

## OLD ROADS IN CENTRAL HANTS

BY C. F. C. HAWKES.

Although many of the roads to be found in this country are of very great age, yet none of them are older than the earliest settlements. Villages and camps were not established along the line of already existing roads, but roads grew up as links between settlements. Before the Saxon invasion all the villages were on the uplands, and hence the roads followed the lines of the ridges from one to another. This was the best way for several reasons:—It was the driest, and generally avoided streams, and it lay over open ground; moreover, the safest route for travel is always that with the widest view. But the principal reason was that the uplands were the centres of population.

The oldest prehistoric roads are the long trade routes stretching right across the country, which form the skeleton of the whole system: they keep, wherever possible, to the high ridge tops or just on the south brow, and where a ridge has to be crossed it is usually at a saddle with an easy gradient: for the crossing of a river valley, they generally descend by some spur with a gentle slope, and always choose a place as high up the river as possible, where the difficult wet valley is narrow. But later there grew up parallel roads beside them, which kept to the lower slopes of the ridges, and were used in dry summer weather, when travellers were not forced to get right to the crest of a ridge to find a passable road. These summerways can be followed alongside of most of the big ridgeways: and it is noticeable that when a river is to be forded they usually come in and join the parent ridgeway for the crossing, leaving it when it climbs the hill on the other side. The characteristic of the ridgeway is that it seldom leaves the highest ground. The summerway is generally to be found somewhere near, but not at the bottom of the least indented slope of the ridge. Where both slopes are equally straight (like those of the Hog's Back), it will choose the drier southern side.

The minor ways of the pre-Saxon system are now few, and most of them are suspect of being really Saxon, or later still; for at the Saxon settlement an entirely new system of valley-habitation was introduced, with new roads and fields which displaced the old. The Saxon ways grew up in the valleys to connect the Saxon villages, and are quite distinct from the British upland roads. Occasionally, however, Saxon villages are found established along a summerway, which may have already been in existence.

In Central Hants the main ridgeways run roughly east and west, with connecting links between them, and branches south to the coast.

(i.) The Harroway was the most important of the Hampshire ridgeways, and is a part of the great road which stretched

right along the backbone of Southern England from Cornwall to Kent. From Salisbury Plain it came along the high ground north of the Test valley, through Weyhill, and, skirting Hurstbourne Park, it passed just north of Whitchurch, parallel to the L.S.W.R. At Oakley, on the low saddle between the Test and Loddon basins, it joins a road coming south-east from the Burghclere downs, and must originally have gone on towards the tumuli north of Kempshott House. Beyond the Winchester-Basingstoke road a lane marks its route through Farleigh Wallop and Ellisfield: further, it must have passed through Nash's Green and Weston Common to the Golden Pot Inn, on the Basingstoke-Alton road, and then it climbed the ridge and went past Sutton Common, and the Penley Copse and Barley Pound earthworks, into the Wey valley at Farnham.

(ii.) But the summerway, which leaves it at Oakley, and passes over Battle Down, and between Basingstoke and Cliddesden, along the edge of Hackwood Park, through Five Lanes End and Long Sutton, to join it again near Well, seems gradually to have absorbed traffic till it superseded its parent, which is now consequently in a fragmentary condition. We shall meet other instances of this.

(iii.) First branch of the Harroway. This is a link between the Harroway and the South Hants ridgeway, and, leaving the former not far west of Cholderton, it passes the Quarley Hill and Danebury Camps. It crosses the Test at Longstock, and can be traced as a lane up to Upper Sandy Down Farm, near Stockbridge. Its course is uncertain until it re-appears south-west of Woolbury Ring as a deep hollow way, which continues just across the Winchester-Stockbridge road. After this there are no traces: presumably it went on to join road (iv), somewhere east of Upper Somborne.

(iv.) The second branch of the Harroway leaves it near Finkley, and goes west and south. After crossing the Test near Fullerton Junction, it is traceable as a wide lane past the "White Hart" and over Windmill Hill. South of the Winchester-Stockbridge road it is narrower and deeper, and just north of the Somborne-Crawley road hollow tracks are visible. Further south the lane becomes a very wide, green road, and turns east; as a lane, it crosses the ridge between the Test and Itchen valleys near its lowest point at Ham Green, where it has some hollow tracks, and can be followed as far as Weeke. It must have joined the South Hants ridgeway in Winchester.

