British Journal for Military History

Volume 12, Issue 3, November 2026

Mancetter: Boudicca's last battle site?

Nigel Stanley

ISSN: 2057-0422

Date of Publication: 20 November 2026

Citation: Nigel Stanley, 'Mancetter: Boudicca's last battle site?', *British Journal for Military History*, 12.3 (2026), pp. 3-32.

www.bjmh.org.uk



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.



The BJMH is produced with the support of Goldsmiths UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Mancetter: Boudicca's last battle site?

NIGEL E STANLEY*
Independent Scholar, UK
Email: historysearcher123@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
Since the 1970s, Mancetter in Warwickshire has been the main location proposed as the site of Boudicca's last battle against the Roman army in around AD 61. This article provides a new translation of the description of the battle in the Annals of Tacitus and compares the Mancetter landscape with the battlefield as described by Tacitus and Dio Cassius. The article also offers a new interpretation of the potential significance of forts available to the Roman army at Mancetter. Based on the evidence discussed, a hypothetical battlefield at Mancetter is reconstructed and compared with reconstructions by previous authors. The conclusion reached is that, despite a lack of conclusive archaeological evidence, Mancetter still has the strongest claim to be the battlefield site, when compared with other proposed sites.[1]

Introduction

Tacitus describes in his *Annals* the campaign by Suetonius Paulinus, Roman governor of Britain, to crush the druids in Anglesey (*Mona*), using Legion XIV. Boudicca, queen of the Iceni tribe, seized the chance to revolt, destroying Colchester (*Camulodunum*) and annihilating an infantry unit of Legion IX.[2] Suetonius proceeded with a small force to London (*Londinium*), but fearing for his safety against the victorious Boudicca, left the town to its fate and marched away. Boudicca then attacked London and St Albans (*Verulamium*) in turn.[3] Various early twentieth-century scholars suggested a Midlands site for Boudicca's last battle against the Roman army, assuming that Suetonius retreated north-west from London along Watling Street, and that Boudicca and her

*Dr Stanley is a freelance historian and retired teacher.
DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.1993
[1]This article follows Kevin Carroll, 'The Date of Boudicca's Revolt', *Britannia*, Vol. 10, (1979), pp.197-202, in regarding AD 61 as the likely year of Boudicca's defeat, and follows Tacitus by using the spelling *Boudicca*, rather than *Boudica* as proposed by Kenneth Jackson, 'Queen Boudicca?', *Britannia*, Vol. 10, (1979), p.155.
[2]Peter Salway, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Roman Britain*, (London: Book Club Associates, 1993), p.82.
[3]Henry Furneaux, *The Annals of Tacitus, Vol. II, Books XI–XVI*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), pp.275-276. Subsequent references to the *Annals* are to the Furneaux edition.

army followed Suetonius in a bid to destroy the Roman forces.[4] A Midlands site might also be implied in the comment by Tacitus that Suetonius ordered Legion II, based at Exeter (*Isca Dumnoniorum*), to assist him.[5] Poenius Postumus, commander of Legion II, failed to leave Exeter, but an intended Midlands battlefield would have allowed Legion II to march up the Fosse Way and rendezvous with Suetonius and Legion XIV somewhere near High Cross (*Venonis*), now in Leicestershire, where the Fosse Way meets Watling Street (see Figure 1).

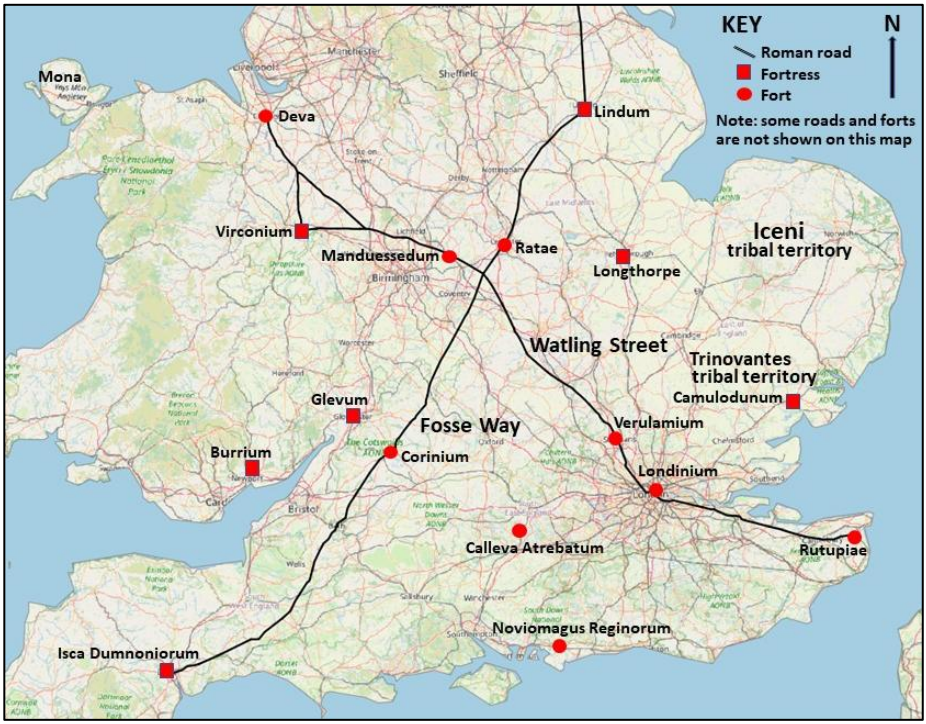


Figure 1: Roman Britain around AD 61on a modern landscape base[6]

[4]Bernard W. Henderson, *The Life and Principate of the Emperor Nero*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1903), pp.214-215; Furneaux, *The Annals*, p. 275; George Ramsay, *The Annals of Tacitus Books XI–XVI*, (London: John Murray, 1909), p.211.
[5]*Annals*, 14.37.6.
[6]Map by present author, using QGIS mapping, based on various sources.

MANCETTER: BOUDICCA'S LAST BATTLE SITE?

From the 1960s onwards, Mancetter (*Manduessedum*) in Warwickshire became the leading site proposed for Boudicca's last battle against the Roman army, as advocated by Donald Dudley and Graham Webster (1962) and later Webster individually (1978).[7] Numerous subsequent authors have followed Webster in regarding Mancetter as the battle's likely location.[8] Mancetter remains the leading candidate site for the battle.

However, Webster's claims and version of a battle at Mancetter have not been universally accepted. Following the suggestion by Carroll (1979) of an encounter somewhere near High Cross, John Waite has proposed High Cross itself as the battle's location.[9] Further south, the Cuttle Mill area of Paulerspury near Towcester is suggested by Martin Marix Evans, a theory adopted by Michael Rayner and by Peter and Dan Snow.[10] A location near Church Stowe, also in Northamptonshire, is proposed by John Pegg.[11] Barry Horne suggests a site just south of Dunstable in Bedfordshire.[12] Graham Appleby has claimed that the Iceni were returning to East Anglia when they met the Roman army near Arbury Bank in Hertfordshire, while Deryk Cundy suggests Chivery Top near Tring in Buckinghamshire, and Duncan

---

[7]Donald Dudley and Graham Webster, *The Rebellion of Boudicca*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul,1962), pp.72-76; Graham Webster, *Boudica: The British Revolt against Rome AD 60*, (London: Batsford, 1978), pp.96-101, pp.111-112.

[8]Including Michael Wood, *In Search of the Dark Ages*, (London: BBC, 1981), pp.31-34; Plantagenet Somerset Fry, *Rebellion against Rome*, (Lavenham: Terence Dalton, 1982), pp.62-72; Meirion James Trow, *Boudicca The Warrior Queen*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003), pp.12-31; Paul Sealey, *The Boudican Revolt against Rome*, (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 2004), pp.38-42; John Davies and Bruce Robinson, *Boudica: Her Life, Times and Legacy*, (Cromer: Poppyland Publishing, 2009), pp.62-71; Nic Fields, *The Roman Army of the Principate, 27 BC–AD 117*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2009), pp.75-76; Nic Fields, *Boudicca's Rebellion AD 60–61*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2011), pp.66-82; Margaret Hughes, *Boudica at Mancetter: The Latin, The Land, The Logistics*, (Atherstone: Atherstone Civic Society, 2020), pp.1-200.

[9]John Waite, *Boudica's Last Stand: Britain's Revolt against Rome AD 60–61*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2007), pp.167-197.

[10]Martin Marix Evans, *The Defeat of Boudicca's Rebellion*, (Towcester: Gemini Press, 2004), pp.i–xvi; Michael Rayner, *English Battlefields*, (Stroud 2004), pp.66-67; Peter and Dan Snow, *Battlefield Britain*, (London: BBC, 2004), pp.12–37.

[11]John Pegg, 'Landscape Analysis and Appraisal: Church Stowe, Northamptonshire, as a candidate site for the Battle of Watling Street' (www.academia.edu, 2010).

[12]Barry Horne, 'Did Boudica and Paulinus meet south of Dunstable?', (*South Midlands Archaeology* 44, 2014), pp.89–93.

Mackay proposes Windridge Farm, just west of St Albans (*Verulamium*).[13] Further afield, many other sites have also been suggested, such as Virginia Water in Surrey; somewhere near Box Hill in Surrey; Ogbourne St George in Wiltshire; and Heydon in Cambridgeshire.[14] Some authors remain more equivocal, such as Vanessa Collingridge, who accepts a location somewhere from St Albans to Mancetter, and Miranda Aldhouse-Green, who suggests Mancetter, Cuttle Mill or elsewhere.[15]

This article discusses evidence for the view that Mancetter was the battlefield site and explains why Mancetter may still have a stronger claim than the other proposed sites.

Part One: Historical texts in comparison with the Mancetter landscape

To determine the battle's likely location, we must first study closely the description of the battle in the text of the *Annals*, written in Latin by Tacitus over fifty years later, around AD 112-120.[16] While the sources used by Tacitus are uncertain, Suetonius Paulinus is known to have written his memoirs, and Tacitus possibly used these, or a source based on them, in his account of the battle.[17] The description of the battlefield landscape by Tacitus contains various topographical details which might suggest that the account is based on eye-witness information, perhaps from Suetonius himself.

