

## Caesar's Battle-Descriptions and the Defeat of Ariovistus

Caesar's military descriptions mark him out among ancient writers. He paints them in the firmest lines ; he is uniquely able to communicate to his audience the important strands in the strategy of a campaign, or the tactics of a battle. This tends to inspire modern scholars with an unfortunate confidence. We have a clear and definite picture of the course of events : we expect it to be an easy matter to fit Caesar's narrative to the terrain, and to determine the exact theatre of the campaigns and battles which he describes. Most of the modern topographical discussions of his campaigns are confident and precise. And yet our expectations have proved delusive. Archaeology alone has been genuinely successful in deciding topographical issues, as (it may be argued) at Gergovia and Alesia. Where archaeological evidence is not to hand, scarcely one of Caesar's battlefields has been determined in such a manner as to quell dispute.

It is time to stop considering topographical questions in isolation, and to adopt a new approach. Caesar painted his pictures firmly ; but how concerned was he to give accurate and precise detail ? He was writing for an audience at Rome. That audience had no more than the vaguest notion of the geography of Gaul, and that audience had no useful maps. 'Every day', Caesar's successes brought new names of races, tribes, locations to Roman ears<sup>(1)</sup> ; 'no writing, report, or rumour' had ever celebrated the regions which Caesar now conquered for Rome<sup>(2)</sup>. Who really knew anything of the Nervii, where their country lay, how far removed from Italy and Rome<sup>(3)</sup> ? Such an audience would find it extraordinarily difficult to grasp the complexities of terrain, or of fortification, or of

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(1) Cic., *Prov. Cons.*, 22.

(2) *Ib.*, 33 ; cf. his similar remark concerning Cilicia, *Att.*, 5. 20. 1.

(3) Cic., *Q. fr.*, 3. 6 (8). 2.

strategic manoeuvre; it would soon grow impatient with the effort. It would be very odd, if Caesar had not sought to ease their path. A flood of complexities might too easily obscure the important points of the narrative. Caesar would naturally suppress many of the details of terrain or of military movements, and present his audience with a *very simplified model*.

The first part of this paper will illustrate this point from three of Caesar's more routine battle-descriptions. The second will turn to the most difficult and controversial of all his topographical accounts, that of the war with Ariovistus.

#### CAESAR'S NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

We may begin with the battle of the Aisne, fought against the *Belgae* in 57 (*B.G.*, 2.1-11)<sup>(4)</sup>. After his arrival at the Belgic frontier, Caesar remained for some days in the territory of the *Remi*; he was probably based on *Durocortorum*, the main town of the *Remi*, for that period<sup>(5)</sup>. When news arrived that the *Belgae* were marching against him, he hurried to cross the Aisne, and encamped close to the river's right bank. *Quae res ... latus unum castrorum ripis fluminis muniebat* (2. 5. 5). Nearby there was a bridge over the Aisne, presumably the bridge by which Caesar had crossed. He defended this with a *praesidium* on the right bank and a camp of six cohorts, commanded by Titurius Sabinus, on the left. The approaching *Belgae* meanwhile attacked the *oppidum Bibrax*, some eight miles away from Caesar's main camp; but Caesar sent a light-armed detachment to its defence, and the town was saved. The *Belgae* then arrived before Caesar's main camp, and occupied a position less than two miles distant. Their camp was more than eight miles in width.

Caesar at first restricted his troops to cavalry skirmishes: *Vbi nostros non esse inferiores intellexit, loco pro castris ad aciem instruendam natura opportuno atque idoneo, quod is collis ubi castra posita erant paululum ex*

(4) The most important modern discussions are: NAPOLÉON III, *Hist de Jules César*, ii (1866), 85-94 and pl. 8; K. LEHMANN, *N. Jb.*, 7 (1901), 506-9, and *Klio*, 6 (1906), 237-48; C. JULLIAN, *Histoire de la Gaule*, iii (1909), 251, n. 5 and 253, n. 2; T. RICE HOLMES, *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul*, 2nd ed. (1911), 658-68, with full references to the earlier literature; J. N. HOUGH, *CJ*, 36 (1941), 337-45; G. STÉGEN, *LEC*, 19 (1951), 209-16, and *LEC*, 26 (1958), 240-2; R. SCHMITTEIN, *Avec César en Gaule*, i (1970), 298-304; Chr. PEYRE, *REL*, 56 (1978), 175-215.

(5) HOLMES, 660; cf. *B.G.*, 6. 44. *Durocortorum* seems to be the modern Reims: see HOLMES, 354, and JULLIAN, iii. 408.

*planitie editus tantum aduersus in latitudinem patebat quantum loci acies instructa occupare poterat, atque ex utraque parte lateris detectus habebat et in frontem leniter fastigatus paulatim ad planitiam redibat, ab utroque latere eius collis transuersam fossam obduxit circiter passuum quadringentorum, et ad extremas fossas castella constituit ibique tormenta collocauit ne, cum aciem instruxisset, hostes, quod tantum multitudine poterant, ab lateribus pugnantibus suos circumuenire possent* (2. 8. 2-4). Both sides then drew up the bulk of their forces in front of their camps: a marsh then separated the two armies. Still no pitched battle was fought, and, after an indecisive cavalry engagement, Caesar led his men back to their camp. The *Belgae* next found a ford and tried to cross the Aisne, hoping to attack the smaller Roman camp. Titurius informed Caesar of the danger, and Caesar vigorously attacked the enemy army, wreaking such slaughter that the entire enemy force decided to withdraw. Caesar pursued on the following day with devastating effect.

This battlefield ought to be identifiable: we could scarcely hope for more detailed information. It must be very close to the right bank of the Aisne (2. 5. 5); and, if Caesar started from Reims, the battlefield should not be far from there. It probably lies close to an ancient road, for the *Belgae* were marching on Caesar and would naturally have taken the easiest route<sup>(6)</sup>. We have perhaps the most explicit natural description in the *Commentaries* to help us locate Caesar's camp. Two miles further from the river there should be sufficient room for the Belgic position, eight miles wide. Between the two there should be a marsh, but there should also be ground firm enough to permit cavalry manoeuvres. There should be a ford close to the battlefield. Even if *Bibrax* cannot be securely identified<sup>(7)</sup>, we should surely have enough material to fix the site.

(6) Though it is not clear where the *Belgae* started from: perhaps La Fère or further north (HOLMES, 658-9), rather than Soissons (JULLIAN, iii. 251, n. 5).

(7) Perhaps Bièvres (LEHMANN, *Klio*, art. cit., 247-8), perhaps Vieux-Laon (NAPOLÉON, ii. 101, n. 1; HOLMES, 398-400; M. RAMBAUD, comm. on *B.G.*, ii-iii [Paris, 1965], 55). Beaurieux (JULLIAN, iii. 253, n. 2 and 254, n. 2) is not plausible: see HOLMES, *ib.*, WHEELER and RICHARDSON, *Hill Forts of Northern France* [1957], 13 and n. 2, followed by SCHMITTEIN, 299-300, identify *Bibrax* with Vieux-Reims, close to the modern Condé-sur-Suippe. This is hardly plausible in view of Caesar's *ex itinere* (2. 6. 1), suggesting strongly that *Bibrax* was close to the Belgic line of march, and surely excluding the possibility that the *Belgae* crossed the Aisne to attack *Bibrax*, then re-crossed to face Caesar. Once the *Belgae* had crossed the river, why should they not have moved instead on the unprotected lands of the *Remi*, about which Caesar was so anxious (2. 5. 5)?

But we do not. We can certainly narrow the possibilities to just two candidates, Berry-au-Bac (Mauchamp) and Chaudardes (see Figure 1)<sup>(8)</sup>. The main road from Reims to the north seems to have passed through Berry-au-Bac<sup>(9)</sup>, sufficiently close to both possible sites. Whether the site be fixed as Berry or Chaudardes, a very plausible ford can be found at Gernicourt<sup>(10)</sup>. Both locations have plausible marshes. Both can afford eight-mile tracts suitable for the Belgic camp. But both sites also have difficulties, and the merits of the two cases are still very evenly balanced.

(1) Napoléon thought that his excavations had constituted decisive proof for Berry-au-Bac: he discovered remains of a camp and two entrenchments (see Figure 1). But his discoveries do not really meet the demands of Caesar's description<sup>(11)</sup>. The Roman army was drawn up *pro castris* and faced the enemy: we naturally assume that the Romans stood between their camp (behind them) and the Belgic army (before them). Yet Napoléon's reconstruction implies that the entire *acies* stood to the left of the Roman camp<sup>(12)</sup>. Caesar certainly leads us to expect fortifications at both sides of the hill and the battle-line (*ab utroque latere eius collis*), and suggests that both flanks needed protection from attack (*ne ab lateribus – note the plural – pugnantes suos circumuenire possent*); Napoléon leaves the left quite denuded<sup>(13)</sup>. It is perhaps possible that a further earthwork

(8) See the judicious discussion of HOLMES, 659-66.

