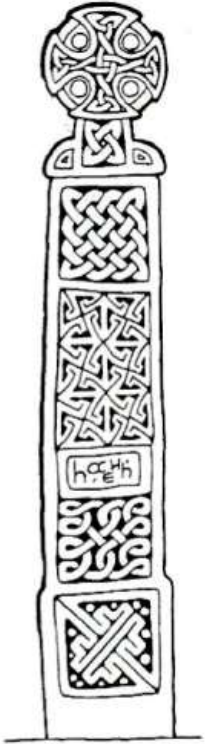


WELSH ARCHITECTURE - ARCHITECTURE IN WALES

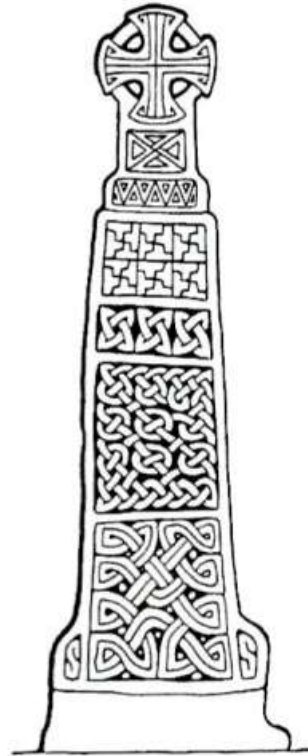
Week 1

Introduction Setting the Scene Celtic, Roman and early Christian Architecture

Ian Standen



*Nevern: Late
tenth- or early
eleventh-century
high cross.*



*Carew: Eleventh-
century high cross.*

Week 1 – Introduction, Setting the Scene – Roman, Celtic and early Christian Architecture

- Aims – To describe the key features and characteristics of **Celtic, Roman and Early Christian** Architecture in Wales; how they are related and subsequently influenced in terms of architectural ‘style’ in Welsh Architecture.
- Objectives- By the end of the sessions students should be able to identify the basic features of each style and appreciate how these have developed, adapted over a period of time.

Welsh Architecture

- The architecture of Wales is rooted in the social and cultural environment different from the rest of Britain.
- Welsh buildings often reflect a completely different historical background.

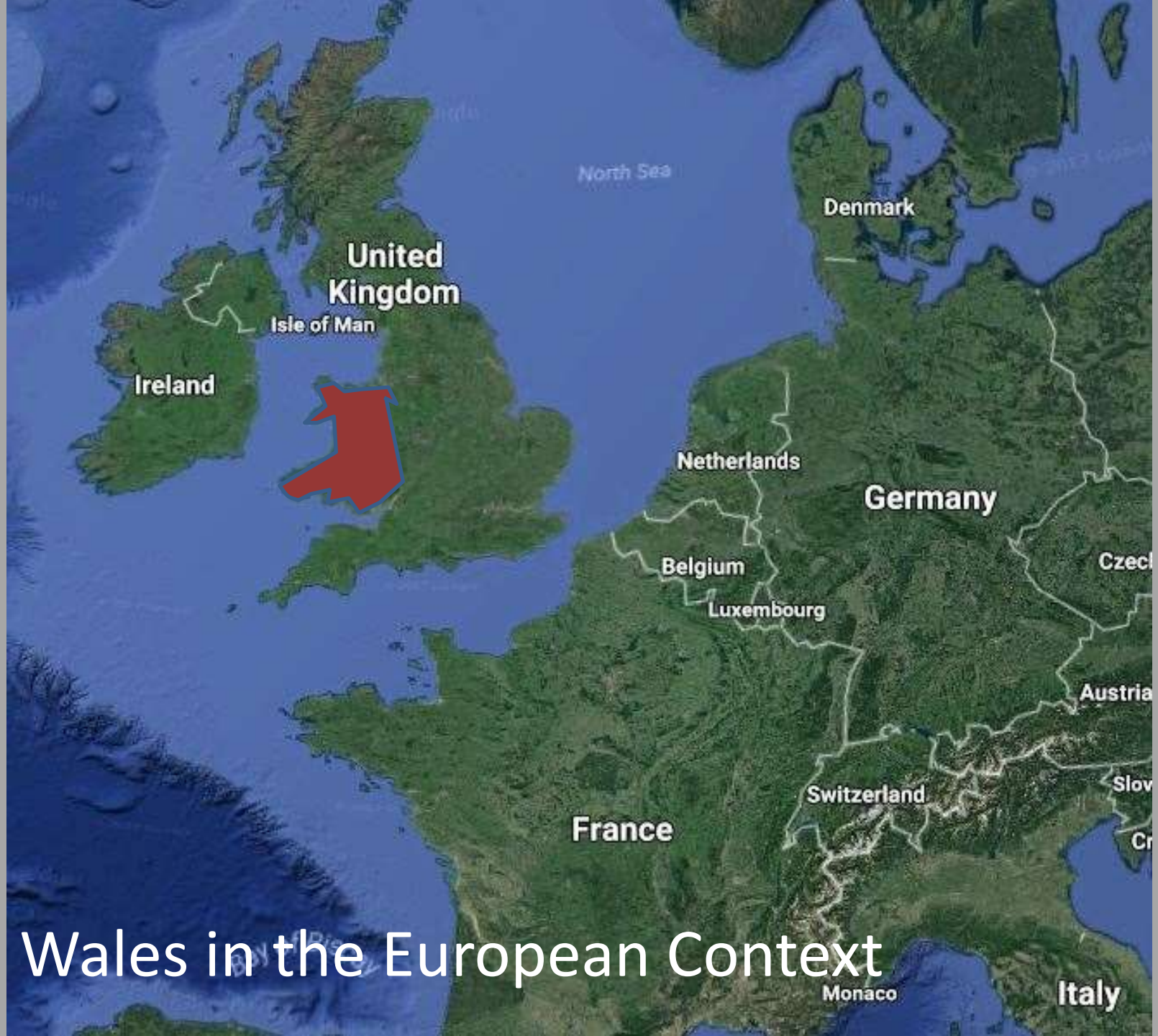
Welsh Architecture

- Architecture traditionally ‘mother of the arts’ has been likened to frozen music.
- More to the point, it is ‘frozen history’, for though the people that make history inevitably die and their written records are irretrievably lost, the buildings in which generations of men and women live, labour and worship often remain for many centuries.



