

V. A DESCRIPTION of the town of SILCHESTER  
 in its present state. With a short ACCOUNT  
 of an antient DATE in Arabian figures at  
 Walling near Aldermarston in Berkshire.  
 By John Ward, F. R. S. and P. R. G.

Read Dec. 22. <sup>1748.</sup> I N a former paper, which I had the honour to lay before this Society (1), I attempted to explain a Roman inscription cut in a stone, then lately found at *Silchester* in *Hampshire*; by which it not only appeared, that this town was the antient *Vindomis*, but likewise that it was situated within the limits of the *Segontiaci*: as to both which circumstances our best antiquaries have been at an uncertainty, and differed in their sentiments concerning them. I took notice likewise at the same time, that the traces of the antient town are yet, as I had been informed, often visible in the summer; and that the ruins of an amphitheatre still remain without the wall. But being since in that country, I had an opportunity of visiting the place myself, and getting a more perfect account of it than I expected, by the assistance of two persons in the neighbourhood, the late Mr. *John Wright* junior, and Mr. *John Stair* junior, who were both well acquainted with it, and accompanied me thither.

The

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(1) *Phil. Transf.* Num. 474.  
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The former, who was an experienced surveyor, measured the whole circuit of the wall, with the height of it in several places, as also the dimensions of the amphitheatre, while we were on the spot. And the other traced out the several streets, and other parts of the town, to a considerable exactness. But as only a rough draught of the plan could then be taken, I left it with them to revise, and transmit to me an accurate copy; which has been since done, and now accompanies this description (a).

The circuit of the wall on the outside, as therein given by the scale, contains near one *English* mile and a half; and the several parcels of land contained within it amount together to an hundred acres, or upwards. Indeed *Leland* sais, that the compass of the wall is *about two miles, and conteyneth 80 acres* (1). And *Camden* sais the same, except that he calls them *Italian miles* (2). But neither of them acquaint us, from whom they had their measurement. The wall consists of nine sides, but very unequal; which might perhaps be occasioned by the different situation of the ground, which in some parts is uneven.

The materials, that compose the wall, are large flints, and rough stones of different sorts, cemented together with very strong mortar. And as to the manner of building it, the foundation is generally made of a row or two of stones laid flatwise; and  
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(1) *Itinerary*, vol. vi. p. 48, edit. 1744.

(2) *Britann.* p. 196, edit. 1607.

(a) See TAB. III.

over them four or five rows of flints; then usually a double row of stones, sometimes three rows, and at other times one only, laid in the same position; over these a like number of rows of flints, as before; and so alternately upwards. And a little to the westward of the south gate are yet to be seen seven of these ranges of stone, with six of flint between them; where the height of the wall measured on the outside about eighteen feet. And about fifty yards eastward of the same gate are six ranges of stone, with five of flint between them; where a small part of the facing seems yet to be near intire. But there is no appearance either of copings, or battlements, on any part of the wall. Tho the ranges of stone in the front of the wall are placed horizontally, yet those within it often stand edgewise and somewhat obliquely, like the wall of *Severus* in the north of *England* (1). And at the south gate the thickness of the wall measured about five yards. From this account therefore it seems not improbable, that in the passage of *Leland*, given us by Mr. *Hearne* from *Stowe's transcript*, where it is said, *the wall without is in some place 6 or 7 fote highe* (2), for the numbers 6 or 7 should be read 16 or 17.

The wall is not any where intirely demolished, except that two breaches have been made of late years on the north-west side, to open a passage for waggons

(1) See *Horsley's Britann. Rom.* p. 123.

(2) *Ubi supra.*

waggon. And the ditch without the wall is in some places ten or twelve yards over, but in others at present not visible; where probably it may have been filled up by the earth thrown into it from the *vallum*, that encompassed the city between that and the wall, and which is yet in several places of a considerable height above the ditch. Each of these may be seen in the plan, (a) marked with the letters A, B, C. There is little appearance of the *vallum*, or military way, within the circuit of the wall, the ground being now more generally raised pretty near the top of the wall, on which grow many large oaks, and other timber trees. From the south gate towards Winchester has lain a military road, which when broken up appears to have been pitched with flints.

