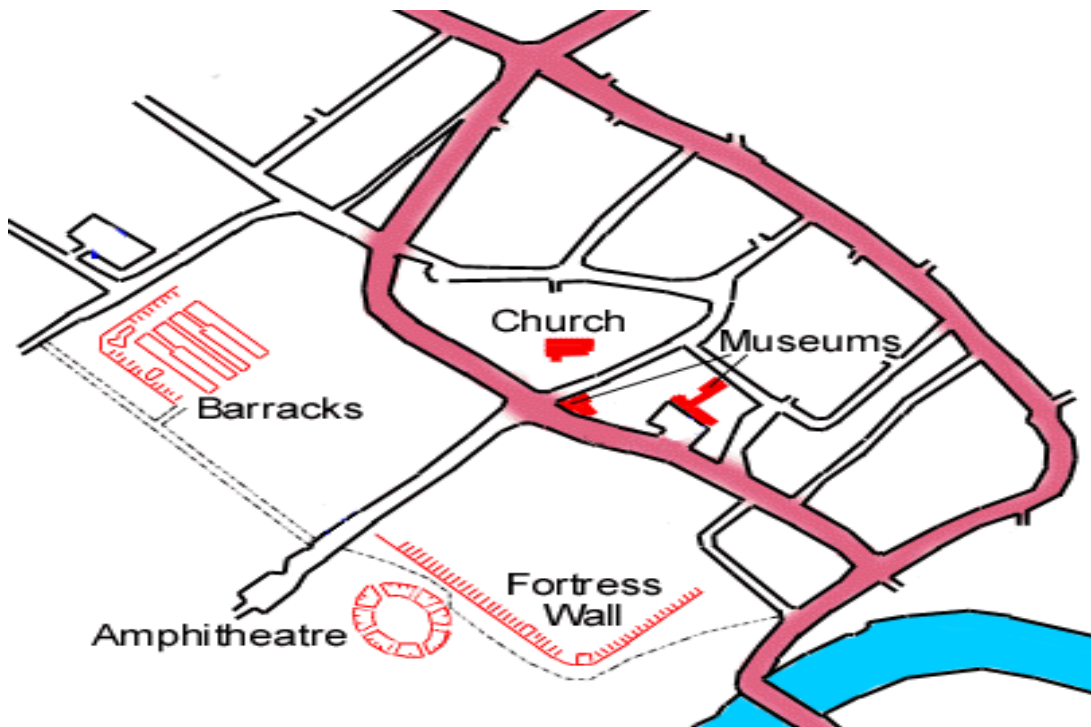


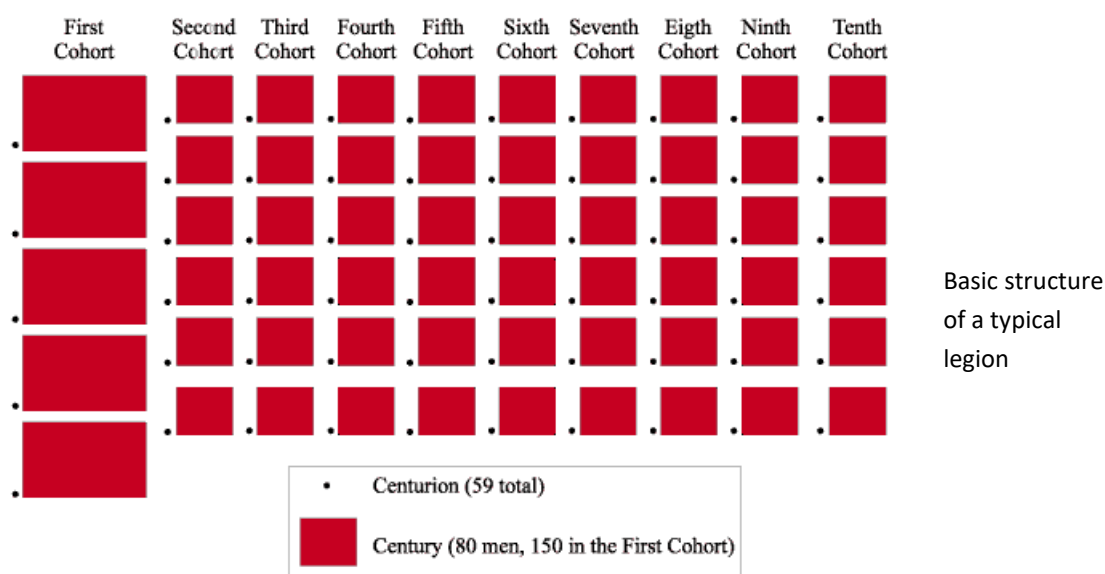
Caerleon (Isca)