ARTHUR'S STONE, NEAR SWANSEA.





Wales in the European Context



Isle of Man

Dublin

Leeds

Liverpool

ENGLAND

Cambridge

WALES

Oxford

London

Cardiff Bristol

Southampton

Brighton

Plymouth

Wales and England
Lowland and Highland



Wales and England – the borderline

Welsh Architecture

- Sir Cyril Fox noted in *The Personality of Britain*,
- The tendency for '*greater unity of culture in the Lowland Zone but greater continuity of culture in the Highland Zone.*'
- This is evident over two millennia in the survival of the Welsh language, 'the Senior British Language' according to Tolkien

Welsh Architecture

- The mountainous nature of the country has hindered invaders.
- Alien concepts were not easily accommodated and the infiltration of non Welsh ideas into Welsh Society from the outside was gradual.

Time to ask the Audience Questions?

- What features do you associate with Welsh Architecture?
- Name two buildings in Wales that you admire and maybe have visited? And why?
- When do you think they were built?
- How would you describe their 'style'?

Architectural Style

If we consider style in the broadest sense:

- A) to group and analyse buildings showing very particular traits.
- B) highlight cultural trends.
- C) demonstrate architectural strategies - this may also show buildings that superficially might appear unrelated.

Architectural Style

STYLE

Conceived as:

- 1. Formal characteristics
- 2. Broad cultural trends and
- 3. Movements/ideologies.

Which Style? Where? When?
A question of Architectural Genealogy?

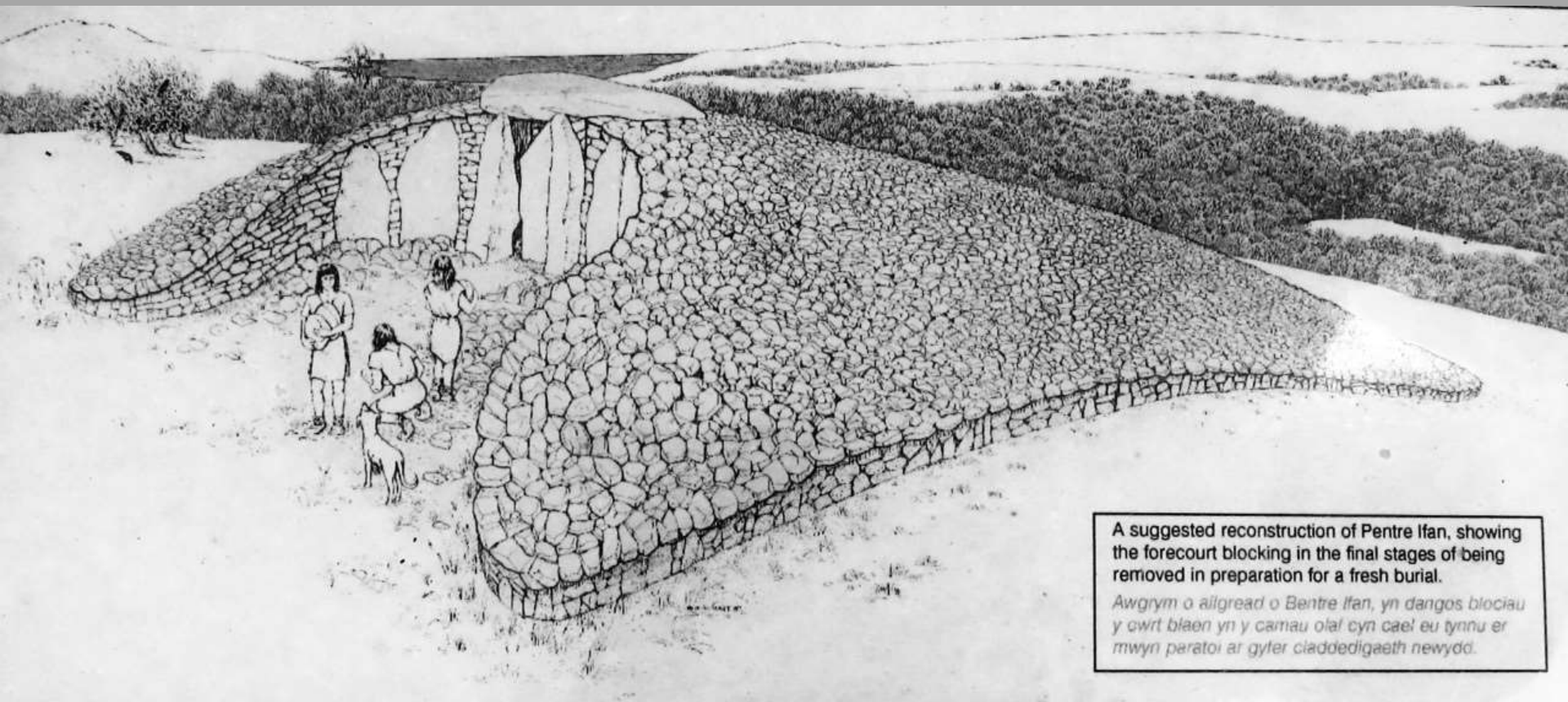
Early Remains

- Prehistoric Beginnings
- End of the Palaeolithic period (Old Stone Age)
hunters and food gatherer settled in Wales
- Probably living in caves and crude shelters.
- Earliest man-made structures that have survived are tombs dating from the Neolithic Period 2500-1800 BCE (Stone Age)

Early Remains



Pentre Ifan, Nevern, Pembrokeshire – 3500BCE



A suggested reconstruction of Pentre Ifan, showing the forecourt blocking in the final stages of being removed in preparation for a fresh burial.

Awgrym o ailgread o Bentre Ifan, yn dangos blociau y cwrth blaen yn y camau olaf cyn cael eu tynnu er mwyn paratoi ar gyfer claddedigaeth newydd.

