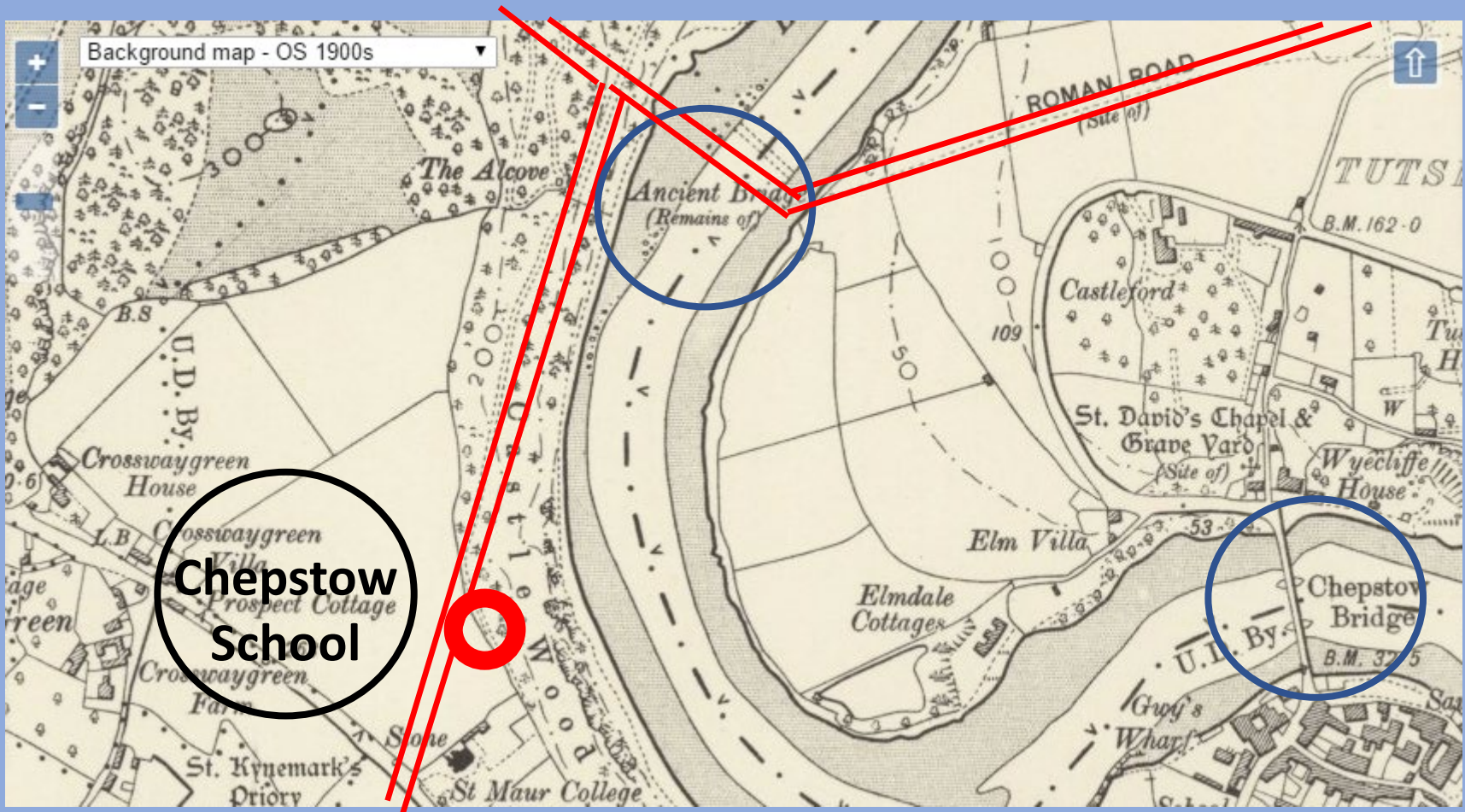
Crossing in the middle of Chepstow (2,3,4)  
(the Norman/Medieval/1816/1852/1988 route)  
would have been far too dangerous for the Romans  
surrounded by cliffs, river bends, and poor visibility.

