

CHAPTER IX.

THE CIRCUS IN BRITAIN.

Native life little affected by Roman conquest—Roman ‘amphitheatres’ in Britain—Maumbury Ring—Other examples—Charterhouse-on-Mendip—Size no criterion—Borcovicium, Llanidan—Cheney Longville—Y Gaer Ddu, Tomen-y-Mur—The ‘Frying Pan’ on Ham Hill—Buckland Bank and Chapman’s Pit—Church Barrow at Woodcuts—Provision for keeping the Moot dry—‘Circi’ in Cranborne Chase—Views of Colt Hoare, Warne, Colley March, etc.—Winfrith, Curknel Pit, Old Rothbury, etc.—Castlestead Ring—Mayburgh—Park Brow, in Sompting—Theatral ‘circus’ in Arundel Park—General features—The Dorset stone circles—The ‘Ring’ at Carmarthen—‘Pond Barrows’—‘Circi’ and mazes—Vinogradoff and Festus on ‘vici’—‘Compita’—Business of the Moot—Alfred on ‘anfitheatra’—Why no finds in the ‘circi’—Sanctity of the Moot.

The Roman occupation of Britain, a matter of some 400 years,² did not affect the purely Celtic character of the population. In the larger towns it introduced a good deal of Roman culture, but there is abundant evidence that the *pagani* and those who filled the smaller towns and villages, and these were far the larger part of the *infinita multitudo*,³ felt but little material change. For the most part they lived exactly the same lives as before, save that they were compelled to recognise the *Pax Romana*, and to pay taxes to Roman instead of to native masters. Even politically there was no violent change: the communities remained com-

munities as before, and each, therefore, had its own moot; and for the most part the new *régime* would make no difference to the business or to the use and methods of such moots. Druidism itself was left untouched¹ until misuse of its wonderful organisation compelled the Romans to break it (A.D. 61) for good and all; but that event, if it broke up the nation’s unity, left still untouched the individual communities. The Roman policy was to proselytise by tact rather than by force²: Roman colonies in Camalodunum, in Eboracum and in Lindum, served as models of what was to be imitated, and the Celt, always receptive, took the hint according to his degree of culture and of proximity or otherwise, more or less readily. What had been native *oppida* came in the course of years to be Roman *urbes*; what had been ‘villages’ grew into *castella*;³ and all over the southern half of Britain were the villas of the wealthier folk—sometimes genuine Romans, but more often denationalised Celts—each a centre of Roman culture. But round all these lay hundreds of nameless native settlements where the native life ran as it had always run, save for the change of masters. Roman Britain presented much the same phenomena and much the same contrasts as does British India. The Britanni never ceased to be a nation,⁴ and when left to their own resources rallied valiantly as one people to maintain a more obstinate resistance against the barbarians than did any other part of the Empire.⁵ Whatever harm might come of the rivalries of various aspirants to the kingship, there is no trace in tradition of any disunity amongst the people; and apparently the four centuries of Roman rule had made possible a British nation by destroying British tribalism—at any rate over the main part of Britain proper as distinct from Wales. Proof of the fact is provided by the slow course of the Saxon conquest: Old Sarum did not fall (552) until fifty-seven years after the landing of Cerdic on the coast of Hampshire, only thirty miles away.

Each *colonia* of necessity had its moot, which was, of

¹ It would be needful only to omit the words ‘for burial.’

² Prof. J. B. Bury has lately shown in *Journal of Roman Studies* for 1920 (actually

1922) some reason to believe that the final departure of the legions occurred only in 442.

³ Caesar, *B.G.* v, xii, 3.

¹ In Gaul Druidism was suppressed in part by successive decrees of Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius; but Mela could write of it (*circa* A.D. 50) as still a system. Things in Britain, it is to be presumed, would take much the same course.

² Tacitus, *Agricola*, 21.

³ Bede, *H.E.* i, i, § 5.

⁴ Rev. G. Wade-Evans in *Y Cymmrodor*, xxxi (1921), pp. 68-9.

⁵ J. R. Green, *Making of England* (1881), p. 24.

course, a *forum* of the Roman plan ; and each of the twenty-eight 'noble cities'¹ would in due course provide itself with the like, according to its ability, as at Calleva, Londinium and Viroconium. Some of the smaller towns in which the Roman element came to predominate would replace their native moots by *circi* of the correct Italian form. In the upshot the new fashion would prevail even in many communities where there was no genuinely Roman population, and either the native moot, of whatever form, would be remodelled on the Roman plan, or there would be built a moot of that plan beside the older one. Fashioned by native hands, such *circi* would be of varying degrees of merit : some would be excellent copies, some bad copies, and some again obvious botches. There are examples of each kind still surviving.

A limited number of such British earthworks, because of their large proportions, have long been recognised as due to Roman influence, but, the true nature of the *circus* not being understood, they have been interpreted as 'amphitheatres' intended solely for games and spectacles ; and this obsession as to their purpose has prevented archaeologists from recognising that the country is strewn with a multitude of works of exactly the same construction, but of sizes varying from the bigness of that of Richborough to as little as 40 ft. in diameter. It was felt to be absurd to call by the name of 'amphitheatre' an arena which is obviously too small for anything but a boxing-match or a village dance. But even Richborough's 'amphitheatre'—and it is not the biggest of its kind in England : its arena measures 200 ft. by 166 ft.²—is not too big for a moot, and though it may possibly be an example of the occurrence of the genuine *amphitheatrum* in Britain, it is also possible that it was originally built only to serve as the *circus* of Rutupiae.

Maumbury Ring at Dorchester has been proved to be a Roman work, and its dimensions may justify the name of 'amphitheatre,' for its arena measures 192 ft. by 158 ft. and it is estimated to have accommodated 10,000 persons. The floor was sunk to a depth of 10 ft. below the natural surface, the banks rose as much as 35 ft. in vertical height ;

¹ Bede, *H.E.* i, i, § 5.

² Roach Smith, *Antiqs. of Richboro'* (1850), p. 162. Its two entrances were unusually

placed in the centres of the two sides, instead of at the ends.

their external slope is still 35 ft. and the internal as much as 55 ft. The *cavea*, therefore, had an over-all measurement of some 275 ft. by 240 ft. Something of its present shape it owes to the Cromwellians, who modified it to serve the purpose of a fort. But certain recent discoveries have raised the question whether the Romans' work here was not a re-conditioning of an older work, a circular 'island' like that of Avebury, enclosed within a large fosse and an external vallum. This theory is based upon the finding of 'shafts,' which, it is suggested, represent this prehistoric fosse ; and this, it is supposed, was either left unfinished because of the builders' lack of skill, or interrupted before it could be completed.¹ The shafts, of funnel-like shape, are sunk into the solid chalk along the curve of the ellipse forming the Roman arena, to a depth of 30 ft. below the original surface. They had been filled in with loose rubble, amongst which were found deer-horn picks. As the Roman arena was 10 ft. below the original surface, it must have been converted into a pond in wet weather unless some means of drainage were devised ; and this may very well have been the purpose of the so-called 'prehistoric shafts.' They are precisely like what the modern builder calls 'soak-aways' or blind drains. The deer-horn picks do not necessarily imply any immense antiquity.² The shafts are set out with perfect regularity, they are fairly uniform in size, and they are neatly finished off at the bottom, giving small suggestion of a task which was for whatever reason interrupted. They were not flint-mines, and the suggestion that they represent the ancient Britons' way of going about to make a big trench is a ludicrous libel on that race. On the other hand, the catchment-basin afforded by this immense ringwork has a superficial area of 2.44 acres, or some twenty-five times as large as that of a *circus* of average size, so that it is impossible to believe that there was no provision for hastening the escape of rain-water, and for this purpose the most

¹ See the various *Reports of the Excavation Committee*, i-v (1909-1913), and especially no. v.

² They were in ordinary use in Romano-British times ; see Pitt-Rivers, *Excavations*, iii, 135. Greenwell frequently found them

in barrows in Yorkshire (*British Barrows*, pp. 5, 201, 231, 432), and comments upon their utility in working chalk. One was found in a barrow of second or third century at Middleton-on-the-Wolds (Yorks.) associated with Romano-British remains (*Museum Journal*, Oct. 1921, p. 93).

practicable means would be the construction of blind drains.¹ The arrangement at Maumbury finds its analogue in the drainage-gutter (the 'canal') surrounding the orchestras of Greek theatres (e.g. Epidauros, Zea, and Athens), and that constructed by Julius round the arena of the *Circus Maximus*.

A much more suggestive, but insufficient, piece of evidence for the existence of some sort of *locus consecratus* on the spot in pre-Roman times is the great stone which appears once to have stood upright near the north-eastern entrance of the present amphitheatre,² and suggests at once a comparison with such a stone as the 'Friar's Heel' at Stonehenge; but as the matter stands at present, there is no proof that any of the work at Maumbury is other than of Romano-British date.

Other accepted 'amphitheatres' are that of Caerleon (204 ft. by 156 ft.),³ the Bull Ring at Cirencester (148 ft. by 134 ft.),⁴ and those of Silchester (150 ft. by 120 ft.)⁵ and Caerwent (145 ft. by 121 ft.).⁶ As only those of Richborough, Caerleon and Caerwent shew any traces of masonry, and in no instance is this more than a retaining wall to hold up the mass of soil forming the vallum, it is plain that nothing beyond a mere earthwork need be looked for.⁷ Excepting in the case of Cirencester, and possibly also Silchester,⁸ there is not even a tradition of

¹ Lt.-Col. Hawley found 'soak-aways' within the depressed enclosures of Romano-British villages in Wilts. which were shown by the evidence of pottery and coins to belong to the third-fourth centuries; *Wilts. Arch. and Nat. Hist. Mag.* vol. xlii (1923), p. 227.

² Roger Gale described this stone as still visible in his time (1719). In 1846 it was found *in situ*, upright, its top a foot below the turf, its base 13 ft. below. It was 'a conglomerate of flint, iron, sand, and calcareous matter,' without any marks of tooling. It was pulled up and left lying for a time, then broken up and removed piecemeal. In 1879 all memory of its fate was lost. See *Proc. Dorset Field Club*, vii, 66.

³ Ward, *Romano-British Buildings and Earthworks*, pp. 228-230.

⁴ Buckman and Newmarch, *Corinium*, p. 12. It seems at one time to have borne the name of the Quern, doubtless in reference to its shape.

⁵ *Archaeol.* xlii (1881), p. 345; 1 (1885),

p. 266. It had originally two entrances (see Stukeley's plate in *Itin. Curiosum*, and Joyce's plan in *Archaeol.* xlii, p. 345), one of which is now blocked.

⁶ *Archaeol.* lix (1904).

⁷ Colt Hoare remarked (*Anc. Wilts.* ii, p. 85) on the rarity of the occurrence of any masonry on Romano-British sites, though wattle-and-daub, stucco, rough pavements and hypocausts are common enough. Pitt-Rivers (*Excavations, passim*) found the same thing at Woodcuts, Woodyates, etc. Professor Vinogradoff (*Growth of the Manor*, p. 39) cites the last-named as proof of the rude character of the civilisation of the Romano-British *vici* of Cranborne Chase. 'The excavated villages,' he writes, 'are of the same type as that of Standlake in Oxfordshire, where only stone implements were found.'

⁸ In the eighteenth century it is said (*Philosophical Transactions*, no. 490) that five ranges of seats were still discernible in the clay and gravel of the vallum at Silchester.

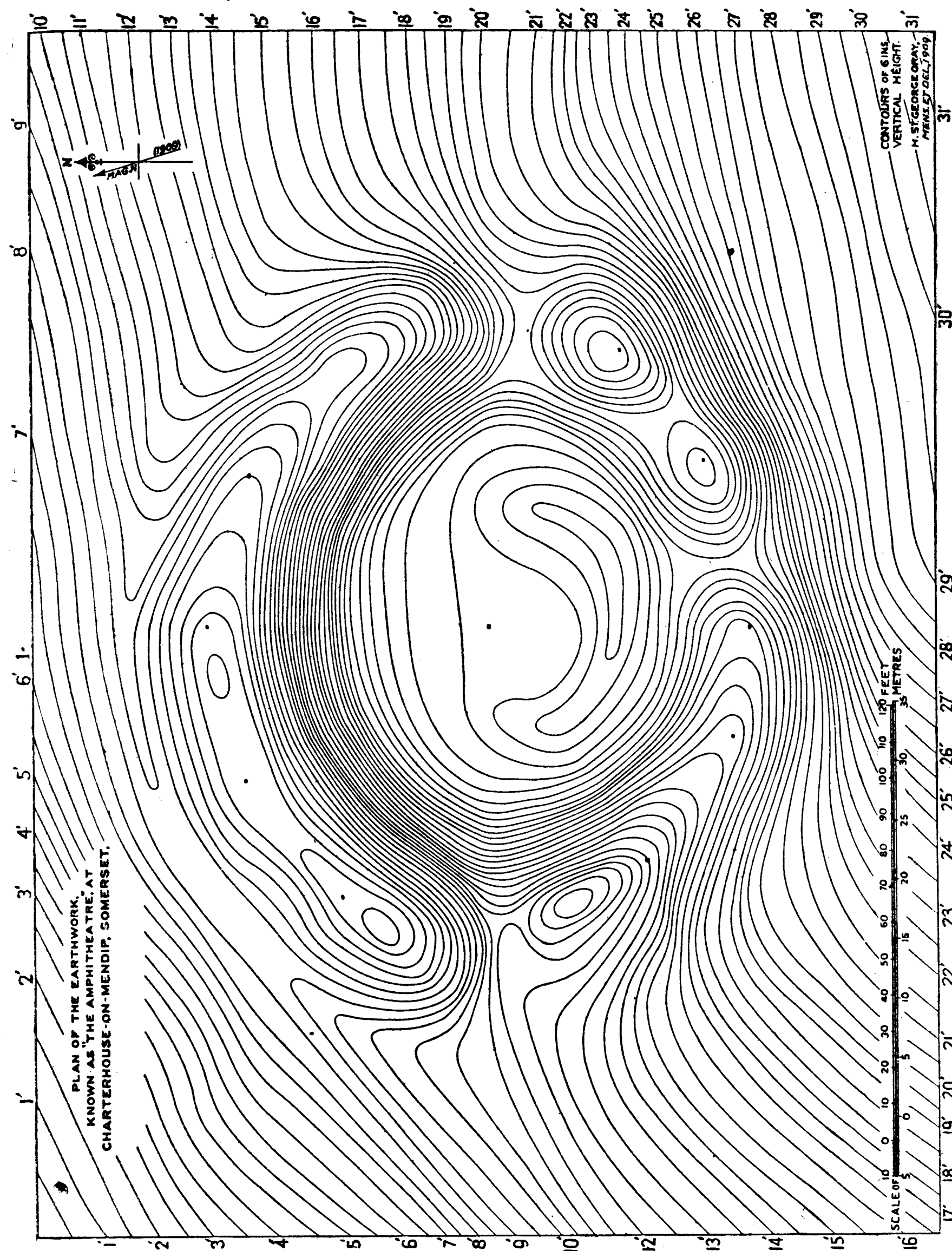


FIG. 17. CIRCUS, CHARTERHOUSE-ON-MENDIP, SOMERSET.

the existence of any stone seating, and even in Italy no seating was provided until the days of the Empire.¹ All shew the peculiar sunken floor, excepting only Caerwent, but there is evidence that this was a work of late construction and possibly was never finished.² Amongst the larger *circi* it stands alone also at the time of writing, in being situated within the walls of its city.

