

Wye a Bridge?

The Gloucestershire perspective on the Wye Crossing at Chepstow

Mark Horton

Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester

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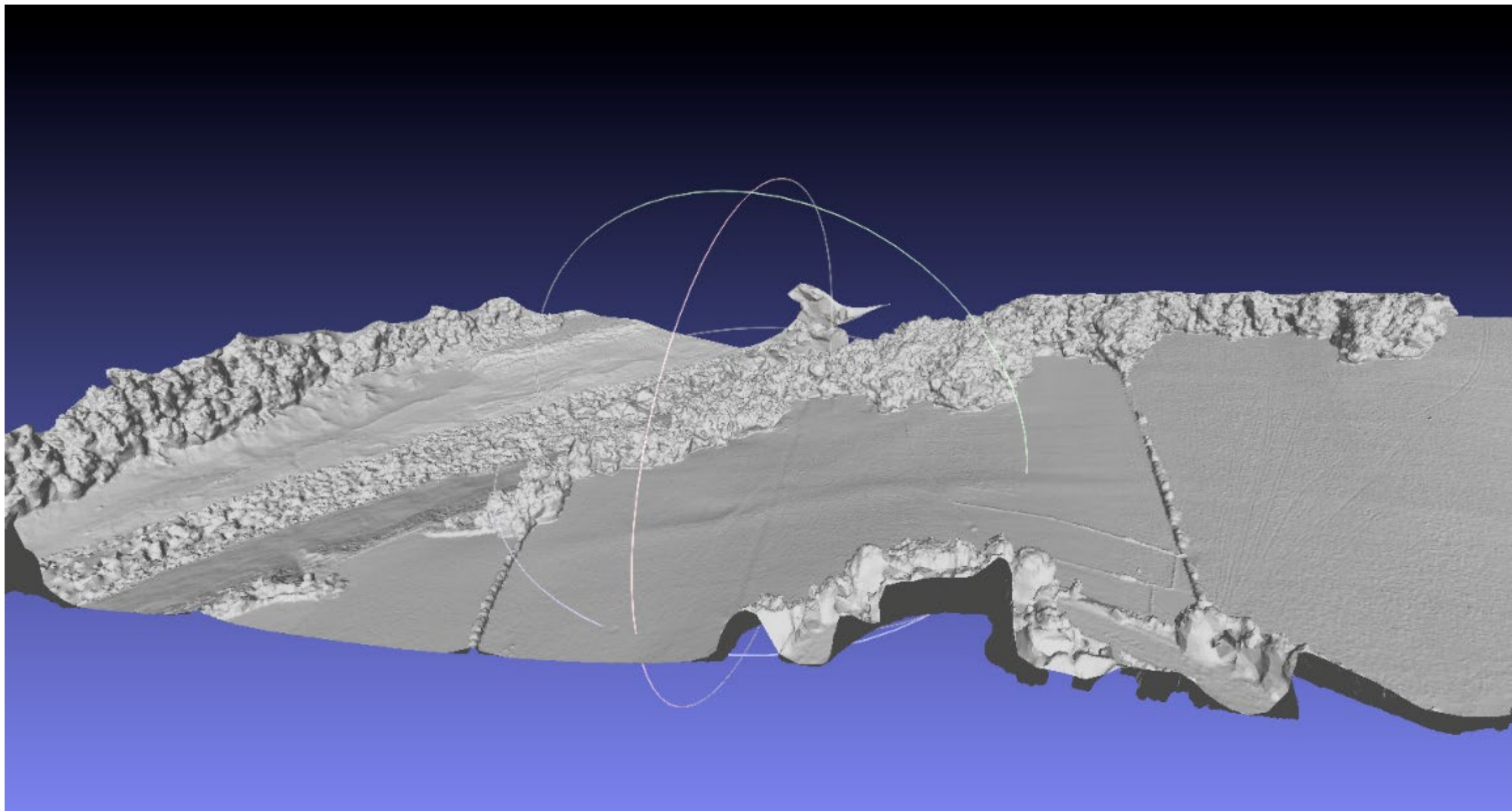
Royal Agricultural University,
Cirencester