Bryn Celli Ddu Burial Chamber, Anglesey

‘the Mound in the Dark Grove’ 6000-3000 BCE



What sets Bryn Celli Ddu apart from the other tombs on Anglesey, is that it is the only one to be accurately aligned to coincide with the rising sun on the longest day of the year. At dawn on midsummer solstice, shafts of light from the rising sun penetrate down the passageway to light the inner burial chamber.

Barclodiad-y-Gawres Anglesey



Geometric patterns
depicting Stone Age art

Y Meini Hirion in Gwynedd



Hill Forts

- Llanmelin is an Iron Age hillfort located just over a mile (2km) north-west of Caerwent Roman Town, between Newport and Chepstow.
- Llanmelin was thought to be the tribal centre of the Silures before the Romans arrived, but there is no strong evidence to support this idea.
- In general, hillforts began to appear about 1000BC or 3,000 years ago. In the Welsh borderland, however, the main phase of hillfort construction seems to have been around 500BCE.
- Small enclosures, with a single bank — known as a rampart — and ditch, predominated. Further ramparts and more elaborate entrances were often added later and hillforts could remain in use until 2,000 years ago.
- We do not know whether this elaboration reflects a real threat or a form of display, but the diversity of shapes and characteristics suggest a range of functions.
- Set high above the coastal plain, Llanmelin follows this pattern of development. It began life with a single bank and ditch. More banks were added and a hundred years later the entrance was remodelled and strengthened.
- From excavation evidence people lived in circular houses made of timber and mud. They kept and ate cows, sheep and pigs, used pottery, smelted copper and carved antlers from red deer.

Llanmelin Wood Hill Fort near Caerwent



Hill Fort reconstruction

Tre'r Ceiri in the Llyn Peninsula 'Town of the Giants'



Pen y Gaer, Dolgarrog



Showing a rampart plus 'chevaux de frise' –
sharp pointed stones set upright in to the ground

ROMAN INVASION



ROMAN ARCHITECTURE

- Features common of Roman architecture include the arch, walls, orders, vaults, domes and new building types.
- The Romans adopted the classical style developed by the Greeks in their architectural language but they adapted it for new uses/situations.
- Roman architecture became urban, enclosed.

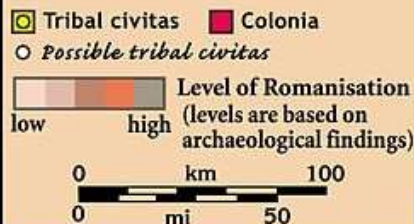
ROMAN ARCHITECTURE

- The Roman Empire introduced a universal architecture with buildings of any Roman colony bearing a strong resemblance to those of every colony.
- They varied in extent/magnificence.
- The design language remained the same.