Very hesitantly Prebendary Scarth extended the name of 'amphitheatre' to a perfect example of the kind (fig. 17) at Charterhouse-on-Mendip (arena 105 ft. by 80 ft.), which has been explored by H. St. George Gray and proved to have been built at a date subsequent to the arrival of the Romans. Under plough as late as 1858 it had been considerably reduced, but still retained every essential feature of the true Italian *circus*, with vallum rising in places 15 ft. above the floor; and being built upon the sloping side of a hill, it was provided on the uphill (north) side with a shallow catch-water trench to prevent flooding. It yielded no finds beyond a few worked flints and Romano-British shards.³ There is some evidence that there once existed a similar work about half a mile to the south.

This is an interesting case, for Charterhouse was the seat of a considerable mining settlement in Romano-British times, and apparently in times yet earlier, for Rutter⁴ says that the locality was in his day (1829) 'covered with squares, circles, and irregular earthworks,' the usual vestiges of ancient settlements, while Phelps⁵ explicitly mentions two circles in the vicinity, one of which (diam. 50 ft.) bore the name of Gorse-Bigbury. The mention of *two* circles and the presence of two *circi* suggest that under Roman influence the British population built for themselves new moots after the Roman plan.⁶ Interesting also is the name of Gorse-(Bigbury), which may possibly represent the Celtic *gorsedd*. It occurs again applied to a stone circle in the Prescelly mountains.

¹ Tac. *Ann.* xiv, 20; Val. Max. xi, 4; Cic. *de Amicit.* 7: cf. John Strange in *Archaeol.* v (1779), 68: 'The people must have stood on the grassy declivity' of the *cavea*. But when the assembly was a moot the city fathers would certainly be seated, presumably round the *podium*.

² *Archaeol.* lix (1904), p. 104. The late date is shewn by the irregularity of its plan, the cheap character of the masonry, and the

fact that a number of earlier buildings had been pulled down to make room for it.

³ *Proc. Somerset Arch. and Nat. Hist. Soc.* lv (1909), pt. ii, pp. 118-137.

⁴ *N.-W. Somerset* (1829).

⁵ *Hist. Somersetsbire*.

⁶ Caesar remarked (*B.G.* iii, 23, 6) that the Gallic Celts were very quick to learn the methods of Roman earthwork.

On Chettle Down in Cranborne Chase is a *circus* (*cavea* 176 ft. by 146 ft.) which in size is almost the duplicate of that of Charterhouse. It lies in the very gate of a large Romano-British settlement, approached by a noticeable sunken road.¹ Much smaller than these is an as yet unnoticed work of identical construction outside the eastern lines of the original² Roman station (? Magos) at Castell Collen near Llandrindod Wells, which measures but 60 ft. by 50 ft. across the *cavea*. As it lies, like that at Charterhouse, on sloping ground, the vallum on the uphill side is no longer discernible, but that on the downhill side is well developed, and the two entrances open direct upon two ancient roads which here converge to the east gate of the station.

It is clear that mere size is no criterion of a *circus*, which, as is to be expected if once its real character of a town-hall is understood, would be larger or smaller according to the means and ambitions of the community which built it. Nor would it be surprising to find that in some cases the work lacks the geometrical perfection of the true Roman plan. Natural irregularities of the ground may explain the irregularity of plan in the case of Borcovicium (Housesteads) on the Roman Wall, where the *cavea* measures 120 ft. by 78 ft. Whether or no this work was an 'amphitheatre' has been matter of debate amongst antiquaries from the day when it was first noticed. In view of its obvious affinity to similar works which were indisputably *circi*, there can be no longer any doubt that this too was of the number; and the matter is clinched by the finding (1882) on Chapel Hill, just south of Borcovicium, of the two remarkable altars dedicated to Mars Thingsus, 'Woden the Councillor.'³ Very significant is the fact that here the great wall is breached by an original gate, so that a community dwelling south of the wall might still have access to its *circus* on the further side. That the wall should be so weakened for the sake of a mere place of games is unthinkable; that it was done for the sake of a pre-existing moot is significant alike of the

¹ It was apparently covered with brush-wood when Warne wrote, for he does not notice it.

² i.e. the fortress of which the faint out-

lines cover the hill-top to the immediate south of the later fortress recently excavated.

³ *Arch. Aeliana*, 2nd. ser. vol. x, pp. 148-172; and below, p. 292.

importance of the moot and of its sacred character. Finally the work is conclusive evidence that near this spot there existed, before the wall was built, a self-governing community, probably absorbed in later years by the adjoining Roman station¹; and if the altars were found at another spot and south of the wall, this probably bespeaks a time when the earlier position was no longer felt to be safe.

Apart from some small irregularities, all the works thus

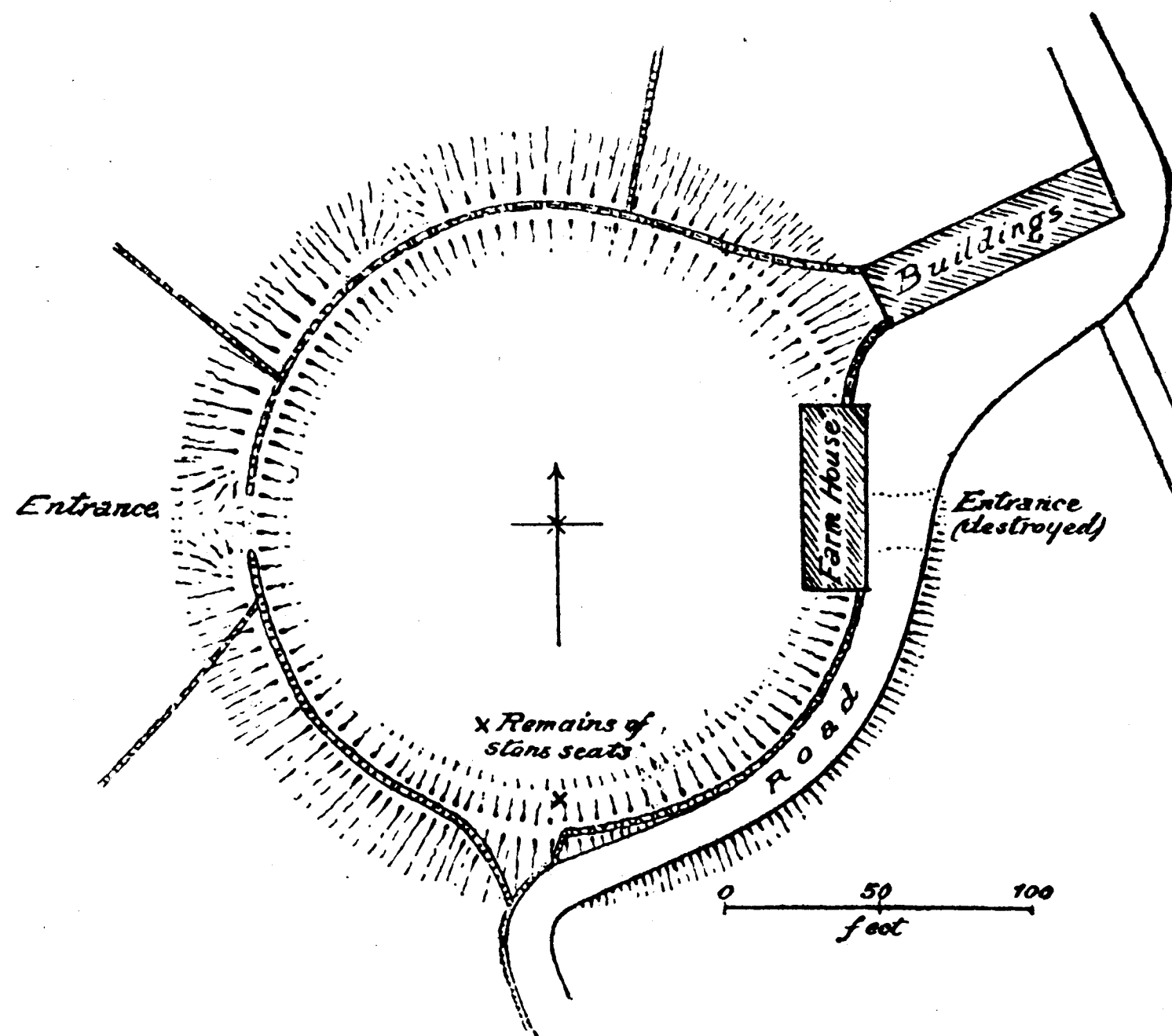


FIG. 18. CASTELL, LLANIDAN, ANGLESEY.

Reproduced by permission of Messrs. Macmillan from *Earthwork of England*.

far discussed show the correct Roman elliptical plan with entrance at either end, but there are considerable differences in the proportions, that of Cirencester closely approximating to a true circle. There is, therefore, little reason to doubt the character of the strictly circular work at Llanidan in Anglesey (arena 165 ft. diam.), with its two entrances at east and west, the less so as there were found on the inner

face of the 10 ft. vallum the remains of three or four tiers of stone seats.¹ Rowlands, who repeatedly speaks of it as 'a cirque of the Britons,' says that in his time (1766) it was still called Bryn (or Brein) Gwyn, which he translates by 'Royal Court,' adding that Welsh poets applied the very same name to the Houses of Parliament in Westminster.² This suggests that until 150 years ago local tradition remembered this particular *circus* to have been used as a moot. Its present-day name is *Castell*.

Llanidan, however, is but the largest of a long series of circular works which in every other respect—construction, disposition of the entrances, and relation to some adjacent settlement—are identical with the true Roman *circus*.

At Cheney Longville, in the parish of Wistanstow, about two miles from Craven Arms in Shropshire, is one of the best of these works remaining.³ It is a circle of 120 ft. in diameter, the saucer-shaped arena enclosed by an earthen bank with entrances to north and south. The vallum is humped in characteristic fashion on either side of these entrances, standing as much as 6 ft. above the arena at the northern side, and 5 ft. above it at the south, while it falls to little more than 2½ ft. at the middle distance on east and west. The floor has a very slight fall to the south, and there is no outer fosse. The exterior face of the vallum is curiously steep, apparently because the work was constructed, not upon a plane surface, but upon a very slight knap of ground, the *déblai* from the arena forming thus an unusually steep slope on the exterior side. The inner slope on the contrary is very gradual. The line of the Roman road ('Watling Street') from Viroconium (Wroxeter) to Bravinium (Leintwardine) passes ¾ mile east of the spot.⁴

Precisely similar in construction is the work known as Y Gaer Ddu, in the parish of Howey near Llandrindod Wells, less than a mile east of the Roman road which runs from Builth northward to the Roman station at Castell Collen, and so to Caersws. As long ago as 1814 it was

¹ *Arch. Journ.* xxxi (1874).

² *Mona Antiqua*: see further below, p. 249.

³ J. C. Wall came very near to discovering its real character when he wrote in 1908 (*V.C.H. Shropshire*, i, 380) that it 'might almost be taken for an amphitheatre.'

⁴ O.S. Shropshire, lxiii, s.e. The *circus*

is locally known as 'the Green,' and believed to have been constructed by those who besieged and destroyed the adjacent castle in Cromwellian times. It may possibly have been used at that date for some military purpose, but to any recognised form of Cromwellian earthwork it has no resemblance whatever.

¹ It is usually held on other grounds that Borcovicium, as a settlement, antedated the wall

described as 'a circle about 50 yds. in diameter, formed of one pretty strong breastwork . . . which, if it was not a Druidical *something*, I take to be a Roman *circus* or amphitheatre.'¹ The writer of the above, who was vicar of the neighbouring parish of Llanyre, said it had 'an entrance' and 'a trench on the outside,' but a later writer,² who found it (1843) still 'tolerably perfect,' says correctly that it has two entrances, and—correctly again—mentions no exterior fosse. He quarrels with the suggestion that it was a 'circus or amphitheatre' on the ground that 'the area is quite inadequate in size, and the position and construction ill adapted to the purpose.'³ It would appear, however, that on this point the vicar of Llanyre was right, for while the position—it is situated on the brow of a rising ground, about 100 yds. from the actual summit—is exactly what was to be expected, the area is very considerably larger than the average.⁴

The works at Howey and at Cheney Longville do not at first sight appear to have sunken floors, but in reality they have. They stand each on a small knap, and the material for the vallum was obtained by scraping away the summit of the knap. Reason for this method of construction is to be found in the nature of the soil, which would have made impracticable the method of construction followed on the porous chalk areas. Even in Sussex the alternative method is followed in a nameless earthwork, to all appearance a *circus*, lying in the low ground of Warning-camp near Arundel. In works thus constructed any surface-water found a ready escape by the entrance-ways.

The name of Y Gaer Ddu ('the Black Camp') raises the suspicion that other earthworks in this country which have hitherto passed as small 'camps' or the remains of

¹ Thos. Price in *Archaeologia*, xvii, p. 171.

² Lewis, *Topog. Dict. Wales*, s.v. LLAN-DRINDOD.

³ The work was until lately covered with a plantation, which made accurate observation difficult. This has been felled, and the work presents itself as a regular oval, the two entrances (as at Richborough) at the ends of the *minor* axis, which lies se.-nw. The vallum of earth is very regular, nowhere rising more than 3½ ft. above the interior, though in places as much as 6 ft. above the ground without. In construction it is precisely analogous to the *circus* at Cheney

Longville. There has never been any exterior fosse, but recent drainage trenches have been made round the exterior, which might easily give the impression that a fosse once existed. A portion of the vallum just east of the southernmost point has lately been destroyed.

⁴ In *Inventory Radnorshire*, nos. 317, 318, no opinion is expressed as to the age or purpose of the work, save that 'as a defensive position it is weak.' It is compared with 'Castle Ring' in Evenjobb (*ibid.* no. 162) which, however, is much larger (diam. 160 yds.), and unmistakably fossed.

such, may on closer examination turn out to be *circi*. The sunken area and the absence of exterior fosse are useful, though not decisive, criteria.