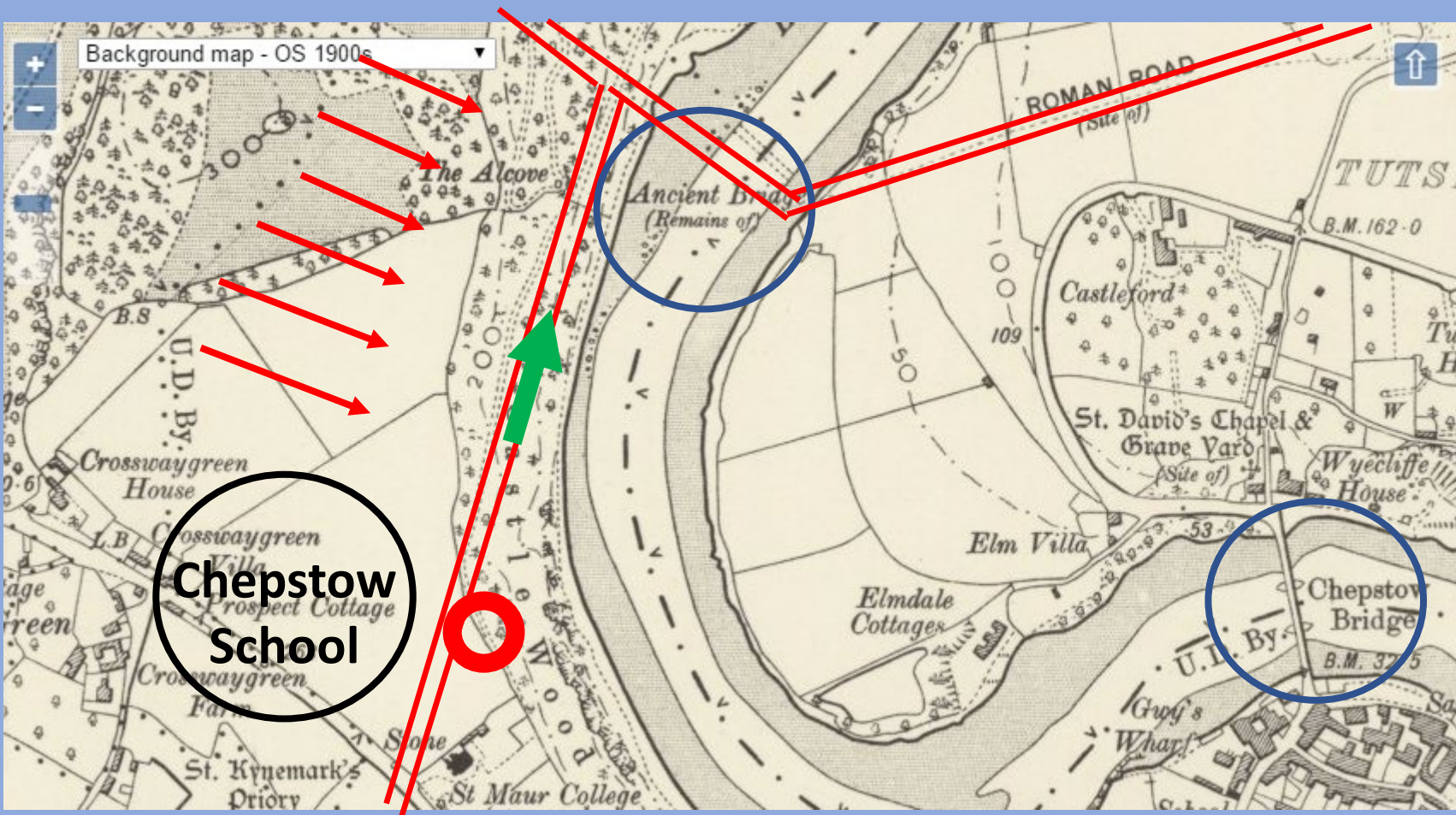
Chepstow Roman Bridge  
site



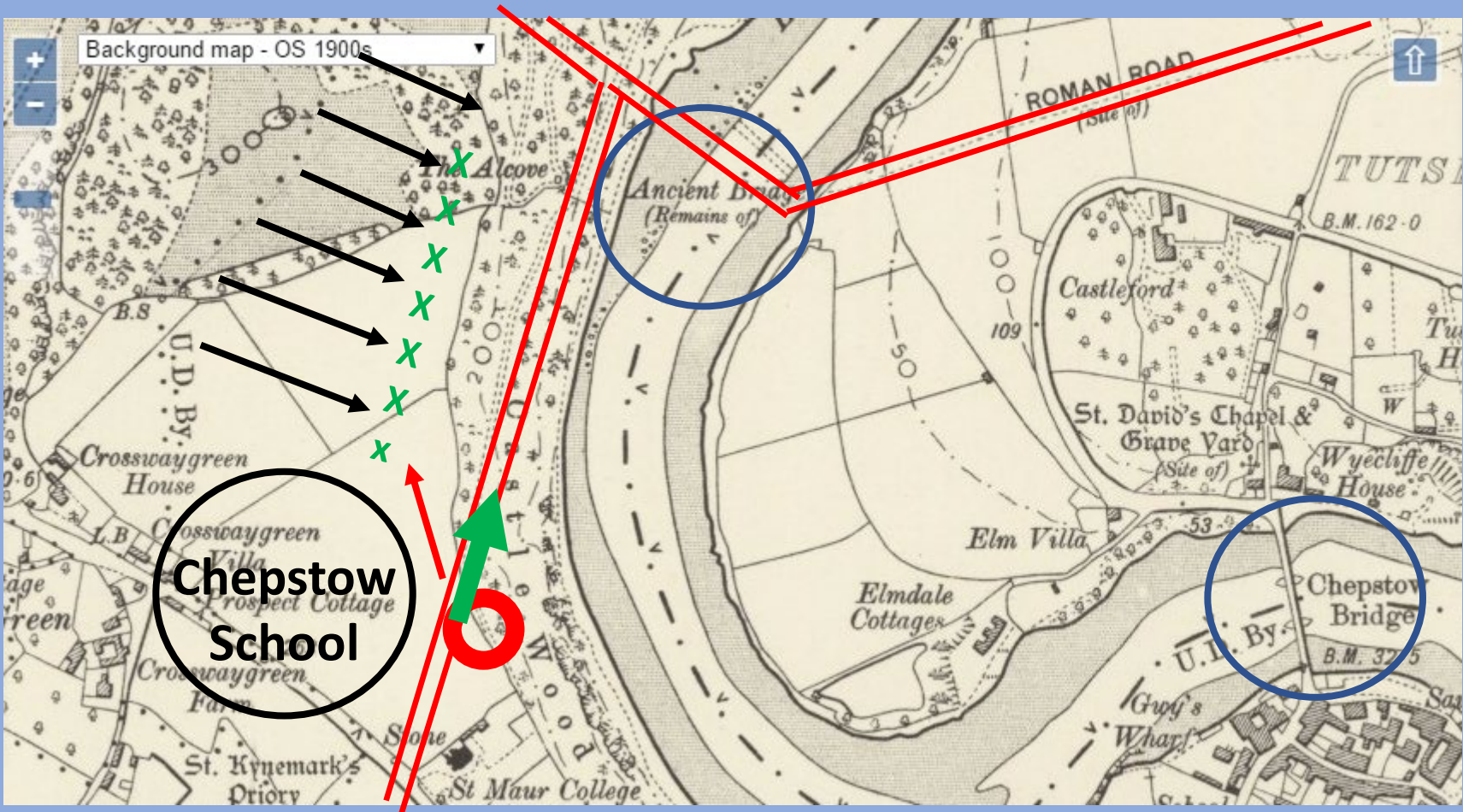
Lancaut

# SECURITY 2 – The Land





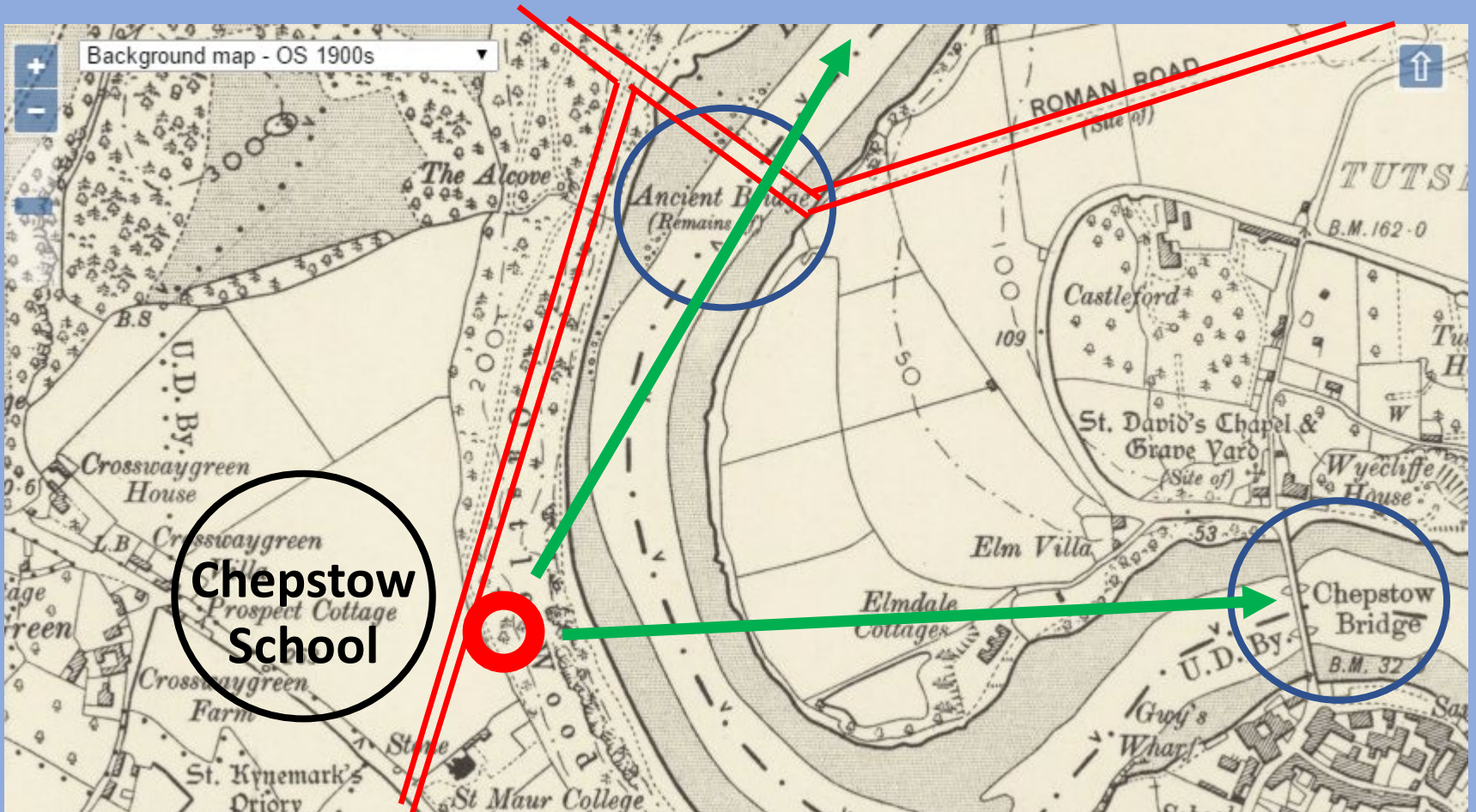




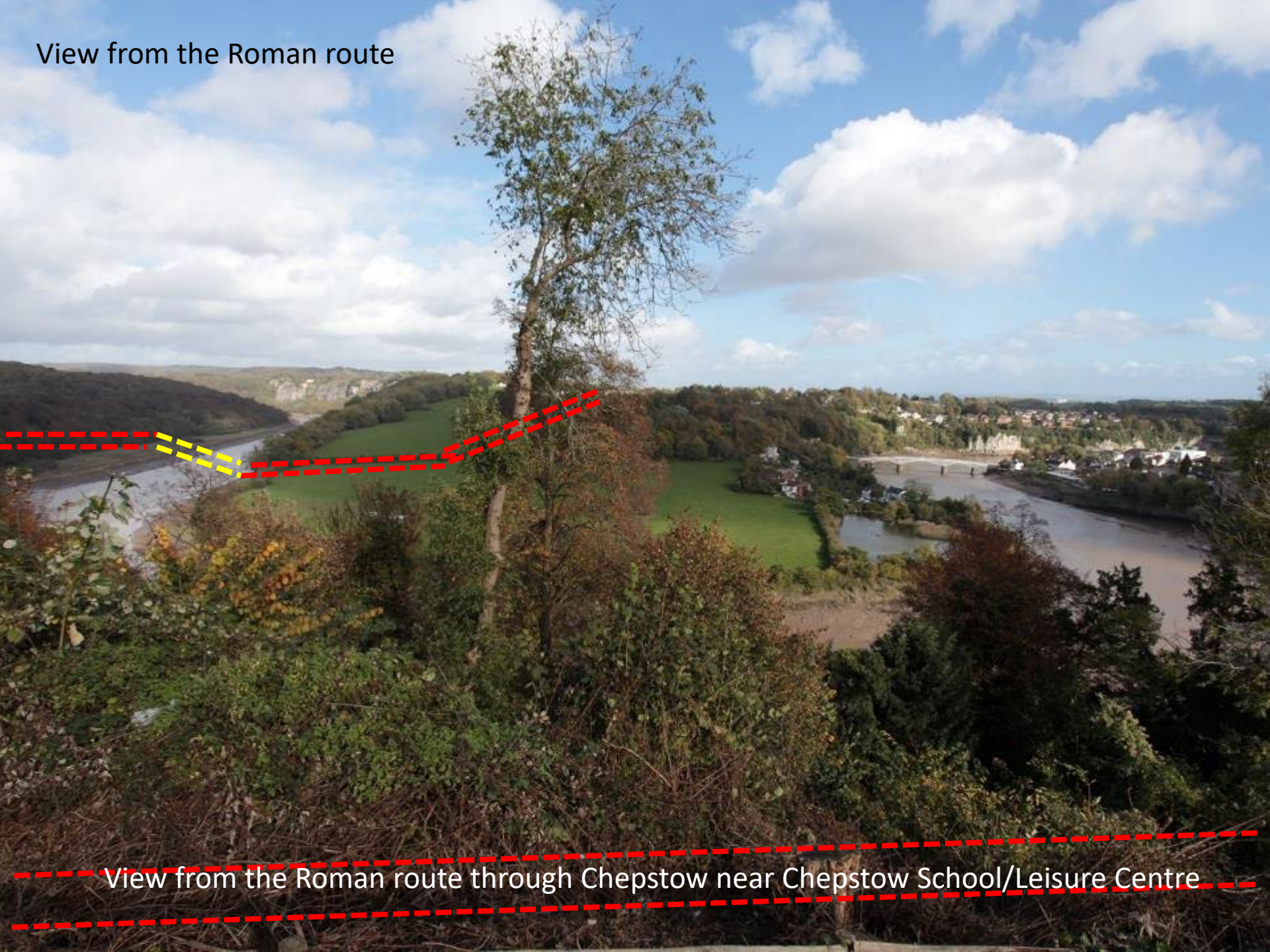