Caerleon ("fortress of the legion" in Welsh), or Isca as it was known as by the Romans was one of three permanent legionary fortresses in Britain. Caerleon is located on the right bank of the river Usk on the outskirts of the modern city of Newport in South Wales. The camp was first established either in 74 or 75 AD as part of the Roman invasion and subjugation of Britain. The camp became home to the *Legio II Augusta*.

The Legion

The Second Augustan Legion was first sent to Britannia in 43 AD as part of Vespasian's expedition there. They campaigned and conquered throughout much of southern Britain. Before settling in Isca the legion occupied a fort in Exeter that also had a large stone bath-house. After the South Wales region was pacified by the Legion a more permanent camp was established and legionaries were able to be sent on missions all around Britannia, some were even sent to help with the construction of Hadrian's wall. The main purpose of *Legio II* became that of a reserve of manpower for defending the province and technical expertise for construction in the province.

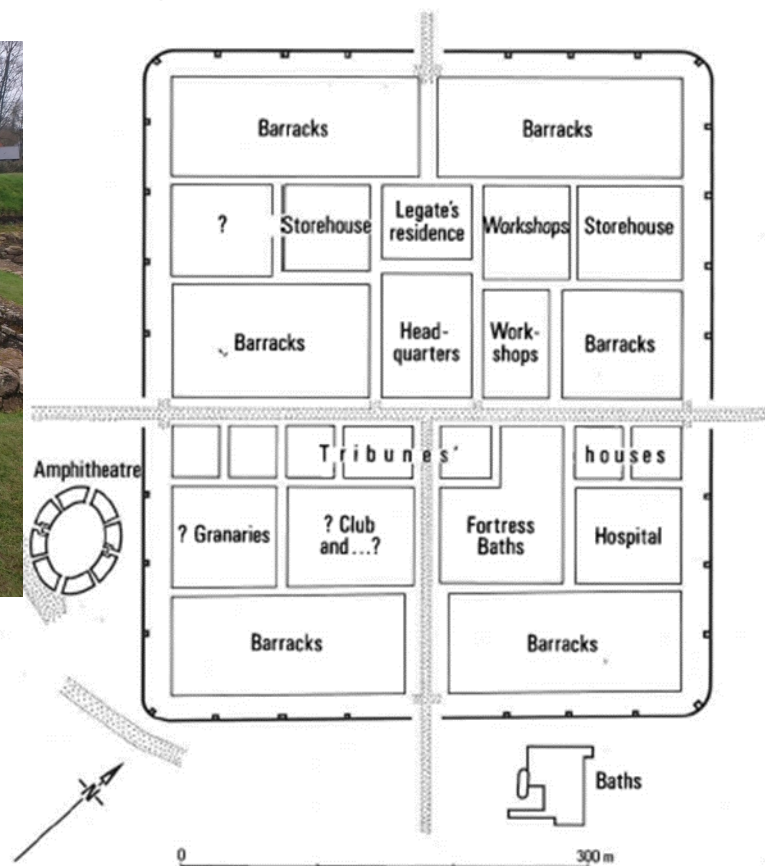


A legion typically consisted of between 5,000—5,500 men and was divided into ten cohorts, the first was larger than the rest and consisted of around 750-800 men, the other nine were around 480 men strong. These cohorts then divide in to centuries of 80 men, and 150 for the first cohort. These centuries then again divide in to the contubernium consisting of 8 men. The legion was led by a Legate who was aided by six Military Tribunes, the senior of which acted as the Legate's second in command. Below that a centurion would lead a century. The legion would also have a small force of 100-200 cavalry to serve as scouts for the most part. A legion would also have auxiliary forces attached to it, most often being local cavalry or light infantry.

