

## THE HEREWARD STREET.

By R. W. P. COCKERTON.

FOR many years a street in the parish of Ashover has been identified as the Hereward Street. Little has been known about it, although in 1917 it was discussed briefly in this *Journal* by S. O. Addy.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Cameron has now given further clues to the line of this street, which enable the enquiry to be carried a little further.<sup>2</sup> This is Dr. Cameron's note:

HEREWARD'S STREET. There is clear evidence in early documents that an old road, probably from Chesterfield, ran from a point north of Ashover in a southerly direction, through Kelstedge and Slack, joining the Ashover to Matlock Bridge road west of Ashover. From Matlock Bridge it went by a route which cannot now be traced with certainty to Ashbourne and apparently to Hanging Bridge. It is *Herewardstrete* c. 1275 *Beau*, *Herewardstrete* c. 1280 *ib*, *Herwardstrete* c. 1300 *Ed I ib* (bounds of Ashover Moor); *Herwardstrete* 1330 *Ass*, 1330, *QW* (near Ashbourne and Hanging Bridge). "Hereward's road", *v. stræt*. At a later date the Ashover-Matlock Bridge section of the road appears to have been called *Portway*, cf. *Porteway Close in Matlock bank* 1662 *Potter*, *Port Way Cloase* 1709 *ib* and for the name *Portway infra* 22. It is very probable that this road continued, from the point north of Ashover at which it is first noted, in a north-north-easterly direction to Chesterfield and from there, perhaps to Sheffield, for there is today Hereward's Road in Norton parish (*Herwards Road* 1815 *Encl A*). Since no early references have been noted here, however, the ultimate destination of the road in that direction must remain uncertain.

Taking Dr. Cameron's interpretation of the name as "Hereward's road", it may be doubted whether there was ever a Hereward so closely associated with Derbyshire as to justify his name being applied to a road. *Here* has frequently been interpreted as "army". Ekwall, for instance, renders Hereford as "army ford", and Herepath was an army road, a road large enough to march soldiers

<sup>1</sup> *D.A.J.*, XXXIX (1917), 128-30.

<sup>2</sup> K. Cameron, *The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, 1959, xvii-xviii, 21-2.

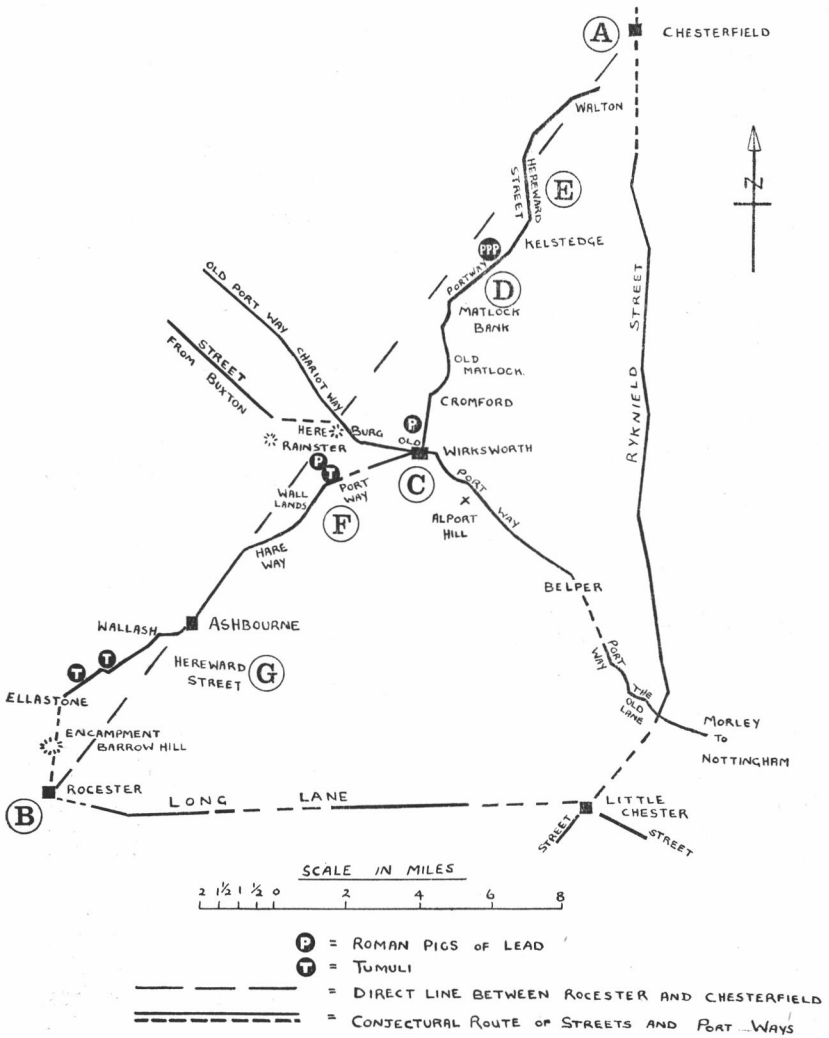


FIG. 14. The Hereward Street.