View from the Roman route



View from the Roman route through Chepstow near Chepstow School/Leisure Centre



## River Wye

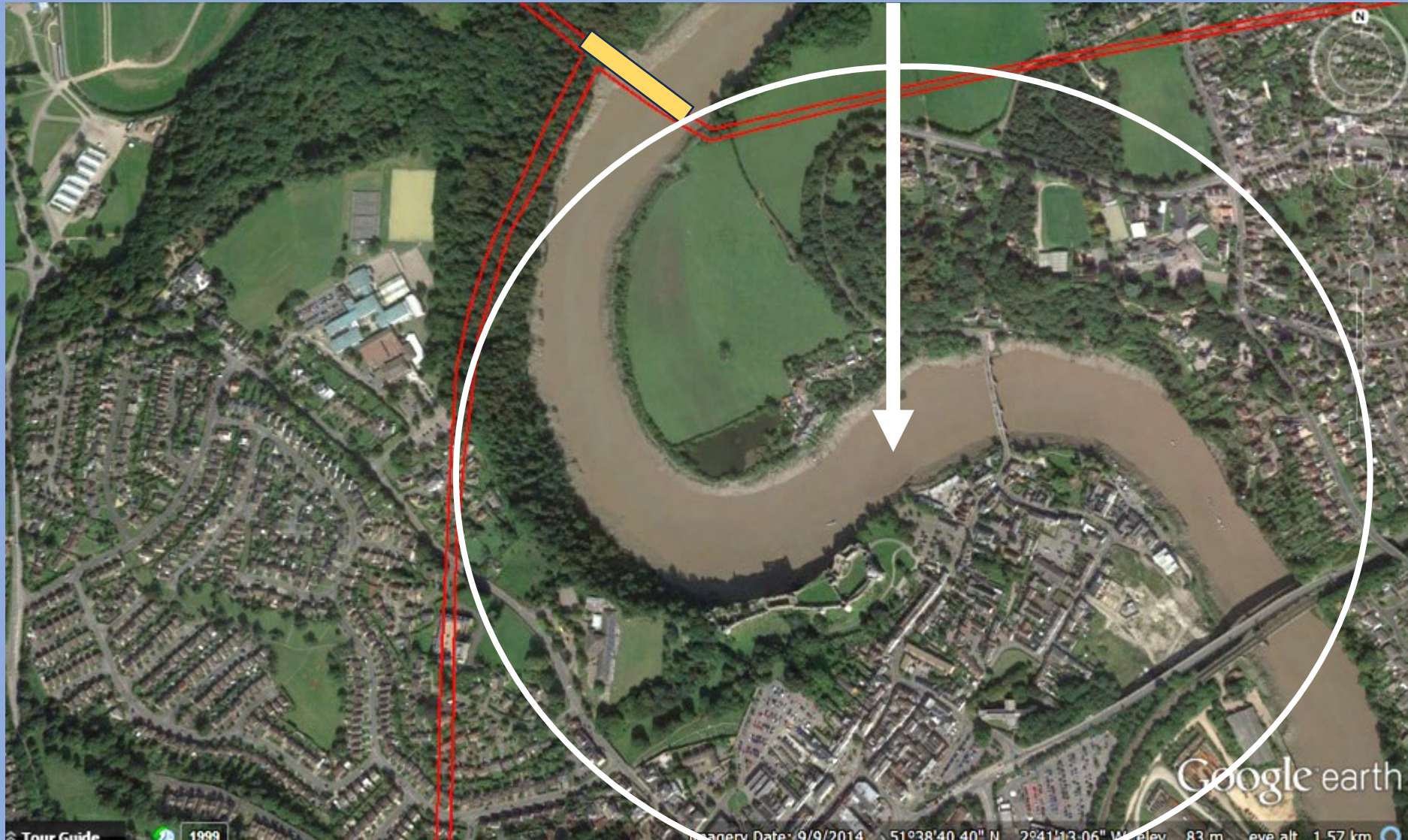
View from the Roman route through Chepstow near Chepstow School/Leisure Centre