(9) Cf. LEHMANN, *N. Jb.*, art. cit., 507; HOLMES, 665, n. 5, 666-7, and *The Roman Republic*, ii (1923), 337.

(10) HOLMES, 667-8.

(11) Cf. esp. LEHMANN, *N. Jb.*, art. cit.; HOLMES, 660-4; STÉGEN, *LEC*, 19 (1951), 209-16 (on the implications of Caesar's language). HOUGH, *CJ*, 36 (1941), 337-45, and, more elaborately, PEYRE, *REL*, 56 (1978), 175-215, argue that Caesar's language can be reconciled with Napoléon's discoveries, but both are forced into strained and unconvincing interpretations of the Latin: see following notes. Rambaud therefore speculates that Napoléon's fortification may represent *hiberna* of 52-1 B.C., and prefers the Chaudardes site (Comm. on *B.G.*, ii-iii, 52-3). Napoléon's discoveries have recently been confirmed by aerial photographs (cf. e.g. PEYRE, 188-93 with Plates 4-5), but these do not prove that this was Caesar's camp in 57.

(12) Unless we assume that the Roman battle-line faced west, rather than north (JULLIAN, iii, 255, n. 1): this is not plausible (HOLMES, 661-2). If the main gate of the Roman camp faced S.W. rather than N.W., there is perhaps a certain sense in which the *acies* was drawn up *pro castris* (so Hough and Peyre). Yet no-one would have guessed from Caesar's account that the line was drawn up in this way, and (as HOUGH, 340, admits) Caesar has certainly written in a misleading and simplified way.

(13) Mr. Morgan reminds me that the curve of the Aisne would give some protection to the left, and suggests that fortification would have been unnecessary; cf. HOUGH, 343. But (1) any advance of the Roman army would leave the left unprotected, and extremely

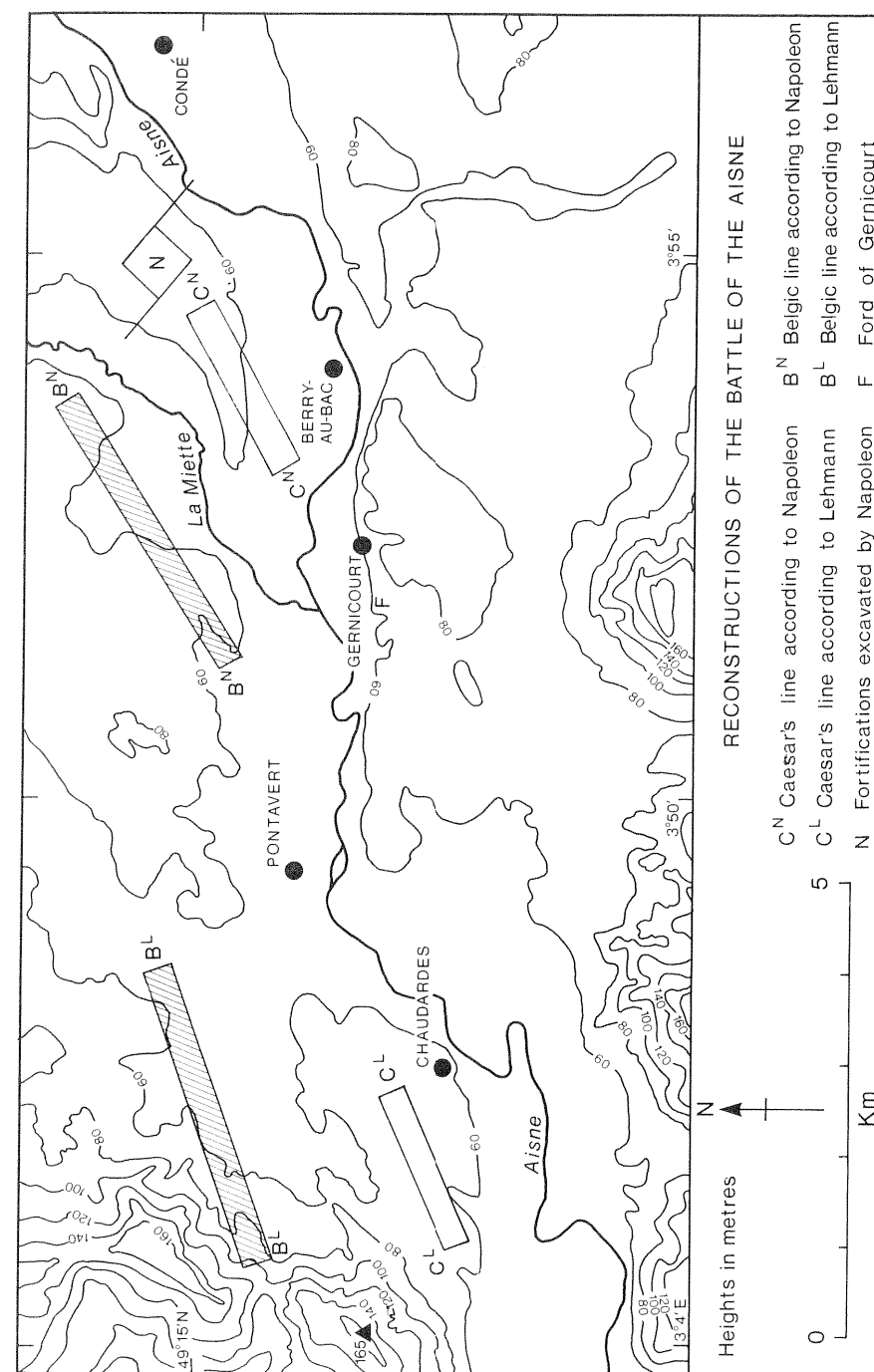


FIG. 1

remains undiscovered in the region of Gernicourt, at the west of the proposed line ; but Napoléon's fortifications are much too complex simply to be the right-wing construction (14). Nor does the nature of the terrain correspond to Caesar's description : *lateris deiectus* probably implies that the west and east of the hill are marked by fairly steep slopes. It has long been noticed that the western slope is much too gentle (15), and in fact the eastern slope is little better. The plateau itself seems rather too wide for Caesar's line of six legions. All this is hardly satisfactory.

(2) Chaudardes would be a more obvious site to fortify, and certainly has much to recommend it. Its descents to west and east are much steeper than the equivalents at Berry, and (*pace* Holmes) the plateau is almost exactly the right size to accommodate the line of six legions. That line should naturally occupy a little more than two kilometres (16); Chaudardes plateau is approximately 2.5 km wide. But it too has its disadvantages. The plain to the north is today heavily forested, and it is hard to believe that it was ever good cavalry country. Nor does Caesar's *in frontem leniter fastigatus paulatim ad planitiem redibat* accurately reflect the complexities of the terrain. The ground immediately north of the 'plateau' slopes noticeably upwards from east to west. At the east the plateau *frons* is rather too steep, while at the west it is in parts lower than the ground immediately to the north.

vulnerable to the overlapping Belgic right ; and (2) – the important point here – Caesar's language (*ab utroque latere, lateribus*) would anyway remain simplified and misleading. Most implausibly, Hough and Peyre take *ab utroque latere eius collis* to be the N.W. and S.E. sides of the hill : Hough adds that the *frons* would not be the 'front' which faced the enemy, but the S.W. side of the hill. If they were right, Caesar's account would again be extremely obscure and misleading : without knowledge of the country, none of his audience would have guessed that both these *latera* lay to the right of his *acies* (as Peyre insists), or that the *frons* did not face the enemy and the plain (so Hough). But in fact we surely take the *latitudo* of the hill facing the enemy (8. 2) to be the distance between the two *latera* ; if so, the *latera* can only be the 'sides' to the N.E. and S.W.

(14) Nor do the distances seem to correspond to Caesar's *passuum quadringentorum* (HOLMES, 663 ; PEYRE, 206). But Mr. Morgan, referring to CASSINI, *Nouvelle carte ... de la France* (1744), observes that the Aisne changed its course between then and 1866, when Napoléon wrote. Cf. also PEYRE, 192-3. This change may have obliterated the furthest extremity of the southern trench : *passuum quadringentorum* may thus be an accurate description.

(15) HOLMES, 662-3. The attempts of Hough and Peyre to refer the *deiectus* to the steeper N.W. and S.E. slopes are misconceived : cf. n. 13 above.

