

NOTES ON SOME VESTIGES OF ROMAN OCCUPATION
IN DORSET.¹

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WERE each spot indicated by reference to an elaborate map, and in detail, where evidence exists and relics have been found of Roman location, the county of Dorset would represent a district more strictly Roman than, seemingly, any other of like area in the south of England.

My especial object, however, is, whilst I travel along the great road, the Ikenield Street, and the vicinal ways which traverse our county, to show that there exists a Station, unknown to the late Sir Richard Colt Hoare, which, as I imagine, might have been the actual *Vindogladia*, instead of the British town, situated about two miles nearer to Old Sarum, upon Gussage-cow-down, which he has fixed upon as such. It is stated that when Britain became divided into Roman provinces, the district of the Durotriges was included in that termed "Britannia Prima," having for its boundaries the English Channel, St. George's Channel, the British Channel, the Severn, and the Thames.

But it is not my province to describe the whole of this district. My plan is rather to proceed by road, picking up some of the *itineræ* where they enter our county, pointing out their transit, exit, and destination; and then, retracing my steps, to allude to a few amongst the many noteworthy localities which present evidence of Roman occupation. But, first, I would refer to Dr. Guest's paper on "The four Roman Ways,"² and to Mr. Charles Warne's lately published Map of Ancient Dorset.

It will be sufficient for my purpose to quote Sir Richard Hoare, avoiding controversy. Previously to the Roman Conquest there had been very many British trackways,

¹ Read at the Meeting of the Archaeological Institute at Dorchester, July

1865.

Arch. Journal, vol. iv., p. 99.

which traversed our downs, leading to the settlements of the Britons, but differing widely in character from the improved causeways of the Romans.

Sir Richard Hoare, in his work upon *Ancient Wilts*,³ speaks of five British streets, viz. :—

1. The Watling Street. From Richborough in Kent, by London, to Caernarvon and Chester.

2. Ikenield Street. From the coast of Norfolk, near Yarmouth, to Old Sarum, and through Dorsetshire.

3. Akeman Street. From the east, by Bedford, to Caermarthen.

4. Ryknield Street. From the mouth of the River Tyne to St. David's.

5. Ermyn Street. From the eastern side of Scotland to Pevensey, crossing the Ikenield at Royston.

And to these he adds a sixth, not mentioned in the Itineraries. The Fosse Way. From the south coast to Bath.

The road which I chiefly have to travel is the Ikenield Street, formed on the basis of the British road so called, and which derived its name and origin from the country of the Icenî. It is supposed to have proceeded from the coast of Norfolk, near Yarmouth, by Newmarket, to Royston, where it crossed the Ermyn Street, and to Dunstable, where it met the Watling Street; thence to Streetley-upon-Thames, where it threw off a collateral branch known by the name of the Ridgeway, which enters the county of Wilts at Ashbury. After the separation it proceeded by Silchester and Newbury (?) to Old Sarum; thence, at a distance of about nine miles, it enters Vernditch Chase, where it presents a noble example of Roman road-making. Leaving Vernditch Lodge a little to the right, it traversed Grymsdyke, an ancient boundary ditch; continuing its course along the Chase, it issues through the forest gate on to an open down, where it assumes a bold and perfect form, until it reaches a stupendous *agger*, bearing the name of Bokerly Ditch, where it is united with the turnpike road leading to Woodyates Inn, eleven miles from Old Sarum, where it enters the county of Dorset. At Bokerly Ditch it makes an angle towards Badbury.

Sir Richard Colt Hoare speaks of this neighbourhood of Woodyates as one of the most interesting parts of our

³ *Ancient Wilts*, vol. ii., Roman *Æra*, pp. 18—23.

district, abounding in unequalled specimens of British as well as Roman antiquities.

The Roman road, here called *Ackling Ditch*, having continued its united course with the turnpike for about a mile, separates, and takes its continued straight course over the down, where the Roman engineers have cut away a part of a British barrow. At about three miles from Woodyates it crosses what is supposed to have been a British *cursus*.

Here, observes Sir Richard Hoare, we come to one of the most interesting situations in England, where may unhesitatingly be fixed the Roman station *Vindogladia*, as recorded by Antonine and Richard of Cirencester. Gussage-cow-down, as the locality is now termed, is fifteen miles from Salisbury. The itineraries variously fix the distances between *Sorbiodunum*, Old Sarum, and *Vindogladia*, at xii., xiii. and xv. miles.⁴

With all due deference to Sir Richard Hoare's experience and research, I combat the correctness of this conclusion, inasmuch as I think that the spot which I am about to describe, called Broadford, affords evidence of a superior claim to being not only an important Roman Station, but the true *Vindogladia*; whilst that which Sir Richard Hoare has so designated is, by his own showing, an extensive and intrinsically British town, presenting no evidence of Roman location in earthworks, pavements, or even by lesser relics of any importance. His account of it is this: the earthworks on this down extend in a line from N. to S. nearly one mile, and occupy a large tract of ground sloping towards the N. E. Their interest is equal to their magnitude. We recognise them as the irregular works of a rude nation, living on the produce of their flocks and herds upon the exposed heights of our chalky downs. In them we see no regular system of fortification, nor any huge rampart of defence, no well-drawn circle nor rectilinear square. Irregularity prevails throughout, and we see before us the rude but grand outlines of an original British settlement.