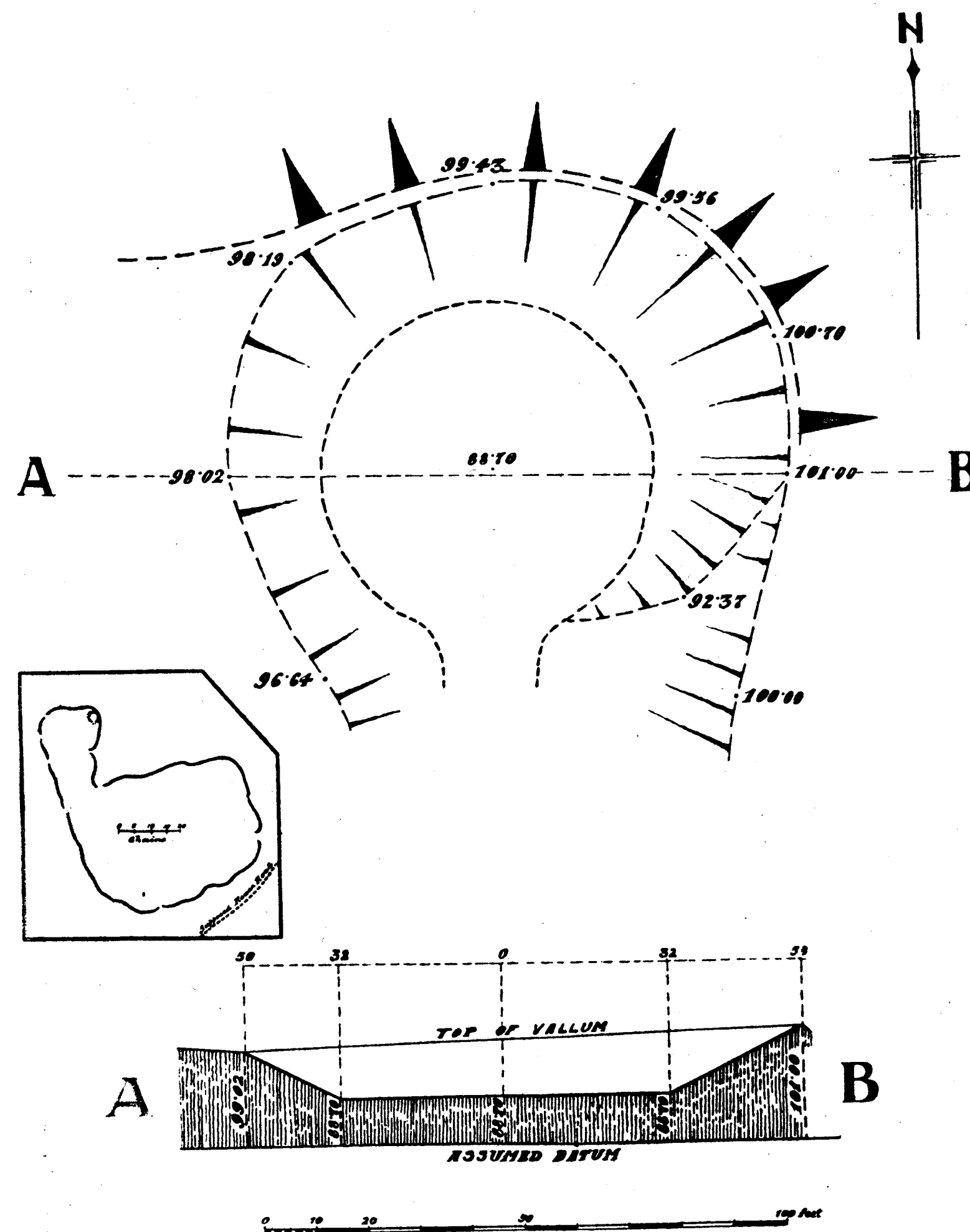


FIG. 19. 'CIRCUS' ON HAM HILL, SOMERSET.

The mutilated condition of the work attached to the Roman station at Tomen-y-Mur, Merioneth, scarcely admits of a correct determination of the number and position of

its entrances, but there can be no possible doubt of its character. Yet it is not merely of strictly circular plan, enclosed within a 10-12 foot vallum, but very small, its inner diameter being but 81 ft.¹

These various examples throw light upon the ancient enigma of the so-called 'Frying Pan' (p. 183), which occupies the north-eastern angle of the northward extension of the great pre-Roman camp on Ham Hill, Somerset. There is no room for doubt that this, too, was a *circus*, in spite of certain peculiarities arising from the unusual position of it.² Its apparent smallness is an illusion due to the immensity of the earthworks which surround and overhang it, for it is actually larger than many of the Dorsetshire examples.³ The floor has a diameter of 64 ft. and the span from crest to crest of the vallum is 104 ft. The exceptional flatness of the floor is probably to be explained by the geology of the spot: the stone of Ham Hill is of the hardest, and denudation would act upon the vallum here in a much less degree than upon sand and chalk, while the peculiar position chosen has effectively preserved the work from the plough. It is in fact one of the very few examples of its kind which has not been interfered with, and, therefore, of particular interest. The vallum rises above the floor 10 ft. on the western, 12 ft. on the eastern side. The slope of the *cavea* measures 20 ft. on the west, 28 ft. on the east. The periphery of the slope is 170 ft. at the foot, and at the top 230 ft. It would easily accommodate 1,000 people, if all were seated, and a very much larger number if some stood up.⁴ The *Lex Ursonensis* provides for a quorum in the *curia* of not less than 50, 40, or even 20 only, according to the business to be dealt with,⁵ and the requirements of a

¹ *Arch. Cambr.* 5th ser. v, 267.

² *Archaeologia*, xxi; *Arch. Journal*, xxxi, 320; *Proc. S.A.* xxi, 128; Allcroft, *Earthwork of England*, pp. 91-94. The position did not allow of more than one entrance way.

³ It is larger than the circus at Borcovicium, very considerably larger than that at Tomen-y-Mur, and almost identical in size with the Greek theatre of Delos (diam. of floor, 65 ft.).

⁴ A *cavea* of these dimensions, if completely annular, would provide a seating-space of 587 square yards. Allowance has to be made for the space occupied by the

entrance-way. At Shoreham, Sussex, was built in 1915-6, an amphitheatre of horseshoe plan for the use of the camp there. The circular portion of the area had a diameter of 62 ft. on the floor, and the 'legs' of the horseshoe had a mean length of 60 ft. There were nine tiers of seats all round, with four extra tiers at the apsidal end, where the rise of the ground allowed it. The total length of the *podium* was 215 ft. This amphitheatre easily accommodated 2,000 men upon its benches alone. On occasion it would accommodate 6,000.

⁵ Bruns, *Fontes Iuris Romani Antiqui* (pars. xcvi, clxix).

little Romano-British town would certainly be no larger than those of the Spanish *municipium*.

Ham Hill has yielded evidence of continuous occupation from earlier times down to Roman days, and the bulk of the Roman finds coming from the immediate vicinity of the 'Frying Pan,' it is probable that the Romano-British town lay in this northward extension of the camp. Here, therefore, we should look for the *circus*, and such the 'Frying Pan' almost certainly is.

This case is proof that two entrances and an elliptical plan were not essential in the eyes of a Romanised British community. On occasion they could make shift with a strictly circular moot having but one entrance. Now works of this plan, but otherwise strictly accordant to the type, are to be found in every part of the British Isles where cultivation has spared them. They have the same sunken floor, the same broad and widely-spread vallum, and no discernible external fosse. Commonly they are associated with British 'villages' or with British 'camps.' Again there can be no doubt of their purpose; they represent a purely Celtic type of moot before it was modified by Roman influence.

A third type is exemplified by an earthwork on Buckland Bank in Falmer, Sussex (p. 186), where a circular arena (diam. 34 ft.) is enveloped on the one side by a massive semicircular vallum,¹ on the other by a second and minor vallum, very much less massive and to all intents rectilinear, which is so disposed as to allow of the passage of a roadway through the arena. The arena is sunk below the natural surface-line, the valla now rising above it to a mean height of five feet. There is no external fosse, and the major vallum is markedly humped at either end in a fashion which shews the two entrance-ways to be part of the original design. The roadway, which is plainly traceable for some distance in either direction, is unquestionably of pre-Roman origin, subsequently adopted and in places reconstructed by Roman engineers. Of the actual settlement to which this *circus* belonged remains now no superficial trace, but the locality abounds in the customary con-

¹ The term vallum is not strictly correct in this case, for, as the plan shews, the *cavea* is in part carved out of the natural soil.

comitants of such a settlement, and at a spot 500 yards to the west—the statutory minimum distance permitted by Roman law—was found in 1849 its circular cemetery.¹

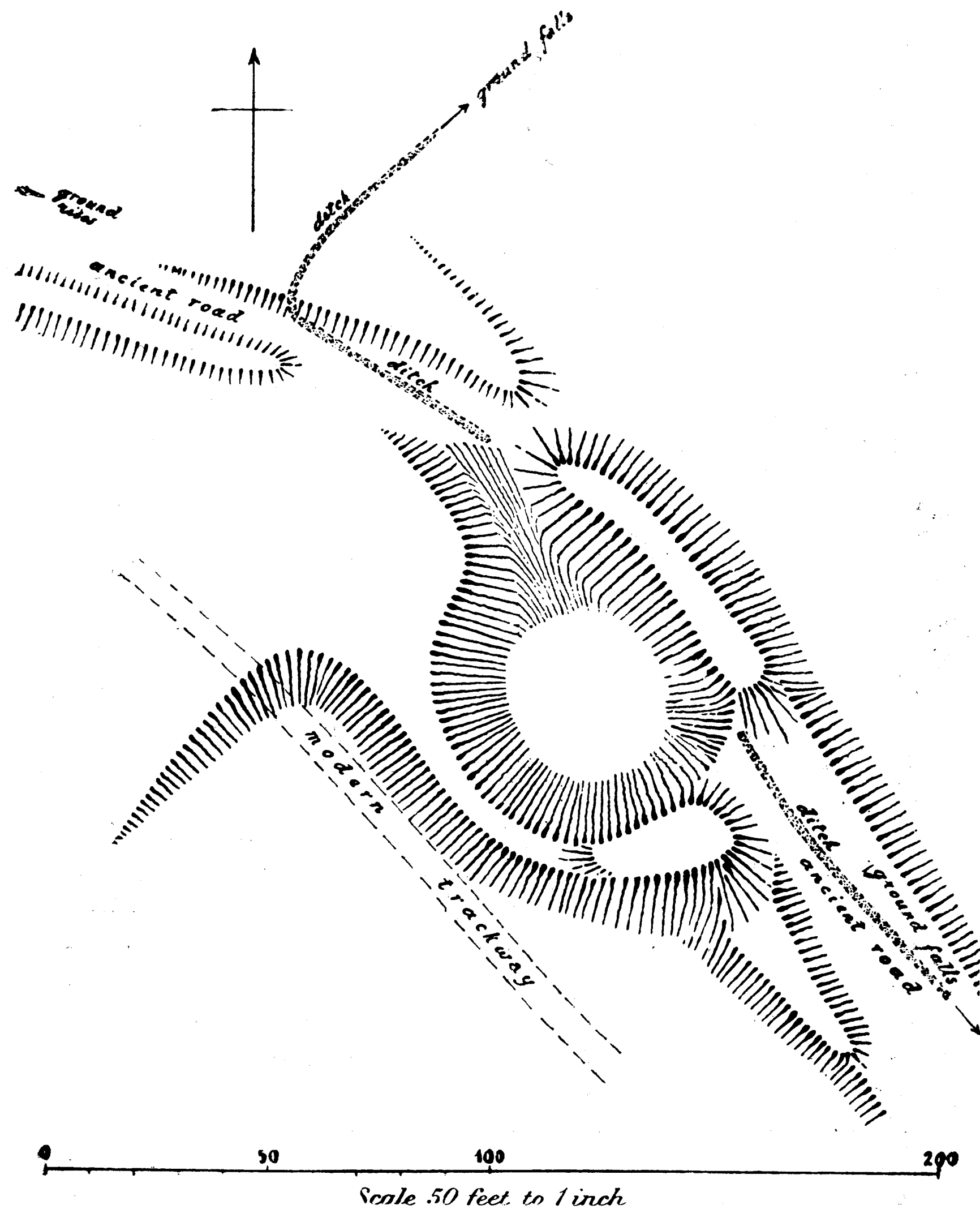


FIG. 20. 'CIRCUS' ON BUCKLAND BANK, FALMER, SUSSEX.²

¹ *Sussex Arch. Collections*, xviii, 65. By the Lex Ursonensis of 45 B.C. it is ordained (par. lxxiii) *ne quis ustrinam novam ubi homo mortuus combustus non erit, propius oppidum passus D facito* (Bruns, *Fontes Iuris Romani Antiqui*, 4th ed. [1909], p. 115).

² The plan here given, the work of a qualified surveyor (Mr. Robt. Gurd), must supersede the writer's field-diagram as given in *Arch. Journal*, lxxvi (1919), p. 103.