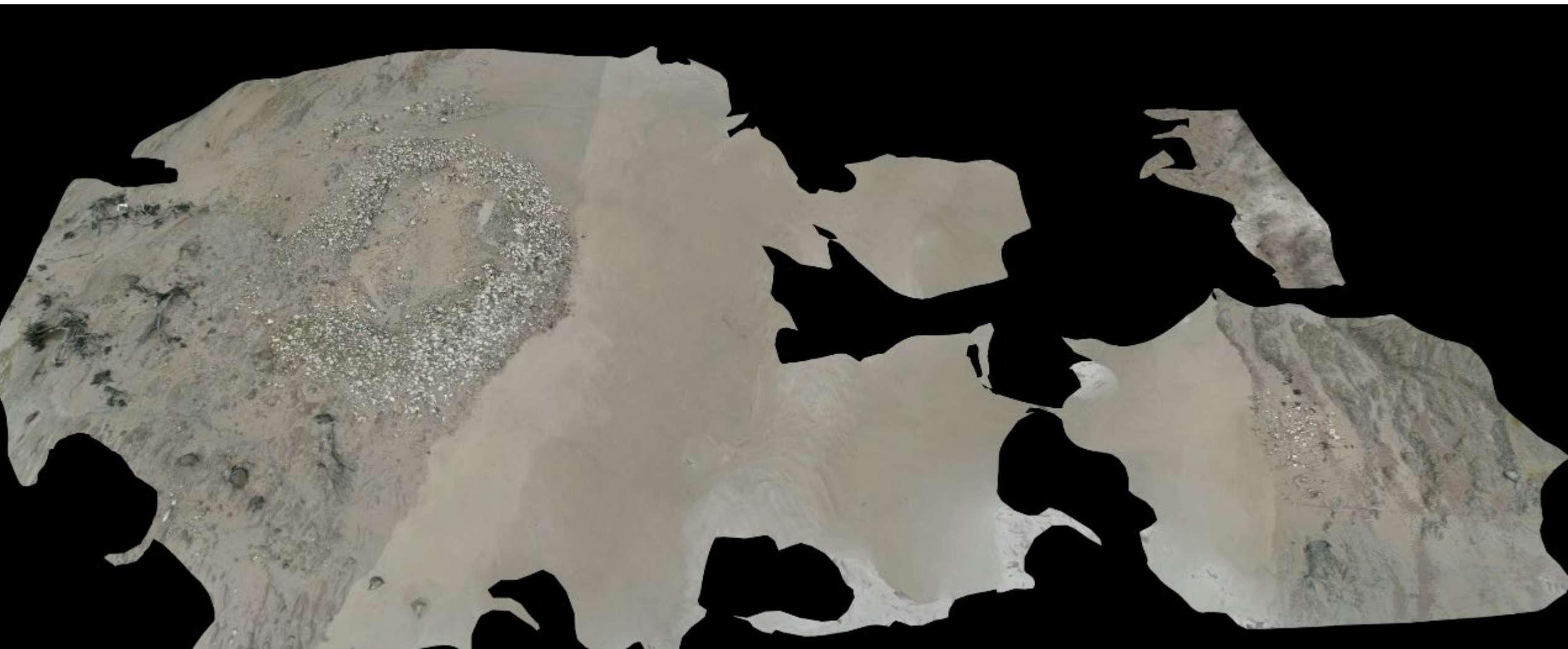
Drone Survey of the approaches at low water