On quitting Gussage-cow-down, the Roman Road continues its straightforward course, and passing between the villages of Gussage St. Michael and Gussage All Saints, ascends a hill, where it passes near to one of those very small square

⁴ Ancient Wilts, vol. ii., Roman *Æra*, of *Vindogladia* is given at p. 31. p. 29. The Plan of the supposed station

earthworks which are so frequently met with upon our downs. It continues in a very perfect state till, passing through Critchel Park, it comes out into a wide green track-way to the left of a row of cottages.

"I wish," writes Sir Richard Hoare, "my readers to notice this particular spot, from which another Roman road diverges to the seaport of Poole." And he adds, in a footnote, that he twice explored this line; but that his researches, though in parts successful, were not attended with the satisfaction he could have wished. He says that there is but one part of it very evident, which is near Cogdean. It is afterwards traversed by the road leading from Poole Harbour. Its probable destination was Hamworthy, or some port in its vicinity.

Returning to the main Roman Road where we left it, we find its elevated ridge crossing the trackway and traversing several fields, and then entering and continuing in the track of a long narrow lane to the spot called Bradford Lane End, where is a modern cross-road at a short distance to the west of a cottage designated in the Ordnance Map as Sannys.

Now I must ask my readers to notice this particular spot, and to bear with me whilst I show that it is where the so-called Poole road branches off, and endeavour to prove that three or four others also did the same.

The first of these branches can only be traced by commencing at a spot near the Cogdean Elms, where its *dorsum* is distinctly visible, and so continues to the entrance gate of Upton House. In the park it has been obliterated, but beyond the plantation it may be again traced along the hedge side, at the further corner of which a small portion remains of a considerable height; so raised, doubtless, as to be above the effect of a high tide, up the Fleet, whose head it there crosses. This may be seen from the Poole Junction Railway Station. Now following, directed by compass, its course, I find that it passes on the west of the church of Hamworthy, where however another road appears to leave it at right angles, towards Poole; and thence down to the shores of the harbour to a spot called Lake, from the circumstance of a lake crossing the mud-lands from thence to Purbeck, which affords a deeper channel for boats.

In a paper read before the Purbeck Antiquarian and

Natural History Society, I suggested the probability of its continuation, either through the fissure at Corfe Castle, or up the valley which, so to speak, splits the chalk hills at Creech, to the coast at Kimmeridge. And in fact, this branch continued as an available road down to a late date. Tradition affirms that the marble was thus conveyed for building Salisbury Cathedral, and indeed a modern road still runs upon it.

We follow back this modern road to where we started at Cogdean. Here its trace is destroyed by a gravel-pit, modern roads, and cottages. But following on by compass, descending the hill, and crossing the meadows, where I learn that its course is discernible during dry summers, I arrive at a ford across the River Stour, about one mile above the town of Wimborne, opposite to a ravine in Pamphill, up which it doubtless passed to Hill Butts turnpike-gate, and on in the same direction. Its *dorsum* may be detected in one or two places, but, the country here being cultivated, it is soon lost. As it approaches the river Allen, near Barnsley, it seems to take a turn towards the north. I detected its onward course for about a mile by distinct risings in three hedge-banks, one of which was in a slanting direction, and all by compass in direct line with each other. Following on the line thus indicated, across Kingdown, I came direct through Broadford, which crosses a streamlet at the head of what has been a peat bog. Immediately beyond, at the distance of a few hundred yards, at Broadford Lane End, the spot alluded to, I came upon the main Roman Road. The value of this road would consist in its throwing off a branch to the port of Poole, supplying inland communication with the potteries and factories of the clay and Kimmeridge coal districts of the Isle of Purbeck, and also with the sheltered bays between St. Alban's Head and Weymouth.

Second Branch.