The defensive deployment chosen by Suetonius is narrated by Tacitus in two stages, in *Annals* Book 14, chapters 34-37. These two extracts are separated by pre-battle speeches by Boudicca and Suetonius, scripted by Tacitus, but to translate the

[13]Grahame Appleby, 'The Boudican Revolt: Countdown to Defeat'*, Hertfordshire Archaeology and History* 16, 2009), pp.57–66; Deryk Cundy, *The Vengeful Queen* (Cambria Books, 2015), pp.325-377; Duncan Mackay, *Echolands: A Journey in Search of Boudica,* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2023), pp.260-270.

[14]Nic Fuentes, 'Boudicca re-visited', (*London Archaeologist* 4, 1984), pp.311-317; Richard Hunt, *Queen Boudicca's Battle of Britain*, (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2003), pp.101-105; Steve Kaye, 'Can computerised terrain analysis find Boudica's last battlefield?', (*British Archaeology* 114, 2010), pp.30–33; Steve Kaye, 'Finding the site of Boudica's last battle: multi-attribute analysis of sites identified by template matching' (www.academia.edu, 2015); William Foot, 'AD 60, Boudica: Unlocated Battle', *British Archaeology* 165, 2019), pp.26-29.

[15]Vanessa Collingridge, *Boudica*, (London: Ebury Press, 2005), pp.231-232; Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *Boudica Britannia*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2006), pp.196-198.

[16]Herbert W. Bonario, 'The *Annals*', in Victoria Emma Pagán (ed.), *A Companion to Tacitus*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p.104.

[17]Nicholas Reed, 'The Sources of Tacitus and Dio for the Boudiccan Revolt', *Latomus*, Vol. 33, No.4, (1974), p.927; David S. Potter, 'Tacitus' Sources', in Victoria Emma Pagán (ed.), *A Companion to Tacitus*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p.135.

description of the battle, the extracts in chapters 34-37 should be considered holistically. The translation below, by the present author, omits the speeches.

Extracts from Tacitus' *Annals* Book 14: A new translation.

34. The Fourteenth Legion, along with detachments from the Twentieth Legion and auxiliary troops from nearby forts, in all around ten thousand armed men, were now with Suetonius, when he prepared to cease delay and to fight in battle-formation. And he chose a position enclosed by a narrow ravine and by woodland in the rear, having made sure that there could be no enemy forces except in front of him, and that the plain was open ground, without fear of an ambush. The legionary force therefore stood in close order, the light-armed troops around them, the cavalry massed together on the wings. The forces of the Britons, on the other hand, were running around at random amongst their war-bands and troops; at no other time was their number as great, and they were in such wild confidence that as witness of the victory, they had brought their wives along with them and positioned them in the wagons which they had parked on the outermost rim of the battlefield.

35. Boudicca, driving her daughters before her in a chariot, approached each tribe …

36. … Such enthusiasm followed the words of the general, and so well had his veteran force trained themselves in javelin-throwing, with much experience of hostilities, that Suetonius was able to give the signal for battle, sure of the outcome.

37. At first the legion was stationary and keeping the narrow confinement of the location for protection; after the legion had discharged its javelins with an accurate aim into the closely approaching ranks of the enemy, in wedge-formation it charged forward. The advance of the auxiliaries was the same; and with extended lances the cavalry broke through whatever strong opposition was in the way. The others turned their backs and fled, with escape being difficult, because the surrounding wagons had blocked the exits. Our troops did not spare even the women from death, and the packhorses which had been pierced with spears also increased the heap of bodies.[18]

Width of the Roman frontline

The *Epitome of Military Science* by Vegetius was written in the fifth century, but much of this work describes the training and tactics of the first-century Roman army and is

[18]Translation of the Latin text in Furneaux, *The Annals*, pp.277-280.

based on lost sources such as Cato's *de Re Militari*. Regarding the deployment of a Roman army in battle-formation, Vegetius explains in *Epitome* 3.15 that

> if you draw up six lines, an army of 10,000 men will take up 42 ft. in depth and a mile in breadth … They say that if the field is too narrow, or numbers are sufficient, the lines can be drawn up ten deep or more. For it is more useful that they should fight in close order than be too far separated.[19]

In the battle against Boudicca, Suetonius deployed his ten thousand troops *frequens ordinibus*, 'in close order' (*Annals*,14.34.3). Using the formula of Vegetius, with a depth of twelve ranks, the Roman frontline would have been around 800 metres in length, with auxiliaries and cavalry on the wings.[20]

Features of the Battlefield Described by Tacitus

The Roman position described by Tacitus was clearly a defensive one, aimed at drawing the British forces into an attack on a position with strong natural protection. The key sentence describing the battle's location is *Annals* 14.34.2, where the Latin text reads: *Deligitque locum artis faucibus et a tergo silva clausum*. The new translation above reads: 'And he chose a position enclosed by a narrow ravine and by woodland in the rear'. If we deconstruct this sentence, Suetonius chose (*Delegit*) a position (*locum*), enclosed (*clausum*) by a narrow ravine (*artis faucibus*) and by woodland (*et…silva*) in the rear (*a tergo*). Another defensive feature of the Roman position, described in *Annals* 14.37.1, was its *angustias* or 'narrow confinement'.

Viewed holistically, *Annals* chapters 34–37 depict the lay-out of the battlefield. To accommodate ten thousand troops in battle-formation in close order, with a frontline of around 800m, the Roman army was probably ensconced in an enclave or pocket of land, enclosed by a narrow ravine and by woodland in the rear. Suetonius thereby ensured that the British forces could not surround the Romans, and that the front lines of the two armies would be of similar length. This would cancel any numerical advantage of the British forces, reduce the effectiveness of British chariots, and hand the advantage to the Romans, with their superior weaponry, armour and training.

***Artis faucibus*: 'a narrow ravine'?**

In describing the battlefield, a key phrase used by Tacitus is *artis faucibus…clausum*.[21] In the translation above, in the context of defensive battlefield tactics, the Roman

[19]N. P. Milner, *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), pp.xiii-xxxi, p.97.
[20]For depiction and discussion of 'close order' formation, see Ross Cowan, *Roman Battle Tactics 109 BC–AD 313*, (Oxford: Osprey, 2007), p.33, p.59.
[21]*Annals*, 14.34.2.

position was 'enclosed by a narrow ravine'. No previous translation has suggested this description of the battlefield landscape chosen by Suetonius. However, *faucibus* can be translated in different ways, and its ambiguous usage here by Tacitus has produced various translations in recent centuries. To establish the likely meaning of *artis faucibus* we must analyse the use of these words in Latin literature.

The plural adjective *artīs,* with a long *ī*, means 'narrow', from the adjective *artus*. *Faucibus* comes from *fauces* (plural of *faux*), a feminine noun which can refer to openings of different kinds, and normally has meanings such as 'narrow pass', 'channel', 'defile' or 'ravine', when describing landscape.[22]

In some contexts, *fauces* can have meanings such as 'throat' or 'jaws', 'harbour-entrance', and 'approach' or 'entrance' in a building. Stanley Ireland translates the key phrase *locum…clausum* in *Annals* 14.34.2 as 'a site with a narrow approach and backed by a wood'; Cynthia Damon prefers 'a place narrow of approach, blocked behind by a forest', while Anthony Woodman chooses 'a place with narrow jaws and enclosed by a wood at the rear'.[23] However, in the present author's opinion, in the context of a defensive battlefield landscape the most likely sense of *faucibus* is 'ravine', rather than 'approach' or 'jaws'.

Several authors have translated *faucibus* in *Annals* 14.34.2 as 'defile' rather than 'ravine'.[24] Margaret Hughes offers a detailed discussion of Latin *fauces*, and regards *faucibus* here as meaning 'defile'.[25] A 'ravine' is 'a deep, narrow gorge with steep sides', and 'defile' is largely synonymous, meaning 'a steep-sided narrow gorge or passage (originally one requiring troops to march in single file)'.[26] However, 'defile' was borrowed into English from seventeenth-century French, and its meaning may be unclear to modern readers, therefore 'ravine' seems a safer translation of *faucibus*.

---

[22]*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, (Oxford: OUP, 1968), pp.680-681; Douglas A. Kidd, *Collins Latin Gem Dictionary*, (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1957), p.576.

[23]Stanley Ireland, *Roman Britain: A Sourcebook* (2nd edn), (London and New York, 1996), p.61; Cynthia Damon, *Tacitus Annals*, (London and New York: Penguin, 2012), p.291; Anthony J. Woodman, *Tacitus: The Annals*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), p.291.

[24]Alfred Church and William Brodribb, *The Annals of Tacitus*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1884), p.271 (see also the edition by Moses Hadas, *The Annals and the Histories*, (New York: Random House, 2003), p.292); John Jackson, *Tacitus: The Annals, Books XIII–XVI*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), p.163; John C. Yardley, *Tacitus: The Annals*, (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p.321.

[25]Hughes, *Boudica at Mancetter*, pp.136-150.

[26]Maurice Waite (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus*, (Oxford: OUP, 2007), pp.852, p.259.

In *Annals* 14.34.2, *artis faucibus* has no preposition, and *faucibus* could therefore be either the ablative or locative case of *fauces*. Some translators have considered *artis faucibus* as locative, and that the Roman army was deployed 'in a defile' or 'in a narrow defile'.[27] However, this seems highly unlikely from a military perspective, since the Roman army would thereby be trapped in a narrow ravine. The present author therefore regards *faucibus* as the ablative case of *fauces*, produced by the past participle *clausum*, 'enclosed'. Using a concise prose style in this instance, Tacitus may be avoiding repetition of *clausum*. The Roman position was 'enclosed by a narrow ravine and (enclosed) by woodland in the rear', a translation which makes sense from military, grammatical and stylistic perspectives.