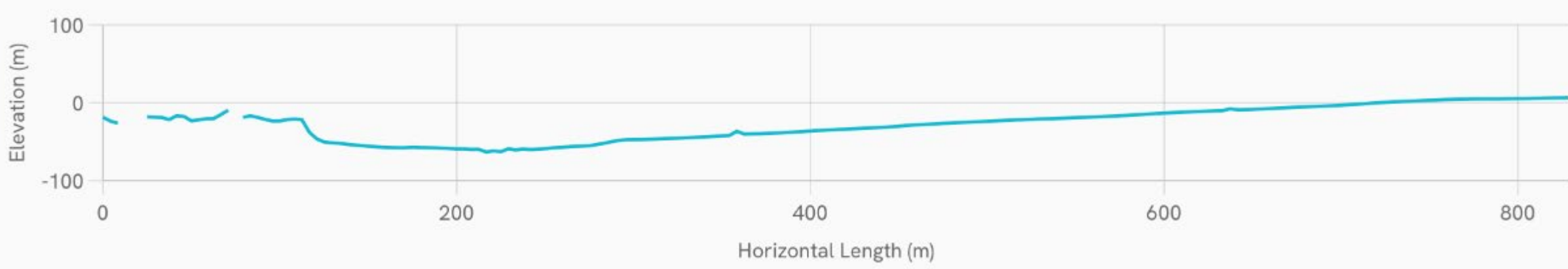
Drone visualisation of the river crossing and Roman agger



