ART. I.—*Two Roman Mountain-Roads.* By R. G. COLLINGWOOD.

I. HIGH STREET.

Read at Sockbridge Hall, 7 July, 1936.

THREE hundred yards south-east of Sockbridge Hall, the track of the ancient road known as High Street runs, travelling north-eastward from Tirril to Yanwath. East of where we stand, it forms a belt of uncultivated land, too hard and stony to be ploughed, in the field immediately beside the modern road. Beyond the L.M.S. main line at Yanwath its course is not, I believe, accurately known; but we can hardly be wrong in assuming that it crossed the Lowther where Lowther Bridge now stands, traversed Brougham Park much as the modern road does, and so reached the Roman fort of Brocavum.

South of Tirril it forms a track rising somewhat sharply past Celleron and Winder Hall to Moor Divock. Thence, grass-grown and in many places deeply worn by traffic and weather, but everywhere easily recognisable, it follows the mountain ridge called High Street, until fifteen miles from Brougham it drops into Hag Gill at the head of Troutbeck.

From the early nineteenth century, when J. Hodgson claimed it as Roman (*Beauties of England & Wales, Westmorland,* p. 41) it has always been regarded as a Roman road; but lately, in connexion with the work of His Majesty's Commission on Historical Monuments (*cf.* their volume on *Westmorland,* pp. xliii-xliv) the question of its true origin and nature was re-opened; and, as scepticism is a healthy discipline, I propose here to treat it as an open question. I shall discuss three questions. (1) Is this really a Roman road? (2) Where did it go? and (3) What was the purpose of its builders?

(1) As to its Roman or other date, three kinds of evidence have to be considered. First, its associations; that is, Roman occupied sites or Roman objects found along its course. Secondly, the internal evidence of its lay-out and construction. Thirdly, external or documentary evidence concerning its age.

If we could trace it running visibly and continuously to Brougham, this would give evidence of the first kind. But we cannot. No other Roman site lies on its line, and no Roman objects, so far as I know, have been found upon or close beside it. On the first heading, therefore, evidence is lacking.

As to its lay-out, the Royal Commissioners (p. xliii) say that it is more circuitous than that of the normal Roman road, but rarely more so than the difficult condition of the ground dictates. The normal Roman road, however, does not climb high mountains. To get a proper standard of comparison we must examine other Roman roads that do. The nearest parallels, in this country at least, are the two roads running south and south-west respectively from Brough-by-Bainbridge, over the fells south of Wensleydale. The latter of these in particular has a problem to solve not unlike that of the High Street road, though on a smaller scale; the hills to be crossed are only 1800-2000 feet high instead of 2000-2700.

The first road, from Bainbridge towards Ilkley, has been repeatedly studied in late years; most recently by Dr. F. Villy in the *Bradford Antiquary* (new series, part 28 (vol. vi, 1936), pp. 1-15). From Bainbridge to Buckden in Wharfedale the distance in a straight line is 8 miles; Dr. Villy's line for the Roman road gives this a length of about 9 miles, or an excess over the direct line of 12.5 per cent. He takes it up the right bank of the Bain in a S.S.W. direction to Stalling Busk for some 3 miles, and then makes it turn S.S.E. to Stake Moss, whence its descent into Cray Gill and so to Buckden is not in doubt.

In the alternative view of Mr. B. H. St. J. O'Neil (*Proc. Leeds Phil. Soc.*, III, part 1, pp. 39-41), it travels first S.S.E. to Carpley Green, and then rather W. of S. to Stake Moss; the total distance is about the same.

