

THE ICENHILDE ROAD.

By the late JOSEPH BELDAM, Esq., F.S.A.

IT is not the design of this memoir to enter upon a general discussion of the ancient roads of this kingdom, whether of British, Roman, Saxon, or Danish origin. Such a discussion would require an amount of leisure and of learning to which I make no pretension. The general subject, moreover, has already undergone the careful investigation of eminent archaeologists, from the days of the Venerable Bede, down to our own times. Though it must be confessed, that notwithstanding the superior advantages, in some respects, possessed by the elder luminaries, they have left many points of great interest in a state of doubt and obscurity, which will now, probably, admit of no solution, unless from the diligent researches of the local antiquary.

It is with the hope of throwing a little additional light on questions connected with a portion of the two great roads—the Icenhilde and the Erming Street,—that I offer some results of recent personal investigation, with a few prefatory remarks of a more general character.

No practical explorer can have been long engaged in these interesting inquiries, without discovering proofs of the existence of numerous roads of ancient, though often uncertain, origin, which leave no doubt, however, that, besides those great military and commercial roads which we usually ascribe to British or Roman hands, a complete network of vicinal and inferior roads intersected many parts of the country, indicating an amount of population and a facility of intercommunication, which to many persons in the present day must appear somewhat surprising.

It is not always easy, however, to determine the class to which these roads belong. For, though the general characteristics of British and Roman roads are well known, many of them have undergone such changes from the lapse of time, the occupation of later races, or the encroachments of

modern cultivation, that the original marks and traces are often almost obliterated.

The original British roads, it need scarcely be observed, were little better than field tracks, hollow, unpaved, and straggling in their course, and chiefly designed, we may assume from the unfriendly relations usually subsisting between native tribes, for local accommodation; while a few of them, possessing an international character, ran through different territories, and were used by various tribes, in peaceful times, for mutual purposes of intercourse and trade. As the earliest of these must have preceded the Roman occupation, their course was necessarily directed, originally, towards British and not Roman sites. They frequently exhibit a remarkable though not exclusive peculiarity of being accompanied by parallel or loop lines, suggestive of the precautions of warlike and barbarous races, ever watchful towards an enemy, and making preparation, either for surprise or for retreat, as the occasion might require.

The more solid construction and correct allineation of the Roman roads plainly indicate the labours of a more civilized and scientific people. At first they must have been intended almost entirely for military purposes, as approaches to military stations, and means of connecting military positions together, their main object being to facilitate conquest, and to secure the possession of territory already acquired. Thus they gradually advanced with the progress of armies, and multiplied with the extension of conquests, until military posts and military roads were established over a great part of the island. But as these posts were widely scattered, and often irregularly placed, following the exigencies of war, the roads which led to them frequently ran in zig-zag directions, and seldom afforded the most direct communication between places remote from each other. At a later period, when the Roman authority became more firmly established, and the military and social necessities of the provinces were better understood, we have ample proof from ancient authors that new roads were constructed and old British roads adopted and improved, in order to shorten distances and increase the general convenience. This process of improvement, indeed, commenced very early, and it certainly continued until the Romans finally quitted the island.

The Roman roads, thus left, continued, there is reason to

believe, to be generally used during the long and distracted ages of the Saxon Heptarchy, wherever the ravages of war had not occasioned their destruction, or the exigencies of newly founded and independent states did not require the formation of other roads towards fresh centres of industry and power. Of the events of this gloomy period we know comparatively little, but it cannot be doubted that, before its close, the names and even the existence of many Roman sites, and of the roads that led to them, had perished; while of those that remained, the greater part had fallen into a state of miserable dilapidation and decay.

Something more than a century after the re-union of the Saxon states into one monarchy, in the reign of King Edgar, we are told that there still existed in England four principal highways, which traversed the kingdom from north to south, and from east to west, and that these four roads were then placed under special royal protection. They were called the Fosse, the Watling Street, the Erming Street, and the Icenhilde Street. To some portions of the last of these attention will be more particularly directed. Dr. Guest, in an able discourse published in the *Archæological Journal* in 1857,¹ has taken great pains to trace the probable courses of these roads and the etymology of their names; Professor Babington, in his interesting work on the ancient roads of Cambridgeshire,² has also carefully examined so much of the same subject as fell within his province. Fully recognizing the general accuracy of these authors, with the exception of some points to which I may hereafter refer, I shall devote the present memoir to such results of my own observation along one of the two last mentioned roads, for the distance of about 20 or 30 miles from the town of Royston, as may tend, I trust, more fully to explain its origin and character.

