

ANCIENT ROCHESTER, OR DUROBRIVÆ, VIEWED  
AS THE SITE OF A ROMAN CAMP AND STATION.

BY BEALE POSTE.

THE nature of this subject is such, that in order to supply due illustration to it, it is necessary to refer to the conquest of Britain by the Romans in the years 43 and 44 of the Christian era, and to ascertain what legions and troops were employed in that conquest; and to indicate what numbers those legions bore, as among them we may perhaps find one legion which was connected with forming the original military works at this place.

The first army, commanded by Aulus Plautius, a distinguished Roman senator and general, was, what was termed "double Consular," by which it is known to have consisted of four legions. To these are to be added, according to the customary arrangement of those times, an equal amount of auxiliary troops; and, as each legion was at that date 6,500 strong for its usual establishment, we shall thus find that the whole army must have amounted to about 52,000 men. The numbers of the said Roman legions are well known, and were the SECOND, the NINTH, the FOURTEENTH, and the TWENTIETH, and seem to have been specially appointed as the army which should occupy Britain, since none of them left the kingdom for about a quarter of a century afterwards.

At the end of the first year the issue of the war still remained doubtful; and in the beginning of the second year the Emperor Claudius, leaving his imperial metro-

polis, came over in person to endeavour to bring the contest to a conclusion: which indeed he effected. About the same time with him arrived also the EIGHTH legion, which—as we know the dangerous foes the Romans had to contend with in the Germanic nations, they having had three legions cut off in former years, under Varus, in the reign of Augustus—was no doubt extracted from the Continent with difficulty, and after its services in the field, might, for its winter quarters that year, have been stationed from prudential motives in some locality whence it might have advanced further into Britain, or have returned quickly to the Continent, as in either case its destination might have required. This legion, we may understand, formed the reinforcement which Zonaras, the Roman historian, informs us the Emperor Claudius brought over with him.

It may be asked: How do we know that the Eighth legion came over to Britain, since, strictly speaking, it is not mentioned by the Roman historians Dion Cassius, Tacitus, and Suetonius, nor even by the said Zonaras? This may be so; but an ancient Roman inscription, discovered formerly at Turin, and mentioned by Du Choul (p. 157), notices the circumstance, and leaves no doubt of it as a fact. I give it as under:—

C. GAVIO L. F.  
 STEL. SILVANO.  
 PRIMIPILARI LEG. VIII. AUG.  
 TRIBUNO COHOR. II. VIGILUM.  
 TRIBUNO COH. XIII. URBAN.  
 TRIBUNO COH. XII. PRÆTOR.  
 DONIS DONATO A DIVO CLAUD.  
 BELLO BRITANNICO  
 TORQUIBUS ARMILLIS PHALERIS  
 CORONA AUREA  
 PATRONO COLON.

There is no evidence that the EIGHTH legion remained

for more than a short time in England,—a few months perhaps. I have mentioned the EIGHTH legion as one which apparently wintered in Britain about this period, and possibly might have been connected with the ancient Roman *castrum hibernum*, or winter camp, at our *Durobrivæ*, or Rochester; but the discovery of inscriptions at this place like that at Turin, or of coins inscribed with the number of the legion, would be necessary to verify the fact, and such it must be admitted have not hitherto come to light.

However, whatever Roman legion may have formed the camp, it is now time to say a few words respecting it.

The city of Rochester then is very evidently laid out and disposed on the lines of an ancient Roman camp—one of that form which was called a *castrum tertiatum*; that is, a camp one-third longer than it was broad. The form is nearly quadrangular, and the four original gates, now long since removed, but the positions of which are still traceable, were placed opposite to each other. Faint traces of the *Via principalis*, anciently one of the most important features in a Roman camp, and invariably of the breadth of a hundred feet, are still to be seen, though of reduced dimensions, besides being built across in medieval times by the constructors of the Bishop's palace. This crossed the present High Street nearly at right-angles, leading from the former South-gate, pulled down in the year 1770, and passed through the site of the episcopal building just spoken of, to the former North-gate, which was called also Cheldegate. The *Via principalis* passed close by the doors of the present cathedral; and on the opposite or western side of this said *Via principalis*, the *Prætorium*, or *Basilica*, of the commander of the garrison, or, in other words, his quarters, would be to be looked for; contiguous to which would have been likewise the *Augurale*, or place of worship for the troops, where also their standards were deposited.