(16) HOLMES, 665-6 ; cf. J. STOFFEL, *Guerre civile* (1887), ii. 327-8. RAMBAUD, Comm. on *B.G.*, ii-iii, 59-60, seems to over-estimate.

It is impossible to decide between these two locations, but that is not our present concern. The important point is that, on either account, Caesar has given us a simplified model. If the battle was fought at Berry, he has disguised the position of his camp, and exaggerated the slope at the east and west ends ; he has misrepresented the nature of his dispositions, which must have left gaps between both flanks and the edges of the plateau ; and he has simplified the detail of his fortifications. If the battle was fought at Chaudardes, he has obscured the complexities of the *frons* and its relation to the adjacent terrain ; and there is something odd about the description of the cavalry fighting. There is nothing surprising or sinister in this. Caesar was simply trying to help his readers. Wherever the battle was fought, the true complexities would be extraordinarily difficult and distracting to explain. Caesar preferred to concentrate on the main points of the battle, and to simplify his natural description in a manner which would make these points easier to grasp.

The next example is the battle *ad Sabim*, fought later in 57, where Caesar defeated the *Neruii* (*B.G.*, 2. 16-28). Most discussions of this battle have started from the assumption that the *Sabis* should be the Sambre, but none of these reconstructions could give a plausible strategic pattern to the campaign (17). It now seems likely that the equation *Sabis* = *Sambre* is no more than a fourteenth-century conjecture, and possesses no authority (18).

It seems most likely that Caesar, after receiving the submission of the *Ambiani* (2. 15. 2), was marching along the road from Amiens through Cambrai to Bavay, the Nervian capital (19). The site should presumably be sought on or near this road. The choice lies between a position on the Escaut (near Cambrai) or a position on the Selle (near Saulzoir). The Escaut site would probably be the stronger point of defence (20). But it is

(17) Esp. JULLIAN, iii. 261, n. 2 ; HOLMES, 671-7 ; G. BOULMONT, *RBPh*, 3 (1924), 19-34 ; M. LIZIN, *LEC*, 22 (1954), 401-6 ; cf. the list of P. TURQUIN, *LEC*, 23 (1955), 115. SCHMITTEIN, *Avec César en Gaule*, i. 311-30, retains the Sambre identification (cf. *RIO*, 15 (1963), 133-49 and 161-8), but he is no more convincing than his predecessors.

(18) M. ARNOULD, *RBPh*, 20 (1941), 29-106, esp. 84-5, 91-5. The objections of SCHMITTEIN, *RIO*, 15 (1963), 142-49, are inconclusive. However, Arnould's further attempt to connect phonetically *Sabis* and *Selle* is less cogent : cf. SCHMITTEIN, art. cit., 138-42.

(19) Cf. SCHMITTEIN, art. cit., 134-6. For the line of this road, see A. LEDUQUE, *Esquisse de topographie historique sur l'Ambiane* (1972), 134-6 ; TURQUIN, *LEC*, 23 (1955), 138-9.

(20) Cf. M. FRAIKIN, *LEC*, 22 (1954), 287-90 ; R. VERDIÈRE, *RBPh*, 32 (1954), 302-3, and *RBPh*, 53 (1975), 52.

hard to find topographical details which answer at all plausibly to Caesar's description, and the Escaut identification would imply that Caesar here confused *Sabis* and *Scaldis* (21). The elaborate discussion of P. Turquin marks out a very plausible site in the environs of Saulzoir, and swings the balance of probability heavily in the Selle's favour (22). If so, Caesar's description of *latissimum flumen* and *altissimae ripae* would be hyperbolic (2. 27. 5); but that, perhaps, would be no surprise.

The main difficulty for both the Escaut and the Selle identifications is presented by 2. 16. 1: *cum per eorum finis triduum iter fecisset, inueniebat ex captiuis Sabim flumen ab castris suis non amplius milia passuum decem abesse*. As Schmittlein insists, *eorum* there should certainly = *Neruiorum* (23). The western boundary of the *Neruii* was probably not far west of Cambrai (24). This does not make any sense at all if *Sabis* refers to the Escaut: Caesar could barely have crossed the frontier before he received his information, and a 'three-day march' is quite ridiculous. Even Saulzoir is only 16 km from Cambrai. Turquin's site can hardly have been more than 36 km from the Nervian frontier, and it should follow that three days' march had taken the Roman army only twenty kilometres. It is true that they were marching through hostile territory, and that their progress was impeded by the Nervian barriers (2. 17. 4-5); but this still seems far too short a distance. It is more likely that Caesar is again giving a simplified version, as he seeks to keep his reader's mind on essentials. He had been marching for three days against the *Neruii*; that was what mattered. His audience would not know or care where the Nervian frontier lay (25). Caesar may not have known himself. He certainly did not want to introduce stray complications, and preferred to obscure the fact that a considerable part of that three-day march had been outside Nervian territory, before he reached the frontier. *Per eorum*

(21) Cf. *B.G.*, 6. 33. 3 (though that is itself confused) and the discussion of VERDIÈRE, *RBPh*, 53 (1975), 48-51.

(22) *LEC*, 23 (1955), 113-56.

(23) *Pace* TURQUIN, 125-6. Cf. SCHMITTLEIN, *RIO*, 15 (1963), 164-5; *Avec César en Gaule*, i. 313-5. Rambaud's discussion of the passage is unnecessarily non-committal (comm. on *B.G.*, ii-iii, 79-80).

(24) Cf. A. LEDUQUE, *Recherches topo-historiques sur l'Atrébatie* (1966), 31-3; G. FAIDER-FEYTMANS, *LEC*, 21 (1952), 338-58, at 347, 357-8. The diocesan evidence for the Nervian boundary is not entirely reliable, but this section of it seems firm enough: cf. J. DUNLAP, *CP*, 26 (1931), 321.

(25) Cf. *Cic. Q. fr.*, 3. 6(8). 2.

*finis* was a pardonable simplification, which would at the same time emphasise the dangers of the march. He had presumably started at Amiens, or perhaps a little to the east of that city (26).

The final example is Caesar's battle against the *Vsipedes* and *Tencteri*. Much of the discussion must be concerned with the manuscript text of *B.G.*, 4. 15. 2: the defeated Germans fled *ad confluentem Mosae et Rheni*. Can those words mean what they say? Or must we assume that Caesar wrote (or at least should have written) *Mosellae*? If the text can be defended, the battlefield will presumably be near to Kleve or Goch (27) – though the featureless nature of the country and the variations in the course of the Meuse exclude any great precision. If Caesar means the Moselle, the battle will have to be transferred to the vicinity of Koblenz (28).

This is no place for a full discussion. The point is that, on either account, Caesar has left a very great amount unsaid. The last topographical indication of the German position was 4. 6. 4: *Germani latius uagabantur et in finis Eburonum et Condrusorum ... peruenerant*. Even that is not very clear: it is uncertain whether Caesar is there referring to the whole German army, or simply to a few wandering detachments. But it is anyway a great surprise for us to find ourselves near either Koblenz or Kleve. If the battle was near Koblenz, Caesar has left it quite obscure why the Germans chose to go there. Their detachment among the *Ambiuariti* (4. 9. 3) will find it difficult to rejoin them; and the natural strategy would surely be to retreat northwards, drawing Caesar as far as possible away from his reliable allies, lengthening his lines of communication. If it was the main force of the Germans which had reached the *Eburones* and *Condrusi*, we should expect them to retreat; if the main force was still near Kleve, we should expect them to stay there. Instead, we are asked to

(26) TURQUIN, 125-6 makes Caesar start from Amiens itself, which would certainly be the natural place to receive the submission of the *Ambiani*. But, if the Selle identification is right, this would imply a march of 76 km in three days, with the last day's route leading through hostile terrain. We should not underestimate Caesar's *celeritas*, but, even leaving the Nervian obstacles out of account, 76 km seems too much. See works cited at n. 36 below. If the Escaut identification is preferred, Amiens would be a more plausible starting-point.

(27) So NAPOLÉON, ii. 138-9; cf. esp. A. T. WALKER, *CJ*, 17 (1921-2), 77-86; R. DION, *REL*, 41 (1963), 186-209, who at 194, n. 1 has some good remarks about Caesar's technique; A. GRISART, *LEC*, 28 (1960), 169-70, n. 87.

(28) So e.g. Cluver, Long, von Göler, Holmes.

assume that they struck off south-eastwards, deep into the country of the *Treueri*. If they did, it is eloquent that Caesar did not think it worth explaining – or even mentioning.