The amphitheatre stands without the wall, at the north-east corner, and distant from it upwards of an hundred yards; as appears in the plan, where it is marked by the letter D. Both the wall and seats, which are made in it, consist of a mixture of clay and gravel. The wall is about twenty yards thick at the bottom below the seats, and decreases gradually to the thickness of about four yards at the top. There are five ranges of seats above one another, at the distance of about six feet on the slope. It has two passages into it, one towards the town, and the other opposite to it. The diameter of the area is fifty yards by forty, and the area itself now serves for a pond to a farmer's yard. The design of this amphitheatre might possibly be for the baiting

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(a) See TAB. III.

ing of wild beasts, or other athletic diversions, agreeable to the customs of those times. Tho at present no appearance of a cavern, or any other place proper for the reception of such animals, is to be discover'd.

The area of the town within the walls contains at present only corn fields, except a small quantity of meadow land, with an ancient church, and farm house, near the east gate, both which are marked in the plan with the letters E and F. The method taken by Mr. *Stair*, in order to discover where the streets formerly lay, was by observing for several years before harvest those places, in which the corn was stunted, and did not flourish as in other parts. These were very easily distinguished in a dry summer, and run in strait lines crossing one another, as they are drawn in the plan. Moreover, by spitting the ground, and often digging it up, he found a great deal of rubbish, with the plain ruins and foundations of houses on each side of these tracts. Whereas in the middle of the squares nothing of that nature appeared, and the corn usually flourished very well. The ploughmen also confirmed the same, who found the earth harder, and more difficult to be turned up, in these tracts and near them, than elsewhere. And it is further observable, that two of these streets, which seem'd rather wider than the rest, lead to the four gates of the city, one of them runing in a direct line from the north to the south gate, and the other from the east to the west, which latter measured at least eight yards across. The four gates are marked with the letter G in the plan.

By digging likewise in different places Mr. *Stair* at length discovered the ruins of a number of buildings

ings, in the form of a long square, which in the plan is marked with the letter H. The foundations of some of these buildings were still pretty intire, and the depth of them from wall to wall was found to be about twenty seven feet, and the breadth about sixteen, which it is not improbable may be the remains of the antient *forum*. But between the letters *i* and *k* there appeared the foundation of some larger structure, consisting of free stone three feet in thickness. And at *k* there seemed to be the pedestal or foundation of an altar, by the great quantity of ashes and wood coals burnt, that lay round about it. What remained was about three feet in high, four in length, and three in breadth. It consisted of large *Roman* bricks, one of which dug up intire, and communicated to me by Dr. *Collet*, is seventeen inches and a half long, twelve and a half broad, and two and a half thick; which accompanies this paper.

At the letter *l* was found the stone with the inscription upon it mentioned above. And upon further search Mr. *Stair* has since dug up within two feet of the same place, and about four feet underground, a square copper frame, composed of several mouldings, and its sides foldered together, three of which are yet intire, but part of the fourth is broken. This frame inclosed a border of the same metal, one side of which is still preserved. The weight of them together is forty seven pounds; but the thickness of the frame varies in different parts from one fourth of an inch to much less, and the border is more than one eighth of an inch thick. Each side of the  
frame

frame at the outer edge is about thirty three inches long. And from the size of the inner edge of the border, each side whereof is twenty inches and a half in length, it is supposed that the stone, which contains the inscription, was at first placed behind it, and supported by it. And as that inscription was erected in honour of *Hercules*, it might originally belong to the stone building, whose foundation is yet visible, and which might have been a temple consecrated to that deity by the persons named in the inscription; as was conjectured in the former account given of it. A draught of this frame and border in their present state, taken by a scale of one sixth of the original (1), now in the possession of Dr. Mead, is prefixed to this discourse (a). There was likewise a considerable number of brass *Roman* coins found near the same place.

At the letter *M* in the plan was antiently a fountain, which at *n* discharged itself under the wall. Some of the stones, with which this fountain was inclosed, are still to be seen.

And at the letter *O* is a large breach under the wall, two yards in length, and two feet in height;  
tho

(1) It may be necessary to repeat here, what was remarked in the *Errata* of the *Phil. Transf.* N. 474, which were put under the *Contents* of N. 475. That whereas *the draught of the Roman inscription mentioned in p. 201, is there said to have been taken by a scale of one fourth of the original; it was afterwards reduced by the engraver in the plate to near one sixth.* And in that proportion it is to be compared with the draught of the frame here given, wherein it is supposed to have been antiently placed.

(a) See TAB. IV. Fig. 4.

tho in the memory of some persons yet living it was considerably higher. It is called *Onion hole*, from an imaginary giant of that name, who is said once to have inhabited this city; and from whom likewise the *Roman* coins found there have been called *Onion penies*. The breadth of the wall thro this hole, where it is pretty much broken, measured now but ten feet; and being upon high ground could not, I think, have been a common sewer, as some have imagined; but might originally perhaps have been designed for a private passage upon some necessary occasions.