The second road offers a closer parallel to High Street. It begins as a well-marked causeway running S.W. by W. from Bainbridge up the hill-side, aiming for the summit of Wether Fell. Three-quarters of a mile before reaching that summit, it swerves to the left, skirts the hilltop in a curve and then runs S.W. away from it along the ridge of Green Side. It swings on this ridge first to the left and then to the right, and curves westwards round the summit of Dodd Fell until it reaches a col where a ridge runs from Dodd Fell south-westwards towards Ribblehead. Instead of following the summit of this ridge it slopes down its southern side to Cam End, whence it turns west and crosses Gayle Beck, the head-waters of the Ribble, $11\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Bainbridge, or slightly under 11 miles in a straight line (excess of 6.8 per cent.). The curves and bends which it makes on high ground are in no case dictated by topographical necessity. Engineers pedantically devoted to the straight line could easily have run from Bainbridge to the top of Wether Fell ($4\frac{1}{4}$ miles), turned 23 degrees to the left and carried on for $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles, and then turned 20 degrees to the right and in $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles reached the same crossing over the Gayle Beck. The result would have been a perfectly satisfactory road. But by curving about on the summits, and skirting the heights instead of charging straight at them, the engineers obtained a road less laborious to travel.*

High Street is more direct than either of these roads. From Allen Knott to the railway-line at Yanwath it measures 18 miles; the straight line is $17\frac{1}{4}$ miles, so that the excess is only 4.35 per cent. The only considerable

* I re-examined the summit-sections of this road in July, 1936, in order to verify its exact line and its Roman characters (both of which are quite clear) and to refresh my memory of its resemblance in lay-out to High Street.

bends not absolutely necessitated by the ground are where it swings round Wether Hill and Loadpot Hill; in both cases behaving very much like the Bainbridge-Ribblehead road in its central section. Further to the south, where the heights are greater, the ridge is too narrow for these tactics; the road has to be led directly over the summits. It appears from this comparison that the lay-out of the High Street road is absolutely normal for a Roman mountain-road in the north of England.

Its construction has been studied at a number of points. At the foot of Blue Gill, where it comes down into Troutbeck, I have myself seen metal and bottoming of ordinary Roman type where spates have laid them bare (*Trans.*, N.S. XXX, 118). North of this, on the summit of the fell, Cornelius Nicholson found road-metal when trenching across the road in two or three places (*Annals of Kendal*, ed. 2, p. 7). On this same summit-stretch I can remember not only seeing kerbstones from time to time, but repeatedly probing with a sharp walking-stick and finding the road stone-hard under the turf when the ground on either side was soft. Further on, Dr. G. B. Grundy trenched the road in 1898 in a peaty place just north of Loadpot Hill, and found a surface of rammed gravel and a bottoming of large quarried stones (see Haverfield, in *Trans.*, O.S. XV, 360; Dr. Grundy tells Dr. Wheeler, however, that he here found the metal resting on fascines; Royal Commission, *Westmorland*, xliii, note 8). Some two miles to the north of this, not far south of the Cockpit on Moor Divock, Dr. Grundy trenched the road again, where kerbstones were (and, I believe, still are) visible on the surface, 10-11 feet apart, and found it a built road but much worn by traffic.

All these testimonies are consistent with a Roman origin, and on the whole inconsistent with any other. If the lay-out is normal Roman work, the construction is even more obviously so.

Even without all this, however, the documentary evidence would be conclusive. Between 1220 and 1247 William de Lancaster, in the grant to his half-brother Roger, published by Mr. Ragg in these *Trans.*, N.S. X, referred to something called *Brethstrett* which, from the context, can only have been the High Street road. This is proof that it existed as a paved or metalled road in the early 13th century and was then so immemorially old that its origin (like that of other Roman roads) was ascribed to the ancient Britons. A metalled road already ancient in the 13th century was quite certainly Roman. Plenty of roads were built in the middle ages, chiefly by the work of monasteries; but none of these could have attained a legendary antiquity by the early 13th century; and if you go backwards from that date there is no time when such a road could have been built, if not by the Romans.