Our present inquiry relates to the Icenhilde Road; and no question will now be raised respecting either its commencement or ultimate destination. It is generally admitted to have been an ancient British road, and one of the few which extended, through various territories, from one side of the

¹ *The Four Roman Ways*, *Arch. Journ.*, vol. xiv. p. 99, accompanied by a valuable map.

² *Ancient Cambridgeshire*, publica-

tions of the *Cambridge Antiq. Soc.*, 8vo. series, No. III., by Charles C. Babington, M.A.: 1853.

island to the other. It appears to have commenced on the Norfolk coast, somewhere near Yarmouth, to have passed through the country of the Iceni to their capital at Ickleham; from thence by Ickleton, a small town on the borders of the Trinobantes, to Royston, where it was crossed by the Erming Street. It went on by Dunstable, near to which it was again crossed by the Watling Street; from thence it continued to follow the great chain of chalk hills which traverse the country in a south-westerly direction, throwing out parallel lines at different stages of its course; and, here and there, being checked or defended (especially in its eastern quarter) by dykes and fortified camps. In its further progress westward, it appears to have divided into several branches, visiting the druidical sites in Wiltshire and the mineral districts beyond, and, finally, to have terminated at some point or points, probably, on the coast of Cornwall. It will be requisite, in the present notices, to consider a variety of particulars falling within the allotted distance, but it may here be remarked of this road as a whole, that no stronger proof of its great antiquity can be well imagined than the fact of its being accompanied through the greater part of its course by numerous tumuli, of the earliest known construction, many of them (as I can attest by my own examination) belonging to the "stone period," and being anterior to the age of metals and cremation. Little doubt, indeed, can exist that this road must have been used by the earliest occupiers of the island, affording, as it does, natural advantages of an open passage across a country originally obstructed by dense woods on the one hand, and by difficult morasses on the other, over a dry soil and a verdant turf, supplying abundant nourishment for cattle, a ready access to the great centres of national superstition, and peculiar facilities for the interchange of commodities between the most distant tribes. The name by which this ancient road was first known is uncertain. Its present name is obviously Saxon, and we may take it for granted, on the authority of Dr. Guest, that in the earliest Saxon charters it was called the "Icenhilde Way." In evidences of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, among the muniments of Royston Priory, I have observed that the name is spelt "Hickneld" or "Ykenilde" Street. But the earliest authorities are, of course, to be preferred; the name may, probably, have been

a translation of one still older, possibly, the "Via Iceniana." At all events it was considered by the Saxons as a military way. I shall presently offer reasons for concluding that it was ranked as such in Roman times; in fact, that it formed part of a military line of communication between several Roman stations. Our particular inquiries along this road, however, will be limited to the distance between Bournbridge and the neighbourhood of Dunstable. Between these points it pursued, for the most part, a midway course over a vast range of open downs, about four miles in width, parallel roads skirting it on either side, dykes or barriers of a uniform construction traversing it at intervals, and a chain of camps and forts, all of a similar construction, flanking it on the northern side.

Each of these subjects we shall take in succession, endeavouring, first, to fix the topography of the Icenhilde Street itself; next, to trace the parallel lines; thirdly, to explain the peculiarities of the dykes and northern camps; and, lastly, to deduce from the whole the probable frontiers of the adjoining British tribes.