I now take my readers to a spot about a mile beyond the eastern boundary of the county, on the high road between the villages of Throop and Muscliff in Hampshire. On the south side of the road, running for several fields parallel with it, I observe an evident *dorsum* of a track-way, distinctly visible at all seasons. After about a quarter of a mile the high road, bending slightly towards the south,

crosses it diagonally. It continues visible, in its direct course, across a field towards a now cultivated drift-way, which shortly terminates at the river Stour, below the ford of Muscliff Shallow. But upon examination from a boat at the spot where it should cross, I find that halfway the water is only two or three feet deep, and the remainder not above five or six, so that a pile bridge might have been easily constructed. The line is not traceable on the western side of the river. But there being half a mile of meadow land, which is frequently flooded by waters depositing a considerable quantity of silt, this is accounted for. Following upon the map, from either end of the line which the visible portion takes, it will appear evident that westerly it continues by Dudsberry camp to Broadford; its easterly direction and destination being by Iford to Christchurch and Hengistbury Head, where a deep defensive dike crossing from the harbour to the sea, and isolating the headland, betokens Roman, if not earlier occupation.

A Third Road comes up Donhead Hollow, on the north side of the Wiltshire Hills, from the Vale of Wardour. On the top of the hill it is clearly recognisable by the side of the modern road, which, after a short distance, traverses it; but, after passing Phelps' Cottage turnpike-gate, it follows its independent course in a southerly direction, crosses Woodley Down, where flints have been frequently drawn from it for road material, and passing through a portion of the Chase, called the Wiltshire Copses, enters Dorsetshire, crosses the recently cultivated Ashmore fields, enters again the Chase woods, and may be traced about a mile further. Its direction, passing near Barton Field, the supposed ancient *Tarentum*, is towards Broadford. And tracing back its direction northward, it will be seen to be towards Bath.

Fourth Road.

It is believed that a road from or near to Bittern, *Clausentum*, traversed a district in the New Forest, where have been discovered extensive potteries, to Ringwood. A line drawn along this route, and continued, arrives at Broadford. I may, I think, then, reasonably submit the question whether this is not, most probably, the true *Vindogladia*?

But further, we may expect to find Roman stations where Roman roads join or intersect. Hard by, at Hems-worth Farm, in the Ewe leaze, are extensive irregularities on

the surface, which are clear tokens of ancient location ; about a quarter of a mile distant, at West Hemsworth, some years since, workmen came upon buried skeletons ; and in an adjoining field were found, something more than thirty years since, the remains of a Roman villa, consisting of foundations and six pavements, three of which were tessellated.

Thus, then, confirmatory of my theory in opposition to that of Sir Richard Hoare, I show evidence of very extensive occupation—the junction of branch roads leading to Bath, Poole, Christchurch, and Southampton—and it is within a short distance of Badbury ; for the main road, leaving the lane above alluded to at this junction, traverses the corner of a field, and then proceeds in a direct line to Badbury Rings. Here it makes a sudden angle to avoid passing over or through the camp, and continues its course to Shapwick where it crosses the river Stour, and proceeds to the north of the town of Bere, near which is the British encampment of Woodbury Hill, and whence branches a road to Wareham. Here, probably, was the Station to which Sir Richard Hoare alludes as missing between *Vindogladia* and Dorchester. Near Stoke also there are traces of a road winding from Wareham towards Dorchester.

From Bere the main road passes on to Dorchester, where Trinity Church and the Town Hall are supposed to stand upon it. Thence it passes between St. Peter's Church and the Castle, appears again at the west side of the town, continues four miles on the Exeter road, and goes on to Eggerdon Hill, where is a camp. Thence it continues its course into Devonshire, where the Fosse-way meets it at Seaton, and thence to Exeter. Dorchester, though the capital of the Durotriges, became a Roman town, and retains the Roman form. Here, too, still exist an amphitheatre, a portion of the Roman wall, and several pavements, one of which, discovered in 1858 within the precincts of the county prison—the ancient castle—is preserved in the prison chapel.⁵ At Frampton, a few miles to the north-west, some very beautiful pavements were discovered during the years 1794 and 1796 ;⁶ and another at Rampisham, about seven miles distant, in 1799. There is also, close by, a circular camp of large area ;

⁵ This discovery has been noticed by the Rev. C. W. Bingham in this Journal, vol. xvi pp. 82, 183, with a ground-plan of

the remains.

⁶ Lysons, *Britannia Romana*. See also this Journal, vol. xvi., p. 186.

and at two miles distant, the noble earthwork of Maiden Castle ; both of these, as indicated by relics found, were occupied by the Romans. From hence a road branches to Weymouth Bay, where was a chief Roman port, and upon the shore, at Preston and Jordan Hill, were locations which have afforded innumerable relics, and where have been discovered pavements, tombs, the site of a temple, &c.

I now return to the north-eastern side of the county, which seems to have been more thickly studded by Roman settlements and locations, and to be richer in relics than elsewhere. I take the angle occupied by Cranborne Chase, which is traversed by some of the roads that I have described.