The most valuable coin, which has been discovered in the ruins of this antient *Roman* town, is a gold one of *Allectus* in fine preservation, and very remarkable for a peculiar attribute of the deity on the reverse. The front side represents the head of *Allectus* crowned with laurel, round which is this legend, IMP C ALLECTVS P F AVG. On the reverse is placed the figure of *Apollo* with a radiated crown; his left hand, which holds a globe, has over it a whip; his right arm is raised in a forbidding posture, and supports a *chlamys*, which crossing his breast descends on both his sides; at his feet sit two captives, whose hands are tied behind them; and the legend round it is ORIENS AVG, with ML in the exergue (1). These several attributes may be found  
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(1) Some very skilful antiquaries have thought, that those letters on the reverse of many coins of the lower emperours, which are  
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in some or other of the imperial coins between the time of *Gordian* the younger and the *Constantines*, or later. But the singularity of the coin, I am now describing, is this; that in the figure of *Apollo* the eyes seem plainly to be covered by a fillet, which goes cross the forehead; the reason of which I cannot undertake to account for with certainty. But we are told by *Suetonius*, that among other reflections thrown upon *Augustus* for a secret entertainment made by him, at which the persons present were dressed in the habit of deities, and this at a time of great scarcity in *Rome*, *Acclamatum est postridie frumentum omne deos commedissee; et Cæsarem esse plane Apollinem, sed tortorem*. To which the historian adds, *Quo cognomine is deus quadam in parte urbis colebatur* (1); which being the place where criminals were punished, is thus described by *Martial*,

*Cruenta pendent qua flagella tortorum* (2).

It

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put at the bottom, often denote the place, where those coins were struck. And therefore, as I meet with ML by themselves upon no others, but those of *Carausius* and *Allectus*, who both ruled in *Britain*; it seems not improbable, that they may stand for *moneta Londinensis*, or *Londini*, supplying *signata* or *incusa*. As upon some coins of *Constantinus Magnus*, who was first proclaimed emperor in *Britain*, we find MSL and MLI, which may also be so interpreted. Indeed the letters MLS and MLP occur upon the coins of some other emperours, where they have been read, and perhaps justly enough, *moneta Lugduni signata* and *percussa*.

(1) In *vit. August.* cap. 70.

(2) *Lib. II. epigr.* 17.

It was not unusual for the ancients to apply the attributes of one deity to another on particular occasions. From whence one might be led to interpret this representation of *Apollo*, or the Sun, with a whip, and a bandage over his eyes (the emblems of *Justice*) together with the two captives, as descriptive of the punishment denounced against all, who should attempt to oppose the government of *Allectus*. And as the *Roman* coins do generally contain on their reverse some device relating to the times, in which they were made; it seems not improbable from hence, as also from the legend, ORIENS AVGVSTI, that this was struck upon *Allectus's* first assuming the purple, after he had murdered *Carausius*: since upon others of his coins we meet with SPES AVGVSTI, VIRTVS AVGVSTI, PAX AVGVSTI, SALVS AVGVSTI, and the like, as denoting the gradual success of his affairs afterwards. An impression of this curious coin, which is now in the *museum* of Dr. *Mead*, is likewise given here (a). The place, where it was found, is marked in the plan by the letter P (b); which of late years has gained the name of the *Silver hill*, because more silver coins have been found there, than in any other part of the city. And by the remaining rains, which discover themselves upon turning up the ground, it is supposed, that some large building stood antiently upon that spot. But great numbers of coins in all metals, and of all sizes, have likewise been found in several other places; so that

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(a) See TAB. IV. Fig. 5:

(b) See TAB. III.

that Mr. *Stair* is now possessed of several hundred, which have been all collected from this *Roman* settlement; among which are the emperours *Valentinian* and *Arcadius* in gold; with most of the imperial coins from *Augustus* to that time, either in silver or brass; many of which are exceedingly well preserved.