3D render of the Chepstow Bridge



Line of the Roman Road and Bridge

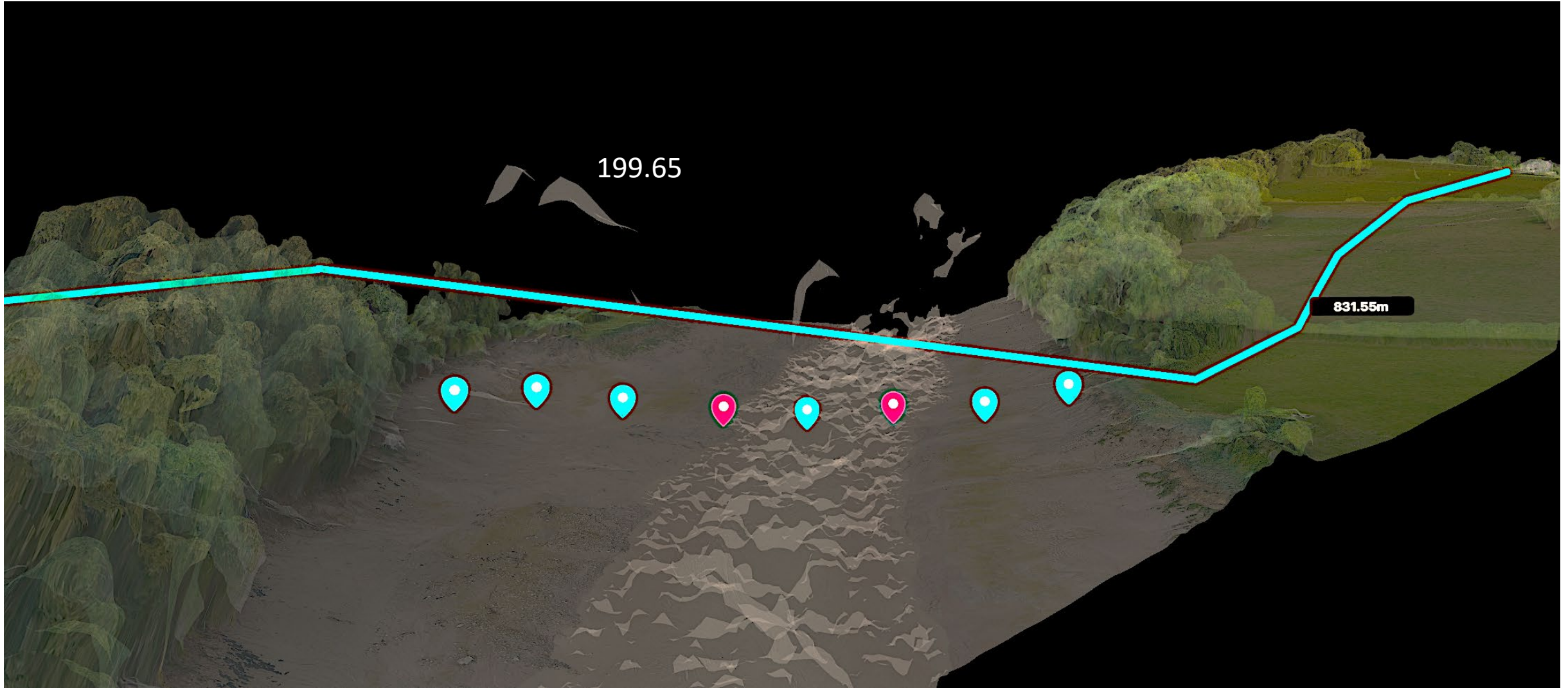


Hypothesis one

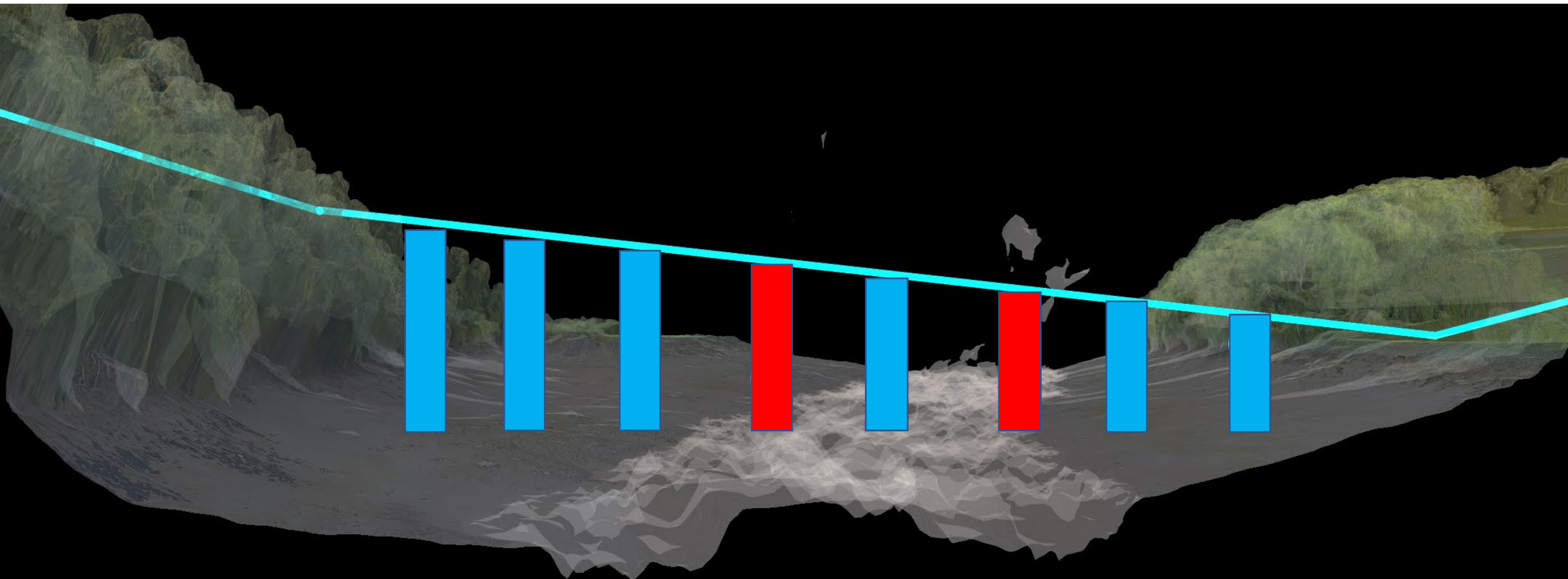
Required Bridge Span is 200m, 8 caissons, @21m

Red dots are known locations of caissons. Green dots are projected.