By *artis faucibus*, Tacitus might perhaps mean 'narrow ravines' in the plural, since a defensive Roman position might be enclosed by narrow ravines to the left and right. Pliny the Elder, describing the Nile Delta, writes *multis quamvis faucibus in aegyptum mare se emovat*, 'and it belches out, by many mouths it is true, into the Egyptian Sea'.[28]

The Question of High Ground and Javelins

Vegetius declares that Roman forces strong in infantry should choose confined places, obstructed by ditches, marshes or trees, and that before combat, good generals should get help from the location by occupying high ground.[29] In *Stratagems* 2.2, written around AD 100, Sextus Julius Frontinus gives three examples of how high ground had assisted Roman commanders, adding weight to a downhill assault or allowing the effective discharge of javelins at barbarians charging from below.[30] Javelins were normally thrown when the enemy was around 15 metres (45 feet) from the Roman frontline.[31]

Annals 14.37.1 describes how javelins were released in the battle against Boudicca. Perhaps for this reason, Salway (1981), Smurthwaite (1984) and Collingridge (2005) propose that the Roman position against Boudicca was on a hillside.[32] This claim is

[27]For instance, Ramsay, *The Annals*, p.212; Michael Grant, *Tacitus: The Annals of Imperial Rome*, (London: Penguin, 1956), p.330; Donald Dudley, *The Annals of Tacitus*, (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1962), p.317.

[28]Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, *Volume Two, Books 3-7*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), pp.258-261.

[29]*Epitome* 3.9, 3.13; Milner, *Vegetius*, p.84, pp.92-93.

[30]Mary McElwain (ed.), *Frontinus: The Stratagems and the Aqueducts of Rome*, (London: Heinemann, 1925), pp.99-102.

[31]Fields, *The Roman Army*, p.28.

[32]Peter Salway, *Roman Britain*, (Oxford: OUP, 1981), p.120; David Smurthwaite, *The Complete Ordnance Survey Guide to the Battlefields of Britain*, (Exeter: Webb and Bower, 1984), p.22; Collingridge, *Boudica*, p.233, p.242.

based on assumption rather than textual evidence, since Tacitus does not mention a hill specifically, and the discharge of javelins was a standard battle tactic which did not require a hill. However, an elevated position may have allowed Suetonius to view the open plain extending before him. Moreover, if the battlefield landscape was enclosed by narrow ravines, a rise in altitude between the ravines would be inherently likely.

The Account of the Battle by Dio Cassius

A second account of Boudicca's last battle exists in the text of *Roman History* by Dio Cassius, composed in Greek around AD 200 and later edited by John Xiphilinus. Dio may have used as source material either the memoirs of Suetonius Paulinus or other sources.[33] The account of the battle's early stages in Dio 61.12.1-2 closely resembles the account in the *Annals*, stating that the Roman forces 'when the charge came, easily broke through the opposing ranks'. Dio's narrative then changes direction, giving a conflicting and generic account of a longer battle which lasted until late in the day, a version which Nic Fields describes as 'garbled'.[34] The surviving text of Dio contains only a single topographical detail in 62.12.5, where the Romans finally 'slaughtered many in battle beside the wagons and the forest'.[35] This implies that the British wagons were parked adjacent to woodland beside the battlefield.

Tacitus mentions the chariot driven by Boudicca, without mention of other British chariots. Dio, however, includes chariots in the battle, narrating in 61.12.3 that 'against the chariots of the barbarians the Roman archers contended. The barbarians would assail the Romans with a rush of their chariots … but, since they fought without breastplates, would themselves be repulsed by the arrows'.

Tacitus gives a figure, whose accuracy is unknown, of 70,000 Roman casualties during Boudicca's rebellion (*Annals* 14.33.5), while Dio says there were 80,000 (*Roman History* 62.1.1). In *Annals* 14.37.5, while applauding the Roman victory, Tacitus states that around 400 Roman soldiers were killed in the battle against Boudicca, with a similar number of wounded, but he gives no precise figure for British casualties, showing caution about the rumoured figure by saying 'there are some who report that scarcely fewer than eighty thousand Britons fell'. Dio gives no casualty figures for the battle; however, we should certainly envisage thousands of British casualties.

[33]Reed, *The Sources*, pp.926-933.
[34]Ernest Cary, *Dio Cassius, Roman History VIII, Books LXI–LXX*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), pp.96-97, pp.101-105; Fields, *Boudicca's Rebellion*, p.79.
[35]Cary, *Dio Cassius*, p.103.



Figure 2: The landscape south of Mancetter[36]

[36]Map by present author, using Digimap website and OS mapping (with permission).

The Mancetter Landscape

A principal reason for considering Mancetter as the likely battlefield site is the highly distinctive landscape around 1.5km south of the village (see Figure 2) and its close correspondence with the text of Tacitus. In the one-kilometre grid-square SP 31 95, Mancetter has an enclave of appropriate size to accommodate the defensive formation of ten thousand Roman troops in close order, as described by Tacitus, with an infantry frontline of around 800 metres. The enclave contains a hill, south of Quarry Farm, west of White Hall Farm, and south-west of the Coventry Canal, built in 1771.

Known as Broome Hills on the 1728 Oldbury estate map, this landscape was part of Mancetter Common before enclosure in 1811, and local historian Joan Allen describes this area as the Mancetter Hills.[37] Facing north-east, the hill has a downhill slope for around 500m, towards the flood-plain of the River Anker. Contours on Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, LIDAR images, and visual observation of the landscape, show that the hill is enclosed to the left (north-west) and right (south-east) by conspicuous ravines, as noted by Michael Wood.[38]

For identification, the two main branches of ravine, both around 800m long, are called the 'western ravine' and 'eastern ravine' in this article. The western ravine, starting beside Quarry Farm, has steep slopes, resembling a deep railway cutting, today providing road access to Mancetter Quarry (see Figures 2 and 3). The eastern ravine starts beside the Coventry Canal and runs south-west past White Hall Farm, curling round to join the western ravine in a valley south-west of the hill. In a central position on the hillside slope facing north-east, around SP 315 953, is another small ravine or gulley around 200m long and 20m wide. The western and eastern ravines form an enclosed pocket of land just over one kilometre wide.

Woodland around Mancetter

Another potential factor supporting Mancetter as the possible battlefield is the woodland south of the village, surrounding the ravines. 2km south of Mancetter, the largest area of woodland is Hartshill Hayes (or The Hayes), with an area of 120 acres (see Figure 2). This is a residual patch of semi-natural ancient woodland, never cleared for agricultural use.[39]

[37]Warwick Record Office CR604: Rowland Okeover's estate map, 1728; Joan Allen, *Heardred's Hill: A history of Hartshill and Oldbury in North Warwickshire*, (Nuneaton: Bethany Enterprises, 1994), p.237.

[38]Wood, *In Search*, p.32.

[39]www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk/content/article/warwickshires-ancient-woodlands. Accessed 22 November 2024.



Figure 3: The Western Ravine, looking west from Quarry Farm[40]

A second woodland area, 2km south of Mancetter, is called The Belt. This was on a steep bank, running north-west for around one kilometre, on the north-eastern slope of Hartshill Ridge, providing a wooded backdrop to the Mancetter Hills. The Belt was around 100m from top to bottom, with a gradient of around 25 per cent or 1 in 4. This hillside bank was clear of woodland on the 1728 Oldbury estate map, but extensive re-planting took place around 1800.[41] Much of The Belt has been destroyed by twentieth-century stone-quarrying. Thirdly, south-west of Mancetter are several woodland areas including The Outwoods, Purley Park, Merevale Park and Monks Park Wood. Overall, the various woodland areas south of Mancetter might have been more contiguous in the early Roman era, as envisaged by Fields.[42] However, no dating of Mancetter's woodland, based on pollen cores, has been published, and without this it is risky to use today's woodland as a precise proxy for woodland in the Roman era.

[40]Photograph by present author.
[41]Warwick Record Office CR604; Allen, *Heardred's Hill*, pp.113-117.
[42]Fields, *The Roman Army*, p.76; Fields, *Boudicca's Rebellion*, p.76.

Part Two: Roman Forts and the place-name Mancetter

Roman forts at Mancetter

A major factor supporting the idea of a battlefield at Mancetter is the Roman fort there, around 600m south-west of Watling Street (see Figure 4). This was a half-legionary or vexillation fortress, occupied by Legion XIV from around AD 50-58.[43] By AD 60, Legion XIV had moved to Wroxeter (*Virconium*), taking the wooden buildings from the Mancetter site.[44] However, the earthwork ramparts at Mancetter would have been available for occupation by the tents of the Roman army around AD 61, and well-known to Legion XIV. Excavations from the 1950s to 1970s revealed the details of the fort, square in shape, around 300m along each side and 9 hectares (22 acres) in area, with four entrances. Pottery from around AD 60 was found, then three amphorae or wine-jars, along with a small hoard of coins from around AD 50, perhaps the contents of a soldier's purse. Excavation continued until 2006.[45] In 2014, a possible annexe to the main fort was found, potentially extending 100m north of the fort.[46] Two small items excavated at the fort might suggest a nearby battle against Boudicca. Two pieces of terret ring, part of a horse-harness dating from AD 50-70, have been found, whose style might resemble a type known in Norfolk, the heartland of Iceni territory.[47]

The fort's proximity to the River Anker was advantageous, since a legion's cavalry needed water and grazing. A further local advantage was the Hartshill Ridge, 2km south-west of Mancetter fort, where stone quarries were possibly first worked by the Roman army to provide building material for road construction.[48]

---

[43]Colin Baddeley, *Roman Mancetter*, (Atherstone: Atherstone Civic Society, 2013), pp.20-36.
[44]Ibid., p.16, pp.24-25.
[45]Webster, *Boudica*, pp.111-112; Baddeley, *Roman Mancetter*, pp.20-36; Warwickshire HER MWA8267.
[46]Bryn Gethin and Stuart Palmer, 'An Annexe to Mancetter's Roman Fortress', *Archaeology Warwickshire*, Report 1419, (2014), Figure 1.
[47]Anna S. G. Lewis, *Iron Age and Roman-era vehicle terrets from western and central Britain: an interpretive study*, (University of Leicester PhD thesis, 2015), p.301.
[48]Geoffrey Templeman and Louis F. Salzman, 'Parishes: Mancetter', in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume Four*, (Oxford: OUP, 1947), p.117; Allen, *Heardred's Hill*, p.28; Alan Cook, 'Roots of Atherstone: Geology and Early History', in Nat Alcock and Margaret Hughes (eds), *Atherstone A Pleasantly Placed Town*, (Chichester: Phillimore & Co., 2008), p.7.