Roman Britain

Romanisation and Approx. Limits of Civil Boundaries

Based on Jones & Mattingly's
Atlas of Roman Britain



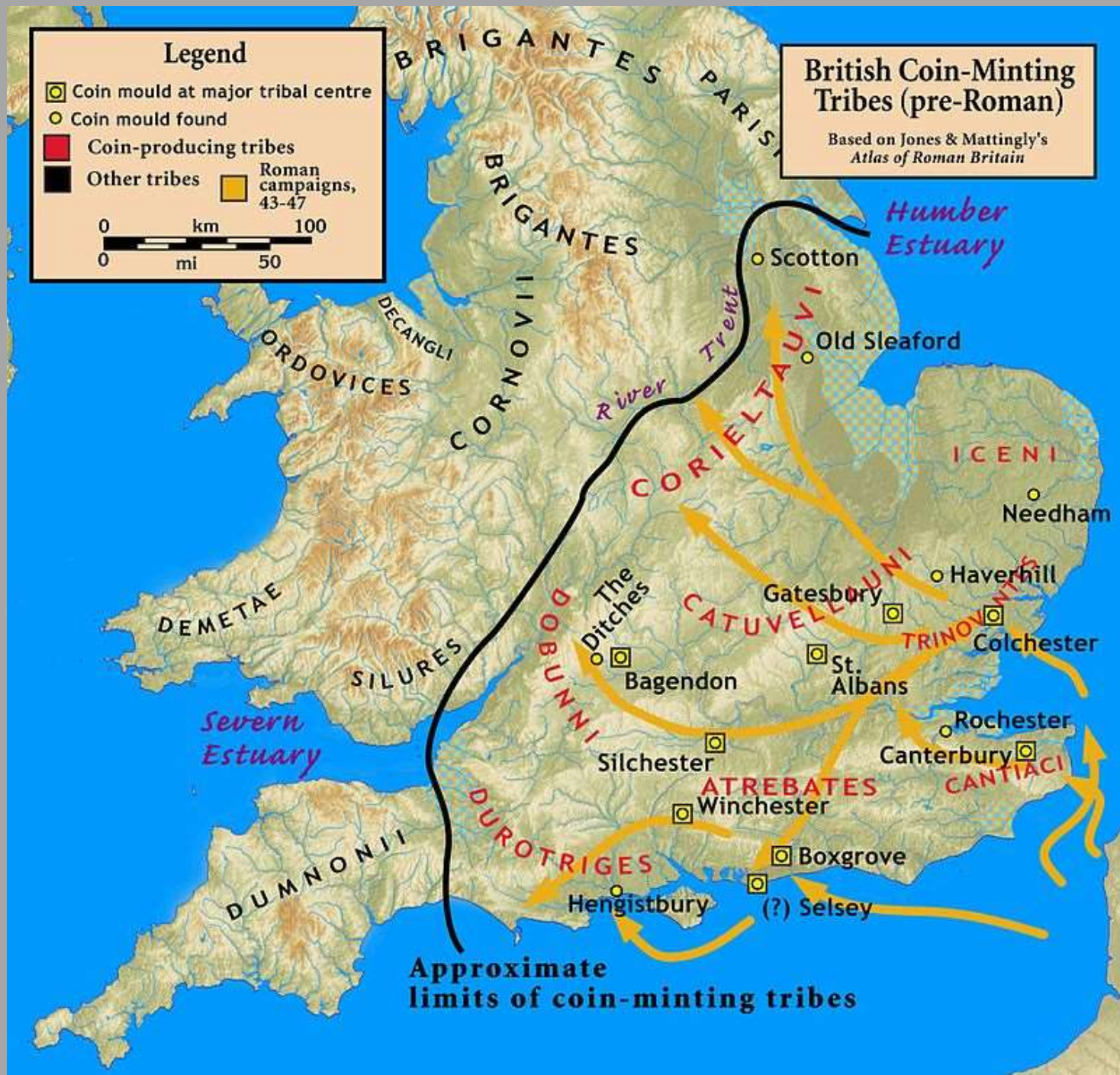
Legend

-  Coin mould at major tribal centre
-  Coin mould found
-  Coin-producing tribes
-  Other tribes
-  Roman campaigns, 43-47

0 km 100
0 mi 50

British Coin-Minting Tribes (pre-Roman)

Based on Jones & Mattingly's
Atlas of Roman Britain



Roman Britain Industrial Production

Based on Jones & Mattingly's
Atlas of Roman Britain

0 km 100
0 mi 50

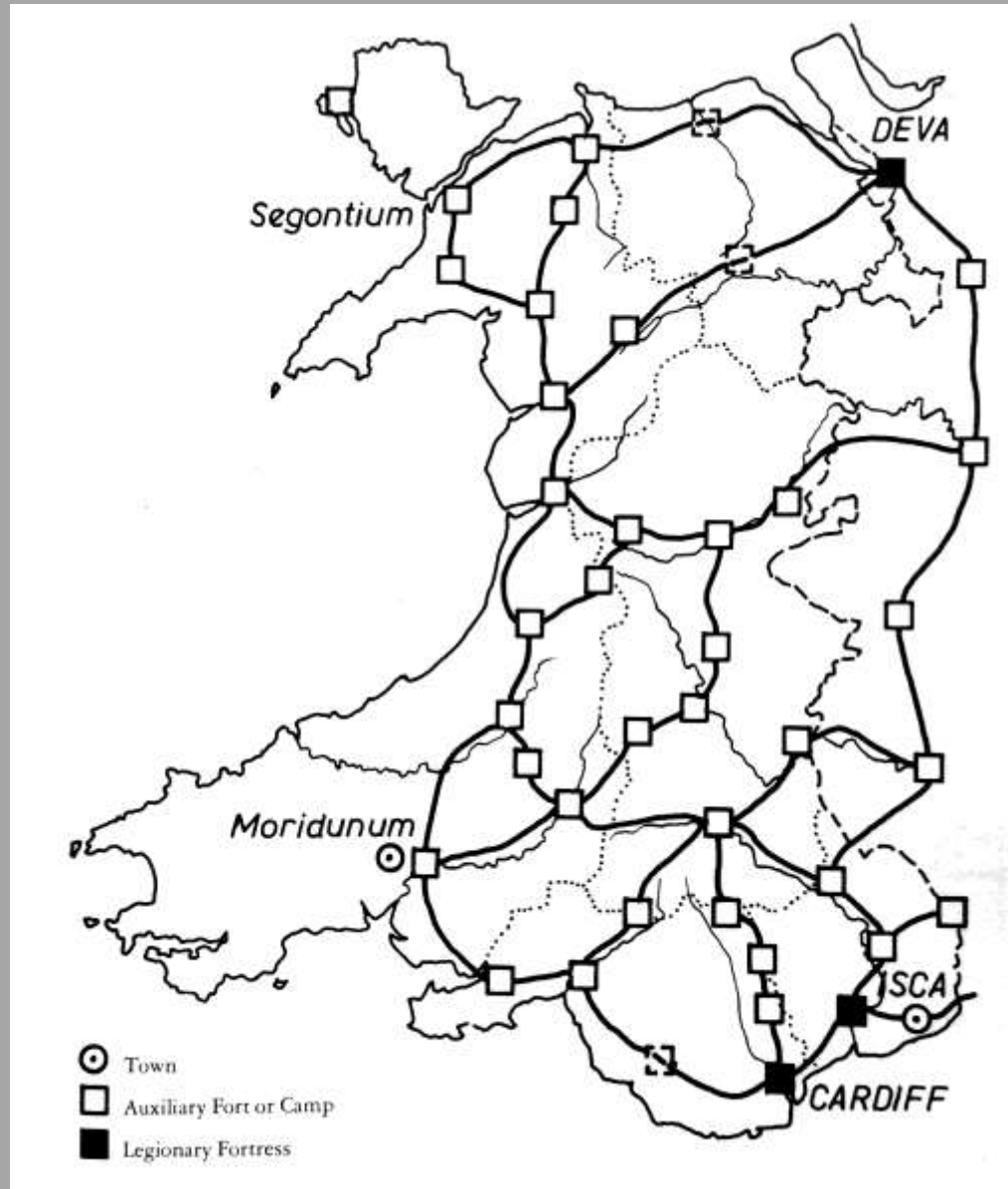
Legend

- Grain-drying ovens
- Iron forge clusters
- Salterns
- Brine springs
- Pewter moulds
- Glassmaking sites
- Pottery kiln clusters
- Tile kiln clusters