Tour Guide 1999

Imagery Date: 9/9/2014 51°38'40.40" N 2°41'43.06" W elev: 83 m eye alt: 1.57 km

**The Romans would not want to construct a bridge anywhere in this part of the Wye Gorge, south of their chosen site, because of the double bend in the river and gorge to the south causing unacceptable restrictions on visibility of the river and over surrounding land.**



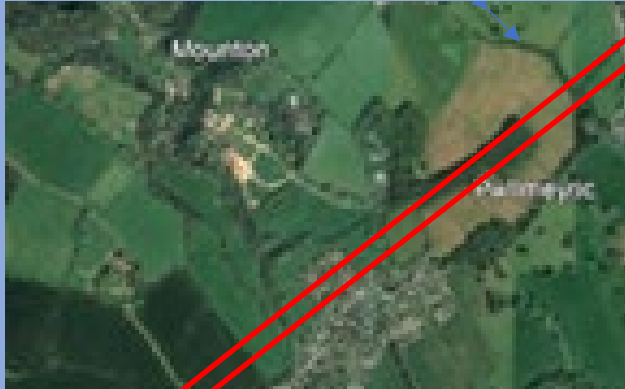


**There was a Roman bridge on a bend in the River Usk at Caerleon but this is on flat land, the river is easily visible, and 100 yards from the largest concentration of Roman soldiers in Southern Britain. The river is under permanent surveillance from the fortress.**



