

Castello di Chun



Chûn Castle is a large [Iron Age hillfort \(ringfort\)](#) near [Penzance](#) in [Cornwall](#), England, [United Kingdom](#).^[1] The fort was built about 2,500 years ago, and fell into disuse until the early centuries AD when it was possibly re-occupied to protect the nearby [tin mines](#). It stands beside a prehistoric trackway that was formerly known as the Old [St Ives Road](#) and the [Tinnners' Way](#). The name *Chûn* derives from [Cornish](#): *Chi an Woon*^[2] ("the house on the [downs](#)"^[3]). The area is now sometimes known as Chûn Downs.^[3]

[Edward Llyud](#) made a plan of this fort in around 1700, remarking that its structure and security showed, "military knowledge superior to that of any other works of this kind which I have seen in Cornwall". What is of note is the fact that the fort has a strategic inner and outer wall and ditch. The remains today are still clearly visible despite the fact that the once twenty-feet-odd walls now stand at around five feet due to its use in the 19th century as a quarry for buildings in [Penzance](#) and [Madron](#). The freehold of the land beneath part of the castle was put up for auction in April 1883 as part of freehold tenement of [Little Bosulow](#). Included was large quantities of good building stone.^[4]

The fort was excavated in 1895, 1925, 1927 and 1930. Much pottery was uncovered, the earliest dating to the 4th century BC due to its similarity to known Breton pottery of that age. However, it is possible that the fort was built upon a much older structure. [Chûn Quoit](#), around 800 feet to the west, is dated to around 2400BC. It is believed that the fort fell into disuse around the first century AD but was reoccupied and modified several centuries later, until the 6th century. However, occupation may also date to the later [Roman period](#).^[5]

The purpose of the fort is speculated to be for protection of tin and copper gathered in the tin-rich locality of what is now [Pendeen](#), with its [Geevor Tin Mine](#), and surrounding villages. Iron and tin slags were found within the castle, near the well. It overlooks many miles of ocean, the [Celtic Sea](#), to the north, and overlooks the only land route to this peninsula ([West Penwith](#)) to the south. Therefore, not only its structure but its location suggest a much more actively militaristic function.

The well, within the inner walls, is of note as it once had a stairway leading to the water, water which remains to this day even during dry spells. Locals used the well water until the 1940s for domestic purposes and some for superstitious reasons, viz. the endowment of [perpetual youth](#). [Neopagans](#) still make pilgrimages to the site on religiously significant days.





Aerial picture of Chun Castle

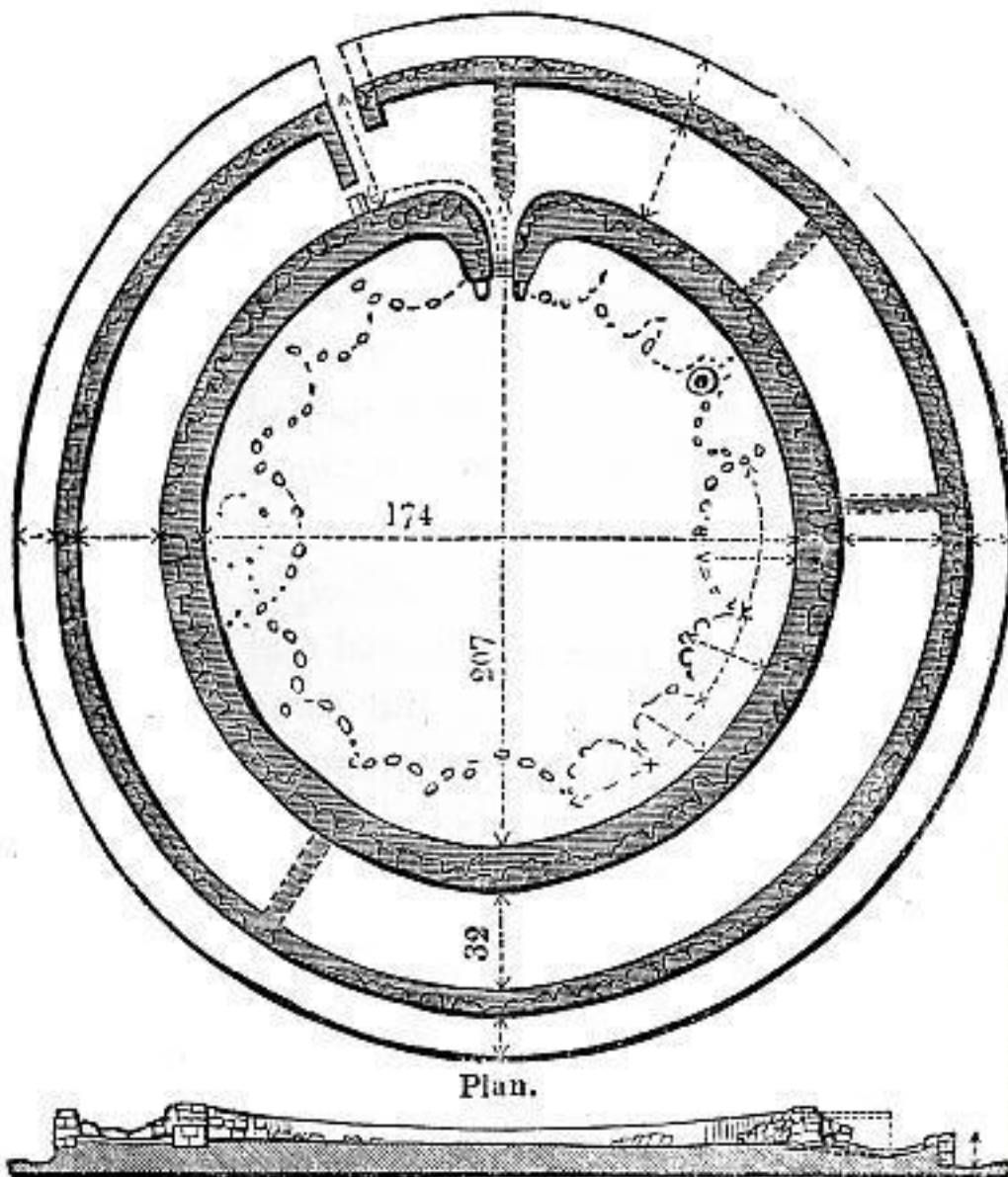
Source: Carolyn Kennett (2019)