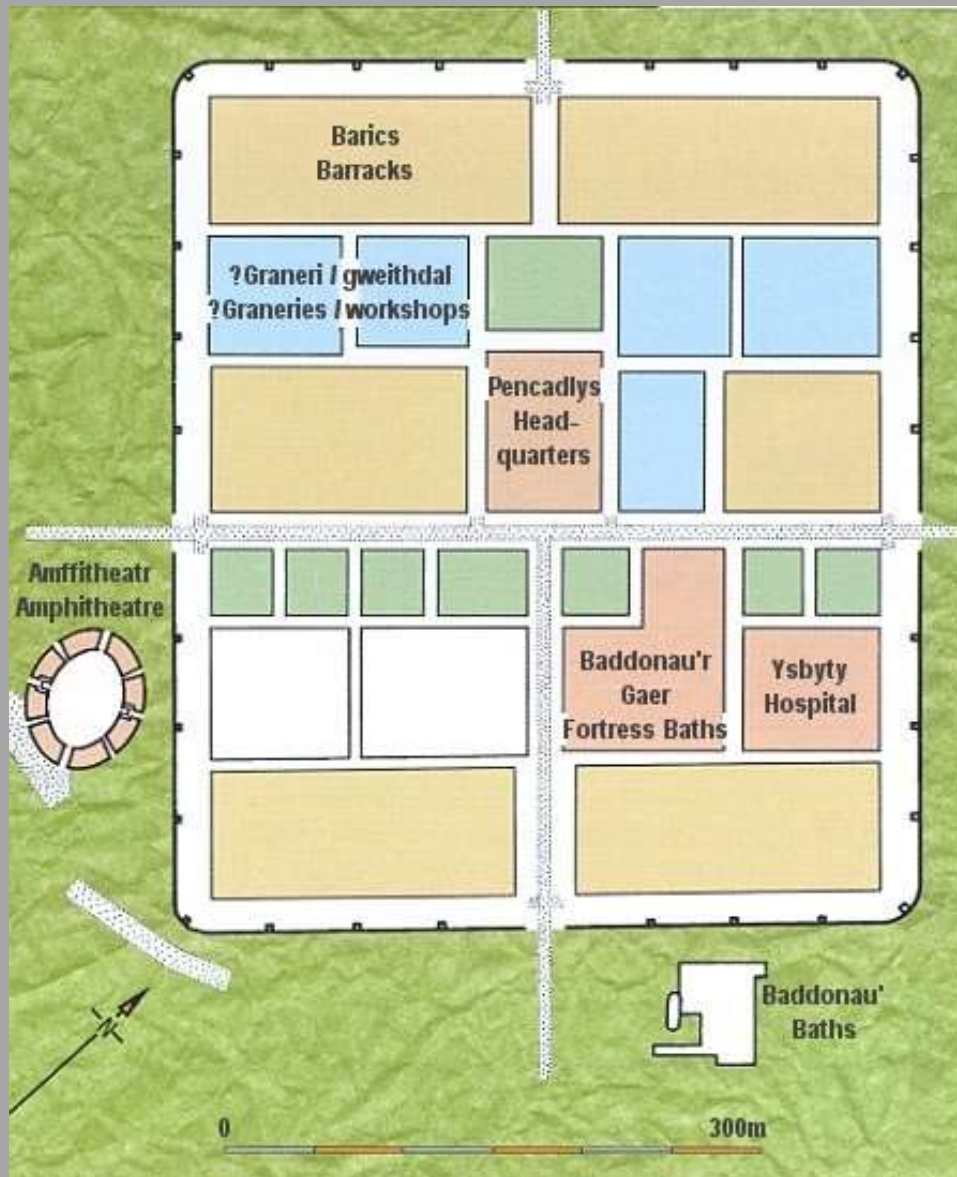


ROMAN CONQUEST

- Wales came under military occupation with forts erected within one day's march



Isca Caerleon



Caerleon Amphitheatre today

Constructed around 90 CE



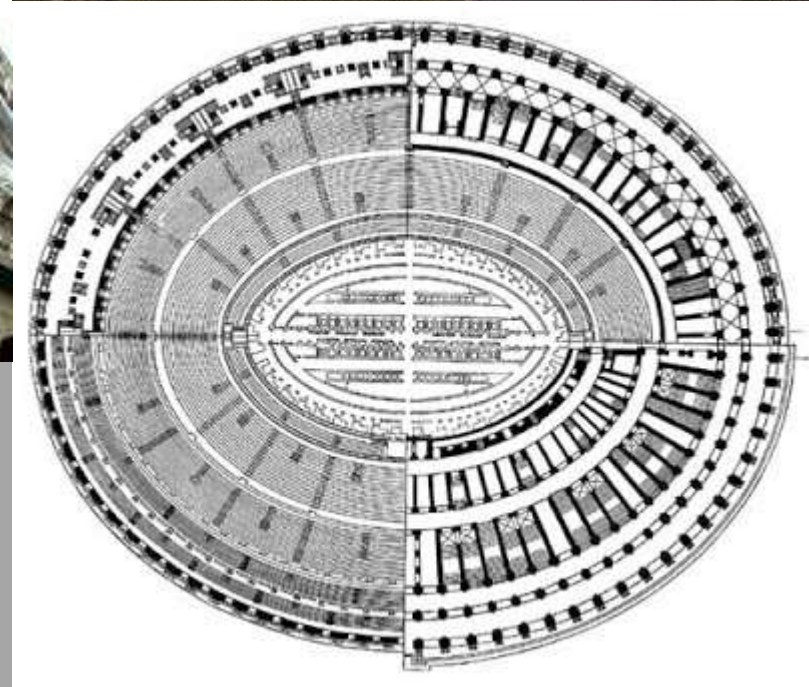
Caerleon Amphitheatre

Famed in the Middle Ages as 'King Arthur's Round Table', the amphitheatre at Caerleon was built to serve the Roman legionary fortress of Isca around 90 CE.



Suggested reconstruction.

