

Maumbury Rings

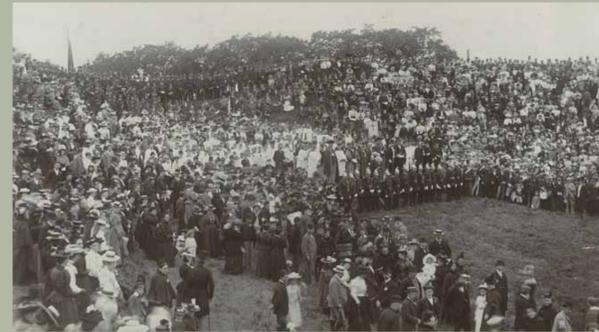
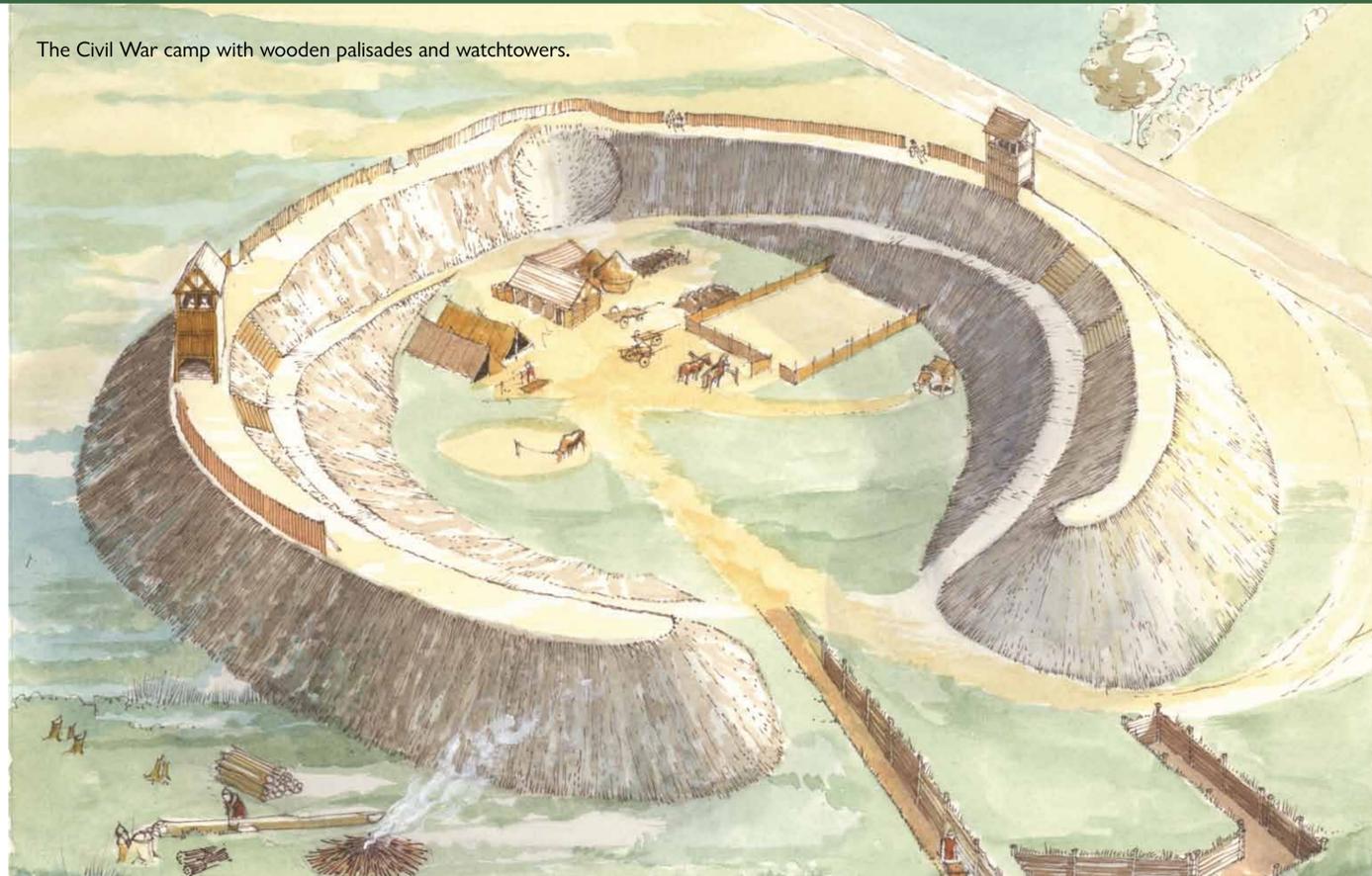
Find out more...

Visit the Dorset County Museum, where objects from Maumbury Rings are displayed

Read about the trial of Mary Channing online or at the Dorset History Centre.

Discover the events held at Maumbury Rings. Ask at the Dorchester Tourist Information Centre.

The Civil War camp with wooden palisades and watchtowers.



Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, 1897. 6,000 people attended a service here.



Town celebrations for the marriage of Prince William to Kate Middleton, April 2011. Maumbury Rings continues to be used for events today – including theatre, circuses, festivals and sports.



Maumbury has often been used for political meetings. This was a gathering of the Peace Pledge Union in 1936. 8,000 - 10,000 people are believed to have attended.

Civil War Camp

During the English Civil War (1642-1648) modifications were made to the amphitheatre. A ramp at the southern end was built to move heavy guns to the top of the banks. There are also smaller ramps from this period on the eastern and western sides.

The defences were built by Parliamentarian forces in Dorchester to defend the town against a possible attack from Lord Caernarvon's troops in Weymouth. There was also a fort at Dorchester's southern gate (near where the war memorial is today), which was connected to Maumbury Rings by a covered trench.

The defences cost over £19,000 to build, but would only have lasted about half an hour, according to one critic. We don't know if he was right, as the fortification was never used; in 1643 the town surrendered to the Royalists as soon as they appeared!

Later History

Maumbury Rings has been used for town gatherings from Roman times to today.

In 1706 Mary Channing was executed here, watched by 10,000 people. She was strangled and burned at the stake at the age of 19, having been convicted of poisoning her elderly husband. The trial took place in July 1705, but, as Mary was pregnant, the execution was delayed until after her son was born. She defended herself at her trial and protested her innocence till the last.

“Not one of those ten thousand people ever cared particularly for hot roast after that” wrote Thomas Hardy.

When the railways came to Dorchester in the 1840s, the original routes would have caused damage to both Poundbury Hillfort and Maumbury Rings. A campaign by the poet, William Barnes, and others led to changes in the route and the setting up of the Dorset County Museum in 1846.