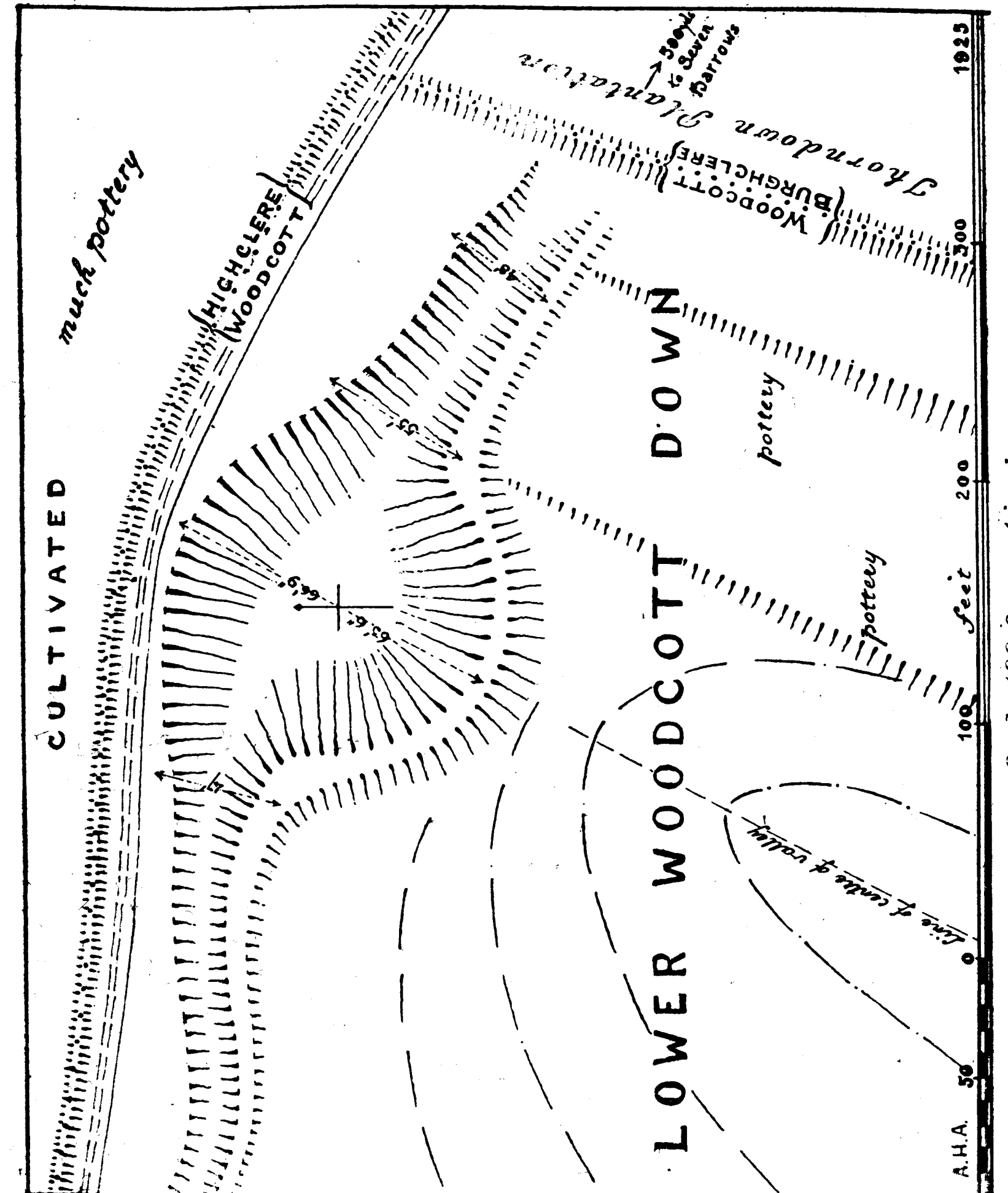


FIG. 21. DIAGRAM OF CHAPMAN'S PIT, WOODCOTE, HANTS.

This type reappears in a work in the Wiltshire parish of Winterbourne Earls, and again in Hampshire at the spot where meet the three parishes of Highclere, Burghclere and Woodcott. O. G. S. Crawford, who identifies¹ this latter with the Chapman's Pit (*Ceapmanna-del*) mentioned in 961 amongst the bounders of the parishes of Woodcott and Crux Easton,² remarks that it 'closely resembles the so-called amphitheatres which are frequently found near Romano-British villages, especially those in Cranborne Chase.' Of the road which traverses the work enough remains to shew that it was a loopline³ of the Ridgeway, providing a direct route between Sidown Hill and Great Litchfield Down (p. 186).

If one should attempt to reproduce the typical Greek theatre in earthwork, the result would be something remarkably like the work on Buckland Bank; and if the latter were to be interpreted in masonry, the result would be something indistinguishable from a Greek theatre. The circular *orchestra*, the rectilinear *scena*, the semi-lunar *cavea*, and the twin *πάροδοι*, are the constituents of each. Both in Britain and in Greece advantage was taken of natural features of the ground; but whereas in Greece the *cavea* was almost invariably hollowed out of sloping ground and the *scena* was for obvious reasons as invariably built up, in Britain there was much greater freedom. The *circus* of Chapman's Pit, as also the similar work in Winterbourne Earls, was formed by throwing the major vallum across the apex of a combe which lies at right-angles to the line of road, while the minor vallum is the natural soil. At Buckland Bank the minor vallum is entirely artificial, the other partly artificial and partly natural. At Church Barrow the whole is artificial. A like discretion is revealed by British *circi* of other types.

To this type apparently belonged also in the first instance Church Barrow, an earthwork bestriding the roadway leading into the Romano-British 'village' of Woodcuts

¹ *The Andover District* (1922), p. 67. A responsible native, familiar with the spot for some thirty-six years, has assured me that he had known it 'many years ago' by the name of Chapman's Hole.

² *Cart. Sax.* iii, 1080. Crux Easton perpetuates the name of the *Domesday* lord, one Croc.

³ It is sufficiently old to have served as a boundary between the parishes of Highclere and Woodcott; and it went out of use so long ago that the bank which demarcates the parishes of Woodcott and Burghclere cuts it at right-angles. It was a made road, i.e. deliberately hollowed out, and not merely the accidental result of treading.

in Dorset, which lay about 100 yards away to the north-west. It was partially explored in 1884-5 by Pitt-Rivers,¹ whose plan of it is here reproduced. In this case the

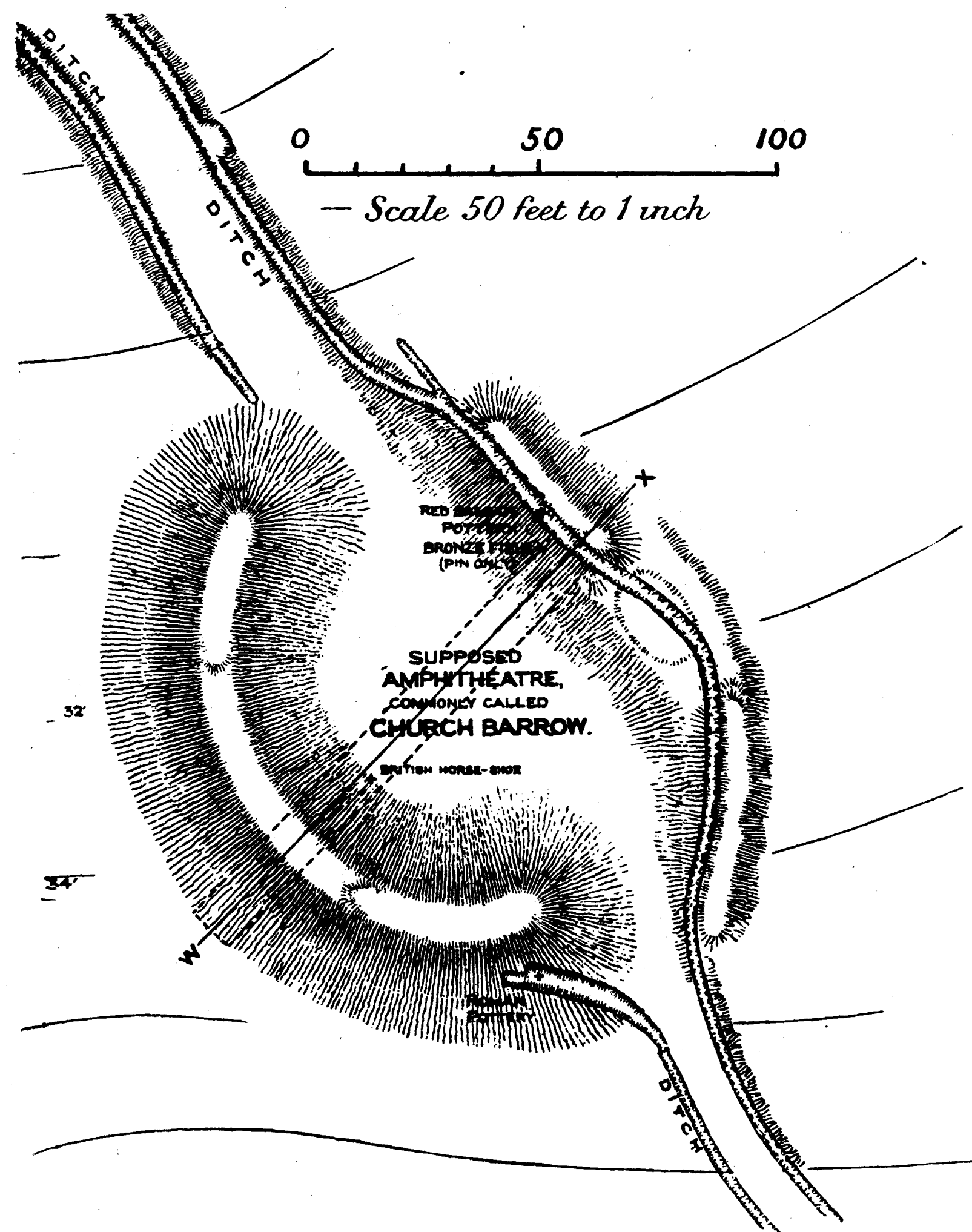


FIG. 22. CHURCH BARROW, WOODCUTS, DORSET.

(Reproduced by permission from Pitt-Rivers, *Excavations in Cranborne Chase*, vol. i, pl. iii)

arena and the enveloping vallum are markedly elliptical, the former measuring about 66 ft.² by 45 ft. In the

¹ *Excavations*, i, pp. 23-4, and plate iii.

² In *Arch. Journal*, lxxvi (1919), p. 118,

the diameter of the entire *cavea* was inadvertently given as 66 ft.

complete absence of anything to indicate the purpose of the work, the excavator accepted without reserve the term 'amphitheatre,' which seems to have been first applied to it by Rev. J. H. Austin in 1867.¹

In the trench which he drove across the *cavea* of Church Barrow (w-x of plan) Pitt-Rivers found, excepting a British horse-shoe, nothing which he thought worth mention.² At the centre of the *circus* on Buckland Bank, lying at the bottom of the 14 inches of brown mould³ which covered the smoothed chalk floor, was found a quantity of Roman and pre-Roman pottery,⁴ to all appearance deliberately broken into small fragments. Two days' digging at Chapman's Pit produced only a dozen scraps of pottery: again all were very small, and all without exception were found about the centre. Two fragments were of British make, the remainder Roman.

Remarkable precautions were taken to keep dry some of these depressed arenas. At Church Barrow the roadway was flanked by ditches: that on the up-hill side was continuous, the vallum overlying it (see fig. 22); that on the down-hill side was interrupted, stopping considerably short of the depressed floor. Clearly the ditches, which were of no great size,⁵ were intended for catch-waters to prevent any surface-drainage from making its way into the *circus* by way of the roadway.⁶ At Buckland Bank were discovered two similar ditches (see fig. 20), shewing precisely the same abrupt intromission, and in each case stopping short at a point *outside* the arena; and both were so constructed as to lead any water *away from* the arena.⁷ A similar provision was found again in the case of a *circus*

¹ In *Arch. Journal*, xxiv (1867), p. 167.

² This silence must not be pressed. Pottery littered the adjacent areas, and commonly he says nothing about it. He found Samian ware in the ditch which underlies the minor vallum.

³ Identically the same depth of soil as was found to overlie the chalk floor of Church Barrow. In both cases the soil was perfectly free from anything which could legitimately be called clay.

⁴ Of a total of 75 fragments, 67 were Roman, and, so far as it was possible to date specimens so fragmentary, about A.D. 150. All lay at the bottom of the mould

within a radius of 4 feet from the centre. Elsewhere the arena where opened—and some 80 square yards of it were uncovered down to the chalk—yielded but three fragments, and these *not* on the floor.

⁵ 'About three feet in width and two feet deep' (*Excavations*, i, p. 23).

⁶ The road was a holloway, with a slight and steady fall from NW. to SE. It was about 10 ft. wide, and innocent of all metal, as was also that at Buckland Bank and that at Binderton.

⁷ The south-eastern ditch terminated at a depth level with the lowest point of the arena, thence falling rapidly downhill.

of the circular type in Binderton, Sussex, explored by Drs. Eliot and Cecil Curwen in 1924.¹

In none of these instances was the peculiar arrangement of the ditches discoverable from superficial evidences, and it is more than possible that other *circi* may conceal a like provision for their drainage. If the exploration of any work of this character—*circus* or stone circle—be confined,

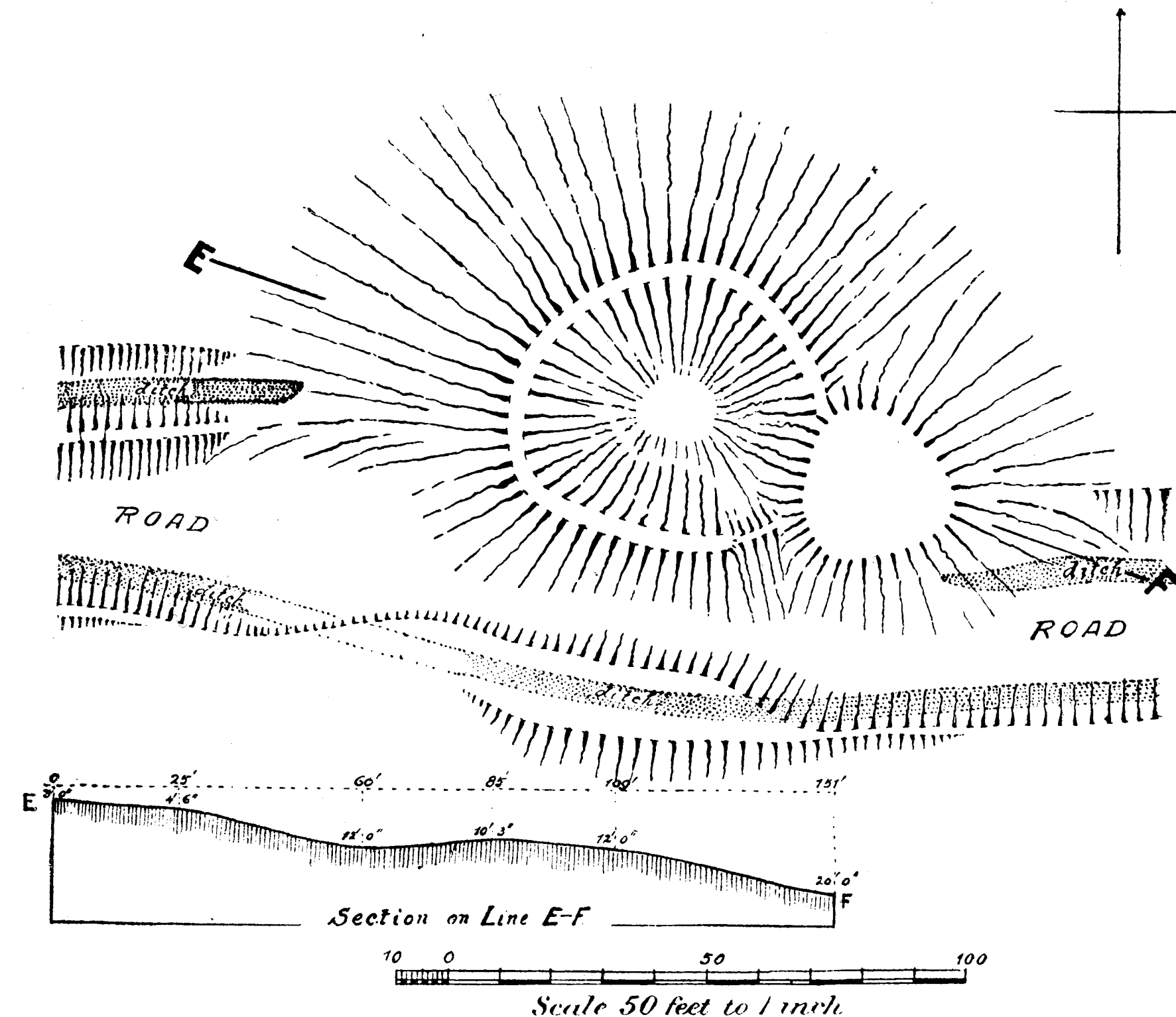


FIG. 23. 'CIRCUS' IN BINDERTON, SUSSEX.
(By permission of Dr. Eliot Curwen).

as it usually is, to the arena, any external catch-water drains are likely to pass undetected. Clearly it was held to be of prime importance that the area of a moot should be dry, and the fact throws light upon the catchwater ditches at Charterhouse-on-Mendip (p. 178) and possibly at Castlestead (p. 197), and upon the peculiar external fosse

¹ *Sussex Arch. Collections*, lxvi (1925), p. 163.

at the Stripple Stones on Bodmin Moor (p. 244). But it would seem that, then as now, local conditions guided the builders. At Chapman's Pit, for example, there seem to have been no ditches, although the *cavea* is larger than the average, the roadways wider and much deeper, and the lie of the ground such that in either direction there is a fall of 100 yards towards the *cavea*. Hereabouts, however, the chalk is peculiarly porous, and not even in the wettest conditions is water to be seen either on the roadway or in the *circus* itself.

