THE ROMAN ROAD
FROM WINCHESTER TO BITTERNE.
By O. G. S. CRAWFORD, F.B.A.

It has been said that roads connect the habitations of man, whereas streets separate them. In current speech the word ‘road’ is used to describe ways across country or those in the ‘better’ residential suburbs of towns, ‘street’ being confined to ways between houses set close together and used as shops and offices, or between residences once aptly described as ‘of the meaner sort.’ In origin the word ‘road’ meant a way used for riding on horseback, and a street was any way that was ‘made,’ that is, strewn with stones. But since almost the only made ways were in fact those made by the Romans and those in towns, which were commoner and more familiar, the word gradually lost its original meaning and acquired a new one by association.

So complete is this change that when the road called in mediaeval records Burgess Street was built up and made into a modern thoroughfare, the City Fathers, in their bourgeois wisdom, changed its name to Burgess Road. Perhaps houses in a road command a higher rental than those in a street; perhaps residence in a road is, partly for that reason, a social asset. Whatever may have been the motive, the change is regrettable, for it had a historical significance; Burgess Street was one of the few made roads outside the town, though it does not necessarily follow that it was the Romans who made it.

Since roads connect inhabited sites, it follows that they will change their course when the sites are changed. The site of ‘Southampton’ has been moved twice; the first site was at Bitterne Manor, the Roman town of Clausentum, and the second in the neighbourhood of Six Dials. It is not, therefore, possible to write of the road-system of the Southampton region as if it were a fixed and constant system; it has changed or been modified with each change in the site of the town, for the town must always have been the dominant influence in the system of roads round it.

Two Roman roads led to Clausentum: One, coming from Chichester, crossed the northern part of Netley Common and thence by Sholing Common to Freemantle Common, where part of it is still plainly visible. This consists of a flat raised causeway of gravel, and lies in the angle between the Woolston and Netley roads just south of their junction at the old lodge of Chessel.


2. Soon after these words were written the better put of this Roman road was covered by a static water-tank. (This has now been removed and the causeway restored under expert supervision.)
road was marked on the manuscript (2 inch to mile) plan from which the first edition of the one-inch Ordnance Map was engraved. It does not, however, appear on the engraved plan, so that it remained unknown until I re-discovered it on the aforesaid plan just after the 1914-18 war. Subsequently I traced its course on foot and inserted it on my 6-inch map. This copy however was lent and not returned. Recently the course has been re-marked on the 6-inch map by Mr. Maitland Muller who has also succeeded in completing the missing portion from Netley Common to the Hamble at Fairthorn, which I missed. The story of its re-discovery further east is given in Man and his Past (1921, 170-3). When Clausentum was abandoned this road ceased to serve any useful purpose and was left to become overgrown with heather and grass, both excellent preservatives. For the same reason no part of it is in use to-day except possibly a few hundred years near Bitterne Station.

The other Roman road connected Clausentum with Venta Belgarum (Winchester). The southern portion being lost, it will be best to start from the north and work southwards. Leaving Winchester by the South Gate of the city, it coincides with the modern Southampton road for 4 miles as far as Otterbourne (Hants 49 S.E.). The 1-inch Ordnance Map of 1810 marks half a mile of causeway then visible by the side of the road as it descends the hill north of Otterbourne; this is no longer visible, as it is built over, but the houses are set back some distance and the intervening space is occupied by their front gardens, in which remains may survive. At the south end of the village, by the old smithy, the modern road turns right (S.W.-wards), but the Roman road continued straight on, and traces were once to be picked up in the fields. The wall at the E. end of Otterbourne House garden is in the same alignment and stands on it, and I thought I could detect remains of the causeway and of the tertiary beach-pebbles that were used to cover it. (At this point the Roman road from Nursling should have joined it, if the alignment of that road on Otterbourne Common was maintained.) In Otterbourne Park Wood the causeway is visible together with deep traffic-ruts running beside it. These can be traced through the wood to the S.W. corner, but no further; and although there seems no reason to doubt that the road continued for some distance southwards on the same alignment, there are now no visible remains except at one point, to be described below. I shall therefore quote from an earlier writer who claims to have found traces of it. "A fine old yew tree in a field forming part of Allbrook brickfield stands