(v.) The Lunway has been thought not to be a true ridgeway, but it has all the characteristics of one, and I have found no reason for doubting its authenticity. West of the Test I have not explored it, but I imagine it to have come from the Old Sarum region by way of Lobscombe Corner, and to have crossed the Test at or near Stockbridge. At Woolbury Ring, which has been wrongly thought to be its western terminus, it is not visible,

but it probably followed the north edge of the wood by Phillips' Heath Farm, and thence eastward it is visible as a lane along the ridge that bounds the Micheldever valley on the south. There is a slight gap by the Winchester-Mildenhall Roman road, but in Isaac Taylor's County Map of 1755 a continuous course is shown. Further on it is distinct past Worthy Down Race-course and the British village thereon, and, continuing just south of Waller's Ash Tunnel, it reaches the Winchester-Basingstoke road at Lunways Inn, though not visible for the last few hundred yards. Here it is joined by a Saxon drove road from Andover to Alresford, which pursues a parallel course on its north side over Worthy Down, after coming south through Barton Stacey from Andover. As the real Lunway is to the south of the ridge-crest here, and the drove practically on it, some confusion has arisen, but, as there is no point of contact at the west (or Crawley Down) end of the parallels, it is clear that they are quite distinct, the southern one being the real ridgeway, the northern one Saxon. On the east of Lunways Inn they are united for some way, and then, at the south-east corner of Micheldever Wood, there is a fork, one road going north-east to the Candover, at Totford, the other south-east to Alresford, with a branch to Itchen Stoke. Whether the southerly road was a minor ridgeway before being used as a Saxon drove, I am not sure, but I suspect that the truth is as follows:—In late prehistoric or Romano-British times, a branch grew up from the main Lunway to join the road later known as the Pilgrims' Way at Itchen Stoke, and afterwards the drove took the same course as far as the tumuli on Itchen Stoke Down, and then turned off to Alresford. This explains all three branches. I do not think the Lunway was connected with Oliver's Battery on Abbotstone Down on this side.

To return to the main line of the road, after crossing the Candover at Totford, a parish boundary alone marks its line for a mile, and then a green lane takes it up on Bugmore Hill, whence a short branch leads south to Oliver's Battery. Hollow tracks are to be found in Godsfield Copse, and the way is continued to Wield by a path along the south of Wield Wood and round Barton Copse. It is dislocated by the villages of Wield and Lower Wield, but there is a footpath between them, which may be a relic of it, and, further, a path and a lane mark it most of the way along the ridge to Burkham House. I have not investigated it further, but the nature of the ground seems to necessitate a winding course, and it probably turned to the right over Herriard Common and joined the Harroway near the Alton-Basingstoke railway-line, perhaps going beyond it over Prior's Hill to join its summerway at Five Lanes End.

(vi.) The Lunway does not throw off a summerway till Totford is reached, but eastward of that it appears as a lane, and strikes north-east along the side of the ridge over Preston



Down ; it is then met by the modern road from Preston Candover to Alton, and must have gone on to join the main Lunway again at Bagmore. It will be noticed that the ground covered by the western portion of this summerway is not a very even slope, but it could not get anything better except by taking a very zigzag course.

(vii.) At the corner of Barton Copse, between Godsfield and Wield, a branch ridgeway leaves the Lunway on the south—it is visible as a lane going south from the Wield-Medstead road into the woods. There it is lost for a little, but the modern road from Heath Green to Hattingley and the direct path thence to Medstead show its course: further east, I take it to have turned south and followed the edge of Chawton Park Wood, and on across the railway to join another ridgeway, road (X), somewhere near Four Marks.