But, of course, there are severe difficulties in the way of defending the manuscript text. The notion of a 'confluence of the Meuse and the Rhine' may itself be something of a nonsense, for 4. 10. 1 seems to make it clear that the stream of the Rhine which met the Meuse was called the *Vacalus* (i.e. the Waal)<sup>(29)</sup>. We might also be concerned by Caesar's silence about the German retreat from the *Eburones* and *Condrusi*; or by the fact that he tells us nothing of a long Roman march up the Rhine to make their bridge, which seems to have been near Andernach; or by the uncomfortably large distance of the return journey to the *Vbii*, which the German envoys promise to cover in just three days (4. 11. 2-3)<sup>(30)</sup>. These problems are just as real as those which face the Moselle identification, but in both cases the problems are of the same kind<sup>(31)</sup>. They rest on Caesar's silence; they rest on topographical difficulties which we, with the aid of autopsy and detailed maps, can expose. That is surely the wrong approach. Caesar's immediate audience would find no difficulty in these silences. They would not know where the *Eburones* and the *Condrusi* were to be found; they would not know how far it was to the *Vbii*; they would not be able to tell exactly where Caesar built his bridge. Caesar could again safely simplify his account, and omit marches and movements which would complicate his narrative and confuse the reader. Whichever location we choose, it is clear that this is what he has done.

(29) Caution is here necessary. The paradosis seems to be *Mosa profluit ex monte Vosego, qui est in finibus Lingonum, et parte quadam ex Rheno recepta, quae appellatur Vacalus insulamque efficit Batavorum, in Oceanum influit, neque longius ab Oceano milibus passuum LXXX in Rhenum influit*. This is evidently corrupt. The traditional healing is the deletion of *-que* after *insulam*, and of *in Oceanum influit*. But T. BERRES, *Hermes*, 98 (1970), 154-63, argues that Caesar wrote *Mosa ... Lingonum, neque longius ab Oceano milibus passuum LXXX in Rhenum influit*, and that the alternative conception and formulation *et parte quadam ... in Oceanum influit* is owed to an early recension, not to Caesar himself. Cf. RAMBAUD, *ad loc.* Berres' argument is not cogent in detail (cf. e.g. n. 31, below), but this is not the place for a full discussion.

(30) See the detailed discussion of HOLMES, 691-706, esp. 698-702. GRISART, *l.c.*, rates these silences as decisive in favour of the Moselle.

(31) Except for the surprise of Caesar's calling the Waal the *Rhenus*. That is a looseness, but no more: it is clear from the paradosis of 4. 10. 1 itself that the Waal was envisaged as a part, or a continuation, of the Rhine. Cf. TAC., *Ann.*, 2. 6. 4, *uerso cognomine Vahalem accolae dicunt*, with Furneaux's note. BERRES, *art. cit.*, exaggerates the difficulties presented by Caesar's formulation.

The choice must be made on other grounds. All Caesar's narrative has suggested a site close to the Meuse. The introduction of the river's name (4. 9. 3) is immediately explained at 4. 10. 1. That explanation has its obscurities and its inaccuracies, but, given Caesar's penchant for geographical vagueness and simplification, it need not follow that it is seriously corrupt. 4. 10. 1-5 has directed our attention to the Meuse and the Rhine. If *Mosellae* is read at 4. 15. 2, the sudden transfer of the reader to the area of the Moselle, with the unheralded and unexplained introduction of so important a river, would be as artistically inelegant as it is strategically obscure. The inelegance is the more important point, for it is a roughness which Caesar's audience would have noticed in his narrative, and therefore a roughness which he would have taken pains to avoid. He would not have made so much of the Meuse, or he would at least have introduced a similar excursus on the Moselle itself. It seems likely that the manuscript reading at 4. 15. 2 must stand, and Caesar's silences must simply be accepted. It would follow that the battle was fought near Goch or Kleve.

The moral of all this is clear enough. As we turn to Ariovistus, examining the topography of a new campaign and a new battle, we must be prepared to find a far more complex and irregular terrain than Caesar's language would imply. We must not always expect an explanation of difficulties which are only discernible to those who know the country, or who can consult a detailed map. We may expect Caesar to have sketched the main lines, but no more, of the strategic background or of the course of the battle. We are entitled to look for a theatre which fits those main lines – but we may never be sure that Caesar has told us the whole story, and we must be particularly chary of resting any argument on Caesar's silences. It is evident that the investigation will be a difficult and delicate one, and that many questions may only be decided with a greater or smaller degree of probability.

#### CAESAR AND ARIOVISTUS

##### (a) *The narrative.*

These features of Caesar's technique evidently complicate topographical inquiry, and many cases will be quite hopeless. But, within limits, progress may still be made. The Ariovistus campaign has provoked more

discussion and less agreement than any other<sup>(32)</sup>; but even here the possibilities may at least be narrowed.

Immediately after the army's panic at *Vesontio*, Caesar set out to march against Ariovistus: *et itinere exquisito per Diuiciacum, quod ex aliis ei maximam fidem habebat, ut milium amplius quinquaginta circuitu locis apertis exercitum duceret, de quarta uigilia, ut dixerat, profectus est. septimo die, cum iter non intermitteret, ab exploratoribus certior factus est Ariouisti copias a nostris milibus passuum quattuor et uiginti abesse* (1. 41. 4-5). Ariovistus then invited Caesar to parley, and this meeting was held at a place where *planities erat magna et in ea tumulus terrenus satis grandis* (1. 43. 1). No agreement was reached. A few days later Ariovistus treacherously arrested two envoys of Caesar (1. 47), and *eodem die castra promouit et milibus passuum sex a Caesaris castris sub monte consedit* (1. 48. 1). There is good reason to think that Caesar, too, had by now moved closer to Ariovistus<sup>(33)</sup>.

*Postridie eius diei* (Ariovistus) *praeter castra Caesaris suas copias traduxit et milibus passuum duobus ultra eum castra fecit, eo consilio uti frumento commeatuque qui ex Sequanis et Aeduis supportaretur Caesarem intercluderet* (1. 48. 2). For the following five days Caesar offered battle, but Ariovistus declined, restricting himself to cavalry skirmishes. *Vbi eum castris se tenere Caesar intellexit, ne diutius commeatu prohiberetur, ultra eum locum, quo in loco Germani consederant, circiter passus sescentos ab his, castris idoneum locum delegit acieque triplici instructa ad eum locum uenit* (1. 49. 1). Ariovistus attacked, but the camp was successfully fortified. Caesar left two legions

(32) The modern bibliography is vast. The most important items are: STOFFEL, *Guerre de César et d'Arioviste* (1890); F. STOLLE, *Wo schlug Cäsar den Ariovist?* (1899); JULLIAN, iii. 221-41, esp. 231, n. 4; HOLMES, 57-68 and 636-57; A. BAZOUIN, *REL*, 14 (1936), 28-9, with a necessary correction by A. DAIN, *REL*, 15 (1937), 269-72; F. MILTNER, *Klio*, 34 (1941), 181-95; Ch. JORDAN, *Arioviste et les Germains chassés d'Alsace en 58 av. J.-C.* (1951); R. SCHMITTEIN, *La première campagne de César contre les Germains* (1956), with extensive bibliography but omitting Miltner's important article; J. H. COLLINS' review of Schmittlein, *Gnomon*, 30 (1958), 300-305; J.-J. HATT, *REL*, 49 (1971), 20-1; J. D. MORGAN, *Caesar's defeat of Ariovistus*, to appear.

(33) It is hard to believe that there would be time in one day for Caesar's legates to ride twenty-four miles to Ariovistus' camp; for Ariovistus ostentatiously to arrest them; for the Germans to break camp; for the full body of their force (apparently including women and children, 1. 50. 4-5, 51. 3, 53. 4) to march eighteen miles; and for them finally to pitch a new camp. Shorter distances must be involved, and it is easiest to assume that Caesar had moved nearer the enemy. Cf. esp. MILTNER, art. cit., 189-92.

there with some of the auxiliaries; the other four legions returned to the larger camp. On the following day Caesar tried again to provoke a battle, but did not succeed. He returned to camp around noon. Ariovistus then attacked the smaller camp with vigour, and fighting continued until evening.

The next day saw the decisive battle. Caesar drew up all his *alarii* in front of the smaller camp, *quod minus multitudine militum legionariorum pro hostium numero ualebat, ut ad speciem alariis uteretur* (1. 51. 1). He himself, *triplici instructa acie*, advanced to the enemy camp. This time the Germans were compelled to accept the challenge. Caesar himself *a dextro cornu, quod eam partem minime firmam hostium esse animaduverterat, proelium commisit* (1. 52. 2); in the sequel, *cum hostium acies a sinistro cornu pulsa atque in fugam conuersa esset, a dextro cornu uehementer multitudine suorum nostram aciem premebant* (1. 52. 6). These two items seem to give a coherent picture. *Dextro cornu* in 52. 2 seems clearly to refer to the Roman right, while *sinistro* and *dextro* in 52. 6 should naturally describe events from the German viewpoint. If so, the battle followed a characteristic pattern, and both right wings succeeded in forcing their enemy to retreat.