The evidence in the case of the *circus* at Binderton went to shew that that earthwork is of Roman date, and that the ditches, while they may be contemporary with the earthwork, cannot be earlier; for they are intronitted to make room for an earthwork which was at any rate designed, if not already constructed, when the ditches were laid out. At Buckland Bank the evidence of the pottery shewed that ditches and earthwork were alike pre-Roman. The same is probably true of Church Barrow.¹

The Saxon name of Chapman's Pit (*Ceapmanna-del*) suggests that in or before the tenth century that earthwork was in familiar use as a market-place. Quite possibly the Saxons were led to put it to this use solely by its convenient situation with reference to the adjacent villages and the Ridgeway²; but in view of the fashion in which commerce everywhere tended to overshadow other and more essential functions of the moot, it may be that we have here a genuine survival of the memory of the earthwork's use in pre-Saxon times.

¹ His own evidence, as published in *Excavations* (*loc. cit.*), makes it impossible to accept Pitt-Rivers' conclusion that the ditches in this case were of a date so remote as to have been already filled up and forgotten when the 'amphitheatre' was constructed in Roman days. The ditches were certainly open in the earlier Roman period; the minor vallum was as certainly constructed in its present form at a later time. Church Barrow seems to be a case of reconstruction: there was here an earlier British *circus*, probably of the type seen at Buckland Bank, which was later enlarged into something more accordant with the Roman type. This was done by setting back the *valla* from their original centre, and the minor vallum, thus reconstructed, unavoidably buried the pre-existing ditch

on that side (which would, however, continue to function as a drain). With this view agrees Pitt-Rivers' own observation (*Excavations*, i, p. 23) that the distorted course of the roadway suggests 'that the [continuous] drain was curved out to avoid some place which existed here before the bank [i.e. the minor vallum as now existing] was thrown up.' As it now stands Church Barrow appears to be a compromise between the type seen at Buckland Bank and the strictly elliptical, strictly symmetrical, Roman type.

² Its peculiar position at the junction of three parishes recalls the remark of Sir H. Maine (*Village Communities*, p. 192), that in India markets frequently arose at points where converged the domains of two or three villages.

Church Barrow was the solitary work of its kind which Pitt-Rivers examined, yet it is very far from being the best of its kind in the vicinity. Romano-British villages were so thickly strewn hereabouts, that the sites of no less than nine are marked upon the ordnance map within an area five miles square.¹ On eight out of these nine sites is to be found an amphitheatral work of one or other of the types described.

The list of sites is as follows:—

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Church Barrow, Woodcuts .. | diam. 66 ft. |
| 2. Oakley Lane, 1 m. south of no. 1 | 75 ft. |
| 3. Berwick Down, 2 m. NW. of no. 1 | 70 by 60 ft. |
| 4. Gussage Down, 3 m. SE. of no. 1 | 65 ft. |
| 5. Chettle Down, 2 m. ssw. of no. 1 | 176 by 146 ft. |
| 6. Tarrant Hinton Down, 1½ m. south of no. 5 | 85 by 75 ft. |
| 7. South Tarrant Hinton Down, 1½ m. ssw. of no. 5 | 100 by 120 ft. |
| 8. Oakley Down, 3½ m. east of no. 1 | |

All of these are pronounced and unmistakable examples with the exception of the last, now reduced by ploughing to a mere circular depression. Beyond the ploughland remain, however, a few yards away, some of the banks and fosses of the 'village' to which it belonged.

The site which, alone of those marked upon the ordnance survey of this area, shews no *circus* is that on Rotherley Down. Here the 'village' includes two circular enclosures,² measuring 150 ft. by 115 ft. and 90 ft. respectively, but neither is amphitheatral: their floors are the natural surface of the ground, the vallum is of the slightest, and they are both fossed. Pitt-Rivers, having excavated it, concluded that the village belonged to but a poor community.³ Probably its *circus*, which cannot have been a large one, has been obliterated by the plough.

Something more than half of another *circus* (diam. 120 ft.) remains on the southern edge of the 'village' on

¹ 'A census of Cranborne Chase in British times might be rather surprising to us nowadays,' says Heywood Sumner, *Earthworks of Cranborne Chase*, p. 68, and the list which he gives of 'British villages' in that area alone fully justifies the remark.

² The 'village' on South Tarrant Hinton Down (no. 7) also shews two independent oval enclosures (8 acres) with an interspace of 200 yards, representing what were perhaps two independent villages.

³ *Excavations*, vol. ii.

Swallowcliffe Down, still shewing a flat depressed floor of 75 ft. in diameter. It seems to have been of the semi-circular plan, and the Old Sarum-Shaftesbury road probably passed through the two entrances. Of the 'village' itself scarce anything remains visible on the surface,¹ but as frequently happens, the *circus* has proved more stubborn.

The little that Colt Hoare has to say of works of this class is confused with observations about things entirely different, such as ring-barrows of various forms. Something of the kind, however, he had noticed as 'generally to be found placed near a British settlement, and in some instances within it and forming a part thereof.'² In such positions they can hardly have been barrows, and as he says in the same passage that 'some of them had entrances,' we may suspect that he had in his mind examples of the *circus*. His plans are too sketchy to be taken as evidence for their including *circi* or not. He mentions 'a circular earthen work with one entrance to the south-east, and apparently another, but not so decisive, towards the west. Its diameter from the entrance is about 280 ft.'³ This was near Battlesbury Camp, Warminster. His description is too vague to be of use, for he does not say whether the arena was or was not sunk, or how his measurement was taken. He was very much alive to the possibility that some at any rate of such circular works in Wiltshire may have been 'religious or juridical,' but seemingly so regarded only earthworks very much bigger than is the average *circus* of the 'villages.'

Warne provides further examples.⁴ He elected to call them 'sacred circles of earth,' a name which was endorsed by the late Dr. Colley March. There was one 'little more than half the size of Church Barrow,'⁵ adjoining the *oppidum*

¹ Dr. R. C. C. Clay has lately (1924) opened a large number of pits representing the huts of the village, and a report of his work appeared in *Wilt. Arch. Magazine*, xliii, pp. 59-93.

² *Ancient Wilts.* ii, p. 80. Fosbroke (*Encyclopaedia of Antiquities*, p. 569) quotes this, and continues with the suggestive words: 'as in modern days the church is considered as a feature of the village.'

³ *Ancient Wilts.* ii, p. 66. There is nothing now in the locality to answer to this description unless it be the work on Mancombe

Down, one mile due north from Battlesbury; but this was certainly not a *circus*.

⁴ *Ancient Dorset* (1872), p. 43, etc.; *Dorset-shire, its Celtic, Roman, Saxon and Danish Vestiges* (1865), pp. 46-8.

⁵ i.e. it was small. So much, and no more, is to be got from so careless a pronouncement. The *cavea* of Church Barrow had a radius of something under 60 ft. and the *circus* of the settlement on Gussage Down, which was one of the most extensive settlements known in southern Britain, was only some 65 ft. over. One of the Aberdeenshire circles (Esslie, no. 2) had a diameter of 35 ft. only (ch. viii).

of Buzbury near Blandford. His plan shews it adjacent to the eastern wall of the settlement and immediately outside the gate, its two entrances facing north and south. One mile only to the north of this was another. A third had stood on Winterbourne Came Down, and a fourth on Broad Mayne Down, but both of these were already destroyed when Warne wrote (1865). The last-mentioned, he says, was 'rectangular, with three tiers of benches.'¹ He figures what would seem to be another on his plan of the village-site at Turnworth, remarking that 'we have noticed on other sites the peculiarity of a small circle adjoining the entrance' of the village.² He suggested that these may have 'served as places of rustic sports and games in connexion with the settlements which they adjoined,' but 'yielding to the opinion of a friend,' ventured to call one of them—that which lay a mile north of Buzbury—'a *gorseddau* (*sic*), or Celtic place of council.'³ He also mentions a 'circle of earth and other ancient vestiges' as then existing (1865) just outside the western entrance of the great 18-acre 'camp' of Badbury Rings near Wimborne.⁴

Another work of the same class (diam. 117 ft.) crowns a small knoll at Slight in Winfrith Newburgh in the same county. It is not far from the small stone circle in Pokeswell which gives a name to Ringstead Bay. It used to be known as the 'Round Pound,' and seems to be identical with the work listed by Warne⁵ amongst 'uncertain remains' under the name of the 'Roundy Poundy.' Dr. Colley March remarked⁶ the occurrence of similar works 'all over Britain,' and specifies three further examples from

¹ *Vestiges*, p. 48. Unfortunately there is no plan or drawing of it. Possibly the rectangular appearance was an optical illusion; the proven *circus* of Charterhouse-on-Mendip has a squarish look when viewed from certain points and in certain lights. On Lea Moor, beside the road from Ivybridge towards Tavistock, is a rectangular earthwork (150 ft. by 86 ft.) of which the bank (26 ft.-40 ft. high) is formed of the material removed in sinking the floor after the fashion of an amphitheatre. It is described by Rowe (*Perambulation of Dartmoor*, pp. 155-6), who thought it 'might have been for the purpose of exhibiting games, or for other large assemblies of people.' Works of this type were constructed by the miners of Devon and Corn-

wall. There is a smaller example on the north slope of Castell-an-Dinas in Gulval.

² *Ancient Dorset*, p. 21. In *Vestiges* (p. 32) the diameter is given as 166 ft. and the work is classed with those on Tarrant Hinton Downs as a 'sacred circle.'

³ *Vestiges*, pp. 15, 55.

⁴ *Ancient Dorset*, p. 36. Old drawings shew that a good many have disappeared. Thus the plate in *Arch.* ix, 200, shews 'a circular vallum about 40 yds. in diameter' as then standing (1788) just north of the camp on Combs Farm in Farnsfield, Notts. (*V.C.H. Notts.* ii, 26).

⁵ *Vestiges*, p. 25. Details of this example I owe to Mr. H. S. Toms.

⁶ *Proc. Dorset N.H. and Ant. Field Club*, xxix (1908), p. 243.

the western end of Dorset, at Bridehead (diam. 93 ft.), at Askerswell (diam. 83 ft.), and near Compton Valence (diam. 66 ft.).

Upon the Berkshire downs, parish of Blewbury, is an odd concavity known as Curknel (Cucknel or Curnel) Pit, at the south-western foot of Churn Hill. 'Carefully formed' and markedly sunk, it has a diameter of upwards of 150 ft. with a pronounced vallum and no fosse. The suggestion was made many years ago that this was a Roman amphitheatre,¹ and the *vestigia* of Romano-British settlement are abundant all around. Its peculiar interest lies in the fact that conceivably it still retains a name derived from its original appellation, for Curknel may conceivably represent *Circanhill*.² It is probable that a great many *circi* yet await recognition in this part of England, where it has been remarked that there frequently occur curious pits, which cannot be explained as made in the search for chalk, flint, or other material.³

Similar circles are to be found as far north as the Cheviots. Within the lines of Old Rothbury, a large camp adjacent to Rothbury in Northumberland, is one (diam. 60 ft.) which Captain Hedley some years ago suggested might have been used as a place of meeting.⁴ Digging within it in 1921, D. D. Dixon found at the centre a rudely steined pit some 6 ft. across, with made soil and much charcoal in the filling, and a large shard of extremely coarse pottery of 'early Iron age' character.

On the high moorland (825 ft.) half a mile west of Cullingworth railway station, between Halifax and Keighley, lie the scanty remains of Castlestead Ring. When complete this was an oval enclosure of 103 yards (N.-S.) by about 80 yds. (E.-W.). Something more than half of it was long since obliterated by cultivation, and much of what was then spared has since vanished; so that when Dr. Francis Villy examined the site in 1910 there remained of the whole the north-western quadrant only. He found that the

¹ *Trans. Newbury Field Club* (1895), iv, 40.

² See below, ch. xxiv. The otherwise inexplicable name of Churn Hill may be a rationalisation of Curnel, aided by the superficial resemblance of the circular pit to a gigantic quern, just as the name of 'the Quern' likewise attaches to the greater

and admittedly Roman *circus* at Cirencester. Dr. G. B. Grundy tells me that 'there is another Churn Hill in Martyr Worth, Hants, represented in a charter by the Saxon *Cyrringe*, "churn."'

³ H. T. E. Peake in *V.C.H. Berks.* (1906) i, 283.

⁴ D. D. Dixon, *Upper Coquetdale*.

external fosse, though 11 ft. wide at the top, was of but superficial character, cut in the surface soil only, and in depth varying from 1½ ft. to 4 ft. with a flattened floor. Seemingly it was a catchment-drain, and very possibly extended round the upper side only of the enclosure, exactly like that covering the *circus* at Charterhouse-on-Mendip. The vallum had a vertical height of 4½ ft. above the area, with a width of 17 ft. at the base. A section made across this vallum shewed that the whole work was originally constructed like a modern hippodrome. Round the arena ran a rough paving of boulders 7 ft. in width, ramped up to a vertical height of 2 ft.-3 ft. and round the upper edge of this was a level unpaved terrace 3 ft. wide. In three further sections the pavement and the level terrace were unmistakable, and in one case it was found that 'the upper stones of the ramp were set horizontally and continued as a sort of flooring' across the terrace. Behind the terrace the vallum rose like a breastwork with an internal face of unusual steepness. The original entrance was not determined.¹ There were no finds of a character to throw light upon the date or the purpose of the work, which lies on a broad plateau having a slight fall from west to east, and is overlooked by a small hillock at some 20 yards to the north-west. The excavator remarks upon the weakness of the site, and of the fosse, from a military point of view, and observes that 'the work is one of a considerable series of apparently similar character in the surrounding district.'² Castlestead lies within the lands of the Brythonic Brigantes.