The evidence of its Roman character, then, is doubly decisive. It may be asked whether the Romans have not used a more ancient track and built along its line a road of their own. Suggestions of this kind have often been made about all kinds of Roman roads, but they would begin to be interesting only if and when evidence was produced in their support. There is plenty of evidence that people have used High Street as a traffic-line from Roman times down to the present day; none whatever that anyone so used it earlier. Antecedently to such evidence, it is no more likely that every Roman road followed a pre-Roman track than that a footpath or cart-road has existed wherever in these days 'pylons' stand to carry electric wires.

(2) At its north end, High Street no doubt reached Brougham. One might expect its south end to make for Ambleside, and people have often fancied themselves able to recognise traces of it on the left bank of Stock Gill. But if it did go that way, the place to look for it is not among the houses and lanes near the town, but in the open

country north of Wansfell, the valley of Woundale Beck, and the north end of Troutbeck Tongue. Accordingly, in 1930 I searched that piece of country for two days; but without finding anything that could possibly have been the remains of a Roman road. I did, however, find obvious traces of it running almost due south along Hag Gill and down the left bank of Troutbeck to Allen Knott, where they join a road running S.E. to Ings on which, though less confidently, I seem also to recognise marks of Roman construction, in which case this should be one part of that elusive road which must somehow have connected Watercrook and Ambleside. I infer that High Street was a branch off the Watercrook-Ambleside road, and that no Roman road ever went direct from Ambleside towards High Street summit.

If this is right, it seems likely that the High Street road was planned from the Brougham end, not from the Troutbeck end. The Scots' Rake at the head of Hag Gill, climbing 1000 feet in three-quarters of a mile with an average gradient of one in four, is the only serious ascent anywhere along its line, and could have been avoided by, for example, bringing the road up Kentmere to Nan Bield, if the main object had been to reach High Street from the south. The actual lay-out is best explained on the assumption that the Brougham people, for some reason, thought they needed it, and that, having once reached the tops of the fells, it was left to find its way down southward as best it might.

(3) But why was it wanted at all? It can never have been a very good road for ordinary traffic, rising as it does to 2700 feet above sea level and running for 6 miles together at over 2000, exposed to the wind and weather of the mountain-tops. I find it hard to believe that so uncomfortable a road was needed for ordinary traffic between the neighbourhood of Penrith and that of Windermere, rather than going round by Shap fells and Tebay.

There are no mines, or anything of that sort, to which it might have given access. There is only one feature, anywhere on or near the line of the road, which might conceivably have been of interest to the Romans; I refer to the large collection of early remains on Moor Divock. These lie between 1000 and 1500 ft. above sea level, about 6 miles south-west of Brougham. They consist in the main, as we all know, of a very large and widely-scattered group of barrows and circles, representing a kind of prehistoric necropolis—a vast burial-ground of Bronze Age folk. Lately, however, Dr. Mabel Barker, Dr. Spence and others have called attention to the fact that in addition to the numerous burial-places there are also considerable numbers of hut-circles of Bronze Age and Romano-British character. There is in our district no genuine Early Iron Age civilization. The Bronze Age culture lasted, it would appear, down to the coming of the Romans. Consequently these Moor Divock people, for all we know, may still have been living up there, in considerable numbers, when the Romans entered Westmorland.

Now there is one case in which it appears that a pre-existing body of native inhabitants in Westmorland exercised a disturbing influence on the Roman road-system. The road from Tebay to Brougham, as I argued in these *Trans.*, N.S. xxxiii, pp. 204-6, had been originally designed to run easily along the level watershed of the plateau between Shap and Crosby Ravensworth, instead of which, having gained that watershed, it swerves away from it, plunging down into the Lyvennet valley and taking a far more difficult line of country, in order to traverse and control the numerous ancient settlements that lie about the head of that valley near Crosby Ravensworth. The details of the lay-out convinced me, when I was working there a few years ago, that this road had been actually alined on the great hut-dwelling of the chieftain,

