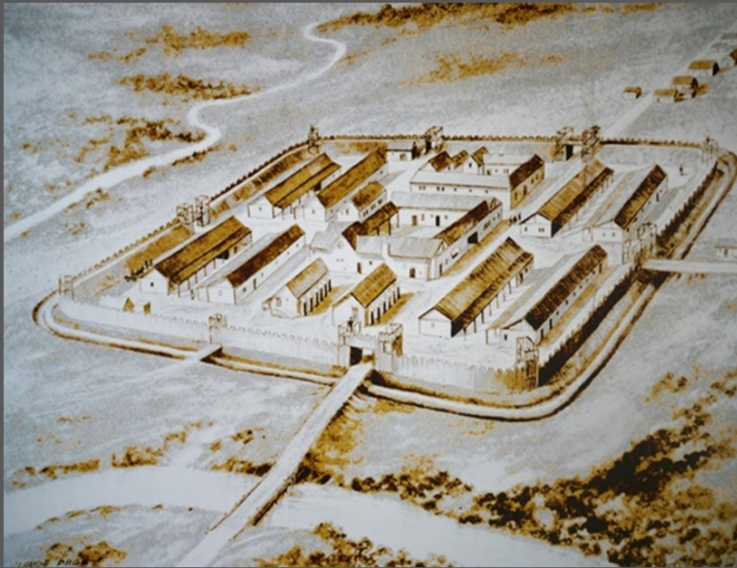


THE ROMANS AT THE DOLAUCOTHI ARMS



The Roman Fort of Luentinum

Julius Caesar invaded Britain in 55BC, but it was not until 43AD that the incursions turned to conquest and settlement. In 74AD, under Sextus Julius Frontinus, Rome turned it's attention to Wales - defeating the Silures and Demetiae tribes, setting up a legionary fort at Caerleon and a network of auxiliary forts across the country. We can be sure that the Romans were aware that gold existed in the hills of the Cothi valley. The Bronze Age Celts panned for gold in the Cothi river 4,000 years ago. The Romans moved quickly to set up an auxiliary fort called Luentinum where Pumsaint is today. This fort was built on the road linking South Wales to the North, Sarn Helen, as a base to protect their mine workings, the gold they extracted and to control the people in the surrounding area.



Digs in the 1970s & 1990s

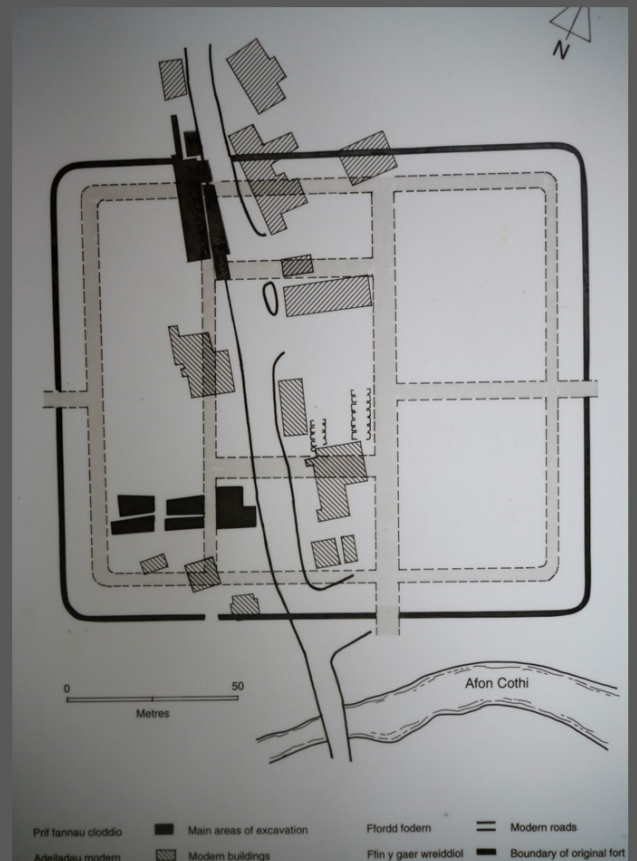
The plan to the right shows the outline of the fort, the dig sites and the hotel above.

The photo above shows part of the archaeological dig near the rear of the Dolaucothi Arms Car Park.

The two pictures below show the excavations to the North side of the hotel, close to the road. See how close the walls are to the ground level.

The buildings and gardens of the Dolaucothi Arms Hotel sit right at the heart of Luentinum. The ruins of the fort sit less than a metre below the ground. The fort was built as a square with each side about 180m long defended by a double ditch, turf and clay ramparts and watch towers with gates set in to each wall. A cohort of some 250 soldiers, mostly Auxiliary Cavalry, and mine workers lived here. Workers were probably a combination of slaves, convicts and people from the local Vicus who were paid for their work. The mine was handed over to civilian contractors c140AD.

It is estimated that the Romans mined over two tons of gold up until the mine was abandoned in the late 3rd century AD.



Mining continued in post-Roman times and even into the Medieval period. In the 1930s a Roman water-wheel was excavated from deep down in the mine, and in the 18th century a hoard of gold artefacts was found including many brooches and snake bracelets. These treasures are now in the British Museum in London.