**Best visibility northwards –**  
(most likely source of attack)  
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Crossing point 1 – Looking north to Chepstow c 1,500 metres visibility



Crossing point 5 – Looking south towards Crossing 5 c 2,000 metres visibility

Chepstow Roman Bridge  
site



2,000 metres  
of clear  
visibility



North



## Preliminary Conclusions

**1. It is likely that the Romans weren't that interested in Chepstow,** as they already had: a major legionary base at **Caerleon**; a significant Roman town at **Caerwent**; and sea and river connections at **Sudbrook** – **but they had to cross the Wye in the Chepstow area** to get to Lydney and Gloucester – so **getting through this area quickly and safely** was a primary criterion for bridge locations

**2. The last opportunity to keep routes E and F together as one road before they had to separate is at Crossing 5.** (Route E is to/from Gloucester and F is to/from Monmouth.)



**3. The best visibility northwards is Crossing 5.** Most likely source of attack was from the North.

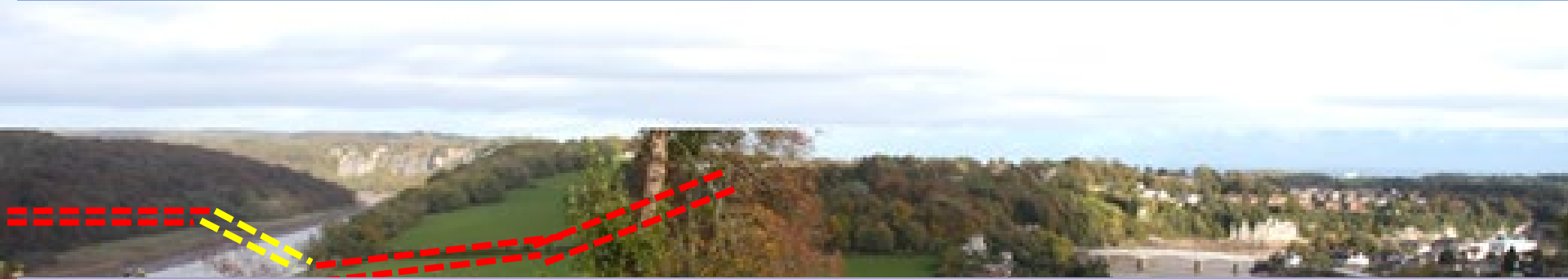
**4. The cliffside Causeway leads to the best and safest crossing location – Crossing 5 –** it may have had some natural alignment, but even if it had to be hewn out all the way down, it **leads to the best and safest crossing location**; and the approach **could be protected easily.**

**5. Superb visibility of the route, and of the crossing, from the route to Crossing 5;** and good visibility of the River Wye both North and South of the crossing point.

View from the Roman route through Chepstow near Chepstow School/Leisure Centre

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# 100 AD



*1,000 years later*

*Chepstow Norman  
Priory 1067*



**2024 AD**



*2,000 years later*



# Chepstow Roman Bridge (or Crossing) over the River Wye

The Roman Crossing  
100 AD/400 AD

The Norman/Medieval Crossing  
1067/1220 AD onwards

Why here?



The principal answer is in this photograph taken from the Roman route on cliffs at Chepstow. **The Roman route through Chepstow has far better military visibility than the Norman route.**

The Normans wanted to control the river and river trade with the Forest of Dean so they had to be next to the River Wye and establish a castle here and a town.

The Romans, probably, just wanted to get over the impediment of the River Wye Gorge and move on to Gloucester or Caerwent / Caerleon as quickly and as safely as possible.

So for the Romans the route, and crossing site near Chepstow, with the best visibility wins.