I SHALL only beg leave to subjoin here a brief account of an antient date in *Arabian* figures, which yet remains at *Walling* near *Aldermarston* in *Berkshire*. It is impressed in releivo upon a brick, near the top of a large and high chimney, on the outside of a farmhouse belonging to *William Wolke-foot* esquire of *Woolhampton* in that neighbourhood. This date had always hitherto been read 1182, the two first figures, as they are seen from the ground, having both the appearance of a one; with this difference only, that the second seems pretty much thicker than the first. And this led me upon viewing it in that situation to suspect it might be a three, like that in the *Cambridge* date, published in the *Philosophical Transactions*, N. 474. And accordingly having by the means of a long ladder an opportunity of going up to it, I found upon a near inspection, that it was really so, as I had apprehended. For the small curves in the second figure being filled up with moss gave it the appearance of a broad and strait line, when seen at a considerable distance. I took an exact draught of the whole, by first impressing a paper upon the brick, with the  
several

several figures contained in it; and then delineating each of them carefully with a pencil. And the copy, which is here exhibited, is drawn by a scale of one third of the original (*a*). The house, where this date remains, is by tradition said to have belonged antiently to a knight templer; but however that might be, the date must have been placed there long afterwards; as that order of knights was destroyed on the seventh of *January*, in the year MCCCVII.

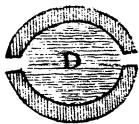
*G. C. Dec. 13, 1748.*

John Ward.

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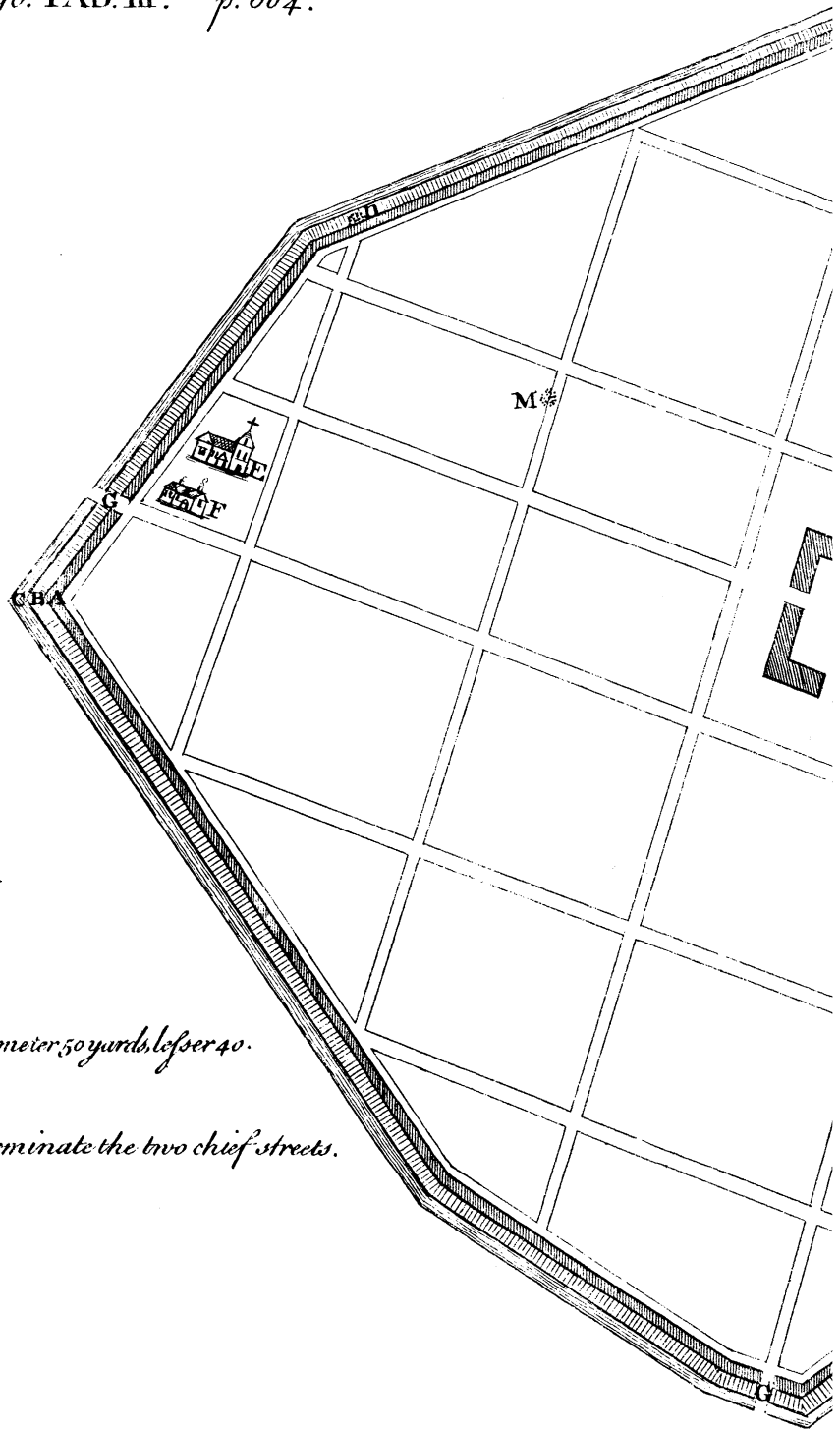
(*a*) See TAB: IV. Fig. 6.