Rise is 25.37m or 12.6%



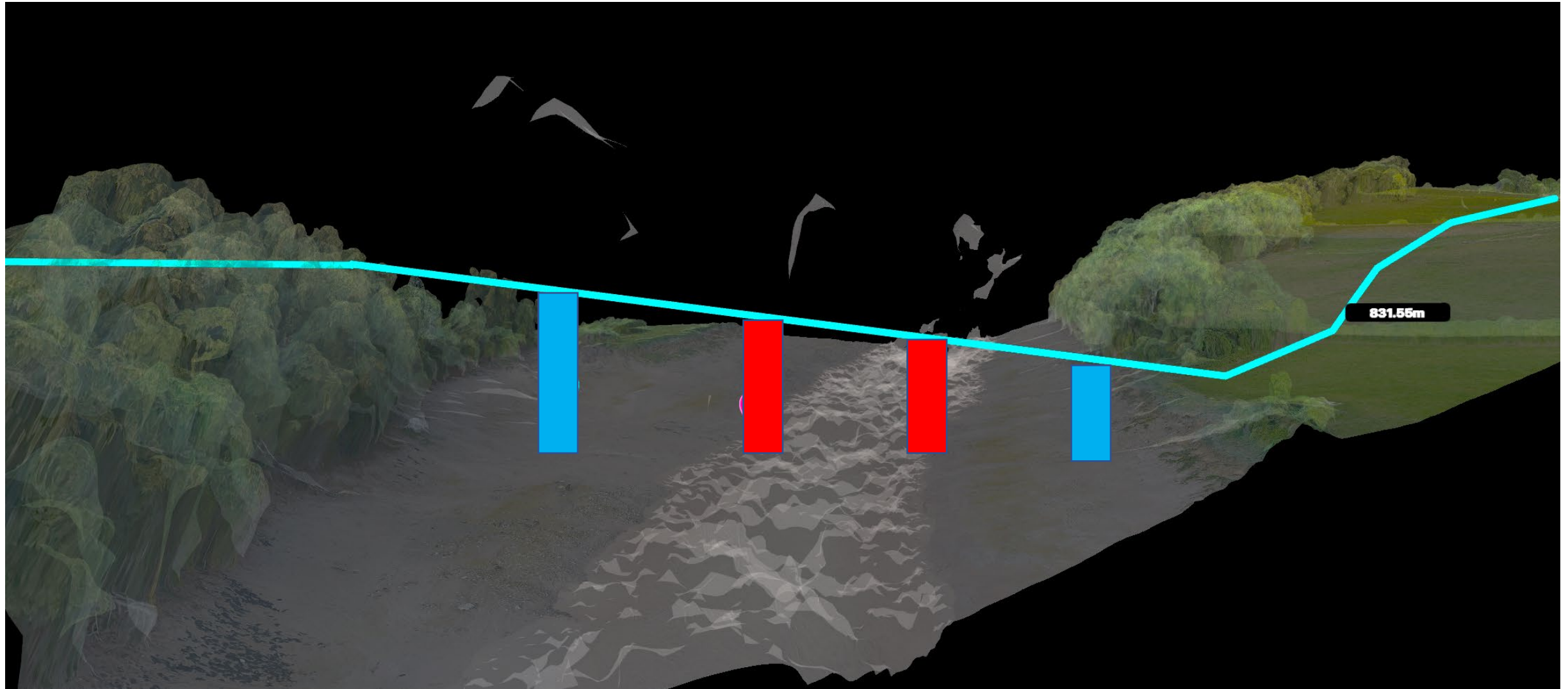
Possible location of the caissons for the Chepstow Bridge, approx. 21m apart.