along or a through road.<sup>3</sup> This name appears in Kniveton as Hareway as explained later. *Ward* means "watch" and so Hereward street may possibly be interpreted as "army watch street", in other words a road which soldiers could regularly patrol to keep down any hostile elements in the locality.

The route at the northern end is quite obscure. Dr. Cameron has found a Hereward's Road in Norton, a name dating only from an Enclosure Award of 1815, and although it may be reasonable to postulate an army road coming up from the south to aid the reinforcement of the Mercian frontier near Norton, it is safer to leave any such conjectural northern route indeterminate.

Towards the south-west, Dr. Cameron suggests Hanging Bridge near Ashbourne as a possible route (see map (G), Fig. 14). Here the name *Herwardstrete* occurs in a document of 1330. He also suggests that at a later date the Ashover-Matlock Bridge section of the road appears to have been called *Portway*, because of field-name references to a *Portway* on Matlock Bank (D).

It is, however, still possible to trace a continuous route from Spitewinter, near Chesterfield, where the Hereward Street has been definitely identified, along the present Chesterfield to Matlock road in a straight line to a place called Pecklant or Peglant (E). Here there is a change of bearing to a straight line to Kelstedge, where the line changes slightly down Amber Lane before the steep ascent to Slack. Again the road swings towards the west and runs over Amber Hill on a fairly straight bearing to Bentley Bridge. Beyond, the road veers slightly to the south, taking up a south-westerly bearing down Matlock Bank in the direction of Old Matlock rather than Matlock Bridge. The name Bentley is probably of significance in relation to the bending of the street as the same name appears on Long Lane, the Roman street from Little Chester to Rocester, where an otherwise strictly straight line is bent. A Portway field or close has been found in title deeds still applied to land on Matlock Bank to the south-east of the route now being studied.

<sup>3</sup> E. Ekwall, *Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th ed., 1960, 236.

After winding slightly down Matlock Bank and crossing the Matlock to Tansley road, the road continues past Matlock Parish Church and Rectory through Starkholmes to Cromford, where the ancient ford, replaced by a medieval bridge with a bridge chapel, carries the continuity forward over the present A.6 and up the steep Cromford Hill to Wirksworth. This continuity explains much which has hitherto been obscured by the development of the valley roads. It must be remembered that the road from Matlock Bridge through Matlock Bath to Cromford is less than 200 years old. Before this valley route was made, it was necessary for all southbound traffic to pass through Starkholmes to the ford at Cromford, thence up to Wirksworth to gain the crest of the watershed west of the Derwent (C).

From Matlock Bank southwards, the character of the road seems to have changed. No longer can one see the bold straight point to point lengths, characteristic of a Roman street. The road seems to take on more the character of a British trackway, making skilful use of the contours, although the steep straight climb from Cromford to Wirksworth is similar to other such road ascents which owe their origin to the Romans. When, however, allowance is made for the difficult contours, the directness of the street is more pronounced than say Doctor's Gate in its passage through the hills.

Passing through Steeple Grange, the road points straight for Wirksworth Parish Church, not, I think, because the church was there first, but because the church was sited close by the side of the ancient way. Near the centre of Wirksworth, there is a road improvement of comparatively recent origin, namely the opening of Harrison Way. The road formerly went round the rock through which Harrison Way was cut to merge with another ancient road, the Old Portway, immediately to the north of the church, which seems to have been sited at a nodal point in this road system (C). The merged roads run almost due west climbing steeply. The Old Portway then diverges along the Brassington road towards Gallows Knoll, while the Hereward Street or Portway (if the use of either of those names is justified) continues

due westward before veering south again to run through Godfreyhole down to Hopton. At Sycamore Farm there was an old crossroads, where the Derby Way crossed from Tiremare Lane to Stainsboro Lane. Here is the stone guide-post, set up in 1705, with the directions, Wirksworth, Ashbourne, Derby, Bakewell, evidencing a crossing of very much greater antiquity than the stone itself.