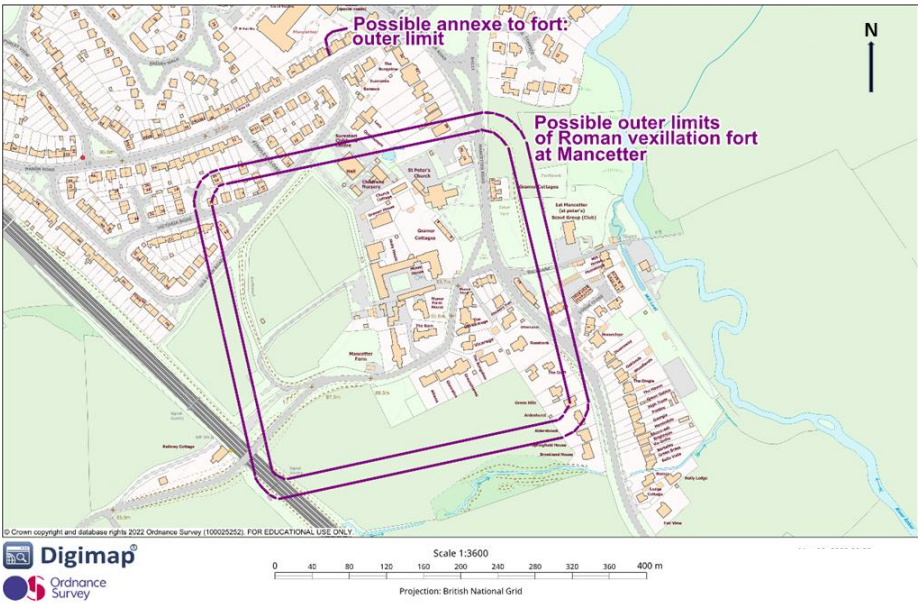


Figure 4: The Roman Vexillation fort at Mancetter[49]

A later Roman fort or *burgus* at Mancetter, dating from around AD 300, is situated on Watling Street, around SP 327 968. From the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries, when the earlier vexillation fort was unconfirmed, the Watling Street *burgus* was regarded as *Manduessedum* (see Figure 5). The *burgus* on Watling Street was excavated from the 1920s to 1960s.[50] This small and short-lived fort had an area of 220m by 160m. North-west of the *burgus*, Roman settlement included ribbon-development along Watling Street.[51] South-west of the *burgus* were numerous Roman pottery kilns, part of a large industrial area extending south-east towards Hartshill.[52]

[49]Map by present author using Digimap, adapted from Baddeley, *Roman Mancetter*, p.21.
[50]Baddeley, *Roman Mancetter*, p.103.
[51]Ibid., pp. 38-44; Historic England Scheduled Monument 1017585.
[52]Barry Burnham and John Wacher, *The 'Small Towns' of Roman Britain*, (London: Batsford, 1990), pp.255-260.

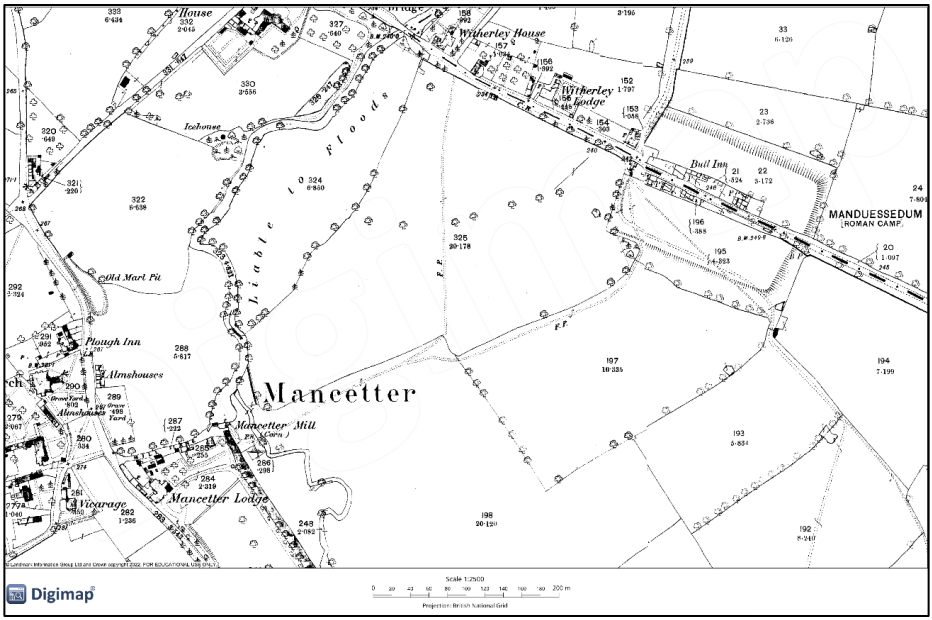


Figure 5: Mancetter and Watling Street *burgus* (top right) around 1880[53]

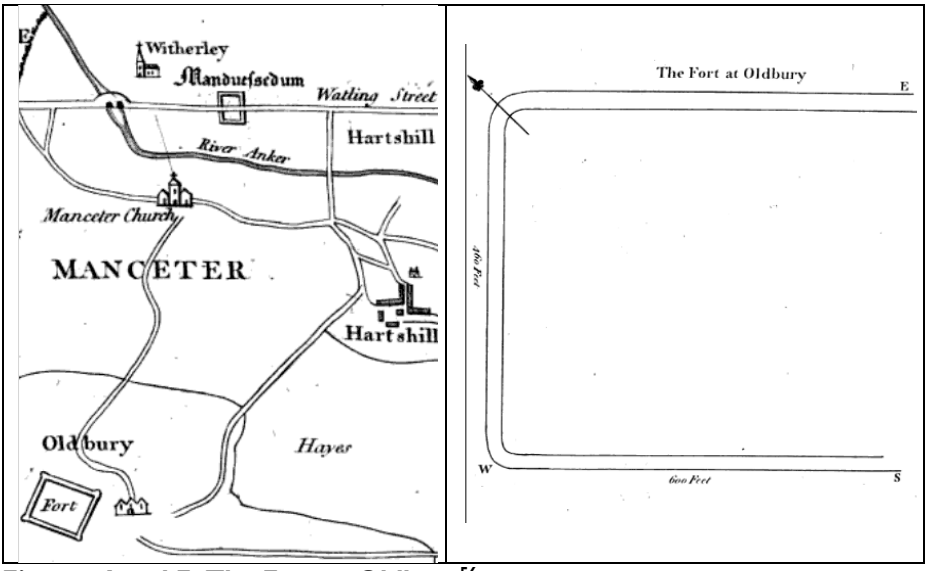
Oldbury Camp

Oldbury Camp is 2km south of Mancetter, on the plateau of Hartshill Ridge and in the medieval parish of Mancetter. This is a largely rectangular fort with rounded corners, whose south-eastern rampart was destroyed by later occupation. A relatively small fort, Oldbury Camp is 200m long and 150m wide, with an area of around 2.8 hectares (7 acres) and a single bank or *vallum* 6m wide, with an external ditch. Parts of the site were excavated in 1949, 1965, 1992 and 2017.[54] No entrances appear on Bartlett's 1777 plans of Oldbury (Figures 6 and 7), but the lost rampart perhaps had a single entrance, where the eleventh-century St Lawrence's nunnery was later sited.[55]

[53]Map by present author, from 1880 OS map, using Digimap.

[54]Iain Ferris and Jon Sterenberg, *An Archaeological Evaluation at Oldbury Camp, Near Nuneaton, Warwickshire*, (Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit Report 206, 1992), pp.1-8; James Fairbairn, *An archaeological evaluation at Oldbury Camp, Mancetter, Warwickshire*, (Cambridge: Oxford Archaeology East Report 2031, 2017), pp.3-15.

[55]Allen, *Heardred's Hill*, pp.50-51, pp.99-100, pp.118-120. Damaged by German bombing in 1942, the house was demolished by 1950 and replaced by an underground reservoir.



Figures 6 and 7: The Fort at Oldbury[56]

Oldbury Hall was built within the camp's ramparts in the sixteenth century and re-built in the eighteenth century. Landscaping may have destroyed the south-east rampart and perhaps produced openings in the north-west rampart (see Figure 8).

