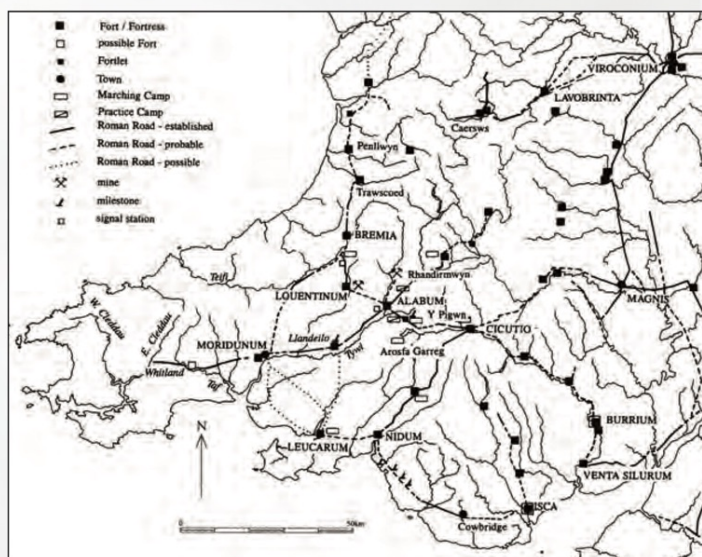


the recently-discovered military road heading west from Carmarthen into Pembrokeshire, and the two overlapping forts in Dinefwr Park, Llandeilo, which featured in *Time Team's Big Roman Dig* [see CA 201]. The earlier and larger of the two may well have held up to 2,000 soldiers.'

Nonetheless, there is no evidence for a fort at Carmarthen in the 50s AD. Perhaps the Romans never got that far in their first campaign. Roman activity at the site only began in c.AD 75 with the construction of an auxiliary fort of about 5 acres. The fort lay immediately south-west of the later Roman town, located on a low ridge just above the most likely bridge over the River Tywi. It is not difficult to guess why it was there.

Carmarthen - Roman *Moridunum* - is a key communications node for South-West Wales. 'The fort may have been founded by legionary and auxiliary forces advancing down the Tywi Valley from the north-east,' explains Carmarthen excavator Heather James, 'or coming along the coast from the south-east, or as a bridgehead by naval forces embarked from the fortress at Caerleon (Isca) and approaching via Carmarthen Bay.' Soon, as well as having a link to the sea and a bridge over the Tywi, there were probably four Roman roads centred on the site - heading south-east, north-east, north, and west - making Carmarthen the true heart of Demetian territory.

The fort does not prove local resistance - merely that it was convenient to have a military base in the area. The soldiers' main roles may have been admin-



istration, policing, and tax-collection. There is some evidence for a Demetian cattle economy, and the Romans may have been eager to levy tribute in kind and process leather for army use. Two sites have yielded possible evidence. Excavations at Church Street immediately east of the fort between 1976 and 1978 were expected to reveal a *vicus* - a civilian settlement of the kind usually found alongside Roman Army bases. In fact, contemporary with the fort there was nothing more than a sequence of ditched and fenced enclosures. Was this an annex with animal corrals?

Above Moridunum - Roman Carmarthen - lay at the heart of a network of roads radiating outwards across the territory of the Demetae of South-West Wales. **Below** Is this what Roman Carmarthen looked like? An artist's reconstruction of a street scene based on excavated evidence.