In this area the road is skirting the foot of the main massif of the Pennines. Hopton Hall and Carsington have obscured the continuity but beyond them at a place called Brook Knowles another important Portway clue has recently been brought to light (F). Again we are indebted to Dr. Cameron, although he himself was prepared to assign this evidence to the Old Portway, about which I have written elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> In his transcripts from the Chandos Pole Gell papers, which he most kindly made available to me, were references to land at Carsington in the years 1315 and 1317 "under le PorteweYe" and in the 13th century "on le Calverremedue between le Breriforlong and le PortweYe". The identification from the tithe maps of the Calvermeadow and the Bready Furlong adjoining leaves no doubt that in the 13th and 14th centuries the name Portway was being applied to the road that has been traced at Brook Knowles and Breach Farm (F).

The route continues on the present road to Kennelmeadow and the White House, with the burial mound, Ows Low, immediately to the north. At the junction with the Brassington to Ashbourne road is another early 18th century guide-stone. Here again there is another puzzling break in continuity, although the road along Hognaston Winn points in the direction of Ashbourne and the Hanging Bridge reference to Hereward Street. Perhaps it is significant that here is found on the map the name Wall Lands. Ekwall notes that *wall* in place-names mostly refers to old fortifications, especially Roman forts or walls, but another possible meaning occurs where the name Walton can be interpreted as "the tun of the Britons".<sup>5</sup>

The latter derivation might be the more fitting in this

<sup>4</sup> *Derbyshire Countryside*, no. 27, 62-3; no. 28, 86-7.

<sup>5</sup> Ekwall, 492-3.

context. In a field a little to the west of the road junction is an interesting standing stone known as the Stoup, which has been discussed in this *Journal* by T. Arthur Matthews.<sup>6</sup> He described and illustrated a cross cut on the southern side, suggesting (on not very certain grounds) a possible date for the erection of the stone of about 1,000 B.C. with the cross cut to christianize the pagan stone by early missionaries. It is also interesting to recall that from this locality at Ows Low Farm comes a pig of lead of Roman type that has been recorded in this *Journal*.<sup>7</sup> Recently Mr. John Lomas has found fragments of Samian ware and Roman coarse pottery in the same neighbourhood (see pp. 109-116). Not far to the north-west is the Romano-British settlement at Rainster Rocks, which seems to have been connected with the route now under study via Winn Barn.<sup>8</sup> It may well be that when Roman soldiers penetrated this area they found a British settlement linked by a trackway through the Wirksworth-Cromford district to other known settlements in the neighbourhood of Matlock. This may account for the character of the road and the Portway names between these points.

Further evidence of the importance of this road in Carsington is given by documentary references to land lying beside the *Homellestonweye* and *Asseborneweye* in the 13th century or *Hameston Waye* in 1600. The first name seems to be equated with that of the Domesday wapentake *Hammenstan* or probably more correctly *Hamelestan* and so may mean "scarred stone way".<sup>9</sup>

To the south-west the route being studied again has much more the character of a Roman point to point street, passing along Hognaston Winn, through Kniveton, and then taking a direct line over Ashbourne Green through Ashbourne to Hanging Bridge. At Kniveton the road was called *Hareway* in the reign of Edward I, as land there was referred to as *Hareweybuttes*; earlier forms were *Arneweye* about 1200 and *Arwey* in the reign of Henry

<sup>6</sup> *D.A.J.*, XXXVII (1915), 55-6.

<sup>7</sup> *D.A.J.*, LXXIII (1953), 110.

<sup>8</sup> *D.A.J.*, XXXII (1910), 138.

<sup>9</sup> Cameron, 338.

III.<sup>10</sup> It may be noted that Harborough Rocks to the north near the Chariot Way is a name which includes the element *here* meaning "army".<sup>11</sup>

A road entering Ashbourne from the north-east is clearly shown on a 16th century map in the Public Record Office.<sup>12</sup> The parish church was sited alongside the continuation of this road, which was evidently destined for some place in Staffordshire, or beyond. The only specifically Roman destination would be the fort at Rocester, and in its line of approach to Ashbourne the Hereward Street is certainly heading in that direction. Whether it crossed the Dove near Hanging Bridge or kept on the east bank to cross the river with Long Lane, the Roman street from Derby, into Rocester is uncertain. Further research is needed but on the accompanying map it has been shown conjecturally continuing through Wallash and Ellastone.