Before any excavations, various authors in 1904 suggested that Oldbury Camp was a prehistoric (Iron Age) hill-fort, an idea repeated more recently.[57] However, Oldbury Camp was regarded as a Roman fort by local antiquaries, including William Dugdale in the 1650s and Benjamin Bartlett FSA in 1777.[58] This idea gains some plausibility from excavations. The long north-eastern rampart, excavated in 1949, had a core of diorite or greenstone rubble, backed by heavy stone packing.[59] By comparison, full legionary fortresses of the first century AD, developed from the design of marching camps built on campaigns, had ramparts mainly of stacked turf, with some addition of stone and

[56]Bartlett, *Manduessedum Romanorum*, p. 4 and Plate V
[57]Francis Haverfield, 'Romano-British Remains', in *A History of Warwickshire Volume I*, (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1904), p.234; Willoughby Gardner, 'Ancient Earthworks', Ibid., pp.376-377; Templeman and Salzman, 'Parishes: Mancetter', p.117. Ferris and Sterenberg, *Archaeological Evaluation*, p. 15; Warwickshire HER MWA255.
[58]William Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated*, (London: 1656), p.778; Benjamin Bartlett, *Manduessedum Romanorum*, (London: 1791), pp.8-9.
[59]Ferris and Sterenberg, *Archaeological Evaluation*, p. 2.

gravel.[60] The diorite rubble in the Oldbury rampart would have been available if Mancetter's stone-quarries, around 800m north-west of Oldbury, were worked by the Romans before Oldbury Camp's construction. Excavations have not yet produced stratified dating evidence, so the fort's date of construction is uncertain. However, the rampart's diorite core raises the possibility that Oldbury was a Roman marching camp. Roman *mortaria* (food-bowls) were excavated at Oldbury Camp in 1965.[61]

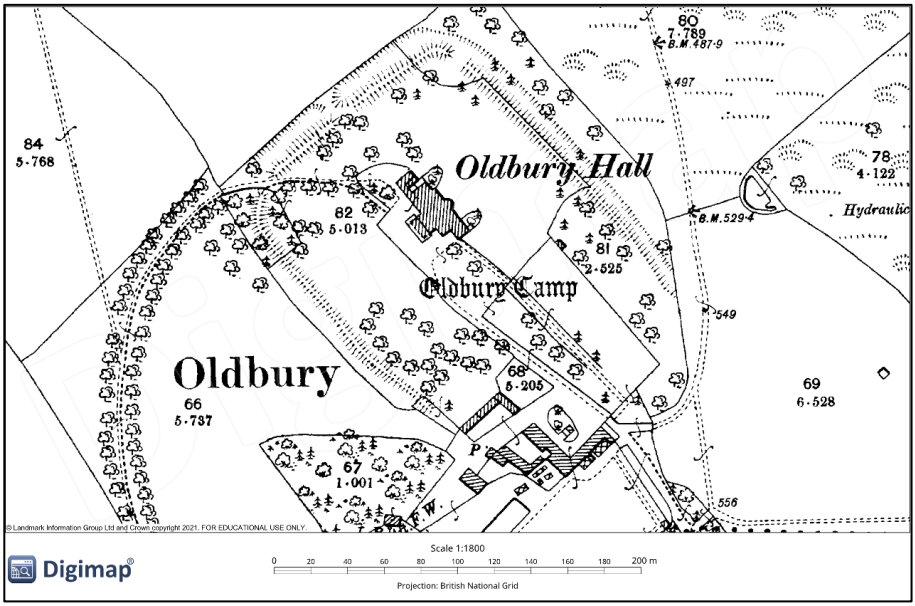


Figure 8: Oldbury Camp around 1900[62]

Why and how might the Roman army have built or used Oldbury Camp during the campaign against Boudicca? Firstly, Mancetter's vexillation fort could accommodate only around a quarter of the ten thousand men commanded by Suetonius, and the remainder, if camped in tents outside the fort, might have been vulnerable to attack by a large British force advancing north-west along Watling Street. Oldbury Camp might therefore have provided additional accommodation for the troops of Suetonius. Oldbury Camp was only one-third of the size of the Mancetter fort, but was more securely located, around 500 metres south of the Mancetter Hills. Oldbury Camp

[60]Duncan B. Campbell, *Roman Legionary Fortresses 27 BC–AD 378*, (Oxford: Osprey, 2006), p.36.
[61]Cook, *Roots of Atherstone*, p.4.
[62]Map by present author using Digimap.

might also have been a safe *praetorium* or battlefield headquarters for Suetonius, perhaps with a supply depot or field-hospital facilities for Roman army surgeons. In any event, Oldbury Camp should appear on modern maps of Roman Mancetter and should feature in discussions of Mancetter's Roman landscape.

Oldbury Camp was near fresh-water springs, and 70m south of the camp is a large rectangular pool, 43m by 11m, previously spring-fed. While not archaeologically investigated, the pool is described in nineteenth-century gazetteers as 'a Roman Bath in an excellent state of preservation'.[63] If Roman, the pool might have provided fresh water for troops or horses.

The place-name Mancetter

The name of Mancetter is potentially significant in a search for Boudicca's last battlefield. Mancetter was the site of the Roman settlement of *Manduessedum*, recorded in the Antonine Itinerary around AD 150, nearly a century after Boudicca's Rebellion. Kenneth Jackson, an expert in Celtic languages, concluded that in British Celtic, *Manduessedum* meant 'horse-chariot', deriving from **mandu* 'small horse' or 'pony' and **essedo* 'war-chariot'. We cannot be sure why this place-name was coined, but *Manduessedum* perhaps derived from a local legend or referred to a historical event.[64] In Roman Britain most place-names were Celtic, and Latin place-names were relatively rare. This has suggested to place-name scholars that Roman Britain remained predominantly a Celtic-speaking country.[65]

The original place-name *Manduessedum* later evolved in various ways. A compound name was formed by addition of the Old English generic element *-ceaster*, derived from Latin *castra*, meaning 'Roman fort'. The form *-cestre* typically appears in the Midlands around the twelfth century.[66] The name *Manduessedum* was contracted at some stage to *Man-*. Mancetter therefore means 'Manduessedum Roman fort'. Early recorded forms are *Manecestre* 1195-1313, *Maumecestre* 1196-1296, and *Mancestre* 1251-1610.[67]

[63]Allen, *Heardred's Hill*, pp. 36-37, p.240.
[64]Kenneth Jackson, 'Romano-British names in the Antonine Itinerary', *Britannia*, Vol. 1, (1970), p.76; A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain*, (London: Book Club Associates, 1979), pp.411-412.
[65]Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place-Names and the History of England* (London: Dent, 1978), pp. 20-21, pp.30-38, p.63.
[66]Miriam Méar, 'De *castra* à *chester*', PhD thesis, (Paris 2008), pp.175-176, pp.207-259.
[67]J. E. B. Gover, Allen Mawer and Frank Stenton, *The Place-Names of Warwickshire*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1935), pp.85-86.

Part Three: A hypothetical reconstruction of a battle at Mancetter

Given the evidence explored above, of the likely meaning of the Latin text of the *Annals* relating to the battlefield, and of the landscape, Roman archaeology and place-name of Mancetter, a brief hypothetical reconstruction of a battle at Mancetter around AD 61 is possible. Many aspects of the location and events of the battle remain debatable, and any reconstruction inevitably involves some speculation. The following sequence of hypothetical maps, Figures 9-12, illustrates possible stages of a battle south of Mancetter, reconstructed in accordance with the texts by Tacitus and Dio.[68]

The Roman forces might have deployed onto the Mancetter Hills from the Mancetter vexillation fort, and possibly also from Oldbury Camp, as in Figure 9. Suetonius might have occupied a mobile position on the hill-top and perhaps placed Legion XIV and his other infantry cohorts on the brow of the hill, with a frontline around the 130m contour-line. Tacitus describes the auxiliary troops from nearby forts as stationed on the flanks, with the cavalry on each wing. In Figure 9, the cavalry on the right wing is positioned between the eastern ravine and the woodland.[69]

Annals 14.34.4 states that the British wagons formed a cordon around the battlefield and were parked so that British women could view the expected victory. The wagons in Figure 10 are therefore shown close to the modern-day Coventry Canal. However, historians should remain aware that in accounts of classical battles, the inclusion of women as spectators, in a supposedly secure location, may be a literary device called *teichoscopia*, or 'the view from the wall', which appears from Homer onwards.[70]

Reference by Tacitus to the British forces and woodland surrounding the Romans might also have ethnographic connotations, since he drew on a long tradition of ethnographic writing in which Roman authors stereotypically associated 'barbarian' people with particular landscapes, such as *Germani* in the forests east of the Rhine.[71]

---

[68]The author wishes to thank James Stanley for assistance with illustrations.

[69]Fields, *The Roman Army*, p. 76, envisages a similar deployment; see also Chris McNab (ed.), *The Roman Army* (Oxford: Osprey, 2010), pp.177-178.

[70]Peter Toohey, *Reading Epic: An Introduction to the Ancient Narratives*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.26-27, p.30, p.193.

[71]James B. Rives, 'Germania', in Victoria Emma Pagán (ed.), *A Companion to Tacitus*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp.48-49.

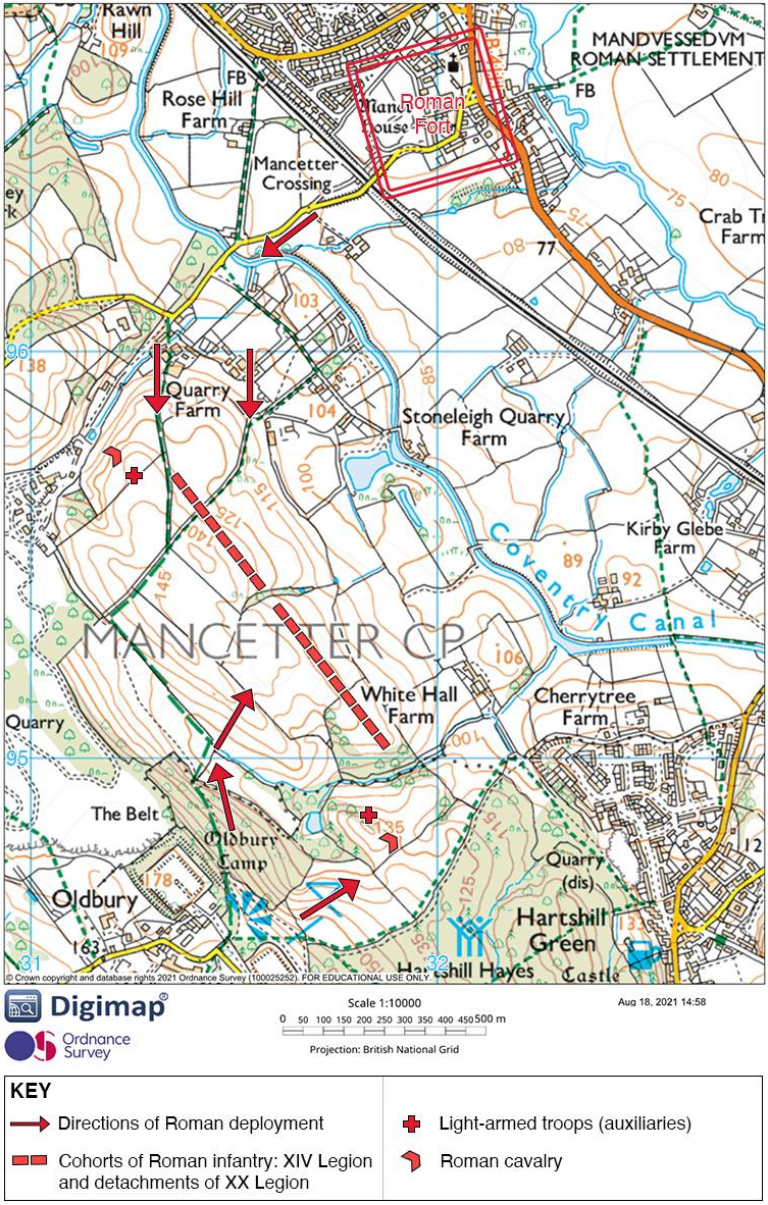


Figure 9: Hypothetical Map of Roman deployment at Mancetter[72]

[72]Map by present author using Digimap.

