

THE RYKNELD STREET.

By F. W. MUNSLOW.

DURING May and June, 1948, a section of the Rykneld Street on Morley Moor was excavated. The site was in field No. 11 O.S. Sheet XLV 14, at a distance of approximately 150 ft. south from the plantation and 160 ft. from the wall bounding the field on the east.

The ridge of the road is not at all pronounced, but its line is indicated on the 25-inch map and no difficulty was experienced in locating it.

A trench eight feet wide and twenty-three feet long was excavated, which exposed full details of the construction of the road. Some four inches below the present ground level was found a layer of gravel and small stones. This surface layer, which averaged three to four inches in thickness, had spread considerably over either side of the foundation — in fact it extended the full width of the excavation. At a depth of twelve to fifteen inches were found small pieces of sandstone (Coxbench grit) from four to six inches across. Below these at an average depth of fifteen inches was the foundation, consisting of a mass of large irregular blocks of the same sandstone. These averaged six inches in thickness and varied in size from rather less than a foot square to just over two feet square.

The width of the foundation was eighteen feet ten inches. No trace of any curb stones was found; these had probably protruded six or eight inches above the foundation and would no doubt be removed when the moor was enclosed and ploughed up.

No side ditches were located. They were usually made for drainage purposes, but would hardly appear to have been necessary on Morley Moor, and possibly none were made.

The only "find" was a small piece of glass, possibly part of a small bottle, which Mr. R. W. P. Cockerton states to be of a typically Roman type.

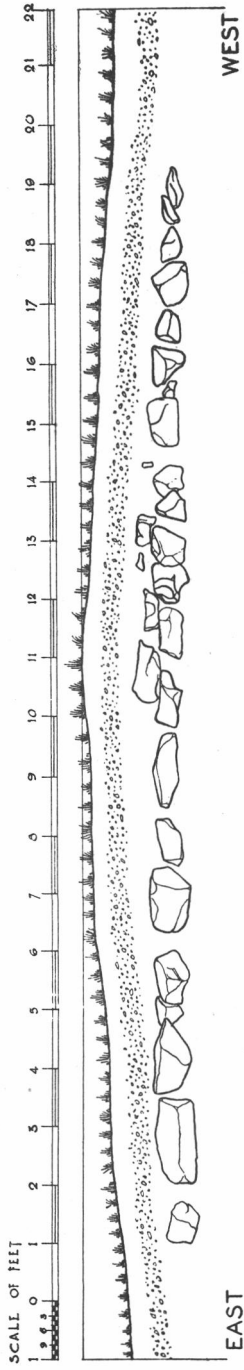
A section of the road is shown on the accompanying plan, and I am pleased to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. B. Widdows for preparing this. Assistance in the excavating was given by several members of our Society, to all of whom I extend my thanks. I am especially grateful to Mr. Camden Clarke, who undertook the greater part of this arduous work.

Towards the close of 1947, the Ministry of Works commenced excavating an opencast coal site at Marks Hill, some half mile to the north of Morley Moor Farm. During the course of the work the line of the Rykneld Street was cut, and Mr. R. W. P. Cockerton, who visited the workings, has kindly allowed me to use his notes from which I have extracted the following details:—

"A section of the street was exposed in the northern face of a bank of clay. Under about 18 inches of topsoil the surface topping appeared as a line of river gravel about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick. Beneath this was weathered or partially weathered sandstone pitching, resting on the natural clay.

The topping measured a total width of 21 feet in the section but this is certainly greater than the original width of the street for two reasons. First because the section was not cut at an exact right angle to the line of the street, and secondly because the topping and pitching appeared to have "crept" outwards over the somewhat ill-defined traces of a ditch in the clay on each side.

Although there was no opportunity to investigate the section in great detail I should put the street at some 18 feet in width.



CROSS SECTION OF RYKNELD STREET AT MORLEY MOOR

There was a slight camber to the surface and while we were making our inspection a bull-dozer was used to uncover part of the surface to the south of the section. This disclosed the gravel topping, and towards the western side of the street three or four stones which were flat on top, as if paving-stones, were uncovered. As they were not continuous and were well within the verge of the road it would be unsafe to attach any particular significance to them."