Such a work as this cannot be explained as intended for purposes military, pastoral, or residential, and of sepulchral purpose there is no evidence at all. On the other hand it is in all but size exactly like the works at Cheney Longville and at Howey, and the suspicion that it belongs to the same class is supported by the name of Moothill Farm still attaching to an adjacent homestead. Within certain explicable limits mere size, as has been said, is no criterion, and it remains to describe a conclusive example of a moot-circle of even greater size, viz. Mayburgh (plate II).

¹ Dr. Villy surmises that there may have been an entrance at the NE. To judge from analogy, there would be an entrance at one or both extremities of the major axis; and

in that case their disappearance is explained. This work may be compared with that at Howey, described above, p. 181.

² *Bradford Antiquary*, 1911.

This, the finest of all the *circi* in Britain, lies on the bank of the Eamont river at its confluence with the Lowther, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Penrith. Larger in area than even Maumbury Ring, Mayburgh's arena has a mean diameter of 287 ft. and covers all but $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres of ground, while the *cavea* measures 372 ft. (N.-S.) by 363 ft. (E.-W.). The vallum has a mean height of some 10 ft. above the area, rising to as much as 18 ft. at the southern side of the single entrance, which faces due east and is 25 ft. wide at the ground-level, 120 ft. wide at the top. On its northern side the vallum appears to have been greatly spread, so that its present height, though still above the mean, is much less than that of the other side. The vallum has at the base an average width of 120 ft., rising to 140 ft. at the entrance. The work crowns the summit of a knap (O.D. 430), the ground falling sharply away on every side. The interior slope of the vallum is markedly more gentle than that of the exterior. The vallum is abundantly littered over with smallish water-rolled stones, and of a fosse there is no trace whatever.¹ It is these last facts that have led observers, at a loss to account for the immense vallum, to suggest that it is built entirely of stones brought from one or both of the neighbouring rivers.

The knap is a mass of glacial drift, and it was long ago surmised that the vallum had been built up of stones removed in levelling the arena.² It seems to have been taken for granted that it is wholly built of stone. The strong growth of old trees,³ chiefly oak and ash, which covers it, makes it very doubtful whether it be not in reality made chiefly of soil with but a thin covering of stone.⁴ The marked rise of the vallum on either side of the entrance is a characteristic, and indeed necessary, feature of a *circus*, and Mayburgh seems to have been constructed exactly as were the *circi* at Cheney Longville and Howey (p. 181). With this view agrees also the different slope of the inner and the outer sides of the vallum. Whence comes the litter of rolled stones which covers it, may be hinted by the Aberdeenshire circles of North Stone and Castle

¹ Description and plan by C. W. Dymond in *Cumb. and Westm. Trans.* xi (1891), 191-200. The work has suffered a good deal of damage since his survey was made in 1889.

² *Cumb. and Westm. Trans.* vi, 451.

³ They are shewn covering the whole enceinte in the plan in Pennant's *First Tour in Scotland* (1769).

⁴ The vallum has never been cut through.

Fraser (p. 145), and that of Culdoich in Inverness (p. 168): the stones may represent what was once the paving of a part or the whole of the arena. It is known from Stukeley¹ that on 15th August, 1725, the arena was a corn-field, and supposing it to have been originally paved in any part, whoever ploughed it must have collected most of this mass of stone and dumped it at the nearest convenient spot, that is, on the surrounding bank. It is a fact that at the present day (1921) there is more stone visible upon the inner than upon the outer side of the vallum,² and it is also a fact that the stones are not evenly distributed about the slope, but are massed chiefly at some five or six points, just as they might be dumped. Stukeley's evidence as to the ploughing makes it needless to discuss further the solitary menhir (9 ft. 6 in. high) which still stands some 40 ft. west of the centre. It was his belief that the arena had once carried two concentric peristalithic circles. From C. W. Dymond's plan it would appear that the earthwork has been thrown up over ancient lynchets.

Gomme conjectured³ this to be 'a British court for the administration of justice and for other civil purposes.' He did not notice that the name of Mayburgh points very clearly to the fact that the Saxons, whether or no they so used it themselves, understood this to have been its purpose; for *maeg-burh* denoted 'the whole family of blood-relations belonging to a *burh*,'⁴ and the name appears to furnish another instance of genuine folk-memory. That the work is Celtic has never been seriously questioned. Stukeley records⁵ the finding of a brass celt when the area was ploughed, and another (of stone) has been found in the entrance-way.⁶ Bishop Gibson confidently identified the work with the place called Eamotum or Eamotun, at which

¹ *Itin. Curiosum*, ii, 44.

² The majority of the stones are no bigger than a man's fist, but here and there are larger ones, up to 30 in. long. The subsoil of the district is generally stony, and precisely the same kind of water-rolled stones may be seen wherever the ground is opened; but had the stones in Mayburgh been merely part of the material excavated to form the *circus*, (a suggestion mentioned in *Cumb. and Westm. Trans.* vi, 451), they would not to-day be found collected into obvious heaps at specific points of the periphery.

³ *Primitive Folkmoths*, p. 242.

⁴ This was pointed out 300 years ago; see Gibson's *Camden*, p. 997. *Maegburh* occurs in *Beowulf* (ed. Heyne), p. 218; cf. *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, i, 131. The current explanation of the name of Mayburgh as 'Great Fort,' would connect it with such names as Maiden Castle and Maiden Bower, frequently attaching to an-historic earthworks, which again seems to be connected with O.W. *meda*, 'stone'; cf. Maiden Way, the paved Roman road southward from Magna (Carvoran).

⁵ *Itin. Curiosum*, ii, 44.

⁶ *Cumb. and Westm. Trans.* iv, 545.

in 926 king Athelstan held a conference with the kings of Scotland, Bamburgh, the West Britons (Strathclyde) and Gwent,¹ and there is every probability that he was right. Eamotum means 'the moot by the waters,' and exactly describes the peculiar position of the work. This, rather than Mayburgh, is the correct name of it, and from this the river, called Eimot as late as Camden's time,² has taken its name. Here therefore is a historical instance of the use of a British *circus* as a moot so late as the first half of the tenth century. It is highly probable that a Roman cross-road ran within a quarter of a mile to the south, connecting the station of Brocavum (Brougham) with the High Street, the main Roman road from Penrith to the south.

It has been said that the *circi* shew certain irregularities, to be explained as due to the lack of resource or skill in those who made them.³ One instance may be cited from Park Brow in Sompting, Sussex. Only with great hesitation did the writer at last accept this (p. 201) as a possible *circus*, and on that ground infer the presence of a lost settlement in the vicinity. A month or two later (1921) excavation brought to light the abundant proof of the presence of such a settlement.⁴ What remained of a shallow pit at the central point of the *circus* was found to be filled with darker soil, in which—for the most part at the bottom—were quantities of blackened and comminuted pottery and fragments of bone. The pottery—some 80 fragments were recovered from an area of no more than two feet in diameter—was pronounced to be not earlier than A.D. 43, nor later than the third century, the bones probably those of *bos longifrons*. Colt Hoare mentions⁵ that his explora-

¹ Gibson's *Camden* (1773), ii, 162, citing Richard of Hoveden (*Chronica*, ed. Stubbs, i, 53-4), who got it from the pseudo-Florence of Worcester and Simeon of Durham: cp. *A.-S. Chronicle*, sub anno 926. The position is admirably suited for the conference, easily accessible by Roman trunk-roads, and the identification of Mayburgh with Eamotum is clinched by the remark of Simeon that it was 'near Dacor'; for it is but five miles distant from Dacre Castle, where was a stronghold of the Cumbrian kings. Others, however, prefer to identify it with Emmet in Yorks. (Plummer, *A.-S. Chronicle*; Robertson, *Scotland under her*

Early Kings). There is an Emmet Bridge in Bradfield, near Sheffield, and an Emmott near Nelson, Lancs. Emmotland near Beverley was Elmotland in 1822 (Langdale, *Topog. Dict. Yorks.*).

² The *n*, not found in old forms, is parasitic, as in Willimontswick (for Willimotswick). Wordsworth wrote Emont. Another interpretation of the name is 'Water's-meet.'

³ Possibly in some cases to later interference.

⁴ *Sussex Daily News*, Jan. 20, 25, Nov. 27, 1922; May 7, 1924.

⁵ *Ancient Wilts.* ii, 108.

tion of the areas of works of this type resulted only in the finding of 'black earth with the fragments of bones.'

Lastly must be mentioned another remarkable example, also in Sussex. At the northern end of Arundel Park, half a mile south of Whiteways Cross, commences a narrow combe—Pughdene—which threads the park to Swanbourne lake. Along the floor of this combe runs an ancient greenway,

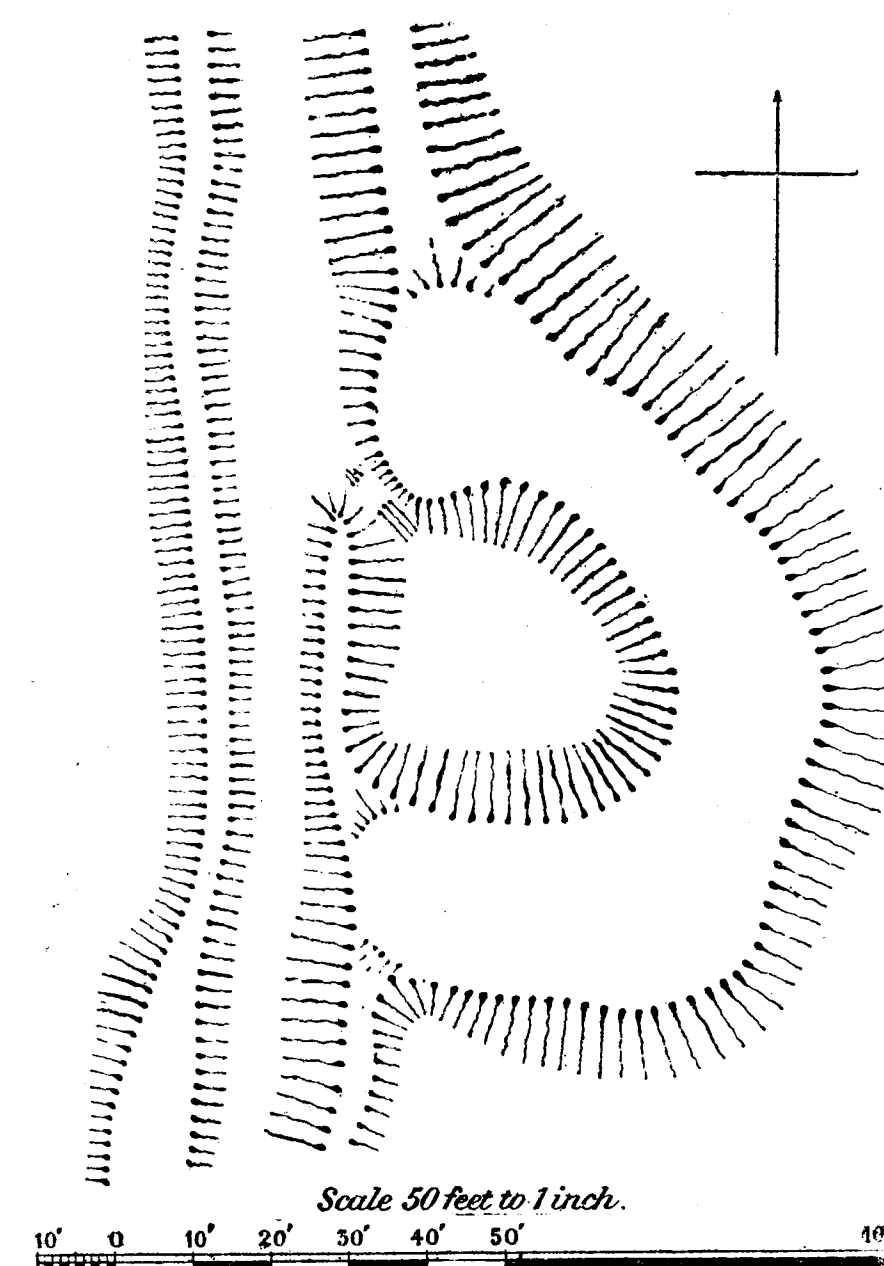


FIG. 24. CIRCUS ON PARK BROW, SOMPTING, SUSSEX.
(By permission of Dr. Eliot Curwen.)

which suddenly assumes the character of a Roman terrace-way to climb the hill towards Whiteways. Along the line of the road for a distance of half a mile the adjacent rabbit-scratchings are full of Romano-British pottery, and on the level plateau to the east of the combe the quantity of such *roba* is enormous, with here and there fragments of iron implements, spindle-whorls, and scraps of Niedermendig lava. These and other indications leave no doubt that

here stood a very considerable Romano-British town.¹ If so, our theory requires that it should have its *circus*.

Some 200 yards south of the lower end of the terrace-way, at a point exactly east of the Duchess' Lodge, the floor of the combe is so narrow that the 8 ft. greenway fills the whole width of it; and just here, carved out of the western slope of the valley, its single entrance opening direct upon the greenway, is an earthwork which is nothing but a Greek theatre in miniature. The *cavea* measures some 42 ft. only in diameter, the floor is sunk below the natural level, and the chalk removed in its excavation has been carefully thrown out to form two perfectly regular banks which complete the eastward side of the theatre. So symmetrical are they that they cannot be explained as the *déblai* from any chance pit, such as might be made in digging for flints or chalk. Moreover, there are scraps of Romano-British pottery to be found where the rabbits have broken the surface. The circumstances are such as to leave no reasonable doubt that this too is a *circus*. Its resemblance to a Greek theatre² is all in favour of this view, for as has been shewn, the Greek theatre was itself a development from the moot circle of the Brythonic Achæans, and although specialised for the particular requirements of the drama, remained throughout a moot. Elsewhere upon the chalk-downs are other works of the same plan, always directly associated with evidences of settlements of the Romano-British time and earlier, as for example at Eastwick Bottom, three miles north of Brighton, and near Knook Castle in Wiltshire.