Looking over the Vale of Wardour, we have the square encampment of Winklebury, supposed to have been occupied by Vespasian. On Berwick Down are earthworks whence I have obtained fragments of Roman pottery, &c. About the village of Tollard Royal similar fragments frequently occur. Upon Tollard Green there is evidence of very extensive location, where, some few years since, the foundations of Roman buildings were dug out, for the purpose of road-making ; and I have myself explored, in the immediate neighbourhood, with moderate success. Half a mile south, upon the property of J. Farquharson, Esq., Roman foundations were eradicated about twenty years since ; about one mile and a half further south, is the supposed Tarentum.⁷ On Woodcotes Common are some earthworks, of which I give a somewhat more detailed account, as they present the appearance of British origin, whilst the relics found within them are Roman. I examined them in 1863. They consist of an irregularly-shaped area of about 80 paces diameter from N. to S., and about 100 from E. to W., surrounded by a low bank with a ditch on the outside. There appears to have been an entrance from the north, on each side of which is a comparatively high mound. Along the east side runs a *cursus* or avenue, which dies out towards the north in unintelligible banks, at about 200 paces. Towards the south-east, at a distance of 130 paces, it runs into an amphitheatre of 20 paces diameter, continues 150 paces further, and ends in irregular banks. The main

⁷ See a Memoir by Mr. W. Shipp of Blandford, Transactions of the Arch. Assoc., Winchester Congress, p. 179.

work seems to have been a stockade of timber with a ditch, and the excavated earth thrown up against it, enclosing only one habitation of sufficient importance to leave any permanent trace. This was situated at the N. W. angle of the enclosure.

In my excavations at this spot I turned up many bones of red and roe deer, ox, boar, horse, and birds; also several ivory hair-pins, Roman coins, an amulet, fragment of an armilla, and portion of a dish, all of Kimmeridge coal, and several pieces of coal money; one of these was of especial interest, having been bored through the centre, and it showed three slight notches upon its circumference, for the purpose of attachment as a charm. Fragments of pottery were abundant, mostly from the kilns of the New Forest. In the ditch, abreast of this spot, in black earth, which showed it to have been two or three feet deep, I found similar relics, with the additions of an ear-ring, a ring set with an engraved piece of glass, two armillæ for children, a piece of coal money, and many oyster-shells. There were also portions of floor-bricks, many flat-headed nails, and several pieces of iron implements. There was also a quantity of fresco, on one side bearing white, black, and red colouring, on the other, impressions of sticks, upon which it had been plastered; hence the house was evidently of wood and wattles. Near was a carefully dug well, which appeared, from the smoothness of its sides, to have been at some time much used. I cleared out this only to the depth of twelve feet. At a short distance, was a small pond. On the north side of the enclosure was a bank, surrounding an oblong space of 25 paces by 9; within it I discovered no relics, except the fragments of a quern with some stones which may have formed its basement.

The amphitheatre, or whatever it may have been, is vulgarly called "Church Barrow." Though irrelevant to my subject, I may suggest the origin of this title. It is situated within a few hundred yards of the boundary between Dorset and Wilts. About twelve miles to the S. E., in the parish of Verwood, is a valley, in as wild a locality as can be well conceived, also very near to the county boundary. This is called "Wild Church Valley." Now it is recorded, that, in the times of persecution, in the reign of Queen Mary, the Gospellers, as they were designated, were wont to assemble

in out-of-the-way places, at the hazard of their lives, for the purpose of worship ; and that they mostly chose spots near to the county boundaries, so that if they were disturbed in one county they might escape into the next.

About eight miles west of Woodcotes is Hod Hill, upon which is a Roman camp within British works, whence Mr. Durden of Blandford has obtained an unexampled collection of relics, and around have been discovered remains of several villas.⁸

It would be tedious to speak in detail of the numerous localities which afford evidence of Roman occupation. It is sufficient to say, that, with the exception of the low lands of the Vale of Blackmoor, which in Roman times was a forest, they abound throughout the county.

⁸ Mr. Roach Smith has given an account of numerous relics found at Hod Hill ; Journ. Brit. Arch. Ass., vol. iii. p. 94. By the courtesy also of Mr. Durden, they supplied an important accession to the stores of Dorset antiquities in the Museum formed during the meeting of the Institute at Dorchester in

July, 1865. It may be acceptable to some of our readers to be reminded, in regard to the remains at Bittern, *Clau-sentum*, near Southampton, to which allusion is made in the foregoing memoir, that they are described in a valuable memoir by Mr. Roach Smith, Trans. Arch. Assoc., Winchester Meeting, p. 161.