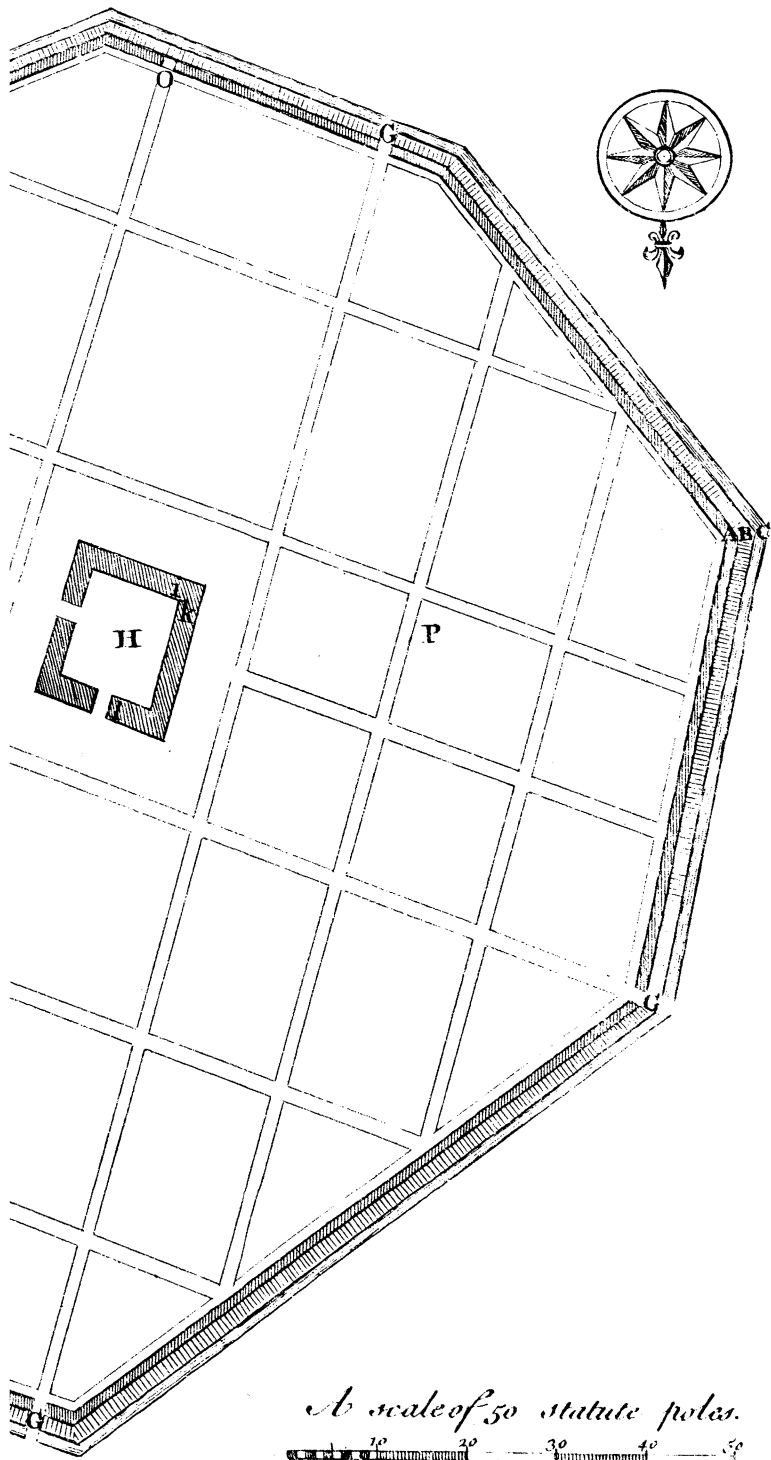
*A PLAN of  
the ancient city of  
SILCHESTER  
in Hampshire,  
taken by  
JOHN WRIGHT  
Surveyor,  
MDC CXLV.*



The Explanation.