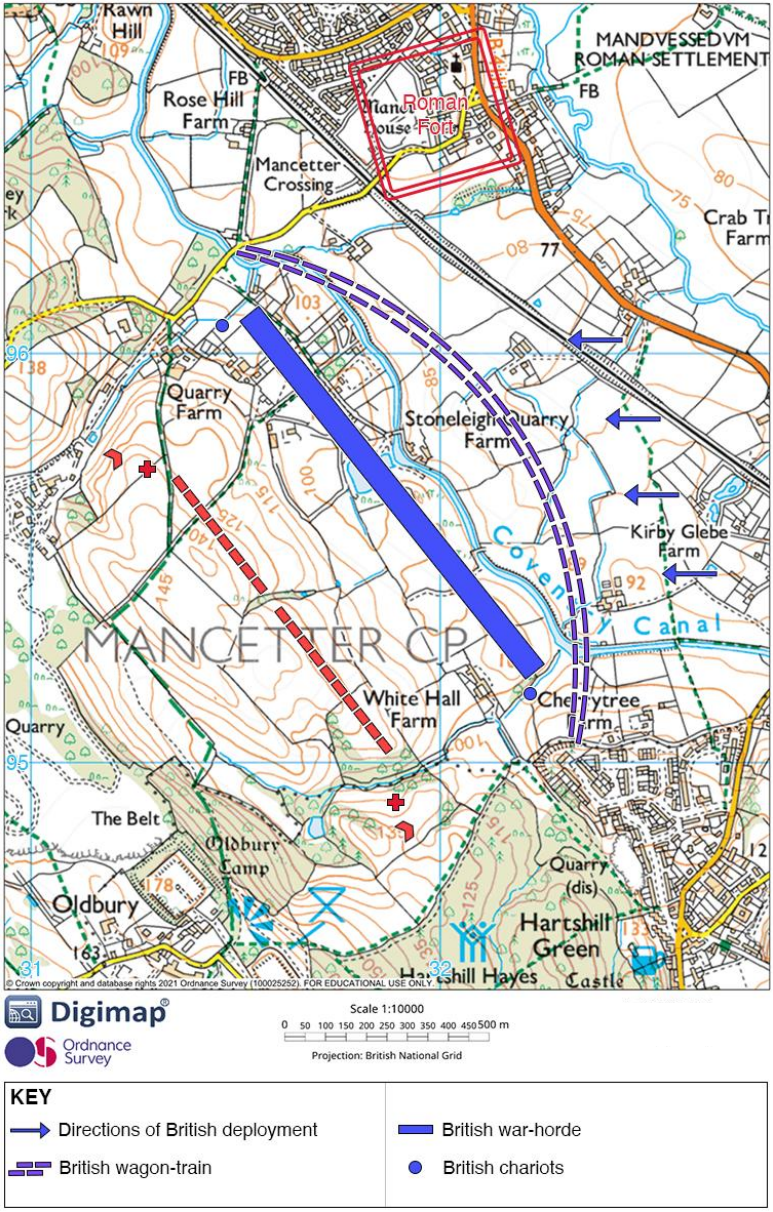


Figure 10: Hypothetical Map of British deployment at Mancetter[73]

[73]Map by present author using Digimap.

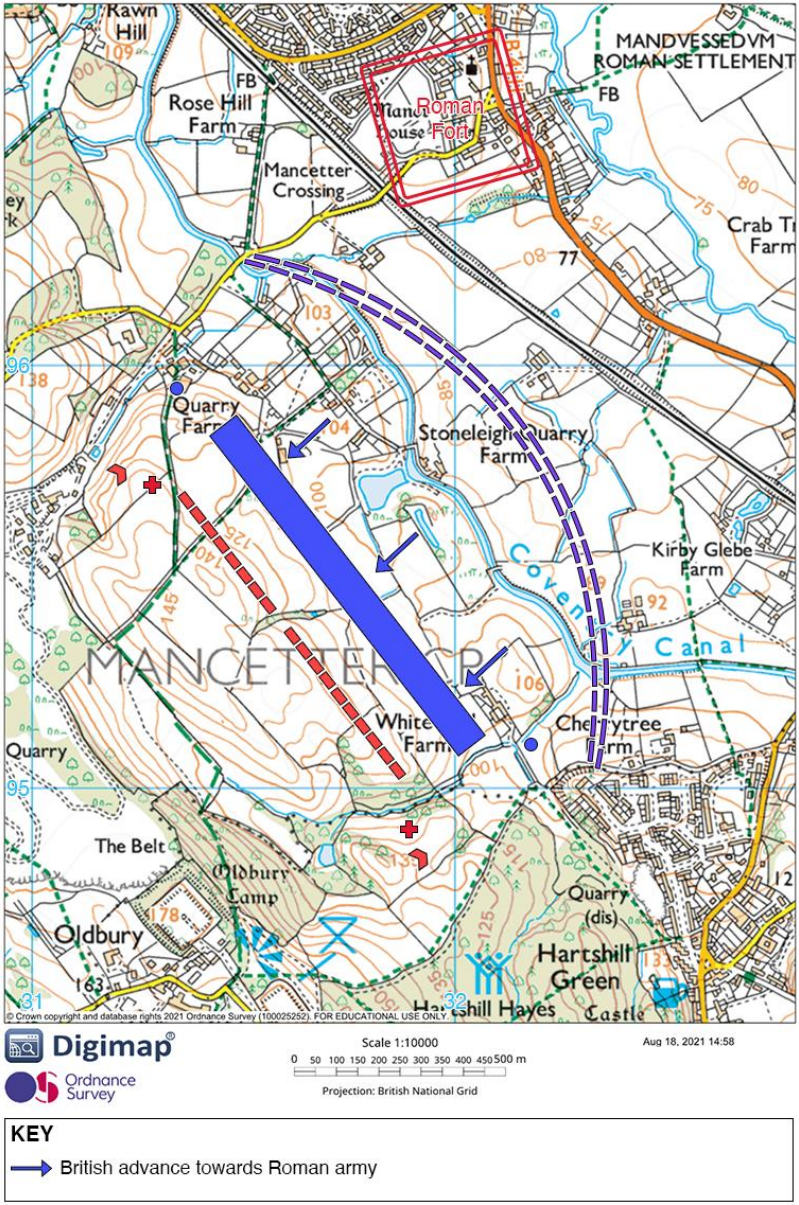


Figure 11: Hypothetical map of the British advance[74]

[74]Map by present author using Digimap.

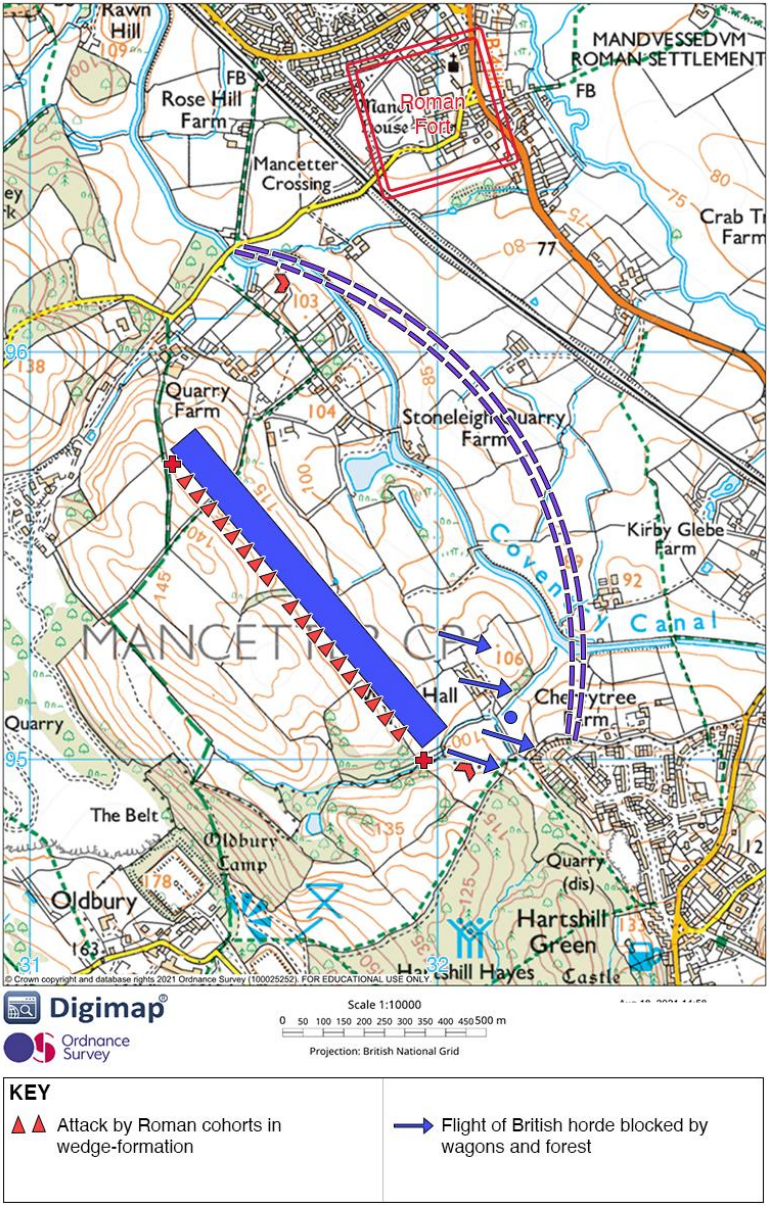


Figure 12: Hypothetical Map of the Roman attack and British flight[75]

[75]Map by present author using Digimap.