(viii.) The South Hants ridgeway is part of the big trade route from South Wilts and Dorset, across Hants, and right along the South Downs. It is described by Dr. Grundy in the "Archæological Journal" for March-December, 1918, but there are several points in which this account differs from his. The ridgeway runs eastward along the crest of Dean Hill into Hampshire, and crosses the Test at Kimbridge Mill, near Mottisfont. It probably followed the present road up to Michelmersh past the Bear and Ragged Staff, but its course through the village cannot now be re-discovered. Further on it is traceable as a lane running eastward on the south of Stubbs' Copse, and Isaac Taylor's map marks it running on along the ridge into Parnholt Wood, where there are well-marked hollow tracks. Beyond, over Farley Mount Down, it is a wide lane, which joins the Old Sarum-Winchester Roman road in West Woods. Originally the ridgeway must have gone along the crest of Pitt Down, and then through Crab Wood and the south part of the Royal Winchester Golf Links into Winchester, but when all the traffic was absorbed by the Roman metalled road, that part of it fell into disuse, and it cannot now be traced.

Beyond Winchester it must have followed the same course as the Roman and modern roads past St. Catherine's Hill to the corner of Deacon Hill. This ascent is covered with hollow tracks, but all those now visible on the south of the modern road are Saxon and mediæval; however, there are some on the north side which are the remains of the old ridgeway. One set of hollow tracks kept off the hill along the edge of the modern Sewage Farm, and only scaled it just west of Chilcombe Rifle Range, where they climb diagonally up the steep slope.

At the corner of Deacon Hill the Roman and modern roads turn south, and the ridgeway is now lost, but the 6in. O.S. map of 1897 shows a footpath continuing east to join "Steeplechase" lane, which runs north-east, south of the crest of the hill. This was the course of the ridgeway, and it is continued east

by hollow trails over Telegraph Hill up to the summit of Cheese-foot Head. The north slope of Telegraph Hill is covered with deep hollow tracks: those along the modern Winchester-Petersfield road must be comparatively recent, but the others, further west, which disappear by Chilcombe Lime Works, are the remains of a shorter, steeper, cut up from the river crossing at Winchester to Telegraph Hill, avoiding the *détour* that the main ridgeway makes to secure an easier gradient. There is a footpath running W.N.W. from Chilcombe, that joins the road into Winchester from Petersfield on the edge of the town, and in this we may see a relic of this branch. The steep and deep lane up from Chilcombe to the ridge-top behind the butts of the Rifle Range is certainly Saxon, and has nothing to do with any part of the ridgeway. There seems to be no evidence for Dr. Grundy's course round to the north over Magdalen Hill. The route is steep, and near the New Inn is cut by a steep gully; moreover, there are no definite traces. At the top of Cheesefoot Head the hollow tracks are well marked in the first copse on the north of the present road, though the ground here is confused by the mediæval London-Southampton highway<sup>1</sup> (the modern Fawley Lane), which crossed the hill from north-east to south-west.

The ridgeway's course on the eastern slope of Cheesefoot Head is followed by the modern road, but after the 500-foot contour is passed, the latter probably bore off to the north; in a field about 50 yards south of it is a fold which may, perhaps, be a relic of old hollow tracks. Though cultivation has now destroyed it, it is marked by Isaac Taylor going south-east to Lane End Down, where it is once more to be traced, broadening out into well-marked hollow tracks which descend the hill past some tumuli, and gradually contract towards the bottom.

Up the hill, from Lane End to Millbarrow Down, the ridgeway must coincide with the modern Winchester-Warnford road; in several places it is quite deeply cut, and for most of the way it has a series of narrow fields and copses of uniform width along its south side, which seems to show it was formerly much wider. On Millbarrow Down faint trails pass on both sides of the tumulus, to re-unite beyond. They were visible a little further on at the north edge of the road three years ago, but are now practically invisible; then they disappear, and the line is taken up by the lane leading from Lomer to Beacon Hill. What the course must have been in the short interval is shown by a parish boundary.