I. The Icenhilde Road, on leaving Bournbridge, presently after crosses the Pampisford or Brent Ditch, at a point about half-way between the Pampisford End and Abingdon Park. It then follows the present boundary between Cambridgeshire and Essex for a short distance, runs about a mile to the north of the Chesterford camp, and, crossing the turnpike road from that place to Cambridge, goes along a parish road to Ickleton. There can be no doubt that this village was the site of a British town, possibly the first on the road to travellers from the west, but certainly so to those who came down from the Essex frontier. Camden calls the place "an ancient little city." From Ickleton the road runs within the Cambridgeshire border by Ickleton Grange, to Chrishall Grange, not far from a tumulus opened by the late Lord Braybrooke. But here, the Cambridgeshire boundary making a sudden turn to the north, the road passes onward for several miles over a narrow slip of Essex, the Heydon or Brand Ditch crossing it within that county, and presently rejoins the Cambridgeshire border near Known's Folly. It then continues to be the boundary line between Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire for six or seven miles. From Known's Folly it passes over an outlying range of the downs

called Burlow's Hill, remarkable for a number of tumuli of the earliest construction, and reaches Royston, our central point. The antiquity of this site has been questioned by various writers. Dr. Guest, in his description of this road, being probably unaware of the local vestiges still extant, seems to consider it as merely a town of the twelfth century. The opinion of Dr. Stukeley was very different. He affirms it to have been a place of great resort among the Britons, and afterwards to have become a Roman town and station. This opinion, however correct it may be, seems to have rested mainly on the resemblance of the country to other celebrated British localities, and on the usual custom of the Romans to plant a station at the junction of great military roads. He does, indeed, point out some vestiges, and among them a narrow vale, lying to the south of the town, banked and ditched on either side, which he concludes to have been a British *cursus*. Mr. Nickolls carried the evidence of antiquity still further, by showing to the Society of Antiquaries, in 1744, a plan of a Roman camp at the distance of a quarter of a mile from the town, on the Baldock road.³ This plan is not now to be found, and if the distance has not been mistaken in the record, the camp must have been since obliterated, probably when the parish was enclosed. I shall offer a few results of my own researches in favour of the ancient occupation of the site, deriving my evidence chiefly from discoveries made under ground:—

1. I begin with the celebrated Royston Cave, which Stukeley erroneously describes as the handiwork and place of burial of the Lady Roesia, the supposed wife of Geoffrey Magnaville, Earl of Essex, in the twelfth century,⁴ but which, on closer examination, appears to have originally

³ Additions to Camden's *Britannia*, ed. Gough, 1806, vol. ii. p. 65.

⁴ This cave, situated under the market-place, in the chief street of Royston, had been dug in the solid chalk, and was approached by a shaft about 2 ft. in diameter, that had been closed by a mill-stone. The discovery occurred Aug. 1742, in fixing a post at that spot. Dr. Stukeley first published, in 1743, an account of this singular vault in his *Palæographia Britannica*, No. I, *Origines Roystonianæ*, which called forth a con-

troversial answer from Mr. Parkin, Rector of Oxburgh; Stukeley replied in the second part of his *Palæographia*; the discussion was prolonged by a rejoinder from his opponent in 1748. The vault is represented in Camden's *Brit.*, edit. Gough, 1806, vol. ii., p. 65. A fully detailed Memoir on the Cave of Roesia was communicated to the Society of Antiquaries by Mr. Beldam in 1852. *Proceedings*, vol. ii. p. 278. (Ed. *Arch. Journ.*)

been an ancient bone-shaft, enlarged by degrees to its present dimensions, the place of the lady's grave being nothing more than a continuation of the shaft below the floor of the oratory, and the bones and other refuse there, such as are usually found in these depositories. The upper part of this shaft was, no doubt, first shaped into a dome, and it bears almost unmistakeable evidence of having been designed for a Roman *columbarium*, the lower part being probably of a much later age, and, beyond all controversy, used as a subterranean chapel in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. But other bone-shafts (probably many) exist in the town, several of which have been partially opened, along the sides of the Icenhilde and Erming Streets. They all exhibit the same peculiarity of rude workmanship, the diameter extremely small, and footholds down the shafts on either side. One of these in a garden in the Erming Street, now called Kneesworth Street, I found to be of the depth of nearly 100 feet, terminating in a fine spring of water; but, like the others, it had been filled up, at some remote period, with the bones of a great variety of animals, some of them of species now extinct, mixed with ashes, charcoal, oyster, mussel, whelk, and snail shells in abundance, and other refuse usually found in the bone-shafts and dust-holes of Roman sites. In the same garden, and within a few yards of the well, were at the same time found, a few feet below the surface, several irregular floors of an ancient habitation, in all probability British; above which were fragments of a foundation of great strength and solidity. In another garden along the Icenhilde Street, now called Baldock Street, was found a circular cavern beneath a low mound, the floor being grooved in order to carry off water, and evidently designed as a rude habitation or a place of refuge.