It is now worth returning to the northern section of the Hereward Street in the parish of Ashover (E). North of Spitewinter the street leaves a strictly northerly bearing to avoid the highest point at Stone Edge and takes up a north-north-east alignment, which gives a steep descent along the hillside. It then bends again to the north-east to a point south of Walton Lodge, where the road loses its street-like character and changes to a gently winding road as far as Walton. From here it follows Walton Lane to Boythorpe with virtually only two changes of bearing. At Walton there is again a place-name often thought to be associated with the Welsh or Britons. It also seems that this Welsh element was found on this route through Matlock for Dr. Cameron records *Walshmansty* as a field-name there in 1415 and explains it as "Welshman's path".<sup>13</sup> Walton lies within close reach of the Rykniel Street and Chesterfield, a place-name which suggests a Roman fort yet to be discovered. Both places have yielded traces of Roman occupation.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cameron, 385.

<sup>11</sup> Cameron, 351, 684.

<sup>12</sup> E. M. Yates, "Map of Ashbourne, Derbyshire", *Geographical Journal*, CXXVI, 1960, 479-81.

<sup>13</sup> Cameron, 394.

<sup>14</sup> *V.C.H. Derby*, I, 255-6.

In this way it is possible to postulate terminals for the Hereward Street without complicating the issue with the Norton-Sheffield road of the same name. In view of the essentially military character of the Roman street system, it is possible that in the early stages of the occupation of Derbyshire when strictly military considerations were predominant it was deemed necessary to hold a line between Rocester and Chesterfield (AB).<sup>15</sup> The course of the Hereward Street indicated (AEDCFGB) is the most direct and logical route to follow between these two places, having regard to the very considerable topographical obstacles to be encountered. After the area to the north had been sealed off by the Roman pincer movement from the Mersey and the Humber, the defensive line in question would have had less military significance, as would Rocester and Chesterfield from a comparatively early date.

This road or street could however subsequently have been used for civilian purposes, notably the export of lead to the Humber. In addition to the Roman type pig of lead from Ows Low Farm, mentioned above, there is a pig of lead, inscribed with the name of the Emperor Hadrian, from Cromford Moor, which abuts upon the road. Other inscribed pigs from Matlock and Matlock Moor fit well into the picture of this route as possibly at some time a Roman commercial road. Bateman also wrote of uninscribed pigs of lead of Roman form having been discovered in the neighbourhood of Wirksworth.<sup>16</sup> The approximate positions of these finds have been marked on the map.

Such a route, if accepted on the basis of topographical and other evidence, reinforces the claim of Wirksworth, where the Hereward Street or Portway crossed the Old Portway, to be considered the site of the lost Roman lead mining centre of Lutudarum. The only alternative to such a Roman origin for the street seems to be to seek some Anglo-Saxon termini, possibly connected with the obscure Mercian plans of campaign and reinforcement of boundaries. As there is no evidence that either the Britons or Anglo-Saxons were builders of point to point

<sup>15</sup> D.A.J., LXXIII (1953), 67-89.

<sup>16</sup> T. Bateman, *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire*, 1848, 135.



streets, it seems preferable to ascribe such lengths of the Hereward Street to Roman military engineers, even if the less direct sections have to be conceded to a pre-existing British trackway system. As Margary has said:

. . . rigid straightness is not an invariable characteristic and if the road had to follow a ridge or river valley it takes the most convenient and winding course, although it will then often be laid out in a series of short straight lengths rather than on true curves. Pre-Roman trackways were sometimes converted to Roman standards, and in such cases the road naturally preserves its original winding course, but most necessarily be included as a Roman road.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the Hereward Street may indicate an answer to one of the problems about Roman lead mining in Derbyshire posed by Haverfield, when he wrote:

A third difficulty arises with respect to communications . . . No road is known to lead to Matlock unless it be the road sometimes thought to run towards Knaves Cross. The conjecture therefore arises whether the pigs may not have been sent down the Derwent by water to Little Chester supposing the river was navigable enough for that purpose, but the incompleteness of our knowledge forbids us to speculate much on such puzzles . . .<sup>18</sup>

The Hereward Street enables us to abandon this conjecture about such traffic on the Derwent in favour of transport by road towards the north-east to Chesterfield and beyond.

<sup>17</sup> I. D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, I, 12.

<sup>18</sup> *V.C.H. Derby*, I, 229.