There is some doubt about the crossing of the Meon Valley. Dr. Grundy takes the road east and north from Lomer, past the tumulus on the north of Wheely Down, and then down a straight footpath into Warnford. But of the first portion of this course there are no traces, though there is no doubt that the wide lane leading up the smooth ridge from Warnford south-

<sup>1</sup> See John Ogilby's Survey, 1682, and the map in Camden's "Britannia," ed. Gibson, 1692.

eastwards on to Teglease Down represents part of the ridgeway. A second crossing of the valley is marked by the very deep hollow tracks down Beacon Hill, which, becoming shallower, curl south along the 400-foot contour: their line is taken up, after one intervening field, by a lane leading to a ford not far north of Exton. A path (followed by a parish boundary) leads up from this to the Camp on Old Winchester Hill, through which it passes to join the way up from Warnford on Teglease Down. A middle route from Beacon Hill, along Beacon Hill Lane to Shalford, and so up to Old Winchester Hill by Garden Hill Farm, is ill attested, but, undoubtedly, both the first two were used. Dr. Grundy thinks the northern one is the original, although at the present day the other is more continuous. One might have expected a route from Beacon Hill to Warnford, but there seems to be no trace of any. East of this the ridgeway is clearly traceable as a wide, green road along the crest of Chidden Down and over Hyden and Tegdown Hills to Butser Hill, and then it leaves the county along the top of the South Downs, though I failed to trace it satisfactorily on Wor Down.

Unless the short cut from Winchester to Telegraph Hill be so styled, this ridgeway has no summerway till Sussex is entered, but there it can be followed along the north edge of the South Downs from one end almost to the other. [See Dr. Grundy *ad loc.*]

(ix.) From Cheesefoot Head a branch of the South Hants ridgeway led south over Longwood Warren; but the present track heads off due south towards Old Down Farm, while the ridgeway must have veered round to the south-west with the ridge, and gone towards the Itchen by Hill Farm and the south side of Twyford Waterworks: of this nothing now remains.

(x.) On the summit of Lane End Down the South Hants ridgeway has branches leading off at right angles on both sides. That on the south must have run down to the low ground somewhere near Marwell, but its course is only marked by a modern road and a lane with a parish boundary almost as far as Longwood Farm; beyond this it has disappeared. That on the north is more interesting: its course north-east from Lane End Down is marked by a straight piece of the Bramdean-Owslebury road. When this turns off to the east, its line is continued by a lane, a hollow way along the edge of a field, and then again a lane. Near Hockley House the lane turns north, and the course of the ridgeway is, I think, shown by the footpath leading north-east across the fields: when this becomes a lane, on approaching Cheriton, there are steep banks on the left which seem to be relics of hollow ways. The road here is marked by Isaac Taylor. It is possible, however, that the footpath further south, by Westfield Farm, marks the true line. Anyhow, the ridgeway crossed the Itchen at Cheriton, and its further course is shown by the path through the timber-yard and up into the fields beyond.



Thence a long trail, followed by a parish boundary, leads up the even slope: it is deeply cut by three mediæval tracks leading south from Alresford, and becomes a wide, green road along the edge of Cheriton Wood. At the top of the hill there is a slight gap, bridged only by the parish boundary, and then the ridgeway goes as a big lane past Old Park Wood and the north edge of Bramdean Common.

I do not think the lane on the north of Cheriton Wood has anything to do with the real ridgeway. It ends abruptly just north of Cheriton battlefield, and the climb thither from the Itchen is much steeper and less likely than the route given above.

East of Bramdean Common all traces of this ridgeway disappear for a good many miles; there are several old lanes which descend the hill towards Ropley, but it must have gone on along the crest. I suspect the lane past Merryfield Farm marks its course, but it certainly did not turn off into the East Tisted valley with the present lane (and parish boundary), though, as Dr. Grundy shows, this is an old one. The ridge turns northward near Plaindell Farm, and the ridgeway must have continued up to the top of the watershed near Four Marks, where it would be joined by road (vii), but its precise route cannot now be found. Descending the further slope, it was probably coincident with the modern Winchester-Alton road for a mile or so, and then passed across the railway to join the road which forms the north side of Alton Butts: but it must have borne off north from this by the Cripples' Home, and we next find a sure trace of it in the road running north from Anstey Manor. Marked by a modern lane, the ridgeway followed the comb of the ridge as it swings eastward, and joined the Harroway on the hill above Brockham Hill Farm.<sup>1</sup>

