

NOTES ON ROMAN ROADS IN THE SOUTH OF HANTS.

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The following notes are from information given me by Mr. O. G. S. Crawford, of East Woodhay, who has been kind enough to give me permission to publish them in the Proceedings. I am glad to say that Mr. Crawford is in possession of a considerable amount of information, both from his own observations and from notes recorded more than a century ago on the remains of Roman Roads in Hampshire, so that we may look forward in the near future to a much fuller knowledge of this most interesting branch of local archæology.

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I.

WINCHESTER—OTTERBOURNE—NURSLING— CADNAM—STONY CROSS—(?) RINGWOOD— to (?) POOLE.

Most of the work summarised below was done in the field between October, 1912, and January, 1913. Some assistance has also been derived from old maps. The object of the investigations has been to ascertain as accurately as possible what roads communicated with the important Roman harbours on the South Coast between Poole and Chichester. I believe the Roman Roads—of this region at any rate—to have been essentially “port-ways,” and that when this fact is realised, a number of branch roads to other ports will be discovered.

This road follows the modern Winchester and Southampton main road for four miles. I have traced it southwards from the golf links near Shawford Station. Signs of

it are visible beneath the hedge of the modern road down the long hill into Otterbourne, on the east side. The entrance gates of a number of new villas are built upon it. It branches from the Bitterne Road at a point in the grounds of Otterbourne House west of the Dell Copse, running in a south-westerly direction, and continues in a straight line to the top of Otterbourne Hill; on the common on Otterbourne Hill it is distinctly visible for a hundred yards or so, to the east of the main road. It is formed of rounded Tertiary beach-pebbles, and aims directly at the fir-tree in the grounds of Chilworth Court, beneath which tree it actually passes.

It comes nearly into line with the main road near Pitmore Farm, and can be traced in a ploughed field there as a pebbly ridge. It is clearly to be seen by the side of the road descending towards Fryern Hill, where it passes through Leech Pond. In Fryern Hill Wood it is very distinct, while in the field south of it I was fortunate in seeing a good section exposed. The field, which is very boggy, was being drained, and in one of the ditches the road was cut through, showing as a thick band of pebbles lying upon clay. There are no stones anywhere else in the field, which is covered with peat. The ridge can be seen across the next two fields, and it crosses the railway and modern road exactly at the railway bridge; it is visible through some gardens and allotments beyond as a ridge covered with white stones. It is then interrupted for some distance by a large brick-pit, but it re-appears just beyond, exactly on the line of its former course, in a ploughed field west of Titlark Farm. Here it shows as a broad streak of white stones without any signs of a ridge, but in the next field and those beyond (all under grass) the ridge is quite distinct, and the gravel of which it is formed can be detected in drainage ditches.

It is interesting to note that here one can trace the ridge right up to the very point where it vanishes into a ploughed field; and it would be just as certain that the road once passed through it if no traces had survived. But although

the ridge is ploughed away, the white stones remain ; so that one is justified in applying this well-authenticated instance to others where the " stony streak " is not connected with a ridge.

From Titlark Farm to Hazel Copse near Chilworth Manor, the road is very distinct, and can be traced without a break. This section of it is marked on a map of the country round Southampton in Edward Magg's edition of " Paterson's Roads " (London, 1822, Plate VIII.) ; and it was here I obtained the first clue to its course. One can follow it across the large fields (under grass) south of Titlark Farm ; it passes a little to the west of Velmore Farm (Fulmer Farm on the old (1810) edition of the 1in. O.S. map), running up a small hill as a broad ledge cut in the side. It enters Hut Wood about 200 yards East of the parish boundary between Chilworth and North Stoneham. From the point where it enters the wood the ridge is very well preserved, until it is replaced by a broad gravelly ledge or shelf cut out of the side of the hill where the road ascends through Marshall's Row. Almost immediately after entering Hut Wood the road gives a slight bend to the West, but very soon resumes its original direction. It enters the grounds of Chilworth Court a little to the east of the gardener's cottage, and passes through the eastern portion of an ornamental pond. The gardener who assisted me in tracing the road through the grounds recalled that at several points where the road went the ground had proved very stony when dug into. It passes through a large fir—a landmark for miles round—growing on a mound which appears to be the remains of the ridge. It emerges across the high road upon a small patch of enclosed common land behind the Clump Inn ; it is here very well preserved, being 33ft. wide at the bottom. Past the Post Office it appears to coincide with the modern road, and, leaving it again, to continue through a field south of Chilworth Manor, making for the south-west corner of the field, where it enters Hazel Copse. The ridge can be seen near a pavilion in the middle of the field. (Its course just here is marked on the old 1in. O.S. map). Coming to

