

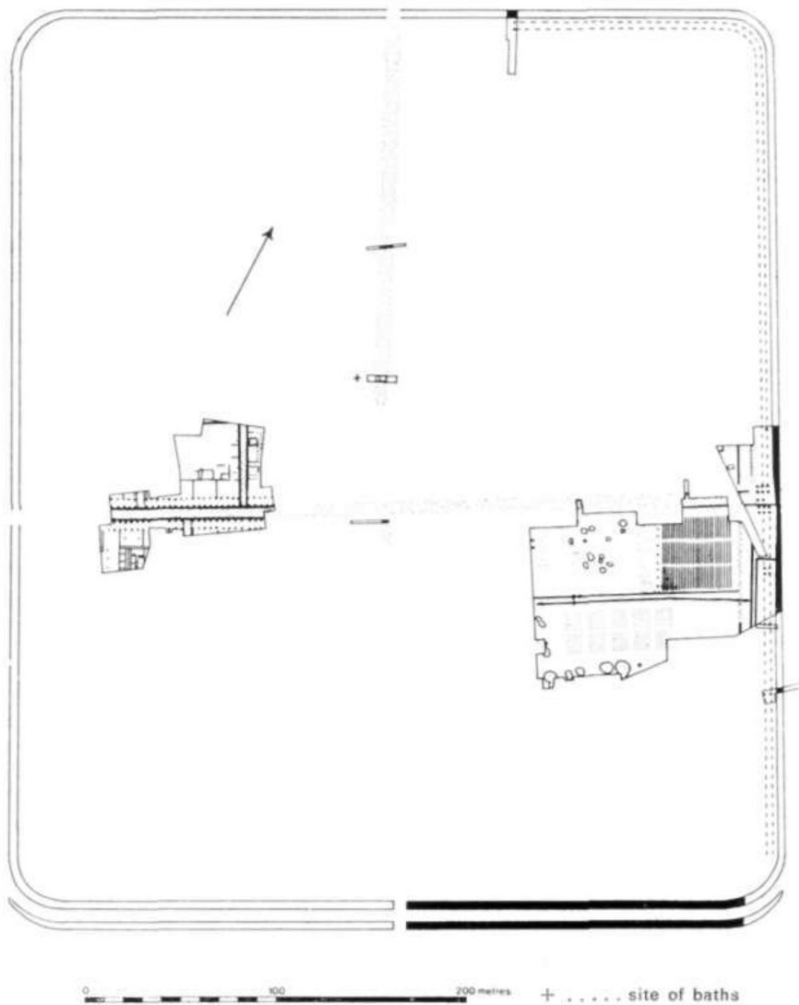
USK

Roman Legionary Fortress

by W. H. Manning

WHAT was the interior of a Roman legionary fortress really like? The text book illustrations of Roman forts rely heavily on a few well-known examples, such as that at Novaesium in Germany and Lambaesis in North Africa, both of them stone forts excavated in the early part of this century. The classic example of a timber fort is that at Inchtuthil in Scotland, superbly excavated by Sir Ian Richmond and Professor St. Joseph, but this was only trenched and although it provides us with our most important complete example of a legionary fortress in outline, yet the details of the individual buildings are extrapolated from the trenches. It was only recently that extensive areas of the Roman timber fortresses of the first century have been completely stripped. The most extensive of these is that at Usk and the results as we shall see, are somewhat surprising.

The very presence of a legionary fortress at Usk has only been detected in the past decade. Usk has long been known as the site of a Flavian (late 1st century) fort, but in 1961 George Boon and Grace Simpson examined the samian ware and pointed out that some at least was pre-Flavian. As a result of their work W. H. Manning was invited to direct a small excavation in 1965 in advance of a new housing estate. Unfortunately the area had not been scheduled and in consequence only small areas could be excavated. Nevertheless the most substantial discovery was a length of the ditch



Overall plan of the legionary fortress at Usk. The site behind the County Goal is to the right, the Cattle Market site to the left.