Hypothesis two

Required Bridge Span is 200m, 4 caissons, @41m

Red lines are known locations of caissons. Blue lines are projected.





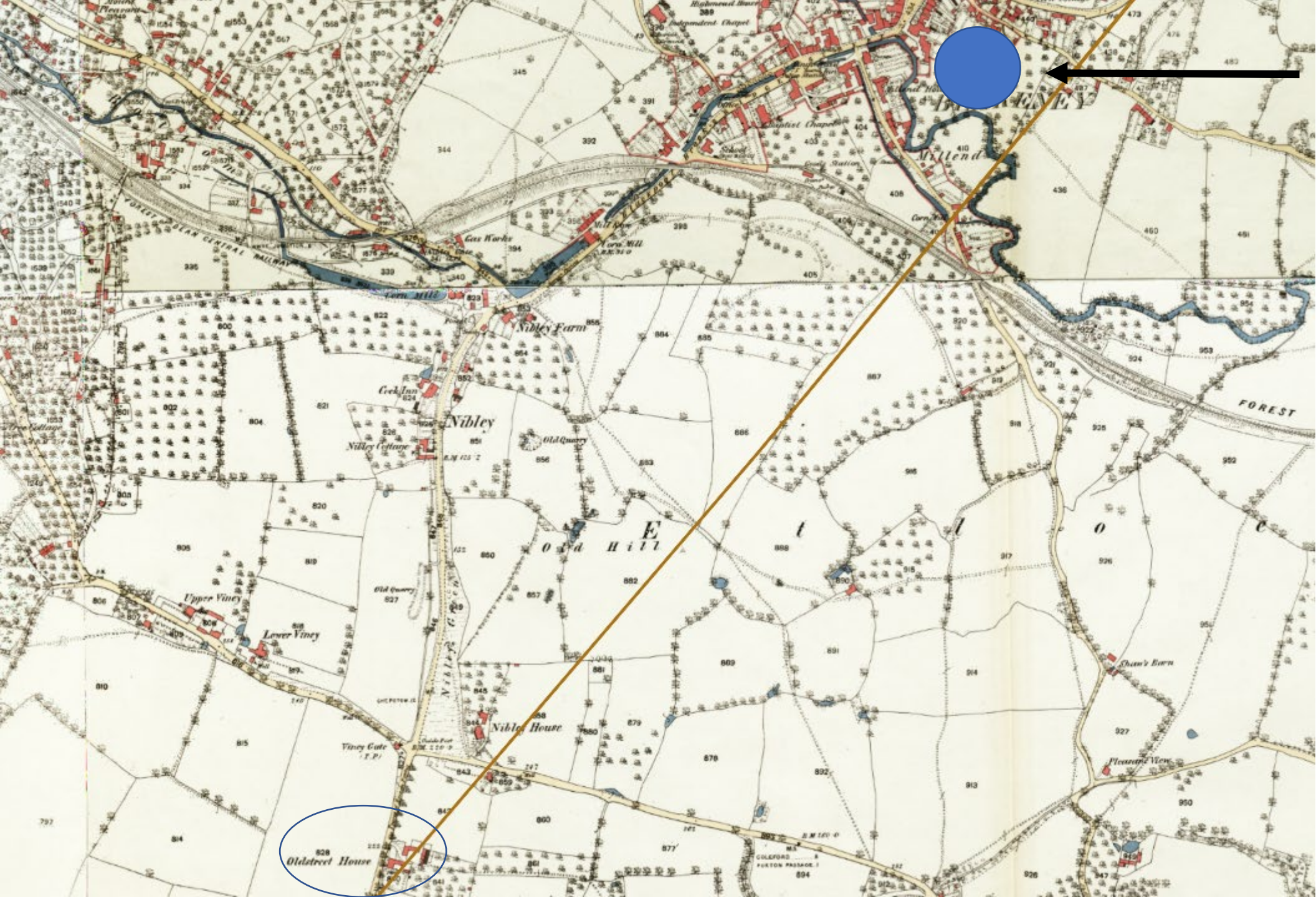
Roman roads in
Gloucestershire
After the Roman Roads
Research Group

Via Julia or RR60A

(source *Know Your Place*)



RR 60A as it leaves the bridge site and heads northwards.