2. Beyond the town, at the distance of a quarter of a mile to the west, on the heath, several British hut circles have been opened, containing ashes and fragments of bronze; and separated from these only by an ancient trench, which I shall have occasion to mention again, were at the same time discovered a number of narrow circular passages, cut deep into the chalk, and turning round a solid block, surmounted by a low mound, in the central chambers of which was deposited a perfect Romano-British vase, now in my possession.

3. In further proof of the antiquity of this site, may be mentioned the probability of a considerable neighbouring population, as suggested by the numerous tumuli on the surrounding hills, by the marks also of very extensive and remote cultivation, as shown by furrowed ridges in the turf, which are more especially visible under the slant rays of the setting sun. The abundance of Roman coins, moreover, scattered over these downs, furnishes an additional argument to the same effect; and one of these, a very perfect coin of Constantine junior, recently found in an ancient and exhausted clay pit, gives demonstration of the use made of that substance in the agricultural processes of the Romans.

4. Finally, I may add, though with greater uncertainty as to the period to which the evidence belongs, the recent discovery of an ancient cemetery, in levelling a mound and footpath by the side of the Erming Street Road, at the north entrance of the town. At this spot, and for an indefinite distance beyond, numerous shallow graves have been found a foot or two below the surface, cut into the chalk in regular rows, and indicating peaceful sepulture. Most of these graves contained skeletons which had not been apparently disturbed, the skulls resting in small cavities made for their reception, but with no weapons or other articles to indicate the date of their interment.

In the middle of the town of Royston, the Icenhilde Street crosses the Erming Street; at the distance of a mile and a half to the west, it is traversed by three ancient dykes, now almost obliterated, but still known as the Mile Ditches, which come down from a tumulus on the southern side, and run down to Bassingbourn Spring Head, a distance of about two miles on the northern side. A little beyond Odsey Grange, the road ceases to be the Cambridge-shire boundary, which turns abruptly to the north for several miles, while the road, still pursuing its original direction, crosses an irregular angle of the county of Hertford, till it reaches Baldock, a town of no antiquity, and thence proceeds to Wilbury Hill, the site of an ancient British camp, through which it passes, and goes down to Ickleford Ford, a considerable sheet of water formed by the junction of two branches of the river Hiz. Here it crosses, and proceeds a little to the south of Pirton, then ascends the lofty downs of Pegden Barns, near the beacon, approaches within about a

mile of Hexton or Ravensborough Castle, an ancient camp of formidable proportions and immense strength, and descends by Lilly Hoo Common into Bedfordshire. It there crosses the old Luton and Bedford road, and at the same spot also several ancient trenches called Gray's Dykes (similar in character to the Royston dykes), which come down in irregular lines of two ditches between three banks, from a tumulus on the Warden Hills, and disappear in a field on the opposite side of the road. They take the direction, however, towards Ravensborough Castle, and were, in all probability, connected, at some period, with that fortress. The Icenhilde Road from thence proceeds by Legrave, the source of the River Lea, and so onwards towards Dunstable, and the adjoining site of the ancient Magiovinium, where our present inquiry ends.

Throughout the whole of this distance there are very few traces visible of artificial construction ; the hard, chalky, and in some parts gravelly, nature of the soil, requiring little help. A considerable portion, however, is now converted into turnpike or parochial roads : where this is not the case, its original character of a narrow field track, between low banks and ditches, still remains. Only a small space between Baldock and Wilbury Camp has been broken up and planted. Along the entire route occasional tumuli are still to be seen ; but many more have been levelled within the memory of man, and scattered fragments of pottery over the hills indicate a much earlier and probably more extensive devastation.