The walls of this site used to be 5 meters in height until the stone was robbed to build Madron Workhouse. It was lived in by both people of the Iron Age and during the Medieval period. The huts from the Iron age are rounded, while the huts from the medieval are squared edged.

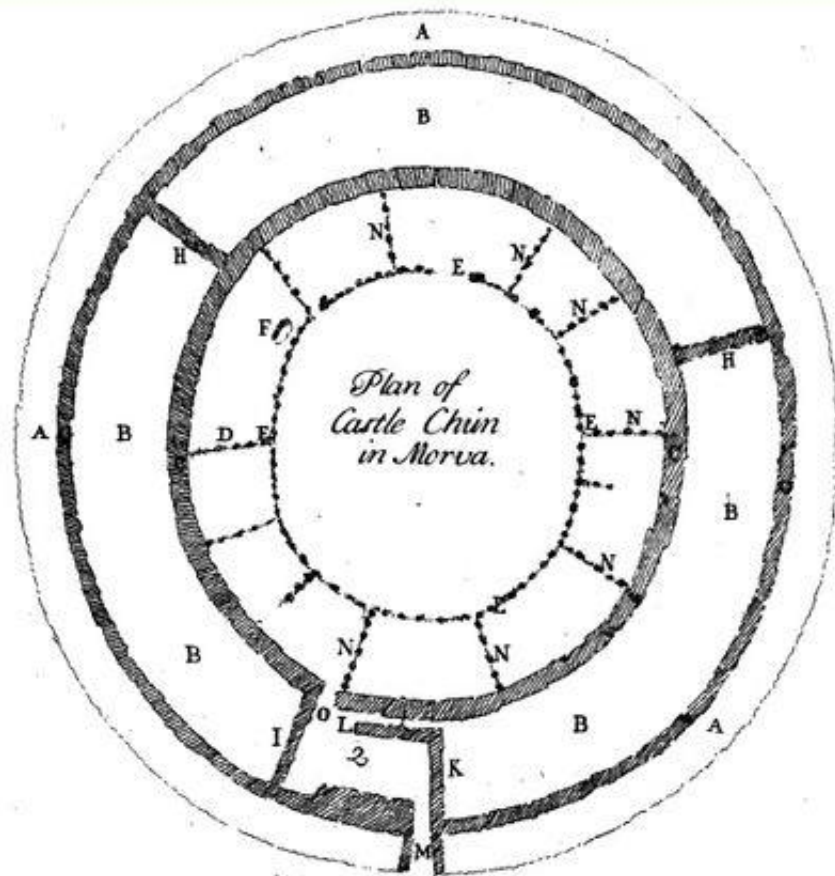


Reconstruction of Chun Castle

Source: Craig Weatherhill



51.—Plan and Section of Chun Castle.



To William Lemon of  Garclew in Cornwall Esq
 This plate is with great  respect inscrib'd by Wm. Borlase.