Roman cavalry reinforcements led by P. Crassus saved the day, and the Germans were driven into flight. The distance of their flight is important and problematic. The manuscripts of the *B.G.* give five miles: *atque omnes hostes terga conuerterant neque prius fugere destiterunt quam ad flumen Rhenum milia passuum ex eo loco circiter quinque peruenerunt* (1. 53. 1). But Plutarch (*Caes.*, 19. 11) and Orosius (6. 7. 10) both give figures which indicate a distance of fifty miles for this flight to the Rhine (*σταδίους τετρακοσίους* and *quinquaginta milia*). Both writers ultimately derive much of their material from Caesar's account<sup>(34)</sup>. It is a natural possibility that they here reflect an early reading *quinquaginta* in Caesar's text. Equally, it is possible that the figure of fifty represents an error made by an intermediate source (perhaps Pollio), and inherited by Plutarch and Orosius; or the two later authors may even have suffered an identical easy corruption<sup>(35)</sup>. Either 'five' or 'fifty' should remain possibilities, and only the identification of the battlefield itself can decide between the two.

(34) Plutarch probably found Caesar's account transmitted in Pollio: cf. my article in *JHS*, 99 (1979), 74-96, esp. 84-91 with nn. 77, 108. Orosius presumably derives from Livy, who himself based parts of his account on Pollio: cf. art. cit., nn. 73, 124.

(35) Thus Bryan conjectured *τεσσαράκοντα* in Plutarch's text.

Caesar thus gives only two place-names, Besançon at the beginning and the Rhine at the end. It is not surprising that a multitude of sites have been suggested. Figure 2 shows the five most favoured candidates: (1) a site just south of Ribeauvillé (Stoffel, with many followers); (2) a site some fifteen kilometres east of this, near Ohnenheim (Jordan); (3) a series of sites around Cernay (many scholars since Napoléon III, especially Jullian, Hatt: the most plausible reconstruction is that of Jullian); (4) a site between Mulhouse and Basel (Bazouin, Miltner, Morgan); (5) a site in the environs of Belfort, as suggested by Napoléon I and elaborately argued by Schmittlein.

(b) *The indications of the site.*

The evidence is very tenuous, and it may be helpful to list the principal pointers to the battle's location.

(1) The time taken to march from *Vesontio*: on the seventh day of his march, Caesar was twenty-four miles from Ariovistus' first camp. When pressed, an army could doubtless move at 15 miles a day or more; but the most likely average figure for a day's march is perhaps 10-13 Roman miles<sup>(36)</sup>. Caesar's speed on this occasion was probably close to the average. He was marching cautiously: he did not know of Ariovistus' precise location until the news arrived on the seventh day<sup>(37)</sup>, and he was sufficiently apprehensive of ambush to follow his *circuitus* rather than the direct route. But, equally, he would not want to dawdle. He did not grant his troops their customary rest-day (*cum iter non intermitteret*), doubtless hoping to reach open country as soon as possible<sup>(38)</sup>. We might expect him to cover something like sixty to eighty miles on the first six days; the length of the seventh march is unknown.

(2) The general probabilities of the line of march. It seems likely that Ariovistus is starting from Upper Alsace; Caesar is setting out from

(36) This is no place for a full discussion of this complicated problem. SCHMITTEIN, *La première campagne*, 105-24, overstates the case for a short daily march of less than 20 km (cf. esp. RAMBAUD, *REL.* 35 [1957], 400, and *REL.* 50 [1972], 58); but some of his arguments are difficult to dismiss. Cf. STOLLE, art. cit., 27-40.

(37) This is the natural inference from 1. 41. 5. Note that Caesar had earlier feared that Ariovistus might reach *Vesontio* before the Romans (1. 38). As he eventually marched over fifty miles beyond *Vesontio* before establishing Ariovistus' position, it is clear that his intelligence of the German movements was limited.

(38) I owe this point to Mr. Morgan. Roman troops were normally rested every fifth day.

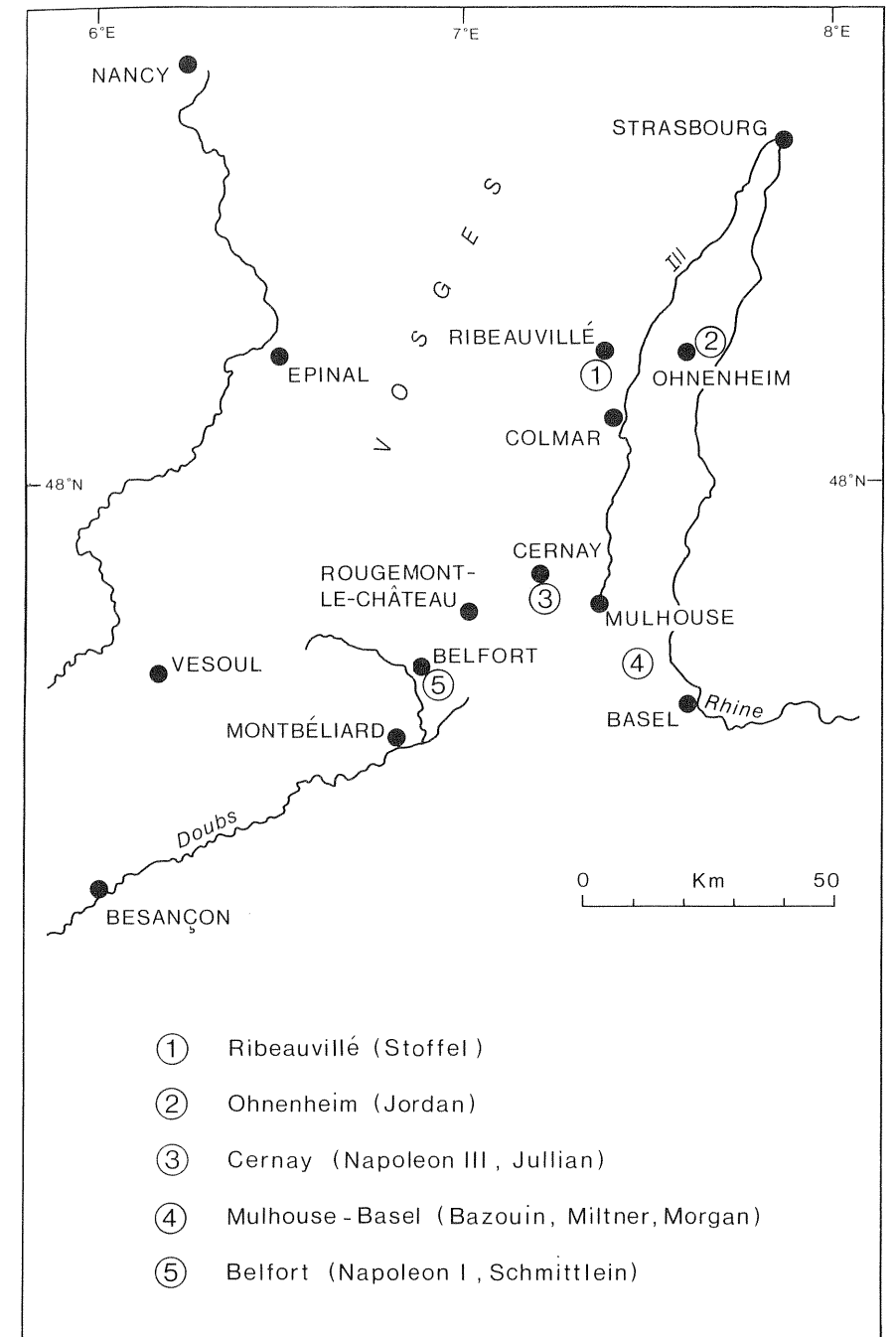


FIG. 2. - Suggested sites

*Vesontio*. This *prima facie* makes a site as far north as Ribeauvillé, or as far south-east as Mulhouse-Basel, hard to explain<sup>(39)</sup>. Of course, here we must be careful. Any number of strategic considerations may have intervened to draw the armies away from their natural route, and we cannot be sure that Caesar would have told us about them. But this remains a factor which favours Cernay or Belfort, both of which would be natural positions for Ariovistus to reach and occupy.

(3) *Sub monte* at 1. 48. 1. There must be at least one mountain or hill in the region, and this should overlook the site of Ariovistus' second camp.