- A. *The Wall.*
- B. *The Vallum.*
- C. *The Ditch.*
- D. *The Amphitheatre, greater diameter 50 yards, lesser 40.*
- E. *The Church.*
- F. *The Farmhouse.*
- G. *The four City gates, which terminate the two chief streets.*
- H. *The Forum.*
- ik. *A Temple.*
- 1. *The Roman inscription.*
- Mn. *A Fountain.*
- O. *Onion hole.*
- P. *Silver hill.*

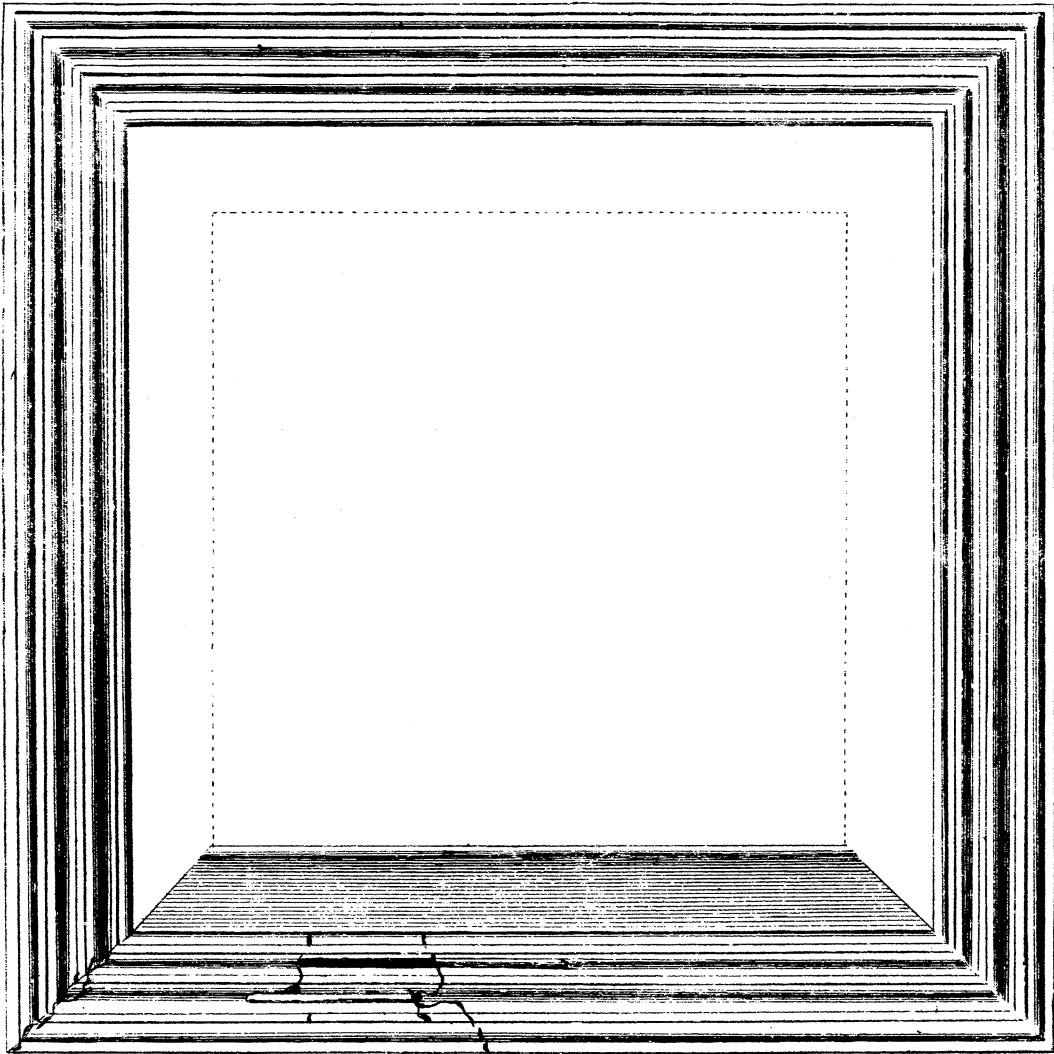




*A scale of 50 statute poles.*



*J. Mynde sc.*



*Fig. 4. p. 609.*

*Fig. 1*  
*p. 599.*



*Fig. 2.*  
*p. 599.*

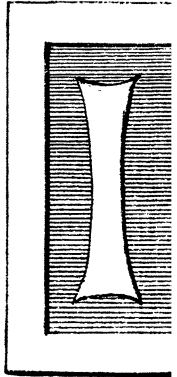




Fig. 5.



p. 612.



Fig. 2.  
p. 599.

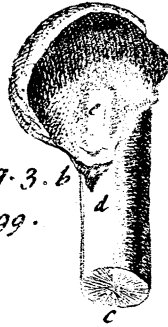


Fig. 3. b  
p. 599.

