

Alauna

is one of the commonest ancient names in Britain and on the Continent

1. *Alauna*, mentioned in RC at number 118 in R&C's list, was probably the Roman fort at [Maryport](#), Cumbria, on the river Ellen at NY039372.
2. *Alauna* is mentioned in RC at number 78 in R&C's list, where RC's track executes a big jump from [Brinavis](#) (Brentford) to [Utriconium](#) Cornoviorum (Wroxeter). Out of several candidate places close to that line, the strongest is probably Alcester, Warwickshire, with a confluence of the rivers now called Alne and Arrow, an important crossroads, a Roman fort, and a Roman walled town, clustered around SP088572 ([Booth](#), 1994). Less likely is the Roman town at Alchester, Oxfordshire, SP57242025, near modern Bicester, beside a [floodplain](#) more than a serious river. Also possible is the [Greensforge](#) complex of Roman forts and camps around SO863886, by what is now a [canal](#) leading to the Severn.
3. *Alauna*, mentioned in RC's tour of harbour estuaries at number 263 in R&C's list, was most likely at the mouth of the river Orwell in East Anglia, by the former Roman fort at [Walton Castle](#).
4. *Alauna*, mentioned in RC at number 32 in R&C's list, was probably beside Αλαυνου ποταμου εκβολαι of Ptolemy 2,3,4 (at coordinates 17°40' 52°40', see [Stückelberger et al.](#)) at number 37 in the list of [Kleineberg et al.](#) This fits Uphill, ST314582, at the mouth of the Somerset river Axe.
5. *Alauna*, mentioned in RC at number 187 in R&C's list, was probably also the Αλαυνα of Ptolemy 2,3,10, at 20°20' 58°40', a *πολις* of the [Ἰταδῆνοι](#), at number 79 of [Kleineberg et al.](#)'s list. This would fit the Roman fort at [Low Learchild](#), Northumberland, on the river Aln above Alnwick, at NU101123. [Marx \(2013\)](#) disagreed with this location but did not suggest an alternative.
6. Αλαυνου ποταμου εκβολαι, of Ptolemy 2,3,6, 21°40' 58°30', at number 55 in the list of [Kleineberg et al.](#), who placed it at the mouth of the river Aln. Marx (2013) later preferred the mouth of the Tweed, but that does not seem entirely convincing.
7. Αλαυνα of Ptolemy 2,3,9, 22°45' 59°20' was a *πολις* of the [Damnonii](#). At number 75 in the list of Kleineberg et al., its coordinates point to the region of Stirling (Marx, 2013). R&S suggested that the name survives in Allan Water and therefore suggested the Roman fort at Ardoch. Allan Water rises in the Ochil Hills near the likely location of [Graupius Mons](#), then flows through Dunblane and Bridge of Allan to join the river Forth near Stirling. There is no single hillfort or concentrated archaeological evidence of native settlement that demands to be this Αλαυνα *πολις*, but candidates include [Gowan Hill](#) (by Stirling Castle), [Abbey Craig](#) (under the Wallace Monument), Ardoch, Dunblane, and [Dun Knock](#). Another attractive possibility is the [Castle Craig](#) hillfort (now destroyed) at NS912977, above Tillicoultry, which hints that the river now called Devon, past modern Alva, used to be an *Alauna*. Maybe the distinct river Black Devon, through modern Alloa, was also. Nevertheless, the best guess for this Αλαυνα is Cramond, near Edinburgh, where there was a [Roman fort](#) at NT190768 beside the river Almond, plus [evidence](#) of human habitation stretching back thousands of years. This fort would otherwise have no name and it yielded an [inscription](#) mentioning ALATERVIS
8. *Alauna Silva*, mentioned in RC at number 24 in R&C's list, was very likely the [Woodbury Farm](#) fort, at SY298973, near Axminster.
9. *Alone* of AI *iter* 10 was the fort at [Low Borrowbridge](#), NY60940127, linked to the main north-south Roman road (equivalent to the modern M6) as recently clarified by [Lidar](#) work. ND's *Alione* was probably there too. The adjacent river Lune preserves the name (despite unnecessary fretting by Ekwall, 1928:270-1).
10. *Alunna*, mentioned in RC at number 110 in the list of R&C (who misread it as *Alicuna*), was probably the [Castle Steads](#) promontory fort near Walmersley, Lancashire, beside the river Irwell, at SD79701298.

RC also mentions *Alabum* and *Alovergium*.

R&S showed a map of 11 definite river names (plus several probables) that may descend from *Alauna* in Britain. [Lacroix](#) (2005: 220-4) listed about 30 place names in France that may come

from *Alauna*, mostly in the former province of *Celtica*. Nicolaisen (2001: 239-240) listed other candidates from Scotland and elsewhere.

Alauna appears to be an adjective that served primarily as a river name, applied secondarily to forts and settlements upon those rivers, and to people and gods from there. Discussions by R&S, [Delamarre](#) (2003:37), Falileyev (2010:6), and others do not materially advance from Ekwall (1928:6-8), who wrote:

As regards the etymology of the stem Alaun-, all that can be said with certainty is that it must be an old British stem, or it would not have been so widely spread or so diversified in meaning. It is hardly probable that it originally denoted a deity and that other applications of the stem developed out of that. Nor is it probable that the various meanings had their starting point in the use of the stem as a river-name. More probably we have to assume a stem with a meaning that rendered it apt to be used in forming names of rivers, deities, persons. Some meaning such as 'holy' or 'mighty' would give a suitable starting-point.

It seems to be generally accepted that *-auna* was an adjective-forming ending. It might be related to “Gaulish” *onno*, which [Endlicher's Glossary](#) translated as Latin *flumen* ‘river’, and to Latin *unda* ‘wave’ and to PIE [*\(s\)nau-](#) ‘to flow’ and to the *-na* endings of rivers (notably *Matrona*=Marne, *Sequana*=Seine), springs (e.g. *Divona*), or goddesses (e.g. Roman *Bellona*).

Various PIE roots have been invoked to explain the initial *Al-*:

- [*al-](#) ‘to grow, to nourish’, whose descendants include Latin [alumna](#) ‘foster daughter’ and various [Germanic](#) words such as Old English [alan](#);
- [*al-](#) ‘to wander’, related to Latin [ambulo](#) ‘to walk about’;
- [*albho-](#) ‘white, gleaming’;
- [*el-](#)³ ‘eel’ of Watkins (2011:23) ‘fish’; and
- [*el-/ol-](#) ‘to flow, to stream’ invoked by Nicolaisen (2001:240), who explicitly called *Alauna* “pre-Celtic”.

A deity [Ialonus](#) is known from three inscriptions. This resembles Greek [υαλος](#) ‘crystalline stone’ (the root of modern hyaline), but might be connected with rivers *Alauna* and *Lune*.

A series of inscriptions (such as [this](#)) dedicated to the *Alounae* were found in southern Germany where the river now called *Alz* flows out of the lake now called *Chiemsee*.

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