The space occupied by the former Roman circumvallation is twenty-nine acres, which, according to the best writers, ancient and modern, on Roman military affairs, would have been about the extent required for the encampment of a Roman legion, the strength of which was, as before said, in the first century 6,500 men. Numerous Roman coins of various emperors, early and late, have been found in the Castle enclosure, and in the garden plots and other pieces of ground which occupy the ditches which surround it.

The said Castle enclosure is considered to have formed the *Itinerary* station of the place mentioned in the *Itineraries* of Antoninus, under its name *Durobrivæ*, and placed as coming between *Vagniacæ* and *Durolevum* in the course of the road from London to Richborough, Dover, and Lymne. The present lofty castle keep or tower was built by Bishop Gundulph, at the end of the eleventh century; but the walls of the castle enclosure, or double ballium,—for there was anciently a middle wall,—were not constructed till after a considerable interval. In other words, Mr. King, in his ‘Observations on Ancient Castles,’ considers all balliums to Norman keeps to be of about the date of Edward I.

The Roman ramparts of the ancient town, city, or camp, including those of the station just spoken of, were without doubt earthen, and are rather to be supposed to have continued so through Saxon, Danish, and early Norman times, till, according to the historical accounts of the place, Henry III., in the year 1225, surrounded the city with a wall. There are no remains of Roman walls of masonry round the whole circuit of the place. Indeed I may here observe, that the entire absence of Roman foundations of every kind, both in the Castle enclosure and in every other part of the city, is very remarkable.

Henry III.’s walls of Rochester have one very re-

markable peculiarity, that of being built on arches, as may be seen in the portion of them in the gardens near the end of Crow Lane, and in every other place where the earth has been removed to a sufficient depth. The walls of Lynn and Norwich are built in the same way, as also those of the Castle of Northampton. No cause can be assigned for this style of building,—certainly no good architectural reason. The walls of the Castle enclosure are no exceptions to those of the rest of the city, save only on the side towards the river, and are built on these arches; as can be seen opposite the cathedral. They were all then built at the same time, city walls and Castle-enclosure walls, as seems a very fair conclusion to form.

It is recorded, that the monks of St. Andrew's Priory obtained permission to alter a part of the line of the city walls in the year 1290, in the reign of Edward I. Which they did, and enclosed a piece of ground, of irregular shape, on the south side of the city, opposite the cathedral. But the original course of Henry III.'s wall and ditch is still plain enough to be seen in the garden of the Deanery. This wall, now removed, was built no doubt on the precise line of the Roman rampart, extending in a straight line to the Prior's Gate, and to the spot a little beyond, where the former South-gate stood, whence there is every reason to believe it went direct towards the river; though the ground has been so altered in that part that now no traces of it remain. The Roman rampart, in fact, with its ditch in front, may be considered, in this part of its transit, to have passed in a line parallel with the south wall of Gundulph's tower, or otherwise keep, and at a distance of about forty or forty-five yards from it.

The Prior's Gate seems to have been altered into a more ecclesiastical form than an Anglo-Norman city gate about the year 1330, or at some period between

the Barons' Wars and the Wars of the Roses, which promised peace and security.

There may be a good reason assigned why Henry III.'s walls followed so closely the line of the Roman ramparts. In the first place the space they enclosed, twenty-nine acres, would apparently have contained all that was required for the site of an Anglo-Norman city of the thirteenth century; and secondly, the ramparts afforded firm ground to build the wall upon; and as the ditches with which the Roman ramparts were flanked were twenty-four feet wide and twelve deep, this might supply sufficient reason for not deviating from them unless some special cause required. The Anglo-Norman fortifiers enlarged these ditches, thus made ready to their hands, exceedingly. The eastern ditch in the gardens at the side of Crow Lane cannot be less than about eighty-five feet wide; and originally about twenty feet deep. Much of the earth, I may add, was probably carted down to the marshes, to make firm ground at the spot called the Common, and at other places.