Colosseum 72-80 CE



ROMAN ARCHITECTURE

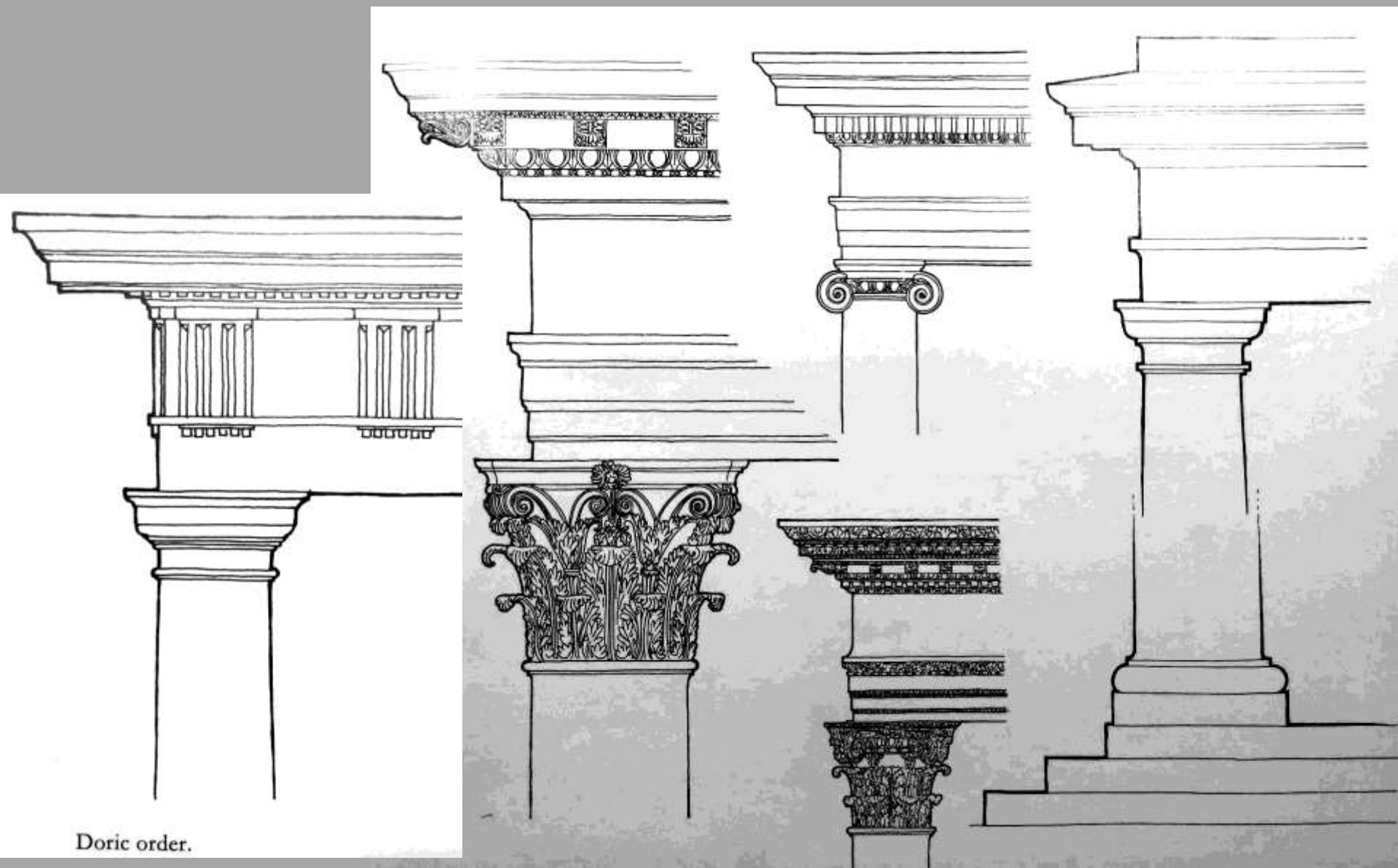
NEW BUILDING FORMS

- Amphitheatrum Flavium or more commonly known as the Colosseum 72-80 CE
- Oval in plan and showed a stacking of orders on the elevations.
- This was not done before in Greek architecture.

ROMAN ARCHITECTURE

Orders

- Romans adapted the existing classical language of architecture.
- They also developed the orders into Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan and Composite.