Figure 11 depicts the British forces as dismounted from the wagons and deployed as a horde, with a frontline of around 1km and a depth of around 100m, advancing uphill towards the Roman position. After the discharge of Roman javelins came the charge by the Roman infantry in wedge-like formation (Figure 12), either in cohorts of around 480 men or in centuries of around 100 men.[76] As Tacitus narrates in *Annals* 14.37.1, 'The advance of the auxiliaries was the same; and with extended lances the cavalry broke through whatever strong opposition was in the way.'

Tacitus portrays the battle as a short and easy Roman victory, adhering to his tendency in the *Annals*.[77] He narrates the end of the battle in *Annals* 14.37.3: 'The others turned their backs and fled, with escape being difficult, because the wagons had surrounded and blocked the exits.' In the hypothetical reconstruction in Figure 12, the final stages of the battle might have been around the eastern ravine at Mancetter, now near White Hall Farm and the Hartshill Hayes woodland. The British wagons, if parked densely here, might have hampered escape from the battlefield.

The deployments depicted above raise various issues. A decision by Suetonius for Roman forces to leave the defensible Mancetter fort, to fight Boudicca on the hillside to the south, would have exposed the Roman army to open attack. However, the landscape south of Mancetter offered strong natural defences in the form of ravines and surrounding woodland. Secondly, the envisaged deployments potentially allowed an assault by Roman reserve forces in the Mancetter fort, behind the British lines. Nonetheless, according to Tacitus, the British forces were keen for battle, and they might have rushed into battle positions without calculating the tactical risks involved.

Part Four: Previous Views of a Battle at Mancetter

The main early advocates of Mancetter as the battlefield site were Graham Webster and Donald Dudley (1962). Their battlefield plan showed the deployment of Roman forces beside woods somewhere west of Mancetter, based on Dudley's translation of *Annals* 14.34.2: 'He chose a position in a narrow defile, protected from behind by a

[76]Tacitus says *velut cuneo*, meaning 'like a wedge'. Cowan, *Roman Battle Tactics*, pp.46-48, discusses how different infantry formations could be described as *cuneus*.
[77]David S. Levene, 'Warfare in the *Annals*', in Anthony J. Woodman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp.227-231.

forest'.[78] In *Boudica* (1978), Webster produced a different version of a battle at Mancetter, with a plan based on OS mapping (see Figure 13).[79]

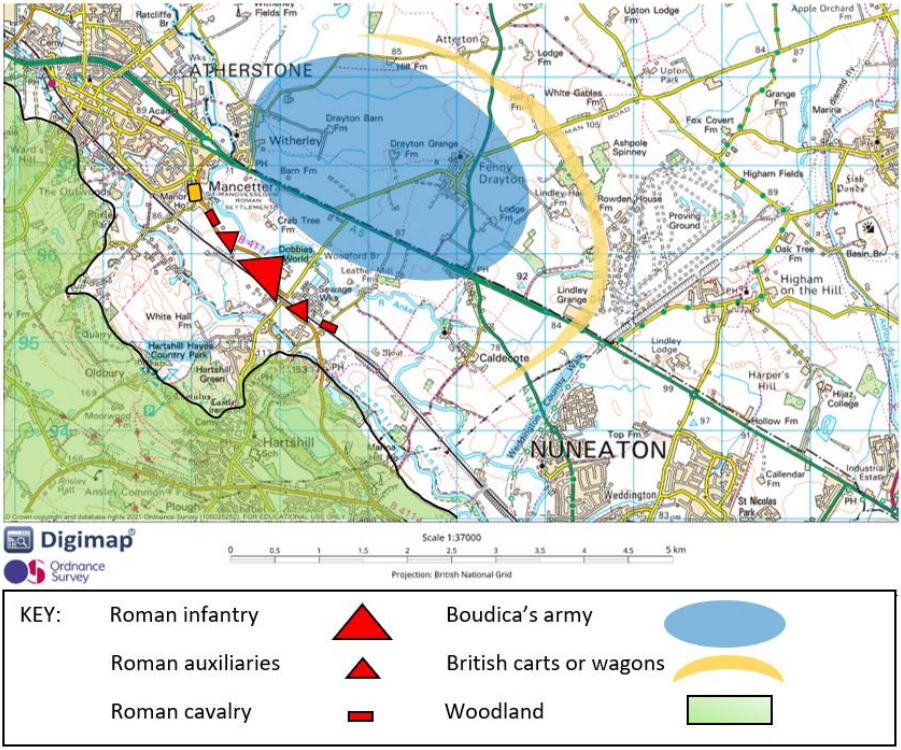


Figure 13: Webster's 1978 Version of a Mancetter Battlefield[80]

[78]Dudley and Webster, *The Rebellion*, p.73, p.140. Their 1962 battle-plan was adapted by Sealey, *The Boudican Revolt*, p. 39. For his full translation, see Donald Dudley, *The Annals of Tacitus* (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1966).
[79]Webster, *Boudica*, pp.96-101.
[80]The map by Webster, *Boudica*, p.98, Fig. 5 (©Taylor & Francis) is transposed here by the present author (with permission) onto a modern OS map-base using Digimap.

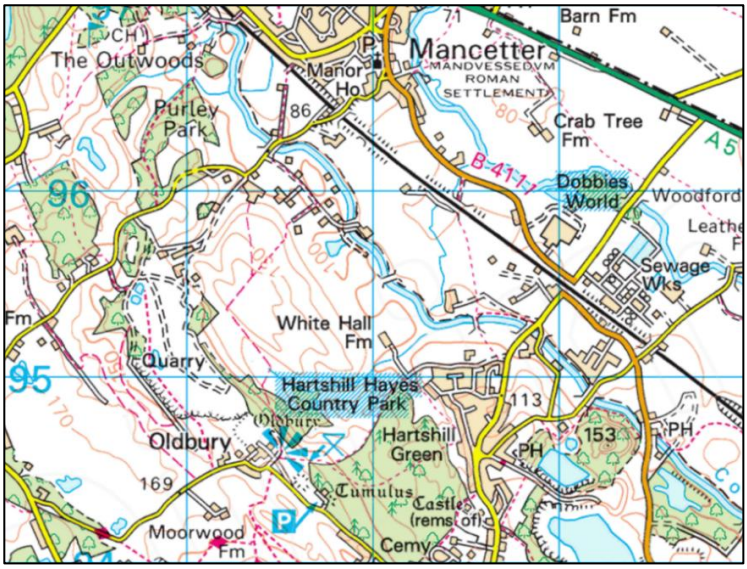


Figure 14: Mancetter landscape[81]

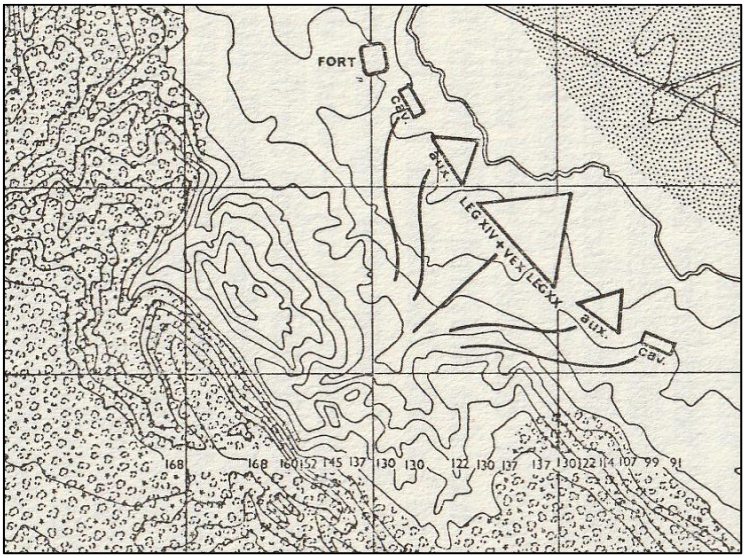


Figure 15: Detail from Webster's 1978 map of Mancetter[82]

[81]Extract from OS map using Digimap (with permission).

[82]Extract from Webster, *Boudica*, p.98, Fig. 5 ©Taylor & Francis (with permission).

Problems with Webster's 1978 Version of a Battle at Mancetter

Webster made several potential mistakes or adjustments to the landscape in his 1978 account and battlefield map (see Figures 13-15). Firstly, Webster replaced Oldbury Camp with woodland symbols (Figure 15), while carefully re-constructing the landscape's contours. Secondly, he deleted the Hartshill Hayes woodland, thereby depicting the Roman army as emerging from an enclave 2km wide.[83] Thirdly, *Annals* chapter 14 describes the Roman position as enclosed by woodland, with the British wagons positioned so that the women could witness the expected victory. Webster, however, placed the British wagons over 4km from the woodland (Figure 13), probably too distant for spectators to witness the events.