Possible site of Mansio at Blakeney



Armoury Village Hall

Sevenside Press B&B

Saint Peter's Church

Bridge or crossing?

434m

The Old Passage Inn

Passage Rd

Westmarsh Ditch

Westmarsh Ditch

Kencroft Rhyne

Kencroft Rhyne

River Severn

River Severn

A49

ARCHAEOLOGIA:

OR,

MISCELLANEOUS TRACTS, &c.

- I. *Observations on the JULIA STRATA, and on the Roman Stations, Forts, and Camps, in the Counties of Monmouth, Brecknock, Caermarthen, and Glamorgan. By the Rev. William Harris, Prebendary of Landaff, and Curate of Caireu.*

Read at the SOCIETY of ANTIQUARIES, 1763.

IT is probable that Julius Frontinus, Prefect of the Legion 2^{da} Augusta under Vespasian, who was detached to reduce the Silures, and from whom *Julia Strata* is said to have been denominated, passed the Severn three little miles below Oldbury, at *Awst* passage, perhaps termed from that legion, *Trajectus Augustæ*; as the Monk of Ravenna styles Caerleon *Isca Augusta*, and the Britons at this day call the mouth of August *Mis Awst*.

2 *Mr. HARRIS's Observations on the ROMAN Stations, &c.*

AT this passage Roman medals have been found; and from thence on the eastern side of the Severn, I conclude they failed down the stream three short miles to Charlton Rock, or, as others term it, the Black Rock, where the new passage now lies; and I am induced to think so, contrary to the common opinion, because Roman coins are frequently picked up in the mud upon the rock or landing place on the Welsh shore by Charlton Rock.

AGAIN, had the Romans crossed the Severn diametrically at Awst-passage to Beachly in the forest of Dean, as is done at present, or to Tidenham on the same shore, they would have had a second trouble, to ferry over the dangerous river *Wy*, where Chepstow bridge now stands, and where the tides always ebb and flow with uncommon rapidity, and sometimes rise to the perpendicular height of fifty feet and upwards from low-water mark; which seems occasioned by the rocks at Beachly and Awst-passage projecting farther into the channel of the Severn than any other part of the shore on each side, just above the mouth of the *Wy*, which precipitates the spring tide with great violence up this river; its rapid progress up the Severn being thus checked by the sudden interposition of these rocks.

I MUST farther observe, that when the Romans landed in an enemy's country, they generally fortified themselves in the first convenient place, that they might secure their footing in it. But by all the inquiry I could make, there do not appear any visible traces of a work of that kind at Tydenham, or near Beachly.

HALF a measured mile, however, below Charlton or the Black Rock, or the New Passage (which are all the same) in Monmouthshire, stands part of a square camp close to Severn

Its not such a mad idea?

The road has been known as the Strata / Via Julia since the 13th century, recorded by John Leland in the 1540's

The 'Julia' must refer to Sextus Julius Frontinus (c. 40-104), Governor of Britannia 74-8 and fits closely with the date of the bridge. He established Caerleon in 75.

In addition to his military career, he was the foremost Roman engineer of his era, the author of *De aquaeductu* (c.90) the history and engineering behind Rome's water supply

He also wrote a 4-volume account of military strategy, *Strategemata*

He was very keen on engineering solutions to military strategy.

A vision of constructing bridges across the Severn and Wye would be well In keeping with his career





Trajan's Bridge
across the river Danube
103-105 CE

Total Length = 1,135m
Twenty pillars
Span of c. 38m