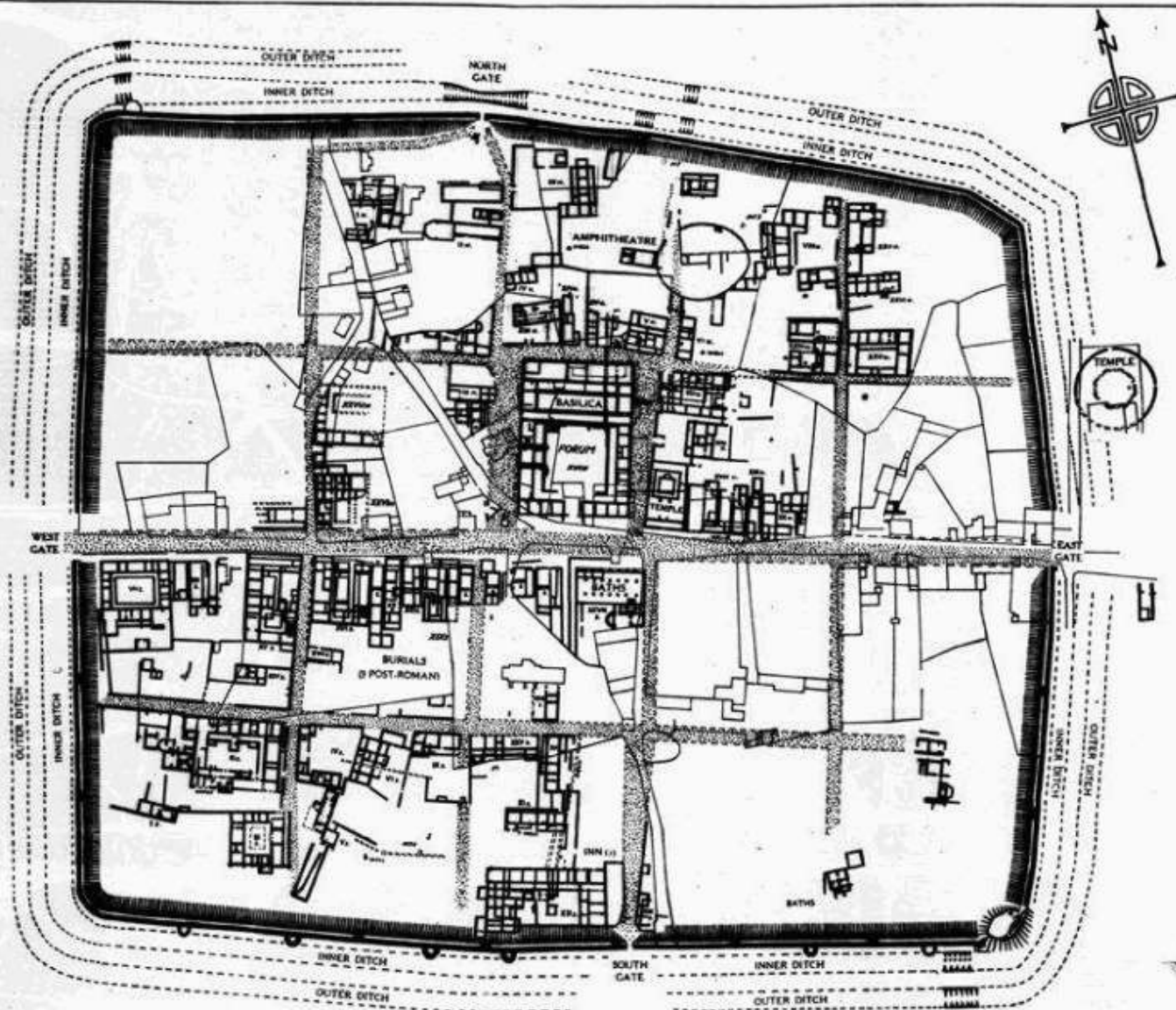


Doric order.

Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan, Composite

CAERWENT (VENTA SILVRVM)

GENERAL PLAN OF ROMAN TOWN



SCALE OF FEET
METRES

Venta Silurum, Caerwent



Herculaneum, Italy



Herculaneum, Italy



Herculaneum, Italy



Herculaneum, Italy



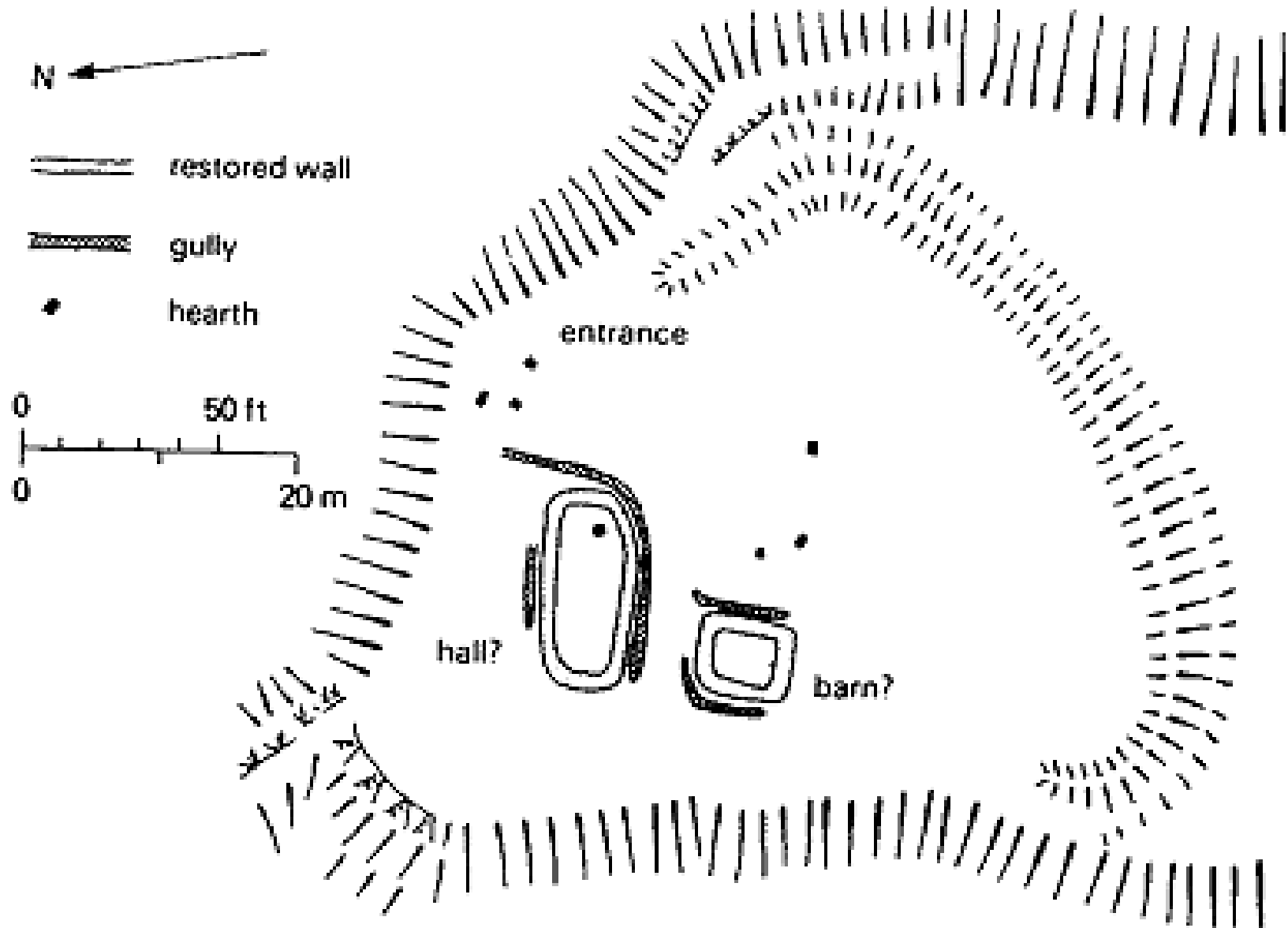
CELTIC SURVIVAL

- Remains of buildings erected in Wales between the departure of the Romans, late in the fourth century, and the arrival of the Normans, at the end of the eleventh century are scanty in the extreme.
- With the collapse of Roman authority a revival of power centres based on easily defended sites was re-established.