(4) Ariovistus' manoeuvre of 1. 48. 2. This is rather odd: Caesar allows the German horde to march past his flank and cut his communications. Caesar of course had *exploratores*, who had been active a few days earlier (1. 41. 5), and he surely knew that Ariovistus had been on the move the day before. He must have been unusually negligent to allow this manoeuvre to succeed unmolested – unless the Germans were in some way protected by the lie of the land<sup>(40)</sup>. Again, not a decisive point. There may have been more to this march than Caesar's language would suggest; Caesar may even have been negligent; or he may simply have suppressed mention of an unsuccessful cavalry engagement. But it would be reassuring to find a site which provided a natural explanation.

(5) *Quinque* or *quingenta*. This is the most specific indication, and discussion must start from here. At first sight *nec prius fugere destiterunt* seems to favour *quinque* in Caesar's text: it is hardly possible that the exhausted Germans could literally have fled without respite for fifty miles. But is it not equally unlikely that Caesar would adopt so emphatic a tone, if the Rhine were a mere five miles distant<sup>(41)</sup>? *Fuga* need not have all the breathless and hectic connotations of the English 'flight' or the German 'Flucht'; *fuga* can be a fairly measured and prolonged affair<sup>(42)</sup>. Caesar quite possibly means that the Germans made no attempt to regroup, and did not stop for any length of time, before reaching the Rhine. The 'flight' does not in fact seem to have been too hectic: the Germans have time to look for boats (1. 53. 2-3), and it is likely that the cavalry pursuit was somewhat delayed (1. 53. 3, cf. perhaps Frontin. *Strat.*, 2. 1. 16). The

(39) Cf. with regard to Ribeauvillé, WALKER, *CJ*, 1 (1905-6), 213-20.

(40) This point is well made by STOFFEL, 94.

(41) Cf. STOLLE, art. cit., 10-11. Particularly after the massive Helvetian flight of 1. 26. 5, five miles does seem too small a distance to be remarked.

(42) E.g. *B.G.*, 1. 27. 4; *B.C.*, 3. 94. 4, with my article in *Hist.*, 22 (1973), 259, n. 67.

picture of 'the Germans diving into the Rhine like lemmings'<sup>(43)</sup> should anyway be abandoned. It may be that this flight was similar to that of the *Heluetii* (1. 26. 5), who fled day and night for four days, covering over 50 miles. *Quingenta* at 1. 53. 1 should certainly remain a possibility.

Whether 'five' or 'fifty', we should not be too confident of its accuracy. Caesar would not have known the exact distance: he would hardly instruct his legionaries to count their paces as they pursued, and the cavalry would have little idea of how far they had ridden. The figure is likely to be impressionistic guesswork, probably too low rather than too high: Caesar had no interest in minimising this *fuga*. Brackets of 3. 5-5. 5 miles, or 35-55 miles, might be realistic. Nor should we assume that the Germans withdrew in a single body; nor that they all took the most direct route to the Rhine.

Discussion should be based on these five points. But, before proceeding further, we should dismiss some other factors which do *not* provide reliable indications.

(1) In his elaborate argument for Belfort, Schmittlein rested much of his case on *miliam amplius quingenta circuitu* (1. 41. 4). Following Stolle, he thought that this 'detour of more than fifty miles' should represent the whole length of Caesar's march<sup>(44)</sup>. Caesar certainly does not mean this. The clause *ut ... duceret* defines and explains *itinere exquisito*: it specifies the length of detour which Diviciacus' informants recommended to Caesar when he was still at *Vesontio*<sup>(45)</sup>. A detour through open country was needed to avoid the dangerous road mentioned at 1. 39. 6, and Caesar duly informed himself of this alternative route. But he certainly would not envisage halting as soon as this detour was complete. He would stop when he received news that Ariovistus was close at hand, and this news eventually arrived on the seventh day. He could not know how far he would march *while he was still at Vesontio*, and could merely concern himself with avoiding the difficult early part of the route. Diviciacus' recommendations provide no pointer to the total distance which Caesar eventually marched, and Caesar's language leaves

(43) The phrase of COLLINS, art. cit., 305.

(44) *La première campagne*, 143-8, cf. 105-24; STOLLE, art. cit., 3-10.

(45) *Itinere exquisito per Diviciacum* suggests that Diviciacus did not know the route himself, but was asked to make inquiries on Caesar's behalf. *Pace* STOLLE, art. cit., 6-7, there is no difficulty there.

it quite possible that, once the detour was complete, his troops marched on a considerable way.

The distance by the direct route from *Vesontio* to Belfort is about 57 Roman miles ; to Montbéliard, about 54. This *circuitus* would naturally add to that figure, but, as the reconstruction of Caesar's route can only be guesswork, the distance from *Vesontio* to either Belfort or Montbéliard by this route cannot be known.

(2) Another favourite argument has rested on the *planities magna* of l. 43. 1 : most have thought that this should be the plain of Alsace, in one sense the only 'great plain' of the region. This need not follow. '“Gross” ist ein sehr dehnbarer Begriff' (Stolle), and takes its colouring from its context. A plain such as that proposed by Schmittlein, on the site of the present Belfort-Chaux airport, would certainly be possible : in the foothills of the Vosges, *any* plain large enough to accommodate two cavalry forces and leave room for a gap of 400 paces (l. 43. 2-3) could be described as *magna* (46).

(3) Many searchers have started from the *tumulus terrenus* of l. 43. 1, and assumed that this should still be visible. The oddity of the phrase was noticed by Holmes (47) : why should Caesar bother to specify *terrenus* ? Holmes suggested that this might be an earthen barrow or mound, an artificial construction which might easily have now disappeared. This is surely possible, though equally Caesar may be contrasting this *tumulus* with nearby rocky eminences (cf. Livy, 38. 20. 4). Most of the suggested sites can in fact provide a *tumulus*, but we cannot demand this as a *sine qua non*.

(c) *The theories.*

We should start from *quinque* and *quingenta*. The site may be either five or fifty miles from the Rhine, and we should certainly allow a margin for erratic guesswork. Yet the traditional favourites, Ribeauvillé and

(46) Cf. STOLLE, art. cit., 12-14 ; F. KROON, *Mnem.*, 3. 5 (1937), 143 ; SCHMITTLEIN, *La première campagne*, 150-1 ; COLLINS, art. cit., 301-2. Mr. Morgan objects that at *B.G.*, 3. 1. 5, *non magna planitie* is used of a nearby plain which extends for several square miles, and is larger than Schmittlein's site. At that point of his narrative, Caesar is preparing the scene for the assault on Galba's camp : when he is thinking of vulnerability to such an attack, a plain of this size might well seem cramped. It need not follow that Caesar would apply the same standards when describing a plain chosen for a *conference*.

(47) HOLMES, 639-40.

Cernay, are well outside these margins, and wilfully ignore the only numbers we have : both sites are about fifteen miles from the Rhine (48). This in itself is enough to exclude them. And, in both cases, the river Ill presents a second problem. Both sites are west of the Ill, and the fugitives would have to negotiate that considerable river before reaching the Rhine. It would be the Ill which occasioned the greater slaughter, the Ill which, once crossed, gave the Germans safety and respite. The only solution is to suppose that Caesar described the Ill as the *Rhenus* : a very unlikely 'simplification'.

Both Ribeauvillé and Cernay have further difficulties of their own :

(1) Ribeauvillé is a long way north. It is hard to see why the armies should have gone there in the first place, and even harder to believe that Caesar could march so far in seven days. Stoffel's site is 189 km (over 120 Roman miles) from Besançon ; we earlier gave limits of sixty to eighty miles for the first six days, then the seventh day's march. Moreover, Stoffel's reconstruction makes little strategic sense. He makes Caesar encamp on the left bank of the Fecht, between Ostheim and Gemar ; Ariovistus' flank march is conducted along the heights of Zellenberg. Caesar, we must remember, was the first to encamp. Stoffel leaves it hard to understand why he should thus occupy the featureless territory towards the Ill, allowing Ariovistus to pitch camp in the foothills of the Vosges. Caesar stood in fear of Ariovistus' cavalry : it would be much more sensible, and characteristic, for Caesar himself to occupy a camp in the foothills.