as it must have been, at Ewe Close. If I am right about this, we may infer that when a large group of native dwellings lay somewhere near one of their main roads, the Romans of the Flavian age, instead of burning the villages and cutting the throats of their inhabitants, preferred to control them by diverting the road so as to bring them under the eye of their cavalry on patrol-duty. Suppose they found that on Moor Divock there was another such group of native dwellings, in a site made sacred by its long use as a burial-ground and very likely for that reason a regular meeting-place of the neighbouring clans. It is, I think, just possible that they would wish to keep the place under observation even at the cost of building a special road through it; pretending perhaps that they needed the road for ordinary traffic, but in fact needing it only in order to keep a watchful eye on the people who lived, or from time to time assembled, among the tombs of Moor Divock. This would explain not only why the road was made at all, but also why it was laid out, as I think it must have been, from its northern end.

It is true that no such policy was followed in the case of the settlements near Kirkby Stephen, or the equally large or even larger native populations of Low Furness and the Barnscar and Stockdale Moor districts of West Cumberland. At Crosby Ravensworth it may have been the chief, rather than the people, who needed attention; on Moor Divock it may have been not so much the permanent population, as the periodical festivals which I have permitted myself the license of imagining.

That this is the true explanation for the existence of the High Street road I do not affirm. But I can think of no other, and this seems to me at least a possible one. And I feel obliged to suggest one; for people do not make such things without some motive, and it is the historian's main business, as I conceive it, to divine as best he can what purpose the men of past ages had in mind when

they made the things that they have left behind for our contemplation.

II. THE MAIDEN WAY.

Read near Milburn, 8 July, 1936.

The Maiden Way, which runs due north and south where we stand on it, is a Roman road beginning at Kirkby Thore, two miles south of us on the York-Carlisle main road, and going by way of Whitley Castle near Alston to Carvoran on Hadrian's Wall. It is in one sense not so mountainous as High Street, of which I was speaking yesterday; instead of rising to 2700 feet it only rises to 2200, at a point 2½ miles N.W. of the summit of Cross Fell; but the gradient by which it attains that level is very severe. In one place it climbs 500 ft. in a third of a mile, which represents an average gradient of 1 in 3½ for 600 yards on end. The whole ascent of the Cross Fell escarpment from Kirkland to the summit involves a climb of 1600 feet in 3 miles. On the other side, the gradients are less severe. The road swings to the right and descends along a tongue of land pointing towards Alston; then it swerves to the left, crosses Aglionby beck, and climbs to the Alston-Hartside road, crossing it at the little plantation where we stopped to look at it six years ago on the occasion of our last visit to Alston. It rises again to nearly 1650 feet and then passes Whitley Castle, after which it runs down the left bank of the North Tyne and so to Carvoran.

From Kirkby Thore to Whitley Castle, the distance in a straight line is 15 miles; by the Roman road it is a little over 15½, an excess of only about 3.3 per cent. But although the road is little longer than the straight line, it is nowhere at all straight after it has once left Kirkland; it is curving gently, this way or that, all the time; a typical mountain-road.

In 1930, when I said a few words about this road

(*Trans.* N.S. XXX, 116-7), I confined myself to discussing the significance of its name. I argued that a Maiden Way (which of course has nothing to do with the Celtic *Mai dun*, high ridge) means a way leading to a Maiden castle; which this one does, for it leads to Carvoran, and Carvoran must be *Caer forwyn*, the castle of the maiden, *morwyn*. To-day I propose to say something of its use. It is an odd line for a road to take; almost as odd as High Street itself. It cannot have been needed for the purpose of communications between the neighbourhood of Appleby and that of Haltwhistle; all traffic could well afford to go round by Carlisle, or if they expected to be in such a hurry they could have made a loop-line from Old Penrith to Lanercost or Birdoswald by way of Castle Carrock. It is the only Roman road in the whole of the mass of moors that stretches from Stainmore to the Tyne, and if the Romans had really wanted to penetrate and police that country they would, I feel sure, have aimed more for its centre, and run their road up Weardale and over the hill by Nenthead, or up the Tees from Greta Bridge by Middleton. Nor do I think that there was any large native population in the Alston district that needed policing. No evidence of it has ever come to light. In Dr. Raistrick's maps* of Bronze Age objects in the north of England that whole moorland district appears as a huge blank.