There are appearances that the eastern wall had formerly been strengthened by a large square tower, from the cavities for fixing the floor-beams being still remaining in the wall. If so, nothing is now left of it. It adjoins the spot where the extension of the eastern wall by the monks began. These ecclesiastics, in prolonging their wall, threw a somewhat wide arch of construction over the former Romano-medieval ditch, crossing at right-angles at this place; the span of which was filled up with masonry. The foundations of the former wall in the Dean's garden before alluded to, according to information from a person accustomed to work there, are often struck against by the pickaxe and the spade in the usual cultivation of the soil.

Some foundations of walls were met with many years since, running diagonally across the Vines for some dis-

tance towards the south-west; but as there is nothing to induce a supposition that they were of the solid nature of city walls, and as they were not skirted by a ditch, so, they can only be regarded as remnants of strongly constructed enclosures for gardens, or for other purposes.

However, though the medieval architects of Henry III.'s wall showed their attachment to the Roman ramparts and were unwilling to leave them, yet they were obliged to make a decided *détour* in the south-west part of their circumvallations by an incidental circumstance, which was this. The Danes, arriving in great force, made a most vigorous though unsuccessful attack, in the year 884, on the ramparts and fortifications existing at that time in this quarter. Their proceedings are recorded in a somewhat brief form in the Saxon and other ancient chronicles, including also Asser's Life of Alfred. The chief feature in their attempts appears to have been, that they threw up immense mounds of earth to endeavour to overtop the works of the besieged, and by their superior advantages of position thus acquired, to drive them away from their defences by their missiles. When the siege was over, the mounds remained, and indeed even now remain. They seem in Gundulph's time to have supplied a reason for the position of his lofty tower, placed at the angle of the ballium, and intended to command them in its turn. These earthworks, then, of the Danes, now known as Boley Hill, had altered the features of the city in this part for attack and defence, and Henry III.'s medieval fortifiers of the city, not thinking Gundulph's tower a sufficient counteraction, enclosed them with a strong wall joining on to their other newly constructed walls at the South-gate, and thus made them a species of outwork to the castle and to the city. They seem to have been much lowered in modern times, particularly towards the Castle. The ancient boundary wall of this addition appears to have been met with, some