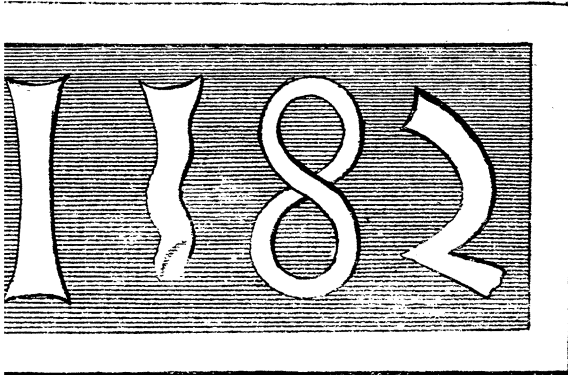
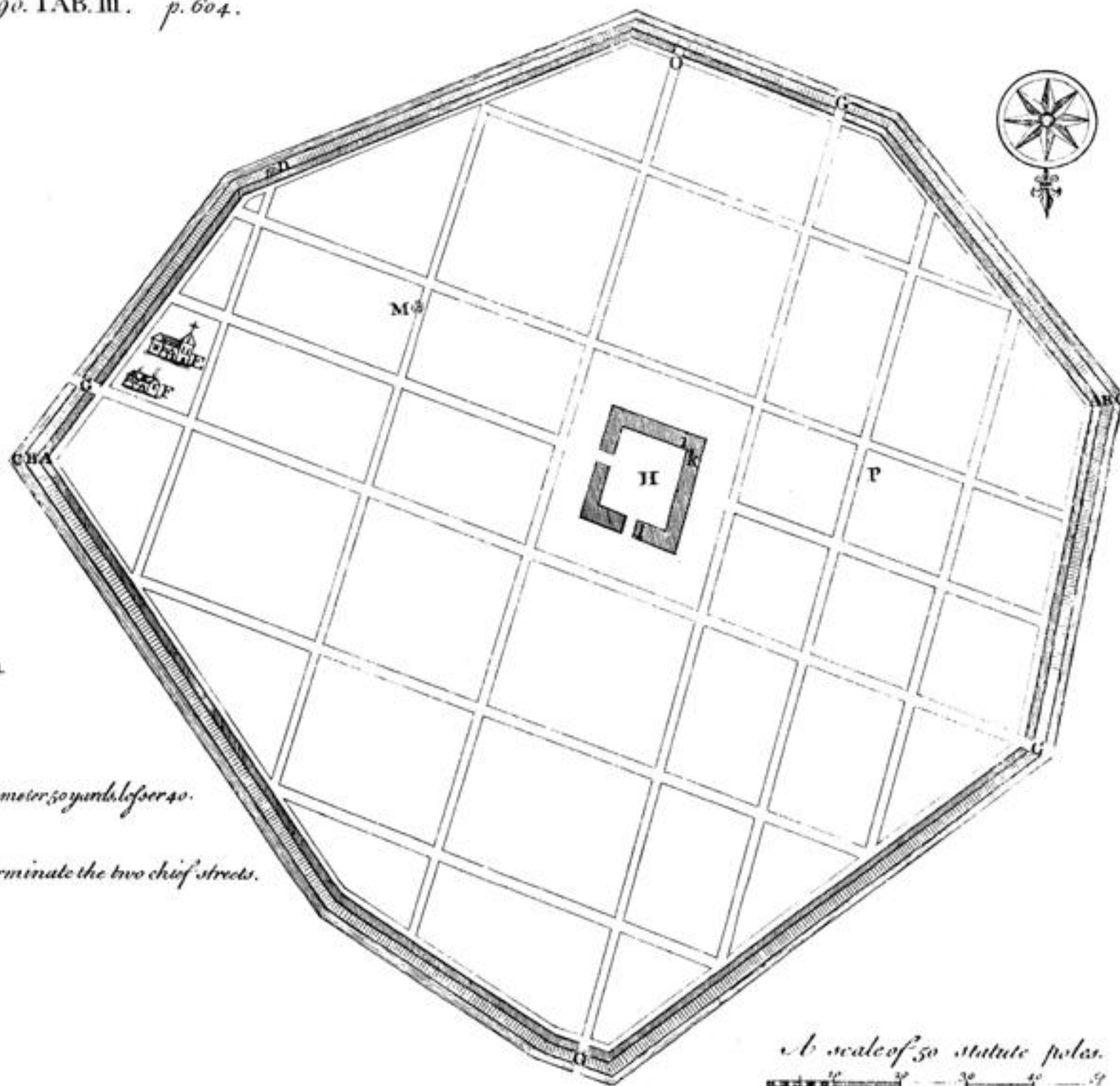


Fig. 6. p. 613.

