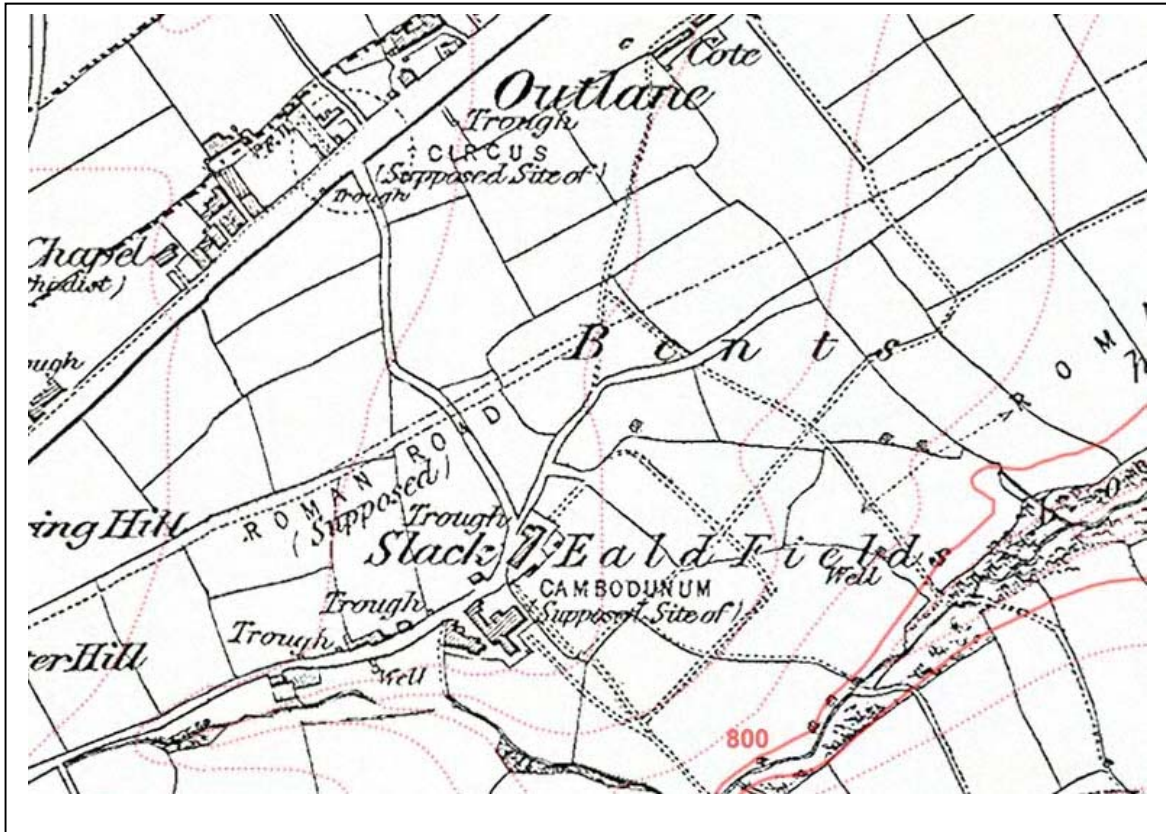


What about the Roman amphitheatre that could have become part of 'Camelot'?

Whilst excavating at Slack, HDAS members noticed a feature shown on the 1854 Ordnance Survey map of the Slack area, marked 'Circus'. It is to the north of the fort, shown as Cambodunum, and the Roman road.



This was intriguing, because Slack was known to be a cavalry fort and such forts, depending on size, did have exercising and training areas for horses, with, sometimes, facilities for spectators.

Slack was a small fort but it would need, at least, a fenced area for stabling cavalry horses and pack animals of the passing travellers.

In 2010 it was decided to carry out an excavation in the corner of the field under which the circular feature appeared to be located.

During all HDAS digs, statements are issued to the local media to create interest and bring visitors to the site. Many new members have been recruited following such exposure.

As usual we were asked what we hoped to find. At that stage we were optimistic that it could be something a bit special, especially with the given title of 'Circus'.

Alas, our optimistic speculation was taken up by the media and others and expanded, because it was a 'good' story and created widespread interest.

The Society is often contacted by people who have pet theories about the sites we are excavating. It was at this point we were contacted by a 'Camelot enthusiast' who seemed determined to connect Slack with Camelot. An amphitheatre was just the evidence he had been hoping for.

It was emphasised that the dig was still in progress and no evidence of such a structure had been found.

What we actually found can be seen below –



It can best be described as a low stone structure with no obvious purpose and more linear than circular. There was no dating evidence and some even suggested that it could be pre – Roman.

The significant structure we were hoping for was not there and, at that point, the excavation ran out of time and was closed down.

During this period, the ‘Camelot enthusiast’, telephoned seeking progress, and was told what had been found and what had not. It was again emphasised that there was no sign of an amphitheatre and absolutely no evidence of any active occupation of the Slack site by any group other than the Romans and more recently small scale farming activity.

Unfortunately, the ‘Camelot enthusiast’ went on to use the speculation and not the factual evidence in a publication which made it appear as though the HDAS research was somehow supporting his case.

The subsequent publicity for the ‘Camelot’ story reached the national press and national radio and television. It no doubt worked wonders for circulation and sales but swamped our efforts to explain that our research and carefully argued conclusions had been misused and misrepresented in pursuit of a ‘good’ story.

What does HDAS think of the ‘Camelot’ theory?

Whatever the historical evidence for a Camelot type fort or garrison being established in this part of Yorkshire in the 6th Century, Slack would be a most unlikely place for its location. At 900 feet above sea level, the surrounding area would be open, exposed, uncultivated, wet and windy moorland. It is an area known for its multitude of springs which keep the ground wet and boggy.

The turf built Roman fort was long gone and any small stone built structures would have been robbed of stone or disappeared under natural plant growth and decay.

It is likely that a trackway following the route of the Roman road was in that locality, but it is 40+ miles from the main power centre of York.

In our opinion Slack would have little to commend itself to King Arthur or anyone else.