Nor can we argue that because they had a fort at Whitley Castle they must have a road to get to it. According to Roman ways of thinking, forts are made for the sake of roads, not roads for the sake of forts. If you have a road 25 miles long, as this one is, from Kirkby Thore to Carvoran, you are pretty well bound to have a fort half-way along it, because in Britain at any rate the custom is to allow about 12 miles, as a rule, between fort and fort; so that, unless we can discover any special

* *Arch. Ael.* series iv, viii (1931).

reason for placing a fort near Alston, we should be wisest to assume that it was a mere corollary to the building of the road, and begin by trying to explain that.

In 1930, when we met at Alston, Mr. Norman Walton read us a paper on the history of the Alston mines. In the course of that paper he remarked that the Romans, with their keen interest in mining, were not likely to have neglected the rich lead-ores of that district. I remember that in the discussion I threw some cold water on this suggestion, asking for some positive evidence in favour of it and implying that there was none. I was wrong. Since then I have been collecting all the evidence I can find bearing on Roman mining in Britain and find in a very early volume of *Archaeologia Aeliana** the statement that during some excavations at Whitley Castle pieces of galena and fluor-spar were found. Galena or lead sulphide is the common lead-ore; fluor-spar is a mineral found in association with it in Derbyshire and also, I believe, in the Alston district. This discovery provides the missing link in the evidence. We are now entitled to say that the Alston Moor lead-field was no exception to the rule that the Romans prospected systematically for lead and worked it wherever it could be found. In the light of this conclusion the purpose of the Maiden Way is clear. It was the road giving access to the Alston mines, and Whitley Castle was the fort where a body of soldiers controlled the mines and the smelting and desilverizing of their produce.

This inference has been brilliantly confirmed by recent work on another class of evidence. Our member Mr. Ian Richmond, in the last volume of *Transactions* (N.S. xxxvi, 104), has reconsidered the significance of the lead sealings which have been found in such large numbers at the Roman fort of Brough-under-Stainmore. He shows that they indicate an opening and re-distribution, at that fort,

* *A. A.*, ser. i, iv, p. 36; *cf.* these *Trans.* o.s. i, p. 11.

of packages derived from various sources; and the contents were not letters or despatches, for these were sealed with wax. He points out that in part, at least, it consisted of produce from mines; for one of the sealings bears the reverse stamp *metal(lum)*, and on the obverse the name of the second Nervian cohort, already known from an inscription as the garrison of Whitley Castle. He infers that there resided at Brough-under-Stainmore a financial officer, a procurator's agent, engaged in clearing certain kinds of produce sent in by garrisons in his district; among these, lead and silver from Alston.

My purpose in this note is to support Mr. Richmond's inference by arguing that, from the first, the Alston lead-mines were the objective which the builders of the Maiden Way had in view. We learn from Tacitus that its mineral wealth was one of the things that attracted the Romans to Britain. We know also, from the official inscriptions on lead pigs, that the argentiferous lead-ores which have been in the past such an important element in that wealth were worked by the Romans surprisingly early in their occupation of this country; Mendip lead under Claudius, the Flintshire ores in the early seventies, the Pateley Bridge mines as early as Agricola. Systematic prospecting for such ores was evidently put in hand as soon as, or even before, the work of conquest was complete. There is no improbability in the suggestion that Whitley Castle was essentially a post for a military garrison supervising the work of slaves, prisoners and criminals in the lead-mines, and that the Maiden Way was the road by which the lead and silver from these mines were despatched to headquarters.