a large gravel pit it turns slightly to the west, and follows the divide between two streamlets towards Matthews' Moor, where the original direction is resumed. It can be traced through Dymer's Wood, but where it begins the descent towards Tanner's Brook, the ridge appears to be replaced by a straight "hollow way" paved with gravel. Across a ploughed field north-east of Clam's Copse it is very distinct as a broad yellow band of fine shingle and stones. The geographical formation below is London Clay, and elsewhere in the field the soil is a heavy clay, as he who attempts to run may heed. It forms the north-west boundary of Clam's Copse, and the ridge is continued by some small tenements to Rosehill Cottages (Row's Hill; rowan hylle?) at the cross roads. From here it is lost for about three-quarters of a mile, but there can be little doubt that it followed almost the same course as the modern road to where that crosses the Southampton-Romsey turnpike. It would seem to pass through the nursery grounds, and in Home Court is a stony ridge which must, I think, be the continuation of it. From here to the Test, across the broad expanse of valley gravel now under crops I can find no certain traces of it, but its course throughout is aiming at Nursling Mill and Farm, and there can be no doubt that it crossed the Test at this point.

On the west side of the Test Valley there are no certain traces of the road until we come to Shornhill. Though obscured by trails it is visible in Great Fir Plantation; just before emerging from the wood it is most distinct and can be detected across a narrow meadow by a slight ridge and a rise in the hedge-line. It forms the Southern boundary of Peatmoor Plantation as far as the modern road running north-north-east from Tachbury Manor House. It then crosses a green field diagonally and passes through two cottages into Money Hills Plantation. Between the westernmost cottage and the roof, contour-line it is well marked, consisting as usual of a gravel causeway. Keeping to the south of the barrows called "Money Hills" it emerges on a rectangular piece of common divided into three parts by north and south boundary banks. The most easterly of

these old enclosures has been at some time a ploughed field, though now overgrown with gorse like the rest, and there are no signs of the road ; but in the other two it is extremely well preserved, measuring 15ft. across the top and double that width over all. This section is intact for about a quarter of a mile, and is the best and longest piece of the road extant. It is marked on the manuscript 2in. copy of the old Ordnance Map from surveys made between 1806 and 1808 ; but it does not appear on the 1in. sheet published in 1810 and engraved from this manuscript. It presumably passes through the garden of Brooksbank, and is visible in the field to the west. Here it swerves round a piece of marshy ground where a spring rises (about 200 yards south-east of Copythorne Church), is lost in a sandpit, but can be picked up again in some cultivated ground north-west of Scammel's Farm, where it forms a belt of shingly soil. Running roughly parallel to a lane it can be detected through the gardens and orchards adjoining houses on the north side as far as the New Bridge Road. Over Pollard Moor, which was uncultivated and open in 1806, it can be easily traced as a low mound running very nearly parallel to a long, straight hedge line, its distance from the hedge increasing from 80ft. to 140ft. in 2,100ft. In the most south-westerly and largest of the fields traversed (which alone is now arable) it is most distinct as a raised mound of very yellow gravel, contrasting strongly with the black peaty soil on either side. It leaves this field (which is pentagonal) at its western corner, near some hoardings and tumbledown buildings, and is visible in places in the narrow fork between two roads which cross a little north of it at a small angle. It comes into the Romsey road a few yards south of the sixth milestone, but at such an acute angle that it may be said to coincide with it for some way. It reappears at Cadnam on a green by the north side of the Southampton road to the west of a chapel, immediately after which it crosses the Lyndhurst road and enters the Forest, through which it can be traced continuously to Castle Malwood. It crosses a tributary of the Cadnam River where that stream is joined by a parish boundary, and for a few yards from here, to where it enters

Shave Green enclosure it is very well preserved. Somewhere in the enclosure it bends slightly to the North, and crosses the Ringwood road. It passes between the road and a pond, whose water has collected against the dam formed by the causeway. About halfway between the pond and Malwood Farm it gives a southerly turn. Though obscured by trails it can be traced without a break along the ridge of the woodland, and through it to near Malwood Farm. It crosses the entrance drive just outside the enclosure gate, where it is a well-preserved section, and going through a corner of the enclosure it re-crosses the Ringwood road and ascends towards Castle Malwood, passing close by the north-west gate in the earthwork. It can be picked up again at a point where it crosses a cart-track 460ft. south of the sign-post near the eighth milestone from Romsey; it is preserved in a narrow plantation of firs on the east side of the track, by a break in the fence. The common on the west has been dug over for gravel, and the original surface level is difficult to ascertain, but there is a good section exposed in one place, where the road material is 3ft. deep and formed as usual of gravel dug on the spot. Running as nearly as possible due east and west the road can be traced as a low mound through enclosed fields; it goes through the southern portion of the Compton Arms Hotel, and finally emerges by the side of the Ringwood road. At Little Stony Cross, where the modern highway bends to the south-west, there stands a detached building under an old tree; the road can be traced up to this building and no further. I think, however, there can be no doubt that it coincides with the modern road from this point onwards though how far I have not been able to determine. The road is laid out in straight sections all the way to Ringwood, and it follows high ground, avoiding precipitous valleys after the manner of Roman roads. The side valleys of the Lower Avon basin (which is entered about two miles west of Stony Cross) are much more deeply cut than those which descend to Southampton Water, and at their heads the sides are often extremely steep. There was a limit to the gradient up which the Romans built a road, and in the few