The Roman use of this road will be better understood in connection with its parallel, and, probably, its principal substitute, the Ashwell Street ; but it is not wholly wanting in independent proofs to this effect. To some of these I have already referred in the neighbourhood of Royston. Along the line of hills from thence towards Baldock, earthworks and scattered coins afford the same evidence. At a spot called Slip End, near Odsey, within a few hundred yards of the road, a small Roman habitation was opened by the late Lord Braybrooke, and subsequently examined by myself, a short distance from which many Roman vestiges have been found, including urns and a large number of clay moulds of coins, chiefly of the family of Severus, some of which are now in my own possession. At Baldock, Roman

urns and other relics, at Wilbury Camp, a coin of the empress Faustina, and at Litchbury Springs, half a mile distant, a quantity of Samian and other Roman pottery have also been discovered.

II. We have now to consider the parallel roads, and 1st that on the Cambridgeshire side. Starting again from Bournbridge, where this parallel joins the Icenhilde Street, it took the line of the present turnpike road to Whittlesford Bridge, then only a ford, passing between the end of the Pampisford or Brent Dyke and the wet land on the opposite side. Proceeding thence for a short distance along the Royston turnpike road, it appears to have diverged to the north, crossing the Thriplow Heath (now enclosed), and near to several tumuli described by Lord Braybrooke. It then ran through or near to the village of Foulmire, and over fields now enclosed down to the springs on Melbourn Common, passing through a narrow opening between them and the northern end of the Heydon or Brand Ditch; from thence proceeding over Melbourn fields within half a mile of a Roman camp at the Cambridge end of Melbourn, and skirting the back of that village to the other end, it crossed the ancient road from Royston to Cambridge, and ran between a tumulus called Greenlow Hill and the copious springs of Melbourn Bury. It then went across the Meldreth and Kneesworth fields to Kneesworth Hedges, within sight of Mutlow or Metal Hill, situate half a mile to the north. At Kneesworth Hedges, where there is another fine spring, it crossed the Erming Street, then proceeded westward a little to the south of Bassingbourn and Bassingbourn Spring Head, being there traversed by the Royston Mile Ditches running down to that spot. It soon after entered the parish of Litlington, passing by the Litlington Sheen or spring head, which doubtless supplied the small Roman fort, now called Limlow Hill, half a mile to the south. Within a short distance of this it ran close by the celebrated Litlington Ustrinum, tumulus, and villa,⁵ and went on in a winding course towards Ashwell. The greater part of the way thus described may still be followed through parish roads and by-lanes, a small portion only being entirely effaced; but its irregularities have been occasionally rectified by the modern commissioner, and in such cases the crest of the old

⁵ *Archæologia*, vol. xxvi. p. 368.

road is often visible in parts which seemed to require additional elevation and solidity. At Ashwell the road passed close by the celebrated springs which give it its modern name, and from thence a short branch ran up to Arbury Banks, an ancient British camp of considerable magnitude standing on rising ground a little to the south, and then crossing the intervening country to the Icenhilde road. The Ashwell Street still went on westward by Stotfold and Hinxwell, crossed the road from Baldock to Sandy, and finally reached Shefford, beyond which it is not necessary to follow it. The original name of this ancient road is not known ; and its present name, acquired probably when Ashwell became a considerable Saxon borough, can only be applied with certainty to the space between Melbourn and Ashwell. But there can be no doubt of its British origin, nor of the purpose it answered in connecting together a number of villages standing on slips of firm ground between swamps which, at that remote time, were probably almost impassable, and thus closing the inlets into the Icenian territory beyond. To possess and secure these advantages were no doubt among the earliest measures adopted by the Romans in their efforts to subjugate that warlike British people ; and the great convenience afforded by the neighbouring springs appears to have given to this ancillary road a subsequent preference over the old Icenhilde road (though not to its exclusion) in the military communications between Roman forts and stations to the east and west. Along the whole of this route, indeed, the conquerors have left abundant tokens of their presence and activity. They permanently occupied the villages, they improved the road, they appropriated the British camps and strong posts along the line, they added defences of their own, and in every way manifested the importance they attached to this defensible frontier. In the remarks I may hereafter make on the probable boundaries of the British tribes, I shall have occasion to allude more particularly to the principal of these British strongholds, but at present I shall confine myself to the vestiges, whether British or Roman, which specially mark the course of the road. The most important of these is the Roman camp, already alluded to, at Melbourn. It formed a quadrangle of about 200 yards square, surrounded by a vallum, with a second vallum towards the east. It occupied a plot

