

BIBRACTE

Overview

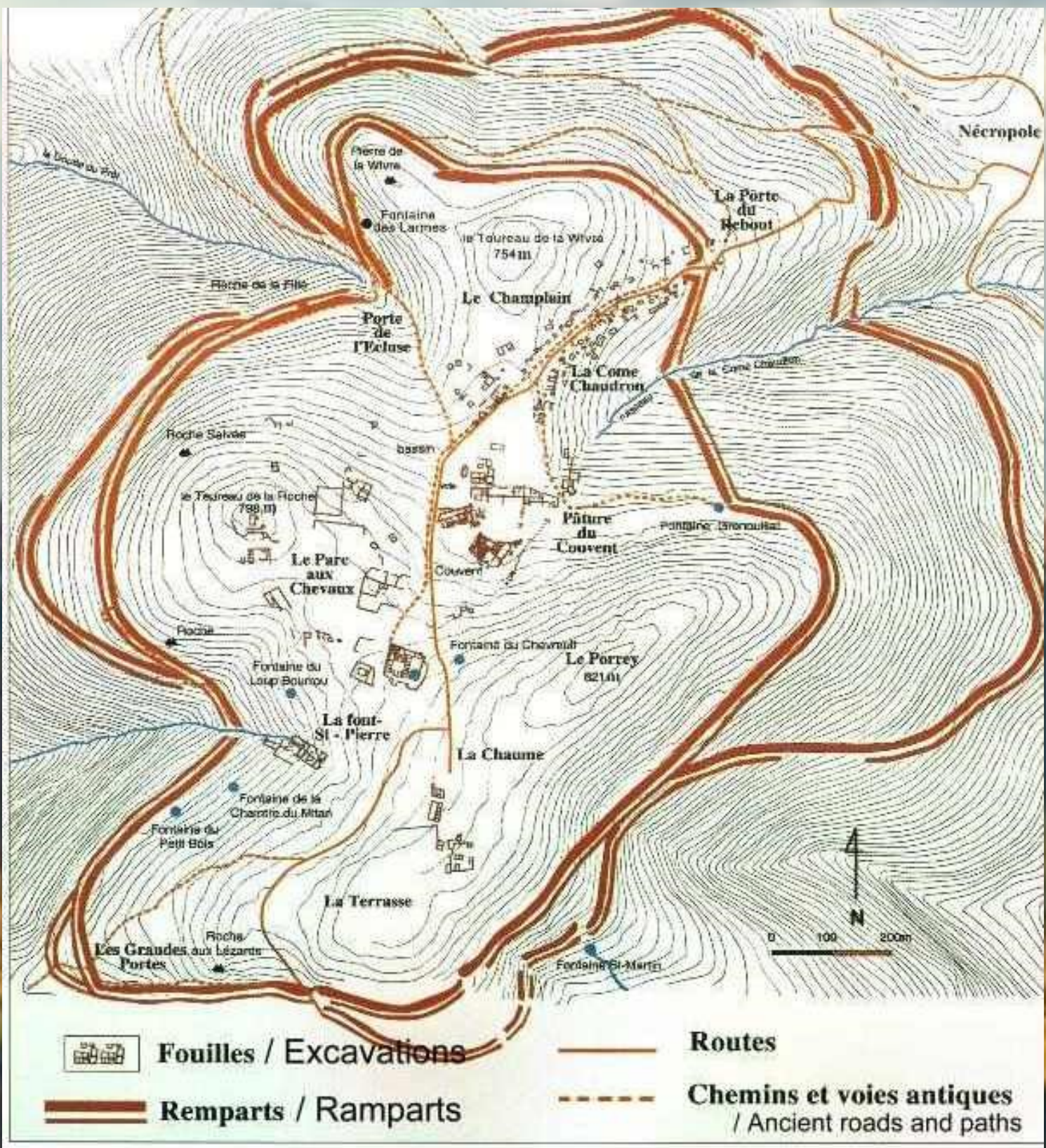
Caesar claims that Bibracte is the “largest and the best-provided of the Aeduan towns” (Caes Gall 1.23), and modern archeology also suggests that Bibracte appears to have been the administrative centre of the Aedui (Koch 2006) and is situated in, modern day eastern France. As well as its significance as the administrative center of the Aedui, Bibracte was also well placed to take advantage of long distance trade relations due to its fairly close proximity to the rivers Loire and Saone (Maier 2003:57) this means that we would expect to find a lot of traded goods such as Amphorae at this site. The site was first excavated by French archeologists in 1865 and is one of the most extensively excavated sites.



Map showing the location of Bibracte in Gaul (Alessia-saine.com)



Coin of the Aedui minted at Bibracte (Available at <https://en.numista.com/catalogue/pieces57956.html>)



A map of Bibracte showing roads and ramparts (Angelfire.com)

Coinage

As the oppidum of Bibracte grew into a more complicated society we start to see a large influx of coinage in the archeological record, Collis records that there were 1579 coins found at the site and 1033 of these were classed as Celtic coinage (Collis 1975), indicating that most of the trade being done in Bibracte was as a result of connections with other Celtic peoples, there were also found 114 Roman coins (Collis 1975) which indicates a small amount of trade with Rome however many of these coins may be from after the Romans occupied the site.

At the start of the 1st century the Aedui started to mint their own coins at Bibracte.

These coins are of a style very similar to that of other ‘Celtic coins’ and they share many common motifs such as the horse and the circular symbol that the horse appears to be jumping over which appears often on coinage from Bibracte.

Layout

Bibracte is a very large site, stretching over 130 hectares making it one of the largest oppidum in the Celtic world. (Maier 2003: 57), Osbourne-Martin states that anything over 15 hectares can be defined as an oppidum (Osbourne– Martin 2014) this reinforces the claim by Caesar that Bibracte was the “largest and the best-provided of the Aeduan towns” (Caes Gall 1.23). This large size suggests a large amount of urbanization.

There also appears to be an attempt at creating districts as there appears to be an artisans district close to the city gate (Collis 1975: 171) as well as an “Aristocratic quarter” and other districts for every part of life (Cunliffe 1992: 65). The clear existence of districts suggests that the oppidum of Bibracte was a large and organized urban centre which was far more complex than merely a simple large village, Bibracte appears to have been a thriving town with religious, political, commercial and residential functions.

However Bibracte does not appear to have always been a complicated urbanized site as unlike Numantia (Lenerz-de Wilde 1995:538) as the streets are winding and do not seem to suggest a deliberate street plan (Cunliffe 1992:65), furthermore the excavations have suggested that the walls were built after occupation (Collis 1975:171) and these things together suggest that the town of Bibracte was at origin a small village which over time developed into the large, fortified town some time before the 3rd century.

Bibliography

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