The Barracks

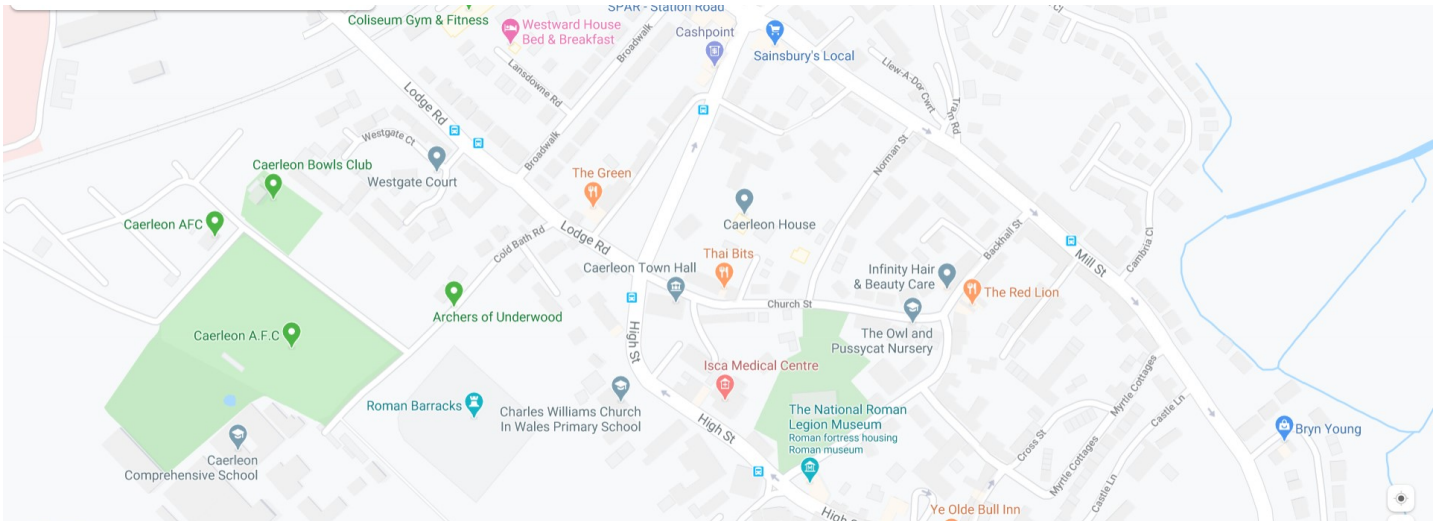


The fortress of Isca. Roman legionary fortresses conformed in their planning to basic principles but were far from identical in detail.



After the local Sillures tribe was pacified and resistance died down in the region in the 120's AD, because of this the whole legion did not need to be stationed all in Isca so they could be sent elsewhere, this however did not leave the camp abandoned and it is thought that every cohort maintained a presence at Isca. As the plan shows there were six main barracks for the rank and file troops, a house for each Tribune and a larger quarters for the Legate. The legate most likely received bigger quarters due to the presence of a family that he would likely have brought with him, as his career would be travelling long distances throughout the Empire for long periods of time; naturally his family would follow him. The spaces for the common soldier were cramped, with a contubernium for each room, which as shown above is a small area. An interesting series of archaeological finds occurred at the latrines near the barracks in which many gemstones and jewellery often associated with women were found, suggesting the presence of prostitutes or further integration with the local area in the form of soldiers starting families, after all they would be stationed in the same place for nearly twenty years.

Caerleon today



In the modern day Caerleon is a small part of the city of Newport, the a section of the barracks are located between a primary and a secondary school, much of the old foundations are now buried beneath houses or in open fields where they remain covered for preservation. The ruins, especially the amphitheatre are now a popular place for dog walking due to it being one of the quieter areas of Newport. Due to the lack of big urban developments Caerleon is one of the best preserved roman sites in Britain, extensive archaeological excavations have been taking place there since the nineteenth century, this is why we have such detailed reconstructions of the plan of the site. An example of what has been uncovered includes, tombstones, axe heads, building materials, pots, gemstones, glassware and spearheads.

The museum dedicated to the site and the bath-houses are of great importance in the local area, as they provide revenue in tourism, are of great cultural significance to Britain and provide opportunities for local children, adults and academics alike to learn about our country's history.

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