J. Wynne sc.



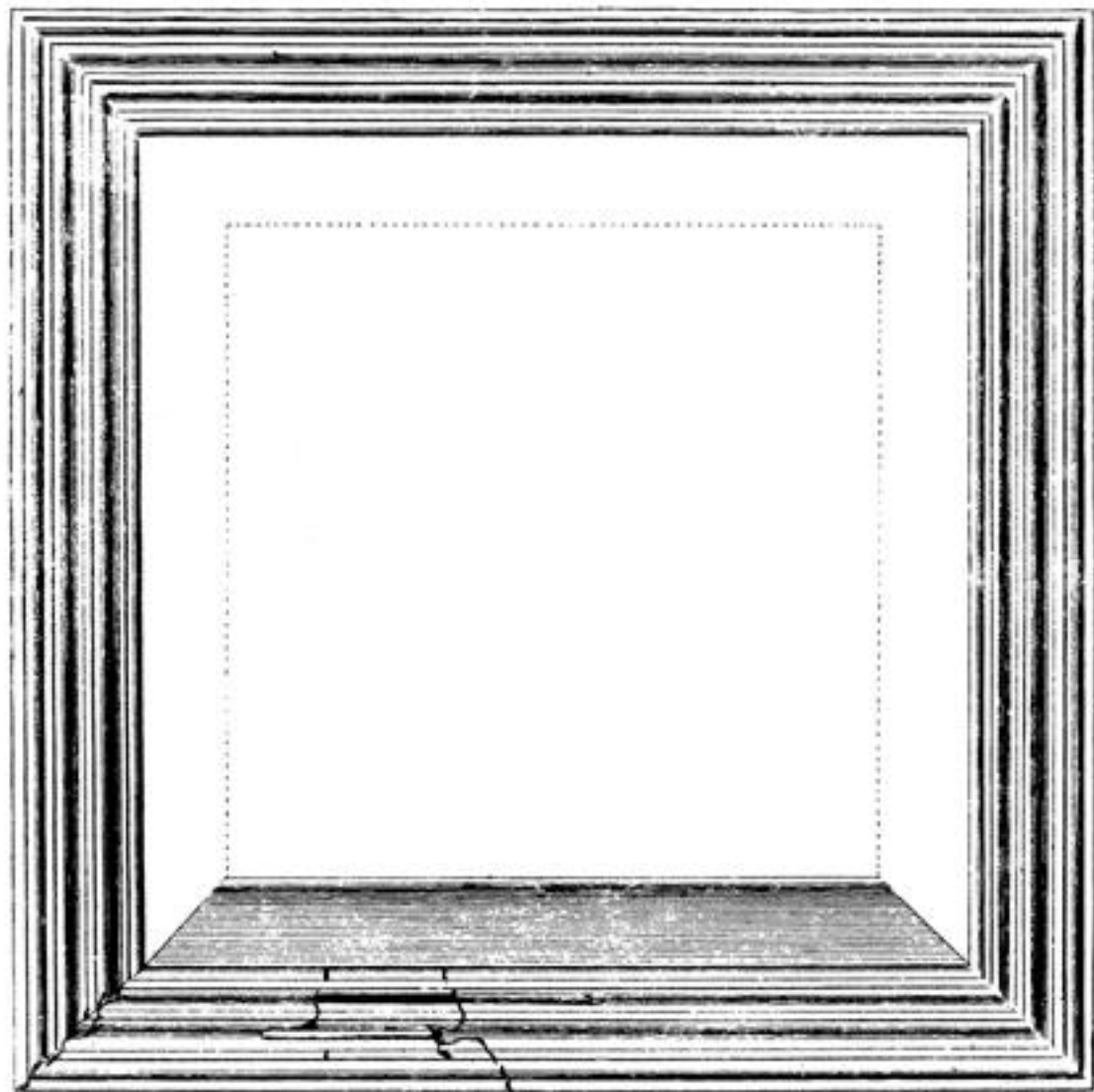
A PLAN of  
the ancient city of  
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The Explanation

- A. The Wall.
- B. The Vallum.
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- D. The Amphitheatre, greater diameter, 50 yards, lesser 40.
- E. The Church.
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- P. Silver hill.

A scale of 50 statute paces.



*Fig. 4. p. 609.*



*Fig. 6. p. 613.*