

EXPEDITIO KALKRIESIANA

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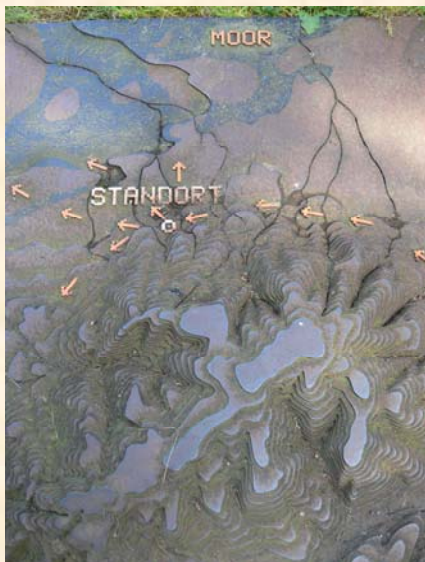
A Trip to the Site of the Varus Battle

Exactly 2000 years ago, in the days of September 9 AD, the famous battle between Varus and Arminius was fought. The exact location of the battlefield in the Teutoburg Forest was controversial for centuries, but excavations starting in the 1980s have provided convincing evidence for the area at Kalkriese/Oberesch, some 15 kilometers north of Osnabrück.



The fighting continued for several days, during which the Romans were still marching, so it is futile to search for a single spot as THE place of the battle. However, the area to the north of the Kalkrieser Berg (Mount Kalkriese) is apparently the region where the Roman expedition force received the final blow from Arminius' Germanic warriors.

2000 years ago, there was only a narrow passage between an extensive bog to the north and the Kalkriese mountain, covered with impenetrable forest, to the south. The defile of an army through such a bottleneck was considered extremely dangerous by ancient military writers, and it betrays Arminius' tactical skills that he forced his opponent to chose exactly such a path.



Arminius additionally enhanced his tactical advantage by building a stretched fortification along the foot of the Kalkriese mountain, thus further narrowing the passageway for the Romans and at the same time providing a fighting platform for his own men, from which they could shower the enemy with missiles. This rampart was up to 2 meters high, built from turf and fortified with a palisade. Gates in the rampart allowed for quick sallies of the Germanic warriors, which certainly had a highly enervating and demoralizing effect on the Romans, who could not effectively strike back from their awkward position between rampart and swamp.

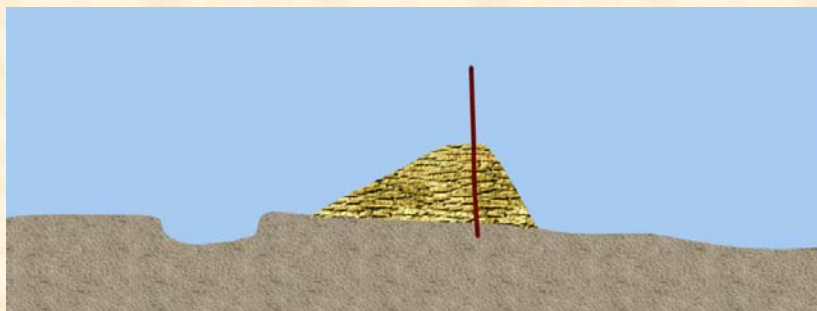


The reconstructed rampart seen from the inner = Germanic side

The construction looks quite Roman and appears influenced by Roman military engineering that Arminius had learned from his former masters. The “Roman style“ of the carefully planned work is especially evident from an additional feature, a small trench behind the bulwark. It was raining heavily in those days of 9 AD, and the large amount of water flowing down from the Kalkrieser Berg would have threatened the whole fortification – the trench neatly prevented this.



The reconstructed rampart seen from the outer = Roman side; the trench is visible behind the gate



Today, the landscape has not much in common with the ancient scenery. The dense forest has disappeared as well as the bog. In the museum park at Kalkriese, the likely path of the Romans is marked by large slabs on the ground, while the assumed course of the rampart is indicated by upright poles. A small section of the rampart with a gate has additionally been reconstructed, giving a very realistic impression of the situation two millennia ago.



Left: View of the area from the tower of the Museum; Right: the path of the Romans, upright poles on the left indicate the rampart in the sections that have not been reconstructed

An impression of the swampy landscape is given in a small area with an authentic reconstruction of the ancient vegetation based on archaeobotanical evidence. And a small piece of the woods will be allowed to grow back into a real primeval forest, intended to re-create the atmosphere of the „Germanic Forest“ with its network of pathways through the undergrowth, which were used for hit-and-run attacks on the Romans. Right now, the forest still bears traces of the human usage in recent centuries, thus for an authentic Germanic forest feeling, you should postpone your visit at Kalkriese for some 100 years ...



Reconstructed bog vegetation and a warrior path in a would-be primeval forest with – please come back later!

See also: <http://www.kalkriese-varusschlacht.de/>

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