(2) There is little to recommend Cernay. The arguments in its favour are largely *a priori*, for it was a junction of major roads. It is difficult to formulate a reconstruction which explains Ariovistus' unimpeded flank march : indeed, the only attempt which squarely faces this problem is that of Jullian. He places Caesar's *castra maiora* some two kilometres south-west of Cernay, and thinks that Ariovistus marched along the foothills of the Vosges from Cernay to Thann. Autopsy suggests that this is not possible. The hillocks rise sharply and steeply from the plain to form individual mounds, giving no continuous ridge. The individual hillocks would be difficult enough to negotiate, and such a march would be physically impossible. Ariovistus could not have attempted to climb these

(48) Hence HOLMES, 657, proposed *quindecim milia* at l. 53. 1 ; justly stigmatised by MILTNER, art. cit., 183, n. 1, as 'jeder methodischen Grundlage entbehrende Willkür'. In his edition of 1914, Holmes more cautiously read *quingenta*.

hills ; he would have no choice but to conduct his march along the plain at their foot. But then nothing is explained, for his army is as exposed as ever. More recently, Hatt has claimed that archaeological evidence indicates a site slightly further east : Caesar's *castra maiora* should be just west of Wittelsheim, and Ariovistus' flank march should have led him to a camp 3 km south-west of this. Caesar's *castra minora* are placed between Aspach-le-Haut and Aspach-le-Bas<sup>(49)</sup>. A fuller presentation of this evidence may make a reconsideration necessary, but, as reported, the finds do not make the solution attractive. They seem to be quite undated. The resulting reconstruction is unsatisfactory in detail, for it leaves the German flank march exposed, and gives an implausible strategic importance to the *castra minora* in the battle itself.

The choice lies between *quinque* and *quingenta* at 1. 53. 1. If we accept *quinque*, we must place the battle in the plain between the Ill and the Rhine. There is not much to be said for putting it as far north as Ohnenheim (Jordan). That makes Caesar march a very long way north ; and it is hard to find a plausible *mons* for Ariovistus' second camp. (If Caesar means one of the Vosges hills, it is difficult to understand how Ariovistus' flank march could have been allowed to cross the Ill). And, once again, Caesar would be unwise to assume such an exposed position in the plain ; he would much more naturally keep to the safer hills.

These arguments may be generalised, for there are no plausible *montes* between the Rhine and the Ill north of Mulhouse. The *quinque* figure would thus lead irresistibly to the suggestions of Miltner, and, with a different orientation, Bazouin and Morgan, preferring sites between Mulhouse and Basel<sup>(50)</sup>. But here, too, there are difficulties. The region is fairly flat, and the German flank march would probably be exposed ; and it is still hard to find a *mons* which convinces<sup>(51)</sup>. The region is good for

(49) Résumé in *REL*, 49 (1971), 20-1.

(50) Bazouin places Caesar's camp in the reign of Rantzwiller and Magstatt, and Ariovistus to the north of this (first in the forest of Harth, then at the foot of the 'Signal d'Illfurt'). Miltner places Caesar's first camp close to Habsheim, and Ariovistus south of this ; the first German camp is placed in the region of Basel, and their flank march on the heights west of Habsheim. Morgan puts the Roman *castra maiora* on the Hittenberg, 1 km west of Hésingue, and the *castra minora* between Attenschwiller and Follensbourg ; the German camp is located at Attenschwiller. (Morgan's reconstruction is the most plausible and closely argued, with good criticisms of his two predecessors).

(51) The Signal d'Illfurt does not really 'dominate the area', as Bazouin claimed. Morgan places the *castra sub monte* at Sierentz, but here too there is no very plausible *mons*.

cavalry, and Caesar would be unwise to allow himself to be drawn to it. And the greatest problem is clearly seen by Miltner and Morgan themselves, as they try to explain how the armies came to be so far to the south-east. (a) Miltner thinks that Ariovistus was anxious to link with the *Heluetii*, now returned to their native land after their abortive migration : that is why Miltner places the Germans to the south of Caesar. This does not ring true. The *Heluetii* must now have been extraordinarily weakened, and their relations with Ariovistus had never been good<sup>(52)</sup>. It is not credible that he should think their help more reliable, or potentially more valuable, than the Suebian reinforcements to the north (1. 37. 3). (b) Miltner also recognises the importance of those *Suebi*, and suggests that Caesar had an interest in drawing Ariovistus away from them to the south<sup>(53)</sup>. This is more plausible ; but it still hard to see why Ariovistus should allow himself to be drawn. He would have done better to adopt the waiting game which had been so successful at *Magetobriga*<sup>(54)</sup>, remaining in Upper Alsace and giving the *Suebi* a chance to join him. That would leave two options, either to wait for the *Suebi*, or to strike at Caesar's elongated and exposed communications. (c) Finally, Morgan points to the advantages to Caesar of avoiding the plain of Alsace, since he feared the German cavalry ; and he suggests that Caesar may have wished to keep the option of retreating southward to the *Rauraci* or *Heluetii*, both of whom he had just subdued. But the Roman lines of communication led not to the *Rauraci* or the *Heluetii*, but to the *Aedui*, the *Sequani*, and perhaps the *Leuci* and *Lingones*<sup>(55)</sup>. Those would be the lines Caesar would wish to protect ; those lands, not those of his recent enemies, would be his favoured directions of retreat. The Mulhouse-Basel location must leave these lines very vulnerable, especially if Caesar did not know the exact position of the Germans as he marched.

All these arguments are of course dangerous. Generals do not always read events correctly ; and the preliminary manoeuvres may anyway have

(52) Cf. 1. 1. 4, 1. 40. 7.

(53) MILTNER, art. cit., 186-7. This is hard to reconcile with his own thesis, placing Ariovistus south of Caesar in an unexplained manner ; but it might provide a strategic explanation of the reverse reconstructions of Bazouin and Morgan.

(54) Cf. 1. 40. 8-9, 1. 44. 3.

(55) Cf. 1. 48. 2 (*Aedui* and *Sequani*), 1. 40. 11 (*Leuci* and *Lingones*). By *Sequani* we should of course understand that part of their country which they had retained from the encroachments of Ariovistus. Cf. HOLMES, 652, n. 1.

been more complex than Caesar's words would suggest, and there may have been other factors to draw the armies to the south-east. If this solution is correct, we should have to assume that the narrative was very bare and simplified, and that vital features of the campaign were unexplained; but, by now, that would be no surprise. The Mulhouse-Basel location remains improbable: credible topographical details are hard to find, and it is difficult even to conjecture a plausible strategic background. But, given the characteristics of Caesar's narrative technique, this solution is not quite impossible.

Still, the difficulties of this reconstruction strengthen the case for *quinquaginta* at l. 53. 1. That leads naturally to the solution of Schmittlein, a site in the neighbourhood of Belfort. That is the natural place for Ariovistus, coming from upper Alsace, and Caesar, coming from *Vesontio*, to meet; and the land to the north is far too mountainous to admit any alternative sites fifty miles from the Rhine. Schmittlein places Caesar's first camp near Montbéliard, and assumes that he moved nearer Ariovistus in the course of the negotiations. The first German camp will be near Rougemont-Lauw, the second close to Vescemont. For the final positions, see Figure 3: he places the main Roman camp on the heights of Cravanche, which have a commanding view northwards (the direction from which Ariovistus would approach); the final German camp is located on le Vallon and la Miotte; and he suggests Les Barres for Caesar's second camp, south-east of the first camp and south-west of Ariovistus.

It is not hard to find difficulties in this account. Belfort is not even fifty miles from the Rhine; the distance is about thirty-five miles. We should have to assume that the Germans took an indirect route, some perhaps fleeing north-east rather than east; or that Caesar allowed himself a generous rounding; or that he simply guessed too high. None of these assumptions is impossible, but the distance is still uncomfortably near to the lower limit which we earlier allowed. Again, some critics have thought the distance from *Vesontio* intolerably small – about fifty-four miles by the direct route from *Vesontio* to Montbéliard, where Schmittlein puts Caesar's first camp<sup>(56)</sup>. But here Schmittlein can be defended. Our

(56) The criticism is made by COLLINS, art. cit., 304-5, and esp. by RAMBAUD (reviews cited in n. 36); so also MORGAN, in his paper to appear. Schmittlein's own defence, assuming that the Romans marched a *total* of fifty miles, is not satisfactory: above, p. 757-758.