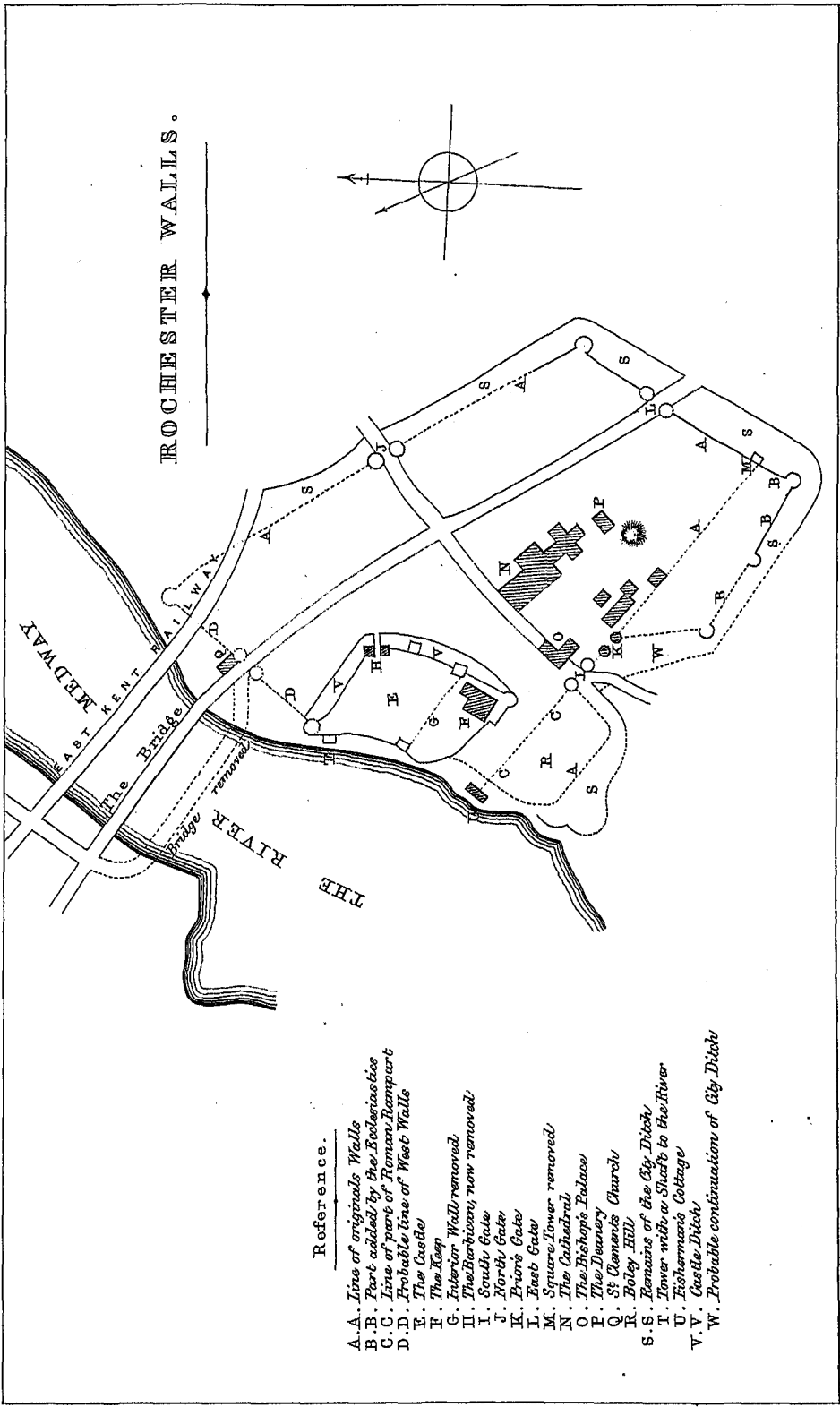
years since, in digging the foundations of the Rev. Mr. Conway's house. It is described as standing parallel to the present brick walls, and as two feet within them. It is not impossible that this outwork might have been strengthened, like the city wall, with towers, but this point has not been hitherto ascertained.

The extent, limits, and direction of the whole of the south wall have been topics somewhat disregarded, and till quite of late years fallen much into oblivion among the inhabitants of this ancient city. Indeed it had been removed in places with great assiduity, and the ditch very completely filled up. Add to which, only the most vague accounts of its former course existed. With respect to the side of the city next the river, the discovery of authentic traces of the west wall and its gateway, excepting one short length of the former, has not yet been made.

*References to the Plan of Rochester Walls.*

- AA. Line of original wall.
- BB. Part added by the Ecclesiastics.
- CC. Line of part of Roman rampart.
- DD. Probable line of west wall.
- E. The Castle.
- F. The Keep.
- G. Interior wall, removed.
- H. The Barbican, now removed.
- I. Southgate.
- J. Northgate.
- K. Prior's Gate.
- L. Eastgate.
- M. Square tower, removed.
- N. The Cathedral.
- O. The Bishop's Palace.
- P. The Deanery.
- Q. St. Clement's Church.
- R. Boley Hill.
- S. Remains of the city ditch.
- T. Tower, with a shaft to the river.
- U. Fisherman's cottage.
- V. Castle ditch.
- W. Probable continuation of city ditch.





ROCHESTER WALLS.

Reference.

- A. A. Line of original Walls
- B. B. Part added by the Ecclesiastics
- C. C. Line of part of Roman Rampart
- D. D. Probable line of West Walls
- E. E. The Castle
- F. F. The Keep
- G. G. Interior Wall removed
- H. H. The Barbican, now removed
- I. I. South Gate
- J. J. North Gate
- K. K. Prior's Gate
- L. L. East Gate
- M. M. Square Tower removed
- N. N. The Cathedral
- O. O. The Bishop's Palace
- P. P. The Deanery Church
- Q. Q. St Clement's Church
- R. R. Botley Hill
- S. S. Remains of the City Ditch
- T. T. Tower with a Stair to the River
- U. U. Fisherman's Cottage
- V. V. Castle Ditch
- W. W. Probable continuations of City Ditch

B. Poste, del.

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