CELTIC SURVIVAL

- Sometimes ancient hill forts such as Dinas Emrys in Snowdonia were reoccupied. Occasionally new sites were used.
- Thus the fort constructed during the fifth to seventh centuries on a craggy hilltop at Dinas Powys, near Cardiff, appears not to have any earlier history.

CELTIC SURVIVAL – Dinas Powys



CELTIC SURVIVAL



Llangorse: Impression of the crannog.

CELTIC SURVIVAL

- In mid Wales, a fortified crannog (artificial island) was built during the late ninth century at Llangorse Lake. The crannog was probably the site of the King of Brycheiniog's Llys or Court and was constructed of sandstone, brushwood and timber retained by vertical piles.
- The buildings have long since disappeared but were probably constructed of wood.

CELTIC SURVIVAL



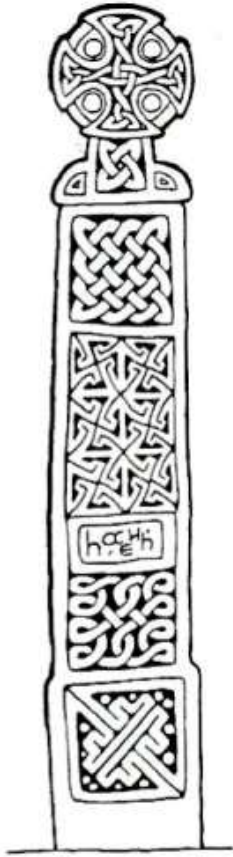
CELTIC SURVIVAL



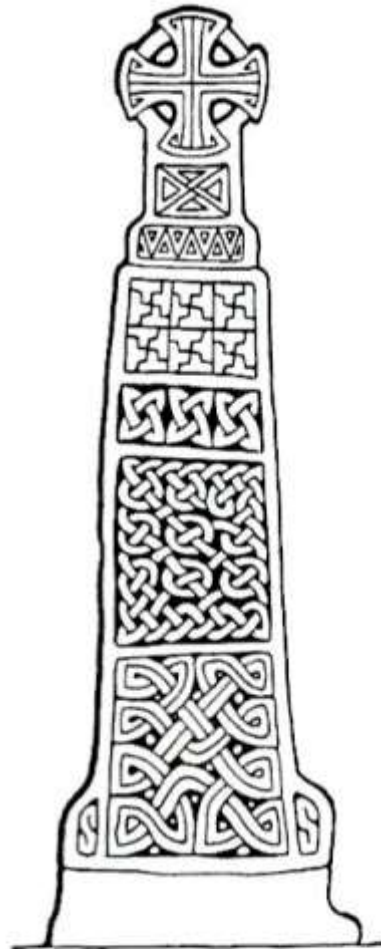
EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE

- The memorial stones of princes and nobles have often survived better than the buildings. About 450 memorials remain from the early medieval period, most concentrated in south-west Wales.
- Many of these are connected with the early Christian church and range from crudely inscribed stones to elaborately sculpted and decorated pillar crosses.

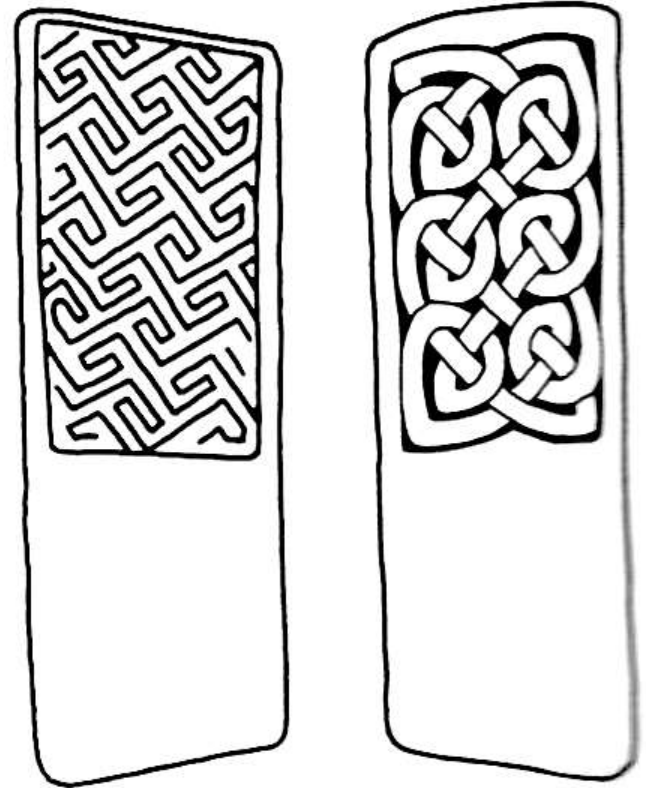
EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE



Nevern: Late tenth- or early eleventh-century high cross.



Carew: Eleventh-century high cross.



Silian: Ninth- or tenth-century decorated stone.

EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE



Margam Stones Museum

EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE



Margam Stones Museum

- **BODVOCI HIC IACIT FILIUS
CATOTIGIRNI PRONEPUS
ETERNALI VEDOMAVI**
- translates as '[The Stone] of Bodvoc. Here he lies, son of Cattegern [or Cattegirn], and great-grandson of Eternalis Vedomavus



EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE

- An important unifying feature during much of the period was the early Christian church. Celtic 'monasteries', comprising a number of small buildings enclosed by, or incorporated within, a curvilinear 'llan' wall, were established in many coastal parts of Wales.
- Traces of such pre-Norman monastic settlements have survived on isolated islands at Ynys Seiriol (off Anglesey) in the north, and Burry Holms (Gower) in the south. Elsewhere, only the enduring decorated stone crosses give any physical hint of the importance of these ancient sites.

EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE



Ynys Seiriol, near Anglesey



EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE

- Timber buildings have disappeared virtually without trace save for postholes which have been discovered during archaeological excavations.
- Monastic stone structures may well have been based on corbelled vaults similar to those found in early Irish oratories and later used as part of a continuing tradition in well head buildings.

EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE



Brecon: Maen-du well with its corbelled stone roof.



Discussion/ Reflection/Recap