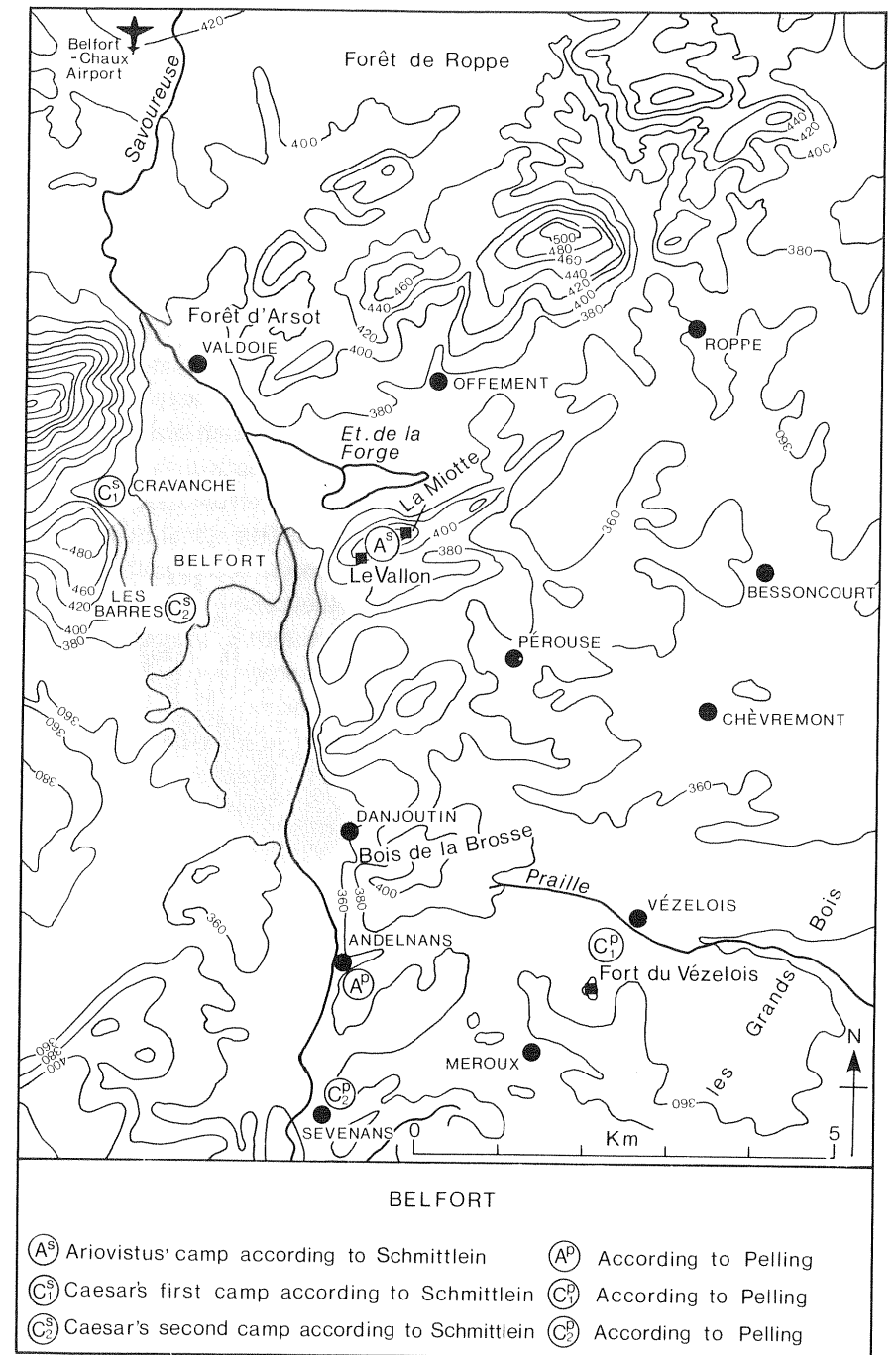


Fig. 3

estimate for Caesar's march gave sixty to eighty miles during the first six days, then an unknown amount on the seventh<sup>(57)</sup>. We cannot know what route Caesar took<sup>(58)</sup>; but it certainly involved the long *circuitus*, and might well be considerably longer than the direct road. Our estimate fits the Montbéliard identification well enough.

Graver difficulties are presented by Schmittlein's detailed suggestions. The final German camp should cut Caesar's communications (1. 48. 2). These communications stretched south-west, west, and perhaps north, to *Vesontio*, to the *Sequani* and *Aedui*, and perhaps to the *Leuci* and *Lingones*. A German camp on la Miotte does little to impede these. The Rougemont-Lauw and Vescemont identifications are no more than guesses. And the worst difficulties are presented by the position he suggests for the Roman *castra minora*, not much more than one kilometre south-east of the main camp. First, both Roman positions now lie on the same side of Ariovistus' camp: that is impossible to reconcile with *ultra eum locum* at 1. 49. 1. Secondly, we have seen that the items of 1. 52. 2 and 1. 52. 6 present a coherent picture, with Caesar commanding from the Roman right, and both right wings forcing their enemy to retreat. It is also likely that the detail of 1. 51. 1 (the force from the second camp *minus multitudine militum legionariorum pro hostium numero ualebat*) is picked up and echoed at 1. 52. 6 (in the battle the Germans *a dextro cornu uehementer multitudine suorum nostram aciem premebant*). If so, the German right wing seems to stand opposite the force from the Roman *castra minora*: it is implied that the Roman line in front of both camps is continuous, and the *alarii*, coming from the smaller camp, stand on the left of the main Roman force. Schmittlein finds it hard to account for this. With the two Roman camps as close as he suggests, the line will certainly be continuous, but the *alarii* will now be on the right of the main force. He has therefore to give a forced interpretation of 1. 52. 2 and 1. 52. 6: *dextro cornu* at 52. 2 now has to give the detail from the German viewpoint, so that Caesar can command from the Roman left; and the indications of 52. 6 have to be given from the Roman point of view, so that both left wings can be successful. This reverses the natural reading of both items, and Schmittlein's suggestion has not won favour<sup>(59)</sup>.

(57) Above, p. 754.

(58) Schmittlein's conjectural route (*La première campagne*, 145-8) is based on his misunderstanding of *circuitu*, and is not plausible.

(59) Cf. the sceptical remarks of COLLINS, art. cit., 305; J. P. V. D. BALSDON, *History*, 43 (1958), 44-5.

Yet perhaps the Belfort model can be saved. Either of two approaches might be rewarding:

(1) We might assume that Schmittlein has rightly identified the battlefield, but reversed the camps of the two sides. If Caesar had occupied la Miotte, it is quite likely that Ariovistus would occupy Cravanche, and such a camp would now genuinely hinder Caesar's communications. The Les Barres location may be retained for the *castra minora*, and this answers quite well to *sescentos passus* at 1. 49. 1. The battle would now be fought a short distance south-west of Schmittlein's proposed position.

(2) Even so, the battlefield remains cramped, and it is hard to believe that both sides could operate as if the Savoureuse did not exist. Both Cravanche and (especially) la Miotte are higher and steeper than the camps Caesar usually favoured in such circumstances<sup>(60)</sup>, though this is compensated by the impressive northern view which both hills command. But it is more likely that the whole battle should be transferred some way south-east, to the rather larger plain south-east and east of Danjoutin. A suitable location for Caesar's first camp would be offered by the hill on which the Fort de Vézelois now stands, some four kilometres south-east of Belfort. Its gently rising slope corresponds to the type of camp which Caesar usually preferred, and the hill has commanding views north and east-south-east. From it a strong army might easily control the Savoureuse valley. Ariovistus' second camp, six miles away and *sub monte*, causes no difficulty: a precise identification is impossible, but there are a number of possible sites below the Forêt de Roppe, between Valdoie and Rougemont-le-Château. Ariovistus' final camp should be two miles from Fort de Vézelois, and able to control Caesar's communications. The most likely possibility is the hillock overlooking Andelnans, some 1.5 kilometres west of Meroux, just east of the modern Belfort-Montbéliard road. The Roman *castra minora* might be placed on the hill a little to the south, close to Sevenans.

No especial importance need be attached to these detailed proposals: they merely illustrate that there are locations near Belfort which are not vulnerable to the objections which face Schmittlein. His general thesis remains quite plausible, and it does seem that the environs of Belfort have more to recommend them than any other proposed site. The Belfort region is the most plausible point for the two armies to meet, and the hills

(60) Cf. JULLIAN, iii. 179, n. 3.

surrounding Belfort a natural position for Caesar to choose to occupy. The Belfort-Chaux airport presents a plausible *planities*. The precise route of Ariovistus' flank march cannot be recovered – but, in this land of hills, ridges, and forests, it would be odd if he could not find a route which was naturally protected against a Roman attack.

The status of this conclusion must again be stressed. We are not dealing with certainties : Caesar's narrative technique does not permit it. The strategy of the campaign, the course of the fighting, the nature of the terrain may all have been more complex than Caesar's language would suggest ; and these complications may have led both generals to act, or to allow their enemy to act, in ways which we find hard to understand. It may still be that the Mulhouse-Basel solution is correct, however difficult it is to explain how the armies reached that region. Even on the Belfort identification, the figure of fifty miles is not wholly satisfactory, though it can be explained. And, on any account, the narrative remains bare and terse : note, for instance, the extreme economy of Caesar's description of the German flank march (48. 2). Given these qualifications, Belfort presents the fewest difficulties. Plutarch's *τετρακοσίους* and Orosius' *quinginta* are vindicated, and *quinginta* should be read at *B.G.*, 1. 53. 1.

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