In all these works the most noticeable features are the sunken floor and the character of the unfossed encircling vallum,³ which is broad and purposely finished with a very gentle interior slope⁴ so as to afford the utmost accommoda-

¹ Less than a mile to the west, on Rewell Hill, stood a very extensive town—80 acres or more in extent—from which have come fragments of pottery pronounced to date circa 150 B.C.; *Sussex Arch. Collections*, lxi (1920), pp. 20-39. At Whiteways converge roads, Roman and Romano-British, from Rewell Hill, Pughdean and other points.

² See for example Blouet's drawings in *Expédition de Morée* of the theatres at Sicyon (iii, pl. 82), Megalopolis (ii, pl. 39), and Delos (iii, pl. 10), and compare also the

peculiar features of the 'theatre' at Sanxay (below, ch. xiii.).

³ This fact at once distinguishes the *circus* from the *mardelles*, the habitation-circles of the Pays Messin near Metz, of which it is explicitly said that the soil removed in making the *mardelle* has been carted wholly away, or purposely spread over the ground about (Grenier, *Habitations Gauloises*, p. 32).

⁴ Statius (*Theb.* vi, 258-60) lays stress upon this feature: *Campum . . . longo quem tramite planum Gramineae frondes sinuataque*

tion for the spectators. The floor at the present day is usually concave rather than flat.¹ The vallum rises from 6 to 10 ft. above the floor, reaching its highest on either side of the entrances.² The work usually stands close to the road or roads which give access to the settlement, and outside its defences, but in some cases it is actually within the settlement.³ The floor and vallum are usually littered with precisely the same fragments of pottery as are strewn over the whole settlement. As most of them have been ploughed over at some period of time, the vallum is commonly very much spread—to as much as 40 ft. or more—and the arena is largely filled up, so that the whole might easily be mistaken for the site of a recent pond⁴ or of a 'swallet,'⁵ or for the site of a chalk-, gravel-, or flint-pit. Frequently the remains are so much wasted as to make accurate measurements impossible.

Speaking of one of the works at Buzbury, Warne says⁶ that it had the appearance of a 'ransacked tumulus,' and it is probable that this is another reason why such *circi* have been overlooked.

On Trows Down, above Broad Chalke, the ordnance survey marks as 'tumulus' an amphitheatral work measuring 50 ft. from bank to bank. The vallum rises 3 ft.-4 ft. above the surrounding ground, but the floor is sunk 1½ ft. lower, and there is no visible external fosse. It is associated with numerous vestiges of a possible settlement, and was possibly constructed for a *circus*, but left unfinished. A second example is to be seen on the brow of Kingston Hill, 2 miles sw. of Lewes, Sussex. It measures 42 ft. across the *cavea*, and the banks rise at the highest some 6 ft. above the floor. There are two entrances, but no fosse. A Roman terrace-way climbs to the crest of the hill at this point,⁷ but there are no discoverable traces of

cespite vivo Mollia non subitis augent fastigia clivis.

¹ The natural result of denudation. On the other hand the floor of the *circus* at Charterhouse-on-Mendip, for no obvious reason, is slightly convex.

² This is because here had to be thrown up all that additional soil which would otherwise have blocked the entrance-ways. The feature is a fairly safe criterion of a genuine old entrance-way.

³ This was the case at Oakley Lane,

between Tollard Royal and Farnham, and at Oakley Down near Handley, and apparently also in one of the two on Tarrant Hinton Down.

⁴ At Berwick Down, Tollard Royal, a modern dew-pond stands some 60 yds. away from the *circus*, giving excellent opportunity to compare the characteristics of both.

⁵ cf. the circle on Pwll Mountain (p. 241), and the case of Tyrebaggar (p. 146).

⁶ *Ancient Dorset*, p. 43.

⁷ *Arch. Journ.* 1915, p. 220.

any settlement near by. This also is marked 'tumulus' on the ordnance survey.

Amidst the irregular and often indefinite aggregates of mounds and banks and fosses which are the outward and visible sign of British villages, the outstanding fact is the general lack of anything which can be called design. By contrast with such surroundings the works now under consideration at once attract attention: they are definite, uniform, and so to say standardised, the details varying only very slightly. The mere fact that they are so shapely, where all else is shapeless, suggests that they had a special purpose. Defensive they cannot have been. For pastoral purposes they are commonly far too small,¹ apart from the unsuitability of their sunken floors and gently graded banks. They yield nothing to show that they were residential or sepulchral, and their position in relation to their settlements adjoining is wholly against either of these explanations of their purpose. On the other hand they are placed exactly as Homer implies a moot should be placed; they answer the requirements of a moot alike in plan and position; and from their likeness on the one hand to the *circus* which was the original Italian moot, on the other hand to the Greek theatre, there can be little doubt that they had a similar purpose. The constant, but otherwise inexplicable, feature of the sunken floor is a ritual survival of the digging of an actual grave, that altar-tomb of Consus, or his Celtic equivalent, to whom all such *circi* were consecrated.

Where there is no discoverable provision for any drainage, these works must have been purposely and carefully turfed when first constructed, for otherwise they would at once become mere mud-holes in wet weather. A good turf overlying a chalk subsoil dries with extraordinary rapidity.²

Evidence has been adduced to shew that alike in Homeric Greece and in Aberdeenshire the Brythonic Celts

¹ Heywood Sumner (*Earthworks of Cranborne Chase*) suggests that they were intended to shelter cattle in wild weather.

² Even the natives of New Guinea, though living in a very different climate from that of Britain, 'realise the danger of sitting on damp ground,' and therefore provide

'stone circles' as places where they may lounge and talk. These, however, are mere rickles of stones and very small, and they seem to have little or no connexion with either religion or administration. See Seligman, *Melanesians of British New Guinea* (1910), pp. 464-6.

had moots of circular plan. These works are likewise of circular plan, the one striking difference being that these are of earth whereas the others are stone circles. But the earthen circles are most abundant where there is no stone, and therefore no stone circles. In Cranborne Chase, for example, where there is no stone, the earthen *circi* are common, stone circles unknown; whereas in the south and west of Dorset, where there is stone in plenty, the stone circles reappear side by side with the earthen *circi*. The extant remains of stone circles in Dorset are one at Rempstone (87 ft.) near Corfe Castle, and three in the parish of Portesham, viz. Gorwell circle (90 ft. by 79 ft.), one in the Valley of Stones (77 ft.), and a third on Hampton Hill (46½ ft. by 30½ ft.).¹ Homer is witness that in any case the stone peristalith was no essential of the moot, and in Italy one finds no trace of it. On the other hand, we find in ancient Italy earthen moots which are obviously akin to those of England. The inference that the latter, therefore, are themselves moots is unavoidable. And not merely are these earthen *circi* parallel with the *ἱερὸς κύκλος* of the Achæans and of the Picts in plan and in position, and in that total absence of any fosse which stamps them as *loca publica*; they are parallel also in point of size. The largest and the smallest of the earthen *circi* are pretty much of the same size as the largest and smallest of the stone circles, while the mean size of each is the same (70 ft.—80 ft.).

As the limits of the Greek theatre were those imposed by the physical capacity of the actors to make themselves heard, so the moot-circle's size was limited and by exactly the same consideration—audibility. Of the two, the moot-circle would, at its largest, be the smaller, for it knew nothing of those masks and ingenious sound-reflectors which were familiar to the theatre.

This view of their purpose is peculiarly borne out by their position, almost always at the gate of the community to which they belonged. As with the ancient Hebrews, so

¹ H. Colley March in *Proc. Dorset N.H. and Antiq. Field Club*, 1908; *Trans. Lancs. and Ches. Antiq. Soc.* 1888. A fifth circle at Pokeswell, with diam. of 14 ft. only, is

presumably sepulchral; and our theory presumes the presence of the sepulchral stone circle wherever the stone moot-circle appears.

in ancient Britain the elders were accustomed to take their seats, for purposes of judgment and administration and debate, literally 'in the gate.'

Geoffrey of Monmouth relates¹ how Vortigern's messengers, when in search of 'the boy without a father (Merlin),' came 'to the city which men later called Kaermodin (Carmarthen). Outside the city's gate they saw some youngsters at their games,² so they drew near to watch the play, and sat them down in the circus,³ for they were travel-weary.' The passage proves that the Romano-British community⁴ commonly had a *circus*, that it was *inter alia* a place for games, that it offered convenient seats for those who watched such games, and that normally it stood before the gate of the community.

Similarly in Saxon times the right of *burhgeatsetl*, that is, of taking one's seat at the gate of the *burh* to assist in the business of the moot, one of the rights which qualified a man for the dignity of thane.⁵ The burgomote was the Saxon equivalent of something which equally belonged to the political system of the Celts, and grew up of itself amongst a people who, when they arrived in Britain, seem to have had little that can be styled a political system at all, and certainly no *burhs*.

Stukeley noticed⁶ under the name of 'inverted barrows' a class of earthworks to which Colt Hoare⁷ gave the equally misleading, if more descriptive, name of 'pond barrows.' He illustrates one in his plate of the various types of barrows, shewing it as a circular work with a saucer-like area and slight continuous vallum all round; and as there is no fosse, the vallum must have been formed of the soil removed from the area. He gives no clue to the size. Like Stukeley,⁸ he

remarks upon the regularity and finish of such works, and while he owns that he knew of no example which had yielded sepulchral remains, he noticed that they were often associated with barrows of the usual types. Stukeley himself had dug into one or two with no better success,¹ and yet another on Ballard Down, Panfield, Dorset, is mentioned by Warne² as having yielded no 'finds.' Dr. Thurnam declared³ that they were not barrows at all: he had dug into two or three, finding a burial in one instance only, and this he pronounced to be 'long subsequent to the formation' of the earthwork.⁴ Stukeley had suggested that they had been intended as places 'of feasting and sacrificing in memory of the dead.' Colt Hoare suggested that they were perhaps originally roofed-in like huts, and Wilson⁵ took the same view. Thurnam, apparently finding an objection to this view in their large size, fell back on Stukeley's notion, adding the further guess that they may have served as shelters during the time occupied by the funeral ceremonies and in the formation of the barrows. Similarly the Rev. A. C. Smith,⁶ who mentions some three or four examples, notably one near Beckhampton, 36 yds. in diameter and 'beautifully shaped,' and another on Colston Down near Shepherd's Shore.

The resemblance between the 'pond barrow'⁷ and the *circus* is too close to be accidental. The two things are identical in construction, and differ only in this, that whereas the *circus* is obviously attached to the dwelling-place of the living, the 'pond barrow' is alleged to be associated rather with the barrows of the dead. This observation of Colt Hoare may possibly be mistaken⁸: it is a common fact for all traces of the dwellings of the living

¹ *History*, vi, 17. Geoffrey's book was completed in 1139, and this portion of it is taken from older Welsh originals.

² It was a game of ball, says the *Brut Tysilio*, and Nennius (§ 41) had said so even earlier: cf. the ball-play before Ulysses in the moot of Scheria (*Odyss.* viii, 370).

³ 'In the Ring' in Aaron Thompson's English translation (1718), without any attempt to explain what 'the Ring' might be.

⁴ Carmarthen was the Roman station of Margidunum of *Anton. It.* xii.

⁵ So Thorpe, *Leges Vetustae*, p. 81.

Maitland (*Domesday and Beyond*, p. 190) would prefer to explain it as 'just a house in the "gate," the street of the *burh*,' but admits that it is not certain that *geat* can mean 'street,' and that the other explanation may be correct. In other passages (e.g. p. 209) he allows that the Burgomote was a fact predating the feudal system, 'a unit in a national system of moots.'

⁶ *Abury*, p. 12; *Stonehenge*, p. 45.

⁷ *Ancient Wilts.* ii, pp. 22, 121, 207. The 'pond-barrow' is no. 6 amongst his list of types.

⁸ He describes an example lying a mile or so west of Stonehenge as 'a circular dish-

like cavity dug in the chalk' and 'extremely well turned,' 90 ft. in diam. and 7 ft. deep in the middle. There were barrows near it (*Stonehenge*, p. 45).

¹ *Stonehenge*, p. 45.

² *Celtic Tumuli of Dorset* (1866).

³ *Archaeologia*, xlii, 166-7.

⁴ He mentions, however (*loc. cit.*), that Rev. E. Duke and Sir R. Hoare found in one case 'in a hole in the chalk . . . a deposit of burnt bones.'

⁵ *Pre-Hist. Annals of Scotland*, p. 43.

⁶ *Guide to British and Roman Antiquities of the North Wiltshire Downs* (1884).

⁷ It is certain that Colt Hoare in some cases applied the name of 'pond barrow' to

circi of the Romano-British type, as for example, one on Steepleton Down and another on Winterbourne Abbas Down. Warne, who corrected Hoare's nomenclature (*Celtic Tumuli of Dorset*, p. 8; *Vestiges*, p. 42, note), himself made the mistake of calling some of them tumuli, misled, perhaps, by their small dimensions. Mere dimensions are no safe criterion either of a barrow or of a *circus*.

⁸ There was a work of this kind outside the Roman lines at Hardham, Sussex (destroyed before 1836). It has been interpreted as a 'pond barrow' (*Suss. Arch. Coll.* ix, 116), but was most probably the *circus* of the station.

to vanish while the barrows of the dead abide, obvious if not intact. Barrows are to be found within short distances of many indubitable *circi* in the Dorsetshire 'villages,' notably at Berwick Down, Gussage Down, and Woodcuts; and always it remains to be proved that the barrows in question are contemporary with the so-called 'pond barrow.' The finding of one interment, and that a late one, within a 'pond barrow' by Dr. Thurnam is readily accounted for on the sufficient ground that the earthwork's circular and circumvallated form misled some later native, as indeed it misled Stukeley and Colt Hoare, into the belief that it was actually a barrow, and therefore a proper place for an interment. Similarly, the persistent knowledge that the *circus*, as its plan declared, was a *locus consecratus*, will explain the clustering of *later* barrows near it. In Binderton, Sussex, a mound has overflowed the entrance of the *circus* (fig. 23), as similarly a barrow has overflowed the stone circle at Boskednan, Cornwall (p. 246, n. 3).

Some of these works have been preserved by the accident of their having been converted into mazes, or 'Julian's Bowers,' to which they readily lent themselves. Analogy would suggest that when their more serious purposes were forgotten, their use as places of amusement, games and dancing would continue, and it is quite likely that some of the larger examples had in the days of their greatness been the scenes of formal military rides,¹ or of those informal maze-games which, as Pliny tells us, were familiar to the Italian youngsters of his own day.² The maze, as we know it, is believed to have been penitential in

¹ The *Ludus Troiae* was the feature of the opening day of the *Ludi Apollinares* in the *Circus Maximus* (Dio Cassius, xlviii, 20; Smith, *Dict. Class. Antiq.* ii, 89b). It was the original of Vergil's well-known description of the ride of Iulus in *Aen.* v, 545 sqq. and the original also of the periodical review-rides of the Roman cavalry regiments, for which see Curle, *A Roman Frontier Post* (1911), p. 170-3. Only the largest *circi* would suffice for such performances, which Arrian (*Ars Tactica*, c. xxxiii) expressly declares to have been of Celtic origin. In Arrian's time (A.D. 136) the evolutions took place on a square field which had been previously dug over and smoothed (*op. cit.* c. xxxiv; cf. *Odyss.* viii, 260, *λεῖψαν δὲ χορόν*); but Vergil explicitly speaks of

the scene of Iulus' ride as a *circus* (v, 551). Geoffrey of Monmouth (ix, 14) speaks of a military ride at Caerleon on the occasion of King Arthur's marriage to Guinevere: it took place, he says, 'in the fields without the city,' which correctly describes the position of the *circus* of Caerleon in Bear-House Field. W. E. Ball, in *Proc. Lewisham Antiq. Soc.* 1899-1901, cites one Troppius as asserting that there once existed at Upsala in Sweden a 'royal circus' still bearing the marks of the evolutions of the horses.