instances in the South of England where this limit is reached the roads are found to deviate. A glance at the map will show that the road keeps along high ground, generally along a watershed, with the object of avoiding steep-sided valleys and securing good points from which to lay the road out in the first instance; and between such points the straight sections were aligned with the same intention. There is, therefore, I think no reason why the road I have been describing should not follow the modern road as far as Ringwood, since it fulfils all these conditions. I have examined it carefully throughout, but have failed to detect the Roman road diverging from it anywhere.

There can be little doubt that the road crossed the Avon at or near Ringwood, and joined the Badbury-Poole road where it turns sharply southwards after crossing the Stour. Originally it connected Poole with Winchester, and the existence of important settlements upon it at Wimborne and Ringwood through Saxon and mediæval times caused a part of the road to remain in use to the present day. The rise of Romsey, however, during the Middle Ages, and the decay of Nursling, diverted the Winchester traffic northwards through Romsey, with the result that the longer route through Nursling fell into decay from Stony Cross eastwards. The memory of it, however, was kept alive by tradition, which says that the body of Rufus was carried from the New Forest to Winchester through Nursling. There is, of course, nothing to support the traditional site of the murder, which is fixed at the Rufus Stone—a point 640 yards north of the Roman road; but the colourless story of a vanished highway has doubtless attached itself to the more vivid personality of Rufus—the culture-hero of the New Forest.

O.G.S.C

II.

The following note refers to the lost road from the supposed site of Clausentum, at Bitterne Manor, to that of Regnum at Chichester. Most of us have noticed the exceeding straightness of the road across Netley Common from

Bitterne to Bursledon Bridge, and some of us have sought and sought in vain for any evidence of its Roman construction. Mr. Crawford was given access to the original MS. map on the scale of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to the mile of the Ordnance Survey of 1806, which is preserved at Southampton, and on it he found a very distinct causeway, marked across Netley Common. But it did not coincide with the present road. It kept about a quarter of a mile south of it through Chessell and Bitterne, and crossing the modern road at the turning leading down to Weston, turned due east to Netley Hill, heading for the upper part of the Hamble River below Fairthorne, at which place it must be remembered there are the remains of a Roman building. At this point, just below where the Curdridge Creek comes in, there is a gravelly place, where it is said you can ford the river at low water, and if this was the crossing of the Roman road it may well give one a point from which the road may perhaps still be traced through the woods to Wickham Common.

Codrington says there appears to be no trace of the road from Clausentum to Regnum, but quotes Stukely as saying he found traces of it along the ridge of Portsdown Hill. These have all been destroyed by the making of the forts, but there does remain a slight trace of a road at the extreme eastern end where it abuts upon the wall of the grounds of Belmont House, and this points straight for the spire of Chichester Cathedral. That there was an ancient road from Wallington, the first point at which Fareham Creek could be forded, along the ridge to Bedhampton is a certainty; but that this was the course of the Roman road is rendered almost impossible by the discovery of the latter on the lower ground to the north of the hill.

Mr. Crawford succeeded last autumn in tracing it across Wickham Common coming in a straight line from Wickham, running along the northern side of Southwick Park and of Purbrook Heath, to join the line of the main Chichester road at Bedhampton.

It only, therefore, remains to make good the portion between Netley Hill and Wickham to establish the whole of the missing road from Bitterne Manor to Chichester.

III.

The road marked on the map as a Roman road across Beaulieu Heath, is recognised as Roman by Codrington and by Shore, and there would have been no need to verify it if it had not been denied to be Roman by Professor Haverfield in "The Victoria County History." I think no one who has walked it, as I had the pleasure of doing with Mr. Crawford, from Butt's Ash to Stone Farm can have the slightest doubt as to its being Roman, for it is traceable as a perfectly straight, slightly raised causeway for practically the whole of the distance where its site is not occupied by the modern road. In the course of our walk we came upon an unrecorded square earthwork, close to Holbury Farm, but the chief interest lay in what we supposed to be the old Roman and mediæval harbour of Lepe, now a low-lying meadow between Stone Farm and the sea, with its outlet barred by shingle just to the West of Stone Point. Along the western side of this meadow just in a line with the Roman road, runs a very hard, good road, and embedded in it we found several pieces of Bembridge stone, as well as some brick and concrete, whether Roman or modern, of course it is impossible to be certain, but it seems an unlikely place for modern concrete. Both sides of the meadow show irregularities in the ground, which are suggestive of the sites of old buildings. I believe Mr. Crawford has since traced the road north from Butt's Ash as far as Dibden, but he does not appear to have succeeded in joining it up to his Nursling-Ringwood Road.

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