3. This is no doubt the "wood of Otterbourne called Parc" which Bartholomew de Capella was licensed to enclose "within the Royal Forest of Ayaslighe" (Ashley), 16th July, 1253. Appendix to Eighth Report of Hist. MSS. Commission, 1881, p. 263.
4. James John Arnold in Hampshire Notes and Queries, iv, 1890, 81.
5. Called "Bishopstoke Brick-works" on Hants 57 N.E., edn. of 1897.
on its western margin, and at Boyatt Farm the wet season of 1879 washed away the present road bank, exposing the gravelled site about two feet below the surface of the adjacent field. . . . From this point the road evidently followed the drove way through Boyatt to Woodside, but beyond this not a trace remains. . . .” I have failed to find any traces of the road between Otterbourne Park Wood and Boyatt Farm; but the old 1-inch Ordnance Map marks a fragment of causeway bisecting the angle of the road immediately E. of the farm. If continued this would follow the course of the drove way mentioned by Arnold, which still exists as a footpath. Parallel to this at a distance of about 30 yards to the west there is a low camber, representing the causeway, between the parish boundary at Boyatt Row and a field-boundary; it is only 800 feet (the N-S. diameter of the field) in length. There can be little doubt that this footpath, drove way or field track does represent the course of the Roman road between Boyatt Farm and Woodside, even though the existing right of way does not exactly coincide with the Roman road.

At Woodside remains of an "intrenched position" of Roman origin have been claimed. The writer was attempting the vain task of identifying the site of "Ad Lapidem" from the distances given in "Richard of Cirencester's" forged itinerary; but he does seem to have observed earthworks here that are not now visible. They formed an oblong enclosure whose dimensions, given first (p. 34) as 270 by 125 "easy paces of mine" (!) were subsequently (p. 62) corrected to "about 210 yards; and its breadth at the North end about 108 yards, besides say 26 yards more for a certain plantation, while at the South end it is a few yards less." He adds that "the trench on the eastern side has been considerably sloped down and filled up." It was kept full by a "little rill." I fancy that the writer of this description actually saw the bank and ditch of his enclosure in places only; for in another place (p. 97) he refers to "a low embankment all along the western side of the said oblong, and at least part of the N. end of it, and yet more—a hillock of about three or four feet high is plainly to be seen by anyone at its south-west corner where the south gate was." The measurements given coincide on the map (Hants 57 N.E.) with those of the garden in which Woodside House now stands; but I was unable to see anything except ordinary field-banks when I visited the site in February 1942. The writer had a theory to prove and is ipso facto suspect; but I have quoted his observations rather more fully than perhaps they deserve because, even if not Roman, the remains may possibly be mediaeval. Even so they are more likely to be of agricultural than of domestic or military origin.

6. Dividing a detached part of S. Stoneham on the N. from the parish of N. Stoneham on the S.
7. By Alfred Vaughan Walters, in Hampshire Notes and Queries, iv, 1889, 33, 34, 62, 97:
From above Boyatt, where the ground is more than 100 feet above sea level, there is an uninterrupted view southwards towards Swaythling across the fertile levels of Eastleigh and North Stoneham. There is no reason why the previous alignment should not have been continued across this plain; but no traces of the Roman road have been recorded there. Much of the area is now covered with houses, but I examined it before they were built and found nothing. The approximate line is represented by Northend Lane (between Woodside and the hamlet of Middle), which may be the slightly altered successor of the Roman road, for it is followed by a parish boundary. A quarter of a mile N.E. of Middle is an old ford across the Monks Brook, and in the path leading from Northend Lane to the ford I observed some large flints which may be connected with the Roman road. Any prolongation of the alignment would pass close to the church of North Stoneham; and it has been stated that "the Roman road certainly ran up (i.e. northwards) from about the spot where St. Denys Railway Station now stands, by South Stoneham and North Stoneham, some 50 yards to the east of the latter church." No evidence, however, was given, and as the church of North Stoneham stands about 50 yards W. of the modern road, I suspect that "W." was merely tracing a hypothetical route on the map. The alignment of Northend Lane would in fact, if produced, pass right through North Stoneham church, and fall into line with a straight piece of the modern road 700 feet in length immediately N.E. of Underwood Farm. North Stoneham church is mentioned in Domesday, and it is well known that the older churches were often built on Roman roads. I think therefore that the course just described is the most probable one for the Roman road, but in default of any tangible evidence it must remain hypothetical.

That course may be continued into the Portswood road, which the map of c. 1560 calls "Portswood Strete" and "the lower waye to Wynchester." This may be the course of the Roman road, and I think it probably is; but we must not rely merely upon the evidence of these two names, for the word 'street' used here may only mean, as so often, the village street, and Winchester way passed northwards by the modern route through Eastleigh and Allbrook, not by North Stoneham—at any rate that is the route shown on Isaac Taylor's map of Hampshire (1759). Assuming that the Portswood road represents in a general way—and with its sweeping curves it can do no more—the earlier Roman road, how did it reach Clausentum? It must have ended at some 'hard' on the banks of the Itchen estuary, from which there was a ferry to the Roman settlement. Where such a ferry may have been is

8. This is probably the 'Streete' of the (North) Stoneham bounds, a.D. 932 (Birch, Cart. Sax. No. 692: Arch. Journ. LXXXIV, 1930, 246).
impossible to determine; but it may have been somewhere below Portswood Hill where Roman burials were found in 1852. Whatever the route followed, I feel quite convinced that it was on the W. bank of the Itchen.

