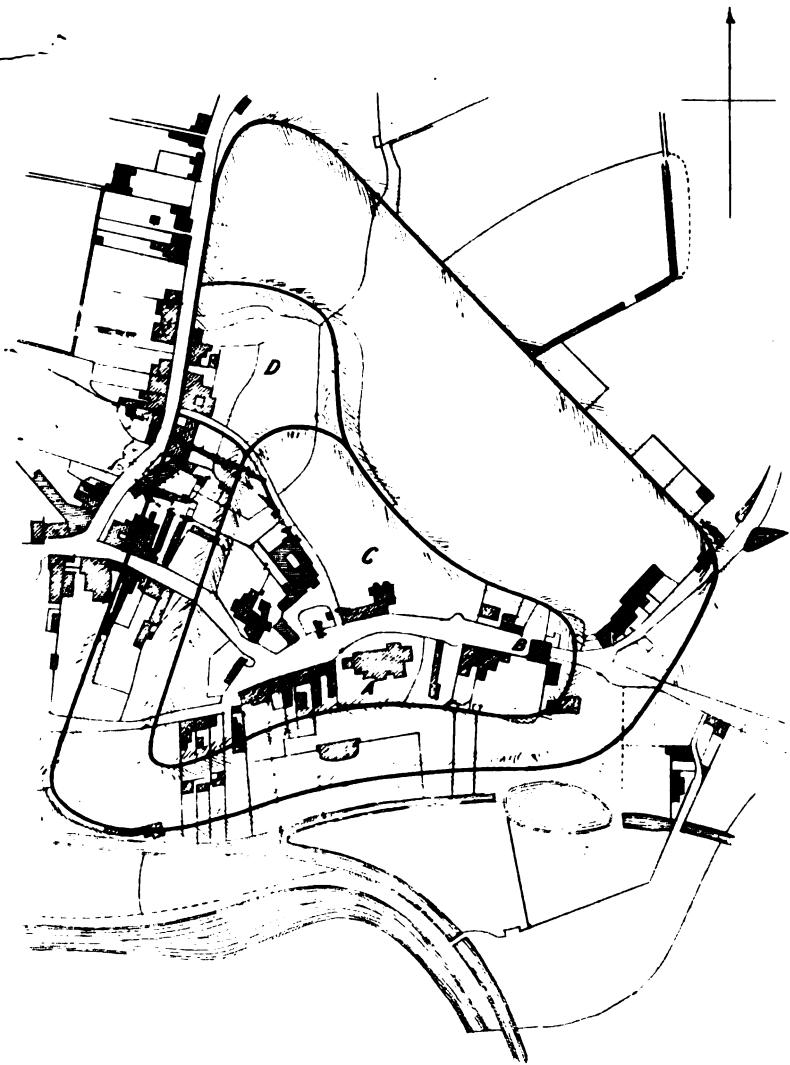


Earthworks at Langport.

BY THE REV. F. WARRE.

A GLANCE at the map of Somerset cannot fail to convince us that in the times when the two sides of the Parret were occupied by tribes not always at peace with each other, the site of the town of Langport must have been a point of very great strategical importance. The eastern boundary of the broad marsh through which the Parret runs (in those days if not a continuation of the estuary of the Uxella certainly an impassable morass) here approaches the bank of the river so nearly that from the neck of land upon which the town of Langport is situated to the rising ground on the other side of the river is not more than a few hundred yards, while above and below this point for many miles the marsh is of very considerable breadth, and, even in these days, after a continuance of wet, would present no slight obstacle to the advance of an invading army. The road leading to Taunton now passes over this narrow strip of marsh, and a bridge here unites the eastern or Belgic bank of the river with the western, which was occupied by the Danmonii. I should here mention that



*A. Church. B. Hanging Chapel.
C. M^r Vincent Stuckey's Grounds,
D. Enclosure.*

the river Parret was probably the final boundary between the aboriginal Danmonii and the invading tribe of the Belgæ, known in the Welch triads as the men of Galedin. And no doubt the same topographical conditions which render it the best situation for a bridge at the present time, being such as would be very little, if at all, changed by the lapse of years, would be sure to have made it in those days the site, if not of a bridge, at least of a ford or ferry of great importance. It is very improbable that a passage between two hostile tribes of such importance as this must have been should have been left without any artificial fortification, and the earthworks I am about to describe shew that whichever tribe possessed it was well aware of its strategical value. At the eastern and highest point of this neck of land still exist the earthen ramparts which once defended a large town, which, from its three-fold arrangement, I suppose to have been intended for permanent occupation and which is probably of very early date. It is in form an irregular triangle, bounded on the south by the river Parret, on the west by the Bridgewater road, and on the east and north, I believe, by the parish of Huish Episcopi. This outer enclosure, which I suppose to have been intended for cattle, contains a much smaller triangular space, defended by a strong rampart which, on the south side, runs along the top of the hill just outside the churchyard and extends in an easterly direction as far as the Hanging Chapel and several hundred yards to the west of the churchyard. The eastern and western sides run in the same direction as those of the larger enclosure. This I believe to have been occupied by the people who took refuge here in time of danger. This enclosure contains besides the Church, the Hanging Chapel and several other buildings, the residence and great part of the grounds belonging

to Mr. Stuckey ; both these enclosures are traversed by the road leading to Ilchester. At the very obtuse apex of the inner triangle there appears to have been a third irregular enclosure, marked D in the accompanying plan, very strongly fortified, bounded on the west by the external rampart and on the other sides by works indicated on the plan. This I imagine to have been the stronghold or, if I may so speak, the keep of the place, but the whole area has been so much tampered with by modern occupation that it is impossible to speak positively as to its original extent. The same cause has rendered it very difficult to fix the position of the original entrances, but I think one was through the lane opening into the Bridgwater road and another at the eastern corner, at which point there appear vestiges of something like flanking works. On the western side of the river there are evident signs of earthworks on both sides of the Taunton road, one seemingly intended to strengthen the least abrupt ascent from the river, but these have been so mutilated by the railway and modern agriculture that I cannot venture upon any conjecture as to their original plan. That this site has been occupied in after times by the Romans is clear from the tiles and other remains of that people which have from time to time been found there.