(xi.) As will be seen from the map, the object of this ridgeway was to connect the big port at Bitterne and its immediate hinterland with the Harroway and the eastern outlet afforded by the North Downs. The way is rather awkward, but must have been important, and, to my mind, it is almost certain that the "Old Road" of Mr. Belloc first arose as its summerway, and later absorbed all its traffic. Certainly in Romano-British times, and perhaps before, this led to the disuse of the former, which is consequently fragmentary and difficult to trace to-day. The summerway is certainly rather a special case, as the nature of the ground keeps it further away than is usual from its parent ridgeway, and it crosses from one side of the latter to the other on the Medstead ridge, but I think that this view of the origin of the "Old Road" is far better than to imagine that it grew up of itself without a previous ridgeway, or that it is merely

<sup>1</sup> The "Maulth Way," mentioned in Dr. Williams-Freeman's "Field Archaeology" as running from the Harroway near Long Sutton, north-east to Chobham, may be a continuation of this ridgeway.

a Saxon road: for there is no getting away from the fact that its characteristics are those of a summerway, not a ridgeway. Its route lies from Winchester along the north side of the Itchen valley, along the modern road through the Worthys as far as Itchen Stoke (though I am not sure of its exact course through Itchen Abbas); it then crossed the Itchen and went through Ovington and over the saddle of Tichborne Down to Bishop's Sutton; further, it coincides with the modern road as far as Ropley Dean. It must then have gone straight on between North Street and Gilbert Street, and is visible again in Blackberry Lane, leading up to the watershed at Four Marks, where it must have joined the ridgeway for a short distance, and then it leaves it again on the right and proceeds to Alton along the north side of the Butts.

Now that so much of the parent ridgeway is established, this conception of the Pilgrims' Way as a summerway has no serious faults; it keeps as near to the ridgeway as the ground permits, and adheres carefully to smooth slopes and easy gradients.

(xii.) I suggest as a possible modification that the portion through the Worthys and Itchen Stoke might be Saxon, and that the true summerway left its parent on Gander Down, and went down through Fulley Wood to the Itchen at the ford just north of Tichborne, only coinciding with Mr. Bellóc's route east of that point. Certainly the track through Fulley Wood has all the characteristics of age, though there is now a gap in its course on Gander Down.

(xiii.) A branch left the South Hants ridgeway southward from Millbarrow Down along the edge of Dur Wood: it was later used as a Salt-way, and must have reached the coast by way of Upham and Durley, but beyond Dur Wood it is now lost.

(xiv.) Near the tumuli on Wether Down near East Meon, a branch left the South Hants ridgeway on the north; it can be followed over Salt Hill and Henwood Down, and crossed the Meon at Westbury. Here there is a fork, and it continues in two parallels, one a lane north across the railway to Stock Farm and Bailey Green, the other further east past Peake Farm to Privett. Beyond these points the ridgeway vanishes, but it must have gone on past the Jumps and over West Tisted Common to join road (X) near Hill Farm. Whether the eastern parallel, which, according to Dr. Grundy, is shown by its straightness, and the name *Stræt* given it in a Saxon charter, to have been straightened and metalled by the Romans between the Meon and Peake Farm, was the beginning of a summerway which went on down through East Tisted under the edge of the hills to Alton, or was merely a bi-form which rejoined the western parallel again near the Jumps, I am not sure: the "romanization" might be adduced in favour of either view.

(xv.) There is a group of roads leading north on the west bank of the Itchen, about which there is some doubt. From



Silkstead an old lane runs northward to Yew Hill: there are traces of it as far south as Hocombe Bridge, and Isaac Taylor shows it coming from the neighbourhood of Toot Hill, near Southampton, by way of Chilworth. It is not a ridgeway, but there are many hollow tracks on Yew Hill, and the road which goes north thence past Oliver's Battery (now partially obliterated by Pitt Corner Camp) looks like one, and must have joined the South Hants ridgeway on Teg Down or Sleeper's Hill, just above Winchester. Though there is a green road north-east from Hursley along the valley past the Kennels, there is no vestige of a way on the ridge between, south-west of the hollow tracks on Yew Hill, and I am not sure where the ridgeway went.