Fourthly, Webster's 1978 map portrayed a battlefield of around 12 square kilometres, with Boudicca's army occupying around 6 square kilometres (6 million square metres). At 4 square metres per man, this would require a British army of around 1.5 million men, approximately the entire adult male population of Roman Britain. Webster apparently incorporated Dio's longer version of the battle into his narrative and battlefield map, thereby extending the battle far beyond the confined location described by Tacitus. In Webster's version of events, the battle continued up to the British wagons, 3km from the River Anker, but no river-crossing is mentioned by Tacitus or Dio. Finally, Webster did not translate the text of *Annals* 14.34.2 describing the battle's location, but loosely paraphrased the text, perhaps using the translation by Church and Brodribb or by John Jackson, which both state that Suetonius 'chose a position approached by a narrow defile'.[84] This translation is potentially inaccurate grammatically, inserting a past participle 'approached', not found in the Latin text.

Other authors' views of a battle at Mancetter

Fry (1982) was perhaps the first author to locate the whole battle on the hillside slopes south of Mancetter. The Roman forces 'could have been drawn up on the northern slopes of the ridge, with the protecting woods behind…And in the plain Boudica's host could have been massed.' The British force moved into the clearing between the two 'prongs' of woodland, then up the slope; after the discharge of javelins, the Roman legionaries charged downhill.[85] Trow (2004) also believes that the Roman army fought 'on the slopes above the Anker that day in the summer of 61'. In Trow's opinion, the bodies would have been thickest at the base of the hill, and the British wagon-train where the women were slaughtered was south-west of the River Anker.[86]

[83]Webster, *Boudica*, p.98.
[84]Church and Brodribb, *The Annals*, p.271; Jackson, *Tacitus*, p.163.
[85]Fry, *Rebellion against Rome*, pp.65-70.
[86]Trow, *Boudicca*, pp.14-15, p.31, p,192.

Nic Fields has produced two different versions of a battle at Mancetter. Fields (2009) envisages a compact battlefield in the enclave surrounded by woodland, south of Mancetter. In his battlefield map, Fields omits Mancetter fort and Oldbury Camp and depicts the wagon-train behind the British forces, forming a cordon between the woodland's extremities.[87] In contrast, Fields (2011) mainly follows Webster's later (1978) theories, with a battlefield of around 12 square kilometres.[88] The Roman army's starting-position is again the hillside south of Mancetter, protected by the forest. Fields now includes Mancetter fort but omits Oldbury Camp and inserts woodland symbols instead. Fields shows the British wagon-train several kilometres from the woodland, stating that Boudicca's forces would have waded through the Anker at least twice during the battle, whose ending he envisages beside the distant British wagon-train. To Fields, the *gyrus* or horse-training ring at The Lunt, an early Roman fort 13km south of Mancetter, was perhaps for re-training horses captured from Boudicca's forces.

Various authors have criticised Webster's 1978 version of events. Evans (2004) objects to Webster's view of a battle on the Anker's flood-plain, as inconsistent with the text of Tacitus and with Roman military tactics.[89] Waite (2007) concurs, also considering Roman deployment for battle unlikely south of Mancetter, in an area of around a square kilometre surrounded by woodland, since the Roman army would have been tightly hemmed in, while accepting this idea as consistent with the text of Tacitus.[90]

Local authors have contributed to the debate, especially Margaret Hughes, whose book *Boudica at Mancetter: The Latin, The Land, The Logistics* (2020) makes a strong contribution towards identifying Mancetter as the battlefield site. Hughes proposes that *faucibus* in *Annals* 14.34.2 refers to the eastern ravine-system by Hartshill Hayes. Regarding Webster's 1978 battlefield map as a 'useful foundation', Hughes portrays a battle starting on the flood-plain beside Mancetter fort and extending several kilometres eastwards. Hughes includes Oldbury Camp in her discussion of Roman battle-preparations, but not in her battlefield map, regarding it as an Iron Age fort and as the Roman army's assembly-point rather than as pre-battle accommodation.[91]

[87]Fields, *The Roman Army*, pp. 75-76; McNab, *The Roman Army*, p.178.
[88]Fields, *Boudicca's Rebellion*, pp.76-77.
[89]Martin Marix Evans, *The defeat of Boudicca's rebellion*, (Towcester: Gemini Press, 2004), pp.32-33.
[90]John Waite, *Boudica's Last Stand: Britain's Revolt against Rome AD 60–61*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2007), pp.168-171.
[91]Hughes, *Boudica at Mancetter*, pp.136-150, p.179, p.186.

Conclusions: Was Mancetter Boudicca's last battle site?

So far, no large-scale archaeological evidence of a battle has been discovered at Mancetter, such as extensive finds of weaponry or burial pits containing British casualties of battle, and this is a potential objection to the proposal that Mancetter was the battle site. However, the same is true of many other locations proposed as the battlefield, and no proposed site should be dismissed if the archaeological evidence of a battle is currently inconclusive. Decisive archaeological evidence may still be awaiting discovery and excavation. Roman lead slingshots have been found at one proposed battlefield site, Windridge Farm, but these might not derive from a battle against Boudicca.[92]

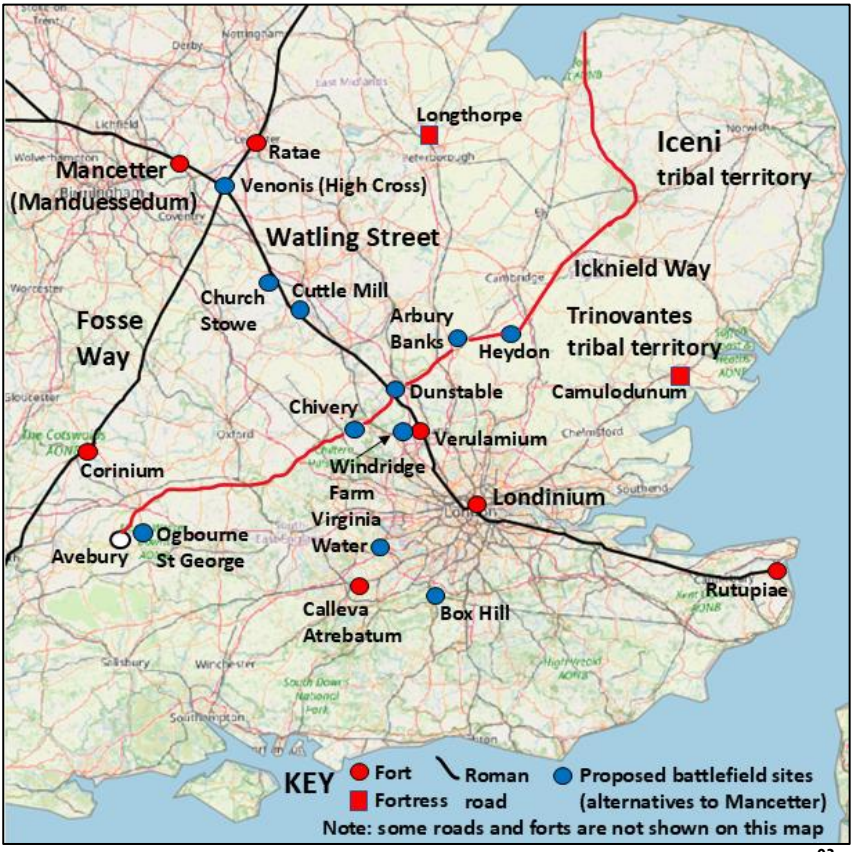


Figure 16: Mancetter and some alternative proposed battlefield sites[93]

[92]Mackay, *Echolands*, pp.260-268

[93]Map by present author, based on various sources, using QGIS mapping.

Many alternatives to Mancetter have been proposed as the battle's location. Eleven other candidate sites (mapped in Figure 16) were listed in the Introduction to this article, and many more have been suggested. In concluding this article, we should summarize the main factors supporting Mancetter's claim to be the battle's location, and why dissenting voices might be incorrect.

Despite the lack of major archaeological evidence of a battle, Mancetter has the strongest claim as the location of Boudicca's last battlefield, for three main reasons. Firstly, based on a detailed analysis of the Latin text of the *Annals*, the present article proposes that Suetonius chose a position enclosed by a narrow ravine, or by narrow ravines, and enclosed by woodland in the rear. This new translation may be an advance in our understanding of the battle's location, as it closely matches the landscape south of Mancetter. Some proponents of alternative battlefield sites have not concerned themselves sufficiently with analysing the Latin text of the *Annals*, which is a crucial task for a historian searching for Boudicca's last battlefield.

Secondly, Mancetter was the site of a Roman vexillation fort close to Watling Street, 1.5km north of the battlefield proposed in this article. The recently proposed Windridge Farm site also had a nearby Roman fort at *Verulamium*, but Boudicca had destroyed the fort. Archaeological finds at the Mancetter fort include two terret rings of native British horse-harness, resembling others found in Norfolk, the heartland of Boudicca's tribe. The military advantages of the Mancetter landscape south of the fort were perhaps already familiar to Legion XIV, which had occupied the fort around AD 50-58, only a few years before the battle. 2km south of Mancetter fort, Oldbury Camp might also have featured in Roman battle-preparations.

Thirdly, the Roman place-name *Manduessedum*, from which Mancetter derives, means 'horse-chariot'. The name *Manduessedum* may have been coined to commemorate a battle involving British war-chariots drawn by horses or ponies. Tacitus mentions Boudicca's chariot, and Dio Cassius mentions British chariots in the battle. While we cannot be certain why the name *Manduessedum* arose, no other proposed site has place-name evidence potentially supporting its identification as the battlefield.

Previous searches for archaeological evidence of a battle at Mancetter have closely followed Graham Webster's 1978 theory of a battle north-east of Mancetter but have failed to find the remains of a battle. If the present article is correct in identifying the landscape south of Mancetter as the likely battlefield, this might be a more productive area for future archaeological investigation. The eastern ravine-system near Oldbury Camp and Hartshill Hayes contains various small ravines and hollows, eminently suitable for the disposal of bodies. Through careful translation and excavation, remains of Boudicca's army might yet be found.