That this road was already in existence in the 1st century A.D. is proved by the discovery of two pigs of Mendip lead at Clausentum during the war of 1914-18. They were inscribed with the name of the Emperor Vespasian (d. 79 A.D.), and the letters VEB, an abbreviation doubtless of the Roman name of the Mendip lead-mines. The exact site is thus described:—"A tract of land close to the river has recently been sold for the erection of engineering works, and in making the foundations for a shed on the line of the wall which marked the limit of high tide in Roman times two pigs of lead were found at a depth of 2½ feet." The credit of recording the discovery and saving the pigs is due to that excellent Hampshire antiquary, William Dale, F.S.A., who did so much for the County and the Field Club. The pigs are now in private possession, and the exact site is marked on the 25-inch O.S. map.

By themselves these pigs would not perhaps suffice to date the road; but they do not stand alone. Others have been found right on the Roman road from the Mendips to Winchester at Bruton in Somerset and at Bossington in Hampshire. All are of the 1st century and prove that the road was made then.

It is usually stated that Burgess Street (now called Burgess Road) was a Roman road. The name 'strete' supports this hypothesis, for this word seems only to have been used in the Middle Ages for Roman roads and village streets; and Burgess Street was never a village street. The name, spelt Bourgese Strete, is applied on the map of c. 1560 to the eastern end, between Langhorn Gate and road and the cross-roads where it runs into the Swaythling road (High road). This portion of the road is called 'herepath' in the North Stoneham bounds of A.D. 932 referred to above, and is probably the 'straete' of the South Stoneham bounds of A.D. 1045. This portion would thus have some claim to be regarded as Roman, but it does not fit into the Roman road system of the district, and I think it more likely that it was a pre-Roman track that was used in Roman times. Whatever its age the purpose is clear; it carried the traffic that converged from several directions to cross the Itchen at Mansbridge and the Monks Brook at Swaythling, across the peninsula between the Itchen and the Test to the ford which preceded the bridge at Redbridge.

10. See Antiquity xvi, 1942, 57. After writing that article I acquired two of the vases found there. They are undoubtedly Roman, and are now in the Tudor House Museum, Southampton.

11. The name Mendip consists of two parts, the former being related to the modern Welsh 'mynydd,' a ridge. The second part must therefore have been something like -epe. Can this be connected with VEB?


West of the Test the traffic branched out again in several directions, one of the roads being the Cloven Way, as I have named it.\textsuperscript{14} The Romans bridged the Test at Nursling where the Winchester road crossed it just above the tidal point, as always. The gradual disuse of this road after the Roman period, caused probably by the decay of the (wooden) bridge, may have led to the adoption, or revival, of another crossing-point at Redbridge. This ford was in use in Bede's time,\textsuperscript{15} and a bridge was in existence in 956.\textsuperscript{16}

Although the name Burgess Street seems to be confined to the eastern portion, the road certainly continued westwards along the northern side of Southampton Common to Chilworth Gate at its N.W. corner. West of this it coincides with the modern Winchester road as far as Shirley Mill, where it crossed Tanners Brook and Hollybrook at their confluence. Here, just N. of the stream, on Old Shirley Hill, stood the old church of Shirley,\textsuperscript{17} which is mentioned in Domesday. West of this point the modern road follows a circuitous course, but a more direct route is shown on Isaac Taylor's map (1759) and its course is indicated by existing footpaths from Mousehole to Wimpson.

Essentially Burgess Street was a bottle-neck carrying the combined traffic from the roads which converged to it at each end. For a short portion of its course, between Millbrook and Redbridge, it is still a bottle-neck, as anyone who likes may prove by watching the traffic there at any time of the day or night. The bridge at Redbridge, in fact, carries a tremendous load of the traffic passing along the South Coast, and it is curious that practically no attempt was made during the war to bomb it.

The name seems to be derived from the fact that it ran along the Northern margin of the Southampton burgesses' liberty. In 1228 it is mentioned, under the name 'regalis via,' as forming the northern boundary of the burgesses' pasture, \textit{i.e.} of Southampton Common.

\textsuperscript{14} Antiquity, V, 1931, 441-58.
\textsuperscript{15} Historia Ecclesiastica IV, sect. 15: Hreutford, \textit{id est vadum harundinis}.
\textsuperscript{16} Birch, Cart. Sax. iii, 926.
\textsuperscript{17} History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Hampshire, by William White, 2nd edition, 1878, 505: "parts of gravestones, etc., have been ploughed up on the top of Shirley Mill Hill in the memory of persons now living." The same statement is made in the 1st edition of 1859.