(xvi.) From Yew Hill hollow tracks lead down to the Itchen, at Shawford, and beyond, White Lane,<sup>1</sup> leading north-north-east up on to Twyford Down, marks the continuation of this branch. The track, after turning east and running along a small fir plantation, ceases, but a deep hollow way can be made out running up through the fields to the Winchester-Bishop's Waltham road, just south of the second milestone, beyond which the southern portion of "Steeplechase" Lane shows how it went on to join the South Hants ridgeway by the farm just south of Deacon Hill.

(xvii.) Whether any part of "King's Lane," which leads over from Compton Down to St. Cross, is pre-Saxon, is doubtful, but there are well-marked trails connecting it with the hollow tracks of the ridgeway on Yew Hill, as well as a footpath and hollow trails which lead to it from the green road at Hursley Kennels. On the north-west slope of St. Catherine's Hill there is a bank, and what appear to be very worn and shallow hollow tracks leading east-north-east across the hillside, and these may be the relics of a continuation of "King's Lane" across the Itchen to meet the South Hants ridgeway behind St. Catherine's Hill.

(xviii.) From Merdon Castle a track leads north and west along Southlynch plantation: hollow tracks to the west of the earthwork seem to show it came from further south. It went past Violet Hill on to Pitt Down, where it must have joined the South Hants ridgeway, though the last part of its course has been obliterated by cultivation, and can only be found in Isaac Taylor's map. I am not positive whether it went on north to join road (iii), as shown on the map in Dr. Williams-Freeman's "Field Archæology," but I have not found it in West Woods. The route further north is marked by a lane east of Upper Somborne, but it is doubtful, and if this way did continue to the northward, its course is much more likely to have been straight through West Woods along the parish boundary to join road (iv) at its bend between Sparsholt and Upper Somborne Wood.

---

<sup>1</sup> The name points to use as a Salt-way in the Middle Ages.





(xix.) There must once have been a ridgeway leading east from Harewood Forest, via Tidbury Ring and Popham Beacons, to the Harroway near Farleigh Wallop, but with the exception of a very dubious hollow way near Popham, I have failed to find any certain traces of it.

The present condition of an old road shows what treatment it has received since the Saxon invasion: much has been ploughed out, and over cultivated ground a long hedge or footpath is sometimes left to mark the line. Where the old road remains as a lane through tilled ground, it was utilized by the Saxons, and narrowed down to its present width by the cultivation on each side. Long strips of narrow field along a road show it was formerly wider, and often indicate a ridgeway: the same may be said of wide strips between a road and its hedges. Hollow tracks on the bare down cannot be taken as evidence of a pre-Saxon road: in their present state they are frequently mediæval (as on Twyford Down, east of St. Catherine's Hill), or even later (as at Black Dick's Corner, on the direct Winchester-Alresford road). Sometimes parish boundaries follow British roads, but not quite so frequently as in the case of Roman highways. Where there is a ridgeway ascending out of a valley, or crossing from one valley to another, it goes up by a spur. It is remarkable that a Saxon road will go up along the adjacent gully, but will coincide with the ridgeway on the crest, sinking into a gully again on the other side; this often results in the disappearance of the ridgeway except on the top of the hill. This is so in Parnholt Wood, where a Saxon road comes up a gully from Braishfield, and on the top meets the South Hants ridgeway which has come up the spur from Michelmersh: also with the south branch of the South Hants ridgeway on Longwood Warren, with the ridgeway on the north of Bramdean Common and elsewhere.

An important feature of the British road system was the roads leading down to the coast (where Bitterne was the chief port), but these are not now traceable very far south, and also I am sure there were originally more of them than are now to be found. Most of these would be replaced by the southward Roman roads from Winchester, just as the South Hants ridgeway was replaced by the Roman road to Old Sarum for four miles west of Winchester.