WHAT DOES A WALL BENEATH PARIS TELL US ABOUT JULIUS CAESAR?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A recently discovered wall beneath a hospital in central Paris may help explain what happened when Julius Caesar's army attacked the Gallic settlement of Lutetia in 52 BC. Caesar described the Gauls as wild and badly organised, while presenting Roman soldiers as clever and disciplined. His account says the Parisii tribe burned their settlement and destroyed its bridges before the Roman attack. Archaeologists have now found a charred wall and building remains on the Île de la Cité, the island in the River Seine at the centre of modern Paris. The discovery supports the idea that Lutetia stood on the island, as Caesar claimed. However, it also shows that the Gauls built strong defences, had skilled metalworkers and used roads, bridges and drainage systems. The Parisii may have burned their own settlement because they realised it could not withstand Roman weapons and wanted to stop useful supplies falling into enemy hands. nationalgeographic.com

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

Caesar was not a neutral reporter. He wrote about his own wars and had good reasons to make Rome's enemies look foolish. Archaeology can test parts of his story, while also showing where his version may be unfair or exaggerated. The discovery helps us ask who gets to tell the story of a war.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"Why might Caesar have described the Gauls unfairly?"

Source: National Geographic

https://www.nationalgeographic.com/newsletters/article/julius-caesar-ancient-paris-gauls-stones-bones