² *Non, ut in pavimentis puerorumve ludicris campestribus videmus, brevi lacinia milia passuum plura ambulationis continentur* (*Hist. Nat.* xxxiv, § 90).

its purpose, and there would be an obvious fitness in turning to such a use these scenes of traditional 'devil-worship,' precisely as happened with the Colosseum in Rome. This, after being long used as the scene of miracle-plays on Good Fridays, was formally consecrated by Benedict XIII in 1728, and a chapel built in one of its archways. A cross was erected in the centre of its arena in 1749, and fourteen 'stations,' arranged around the *podium*, remained there until 1874.¹ Most surviving mazes are on spots unquestionably once the sites of Romano-British settlements,² and they frequently recall by their construction the characteristic features of the *circi*. Stukeley,³ speaking of the 'Julian's Bower'⁴ at Alkborough in Lincolnshire, notices 'these bowers or burroughs . . . where there was no ditch behind' the presumed circle of spectators, i.e. no external fosse. This particular example still preserves some part of its enclosing vallum. So did that of Comberton—the name be it noted, is said to mean 'Town of the Cymru'—until, a church-school being built beside it, the trampling of the children's feet destroyed it in a few years, although it had stood 3 ft. high. The maze at Asenby, N.R., 'sunk in a hollow at the top of an oval hillock . . . looks very like a damaged replica of the "amphitheatre" at Charterhouse-on-Mendip.'⁵ No objection to this view can be found in the small size of many of them. At Alkborough the actual maze, which fills the whole of the depressed floor, has a

¹ J. H. Parker, *Archaeology of Rome* (1876), pt. vii, pp. 29-30.

² For example, those of Comberton, Cambs. and Alkborough, Lincs. Rev. F. G. Walker goes so far as to assert that they are invariably found close to Roman roads and in Roman settlements, the one case where no such Roman road is known to exist being in the Scilly Isles; and even there there have been found Roman remains. The traditional maze-patterns occur also in Roman mosaic pavements in this country; see *Proc. S.A.* xx (1904-5). In Wright's *Hist. Essex*, ii, 124, it is said that there used to be a triennial feast at Eastertide about the maze at Comberton; 'it would seem probable that such works originally served for some religious ceremony among the Britons, to whom they are generally attributed.' The feast, its intermittent recurrence, and its coincidence with Easter, all point to a very remote origin. That the penitential purpose of the maze was some-

times forgotten is suggested by the name of 'Maze-Sunday,' some particular Sunday set apart in Devonshire *circa* 1700 for festival purposes.

³ *Itin. Curiosum* (1772), v, 98.

⁴ This name is still used, corrupted to 'Jullinbore' or 'Jellinbore.' That at Alkborough was also called 'Roslin (i.e. Rosamond's) Bower.' Stukeley particularly noticed the position of this example immediately outside the gate of the small entrenchment, of which the memory remains in the name of Walcot Hall. The Roman origin of this entrenchment has been questioned needlessly. It is a few miles from the indubitable Roman station of Winteringham.

⁵ Allcroft, *Earthwork of England*, p. 602. The words were written nearly twenty years ago. This maze was 51 ft. in diam. and was apparently perfect in 1866 (E. Trollope in *Proc. Mon. and Caerleon Antiq. Soc.* 1866).

diameter of 44 ft. ; that at Wing¹ in Rutlandshire, 40 ft. ; that at Boughton Green, Northants, 37 ft. These figures appear very small, but they are not smaller than must have been the actual floors of such indubitable *circi* as those of Buckland Bank and Gussage Down.²

Sir Paul Vinogradoff has given good reasons for his belief that the free self-governing communities of the Celtic time, far from being extinguished by the Roman occupation, preserved their existence and to some extent their autonomy throughout that occupation, and actually far down into the Saxon period.³ 'There existed all over the Empire rural communities with a modest but definite measure of self-government . . . managing their concerns mostly by means of elective officers and meetings of the more important villagers, and capable on many occasions of seeking redress for grievances and affording protection to those of their numbers who suffered wrong.'⁴ As communities they must have had their own communal moots, and all analogy tells us that these must have been in the open air. Such was the *circus* in Latin Italy, and if we find much the same *circus* here in Britain, we may safely believe that its purpose was the same. It was the moot of the community to which it belonged, and these small rural communities were the *pagi* and the *vici* of the Empire. 'Festus speaks distinctly (*s.v.* VICUS) of villages which form commonwealths and unities of jurisdiction, and of others which, though not so city-like, have still to be considered as economic bodies, and e.g. hold their own fairs (*nundinae*) and enjoy a special administrative organisation (*magistri vici quotannis fiunt*).'⁵ The *magistri vicorum* and *pagorum* are known to have been the officials who managed the festival of the *Compitalia*,

¹ This was 'perfect and well looked-after' in 1903 (Murray, *Handbook to Rutland*).

² See further Trollope, *Arch. Journal*, xv (1858). It does not seem possible to explain the name of 'Julian's Bower' save by reference to Iulus and the Troy-game. Mazes are, or till lately were, cut in the turf by the shepherds of Wales and Strathclyde, who called them *Caer-droia* and 'Troy-Towns' (Roberts, *Cambrian Popular Antiqs.* p. 212). All the evidence points to a connexion with Roman times. The not uncommon name of Troy Town, applied to farmsteads, etc. probably points to the presence of mazes now destroyed.

³ *Growth of the Manor*, 1905.

⁴ *ibid.* p. 51.

⁵ *ibid.* pp. 49, 104. For possible archaeological evidence for the existence of the latter class ('not so city-like') and their moots in Britain, see the next chapter. The passage in Festus runs: *Sed ex vicis partim habent rempublicam et ius dicitur, partim nihil eorum et tamen ibi nundinae aguntur, negoti gerendi causa, et magistri pagi quotannis fiunt* (ed. W. M. Lindsay, Teubner, 1913). The date of Festus is thought to be circa 150. For the survival of *pagi* in Italy, see J. S. Reid, *Municipalities of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 1913), pp. 32-33.

and *compita* were places 'wherein the *pagani* met to debate definite matters,' i.e. they were the moots of *pagi* and *vici*; for the *vici* had its own *curiales*,¹ which means that it had its own *curia* and its own moot. Like the meetings of the old *comitia curiata*, that of the *Compitalia* was summoned by trumpet,² for it was not determined by any fixed date³; the ceremonies included the sacrifice of young pigs⁴; and the sacrifice was made not so much to the *di superi* as to 'heroes,' i.e. the spirits of departed mortals.⁵ In short, the whole was a humble replica of the *Consualia* and the festival of the Roman *curiae*. Every *vici* appears to have had its own *compitum*.⁶

It is not impossible that some amongst the many Comptons which figure upon the map of southern England may go back to an original in the Roman *compitum*; as, for example, Compton Valence, where still survives a noteworthy *circus* (above, p. 196). Doubtless in many cases the name stands for Coombe-tun, and denotes a place lying in a hollow amongst hills, but there are many cases in which such a description does not apply, and some other derivation remains to be found. In Sussex the name of the Comp or Compt⁷ still frequently attaches to spots beside the meeting-points of roads; and this is the radical meaning of the word *compita*.⁸ There is some reason to suppose that the *compitum* was uniformly circular.

Some hint of the kind of business which might be conducted in these moots of the *pagani* may be found in the village committees (*panchayats*) of India, whose activities

¹ So Vinogradoff (*op cit.* p. 104), citing the *Codex Theod.* and Salvianus *De Gubern. Dei*.

² Philargyrius on Verg. *Georg.* ii, 382: *Ubi pagani agrestes buccina convocati solent certare consilia*. The same method of summons is illustrated by the moot-horns of many English communities, such as Canterbury and Dover.

³ It was one of the *feriae conceptivae* (Ausonius, *de Feriis*, 17: *Non certis redeuntia festa diebus*), though later fixed (*feriae stativae*) to Jan. 3-5.

⁴ Propertius, iv, 1, 23.

⁵ Dion. Hal. iv, 14.

⁶ Ausonius, *de Feriis*, 18: *Compita per vicos cum sua quisque colit*.

⁷ The form Compt is found in legal documents of the seventeenth century as an alternative to Comp, e.g. at Seaford.

⁸ Schol. on Persius, iv, 28: *loca in quad-riviis . . . viae publicae ac diverticulae aliquorum confinium*. In the rural districts, he adds, they were marked by little open shrines (*aediculae patentes*), but in towns they were *quasi turres*. Possibly the lack of space had led to the substitution in the towns of smaller enclosures—*sacella*—of some sort in circular form. The word *turris* does not necessarily imply any great height. On the other hand it seems to have commonly implied a circular plan. It is possibly connected with Lat. *tor-nus*, Eng. *turn*; cf. the meanings of the French *tour* (masc. 'a tour,' fem. 'a tower'). It is said that *turris* is in medieval Latin never used of an engaged tower (*πύργος*). My authority for the statement (if my memory serve me) is Dr. H. J. Round.

are chiefly concerned with education, watch and ward, sanitation, public works, and the administration of justice.¹

At the present day the smooth green floor of the 'Frying Pan' on Ham Hill is a favourite dancing-ground of west-country holiday-makers.² This looks like a genuine survival from the past into the present, perhaps one of the most remarkable in this country. Some Italian archaeologists believe that the *circus* was evolved from the sepulchral barrow, just as was the Greek theatre with its *ὀρχήστρα*. When, therefore, the *circus* replaced the older circle-moots of Celtic Britain, themselves a development from the barrow and the sepulchral cromlech, it easily and naturally inherited the function of a dancing-floor. And to-day that is the solitary *raison d'être* of the 'Frying-Pan' in the minds of many of those who dwell within reach of it. Certainly no structure could be better adapted for the convenience both of the performers and of the onlookers, the 'throng that stood all round enjoying the charming dance.'³

Repeating Livy's well-known story that theatrical performances were first introduced into Rome in 363 B.C. in consequence of a violent plague, Orosius takes occasion to remark⁴ that the Romans 'to rid them of a passing plague of the body, introduced an abiding disease of the soul.' Alfred enlarges upon Orosius' comment: he says that the *anfithœatra* then introduced became prime centres of devil-worship and blasphemy, and that in Britain their number was countless.⁵

Orosius was a Spanish monk who lived in the first half of the fifth century. He had known Spain while it was

¹ See Matthai, *Village Government in British India* (1915). He says little of religion, but makes the remark that the village schoolmaster acts also sometimes as astrologer, to tell the lucky seasons for sowing, etc.

² As one of the principal occasions for such holiday-making is (or used to be) Shrove Tuesday, it has been thought that the name of the 'Frying Pan' is an allusion to this date; and as cock-fights were peculiarly associated with Shrove-tide sports, it has further been argued that the *circus* was built—in relatively recent times—for a cock-pit. Cock-fighting does not require any such laborious apparatus or any such large arena. Most likely it has been so used

often enough, but assuredly it was never built for such a purpose. The largest authenticated cock-pit known to the writer, that in the churchyard of Llanfechain, Montgomery, had a diameter of 27 ft. only.

³ *Iliad*, xviii, 603.

⁴ Orosius, *Hist.* III, 3, *pro depellenda temporali peste corporum, arcessitus est perpetuus morbus animorum.*

⁵ *pa waeron unarimede*. The original Latin of Orosius and Alfred's Saxon version are printed side by side in E.E.T.S. no. 79. *Amphitheatrum* does not occur in Hessels' *Eighth-Century Latin-A.-S. Glossary*, and excepting as a literary loan-word, it never passed into Saxon speech.

still a Roman province, and did not confuse his account of the matter by anachronistic references to theatres and amphitheatres. Alfred was born more than four centuries after Britain had ceased to be Roman, and at times he gravely misuses Roman terminology, but it is plain that to his mind 'amphitheatres' were first extremely numerous in his England, and secondly were specially identified with paganism. *Circus* and *amphitheatrum* being convertible terms (ch. vi), there is no reason to doubt that Alfred was thinking of all and any works of amphitheatral plan; and as every community seems to have possessed its own, his statement that they were 'countless' is justified. Bede himself asserts that, beside the eight-and-twenty 'noble cities' of Roman Britain, there were 'countless' other fortified towns and villages (*castella*) of smaller size, using the identically same epithet. For what reason Alfred preferred to speak of such earthworks as amphitheatres rather than as *circi*, will appear in the sequel.

The peculiar absence of any 'finds' in the *circi*, excepting only scraps of pottery, is exactly what was to be expected, for Roman law did not permit the bringing of arms into the moot, whether that was *forum*, *curia*, or *circus*. The armed riots of Gracchus and his opponents in the *comitium*, the military terrorism of the Forum in the Sullan time, were outrages only to be equalled by Catilina's coming armed into the Senate, and by the actual murder of Julius within the walls of the *Curia Pompeia*.¹ Something of this feeling the Celt would seem to have known even in the remote Homeric time; under Roman influence he would naturally adopt it *in toto*; and this may be the sufficient reason for its reappearance in the ancient laws of Wales and Ireland, and thereafter in the Saxon codes. It underlay the fierce outburst of horror against the Gunpowder Treason, against the arrest of the 'five members,' and against the outrage of 'Pride's Purge,' for one and all were violations of that sacrosanctity which the administrative moot shared with the sepulchral precinct whence it was derived. The 'Mother of Parliaments' is an ancient institution, but infinitely more ancient is that 'privilege' whereof it is so jealous. That inviola-

¹ cf. Tacitus, writing his *Agricola* nearly a century and a half later: *obsessam curiam, clausum armis senatum* (c. 45).

bility of the *curia* of which Cicero made so much in Rome, came with the Roman to Britain, and there amongst a people *toto divisos orbe* was a sentiment strong enough to debar even the uncivilised Saxon from desecrating its holy places, though he seems to have desecrated all things else. So one finds in the *circi*, as in the stone circles, little but the fragments of those rude *fictilia* which we know to have been the customary ritual vessels even in provincial Italy.¹