of dry ground, defended towards the north-east and east by the morass. Under its western side passed the ancient road to Cambridge, still known in this part by the name of the "Portway," and a similar space of about 200 yards of high ground, probably entrenched, divided it from the Meldreth morass, still farther to the west. There can be little doubt that this was the principal access to Camboricum from the country of the Cassivellauni. Between the north-eastern vallum of this camp and the morass, a considerable deposit has been recently found, consisting of 16 or 17 funereal urns in a very perfect condition, which are now in the British Museum; a silver coin of Constantine has been also found in the camp. The village of Melbourn and its vicinity have been very productive of antiquities, and many coins, together with Samian, Castor, and other ware, may be mentioned among them. Along this line also British relics have been found, bronze and stone celts of great beauty; and at Greenlow Hill, several small British penannular iron rings, of the horse-shoe form. At Mutlow Hill, also, a stone coffin was sometime since discovered, containing a skeleton wrapped in lead, with coins and lachrymatories. Bassingbourn and its neighbourhood have been equally abundant in coins, bronze relics, and other antiquities. There is some ground for believing that a Roman camp once stood on the site of the fortified mansion of John of Gaunt, to the north of the village. It is at least certain that vestiges of several ancient roads may be traced from the Icenhilde Street towards that spot, and a bronze sword, either Roman or British, was found on one of them. A portion of the site itself also bears a strong resemblance to a Roman encampment, and bronze fibulæ and coins have been recently discovered very near it. It is needless to speak of the remarkable antiquities of Littington, and the numerous coins that have been found there. A large proportion of these, however, have been unhappily dispersed, though some have been deposited in the Oxford and Cambridge Museums, and a few remain in my own possession. Limbury or Limlow Hill consists of a lofty tumulus enclosed within a square intrenchment. Many Roman coins, beside pottery and other antiquities, were discovered here and in the vicinity by the late Rev. W. Clack, whose collection was dispersed in Devonshire after his death.⁶ The tumuli in the

⁶ Ancient Cambridgeshire, by Professor Babington, *ut supra*, p. 37.

neighbourhood of Odsey and Ashwell have also yielded much pottery; the excavations made by myself in 1858, and recorded in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries,⁷ have proved that the camp at Arbury Banks, though occupied by the Romans, was undoubtedly a British intrenchment. Various antiquities in pottery and glass have been also discovered in the vicinity of Stotfold and Hinxwell, but, as my personal inquiries extend no further, I need only advert generally to the valuable remains which Shefford has furnished to the Museum at Cambridge.

2. We turn now to the parallel road on the Essex and Hertfordshire side, which commences at Chesterford, and, throwing out various ancillary branches in its course, for the most part pursues a bold line of observation along the brow of the Essex and Hertfordshire hills, and ultimately appears to have divided into several routes communicating, probably, with Verulam and Magiovinium. The camp at Chesterford appears to have originally been a frontier town of the Trinobantes. A British camp is believed to have been there, and British coins have undoubtedly been found there; but we may infer, from the discovery of early imperial coins, that it soon became an important military position among the Romans. From this place a number of ways diverged towards the south and west; and among them were two which, coming up the hills to Strethall, formed a junction midway, and proceeded from thence by Elmdon, Heydon, and Chishill to Barley; while another road, coming round by Littlebury, Littlebury Green, and Chishill Hall, united with the former at Barley, which then proceeded up the Braughing or Hare Street Road southward as far as Barkway. At the entrance to this town it turned again abruptly to the west, following the brow of the hills along a raised road, still known by the name of the Causeway, the crest of which is visible by the side of the modern highway. It passed close under a wood, known as the Rookey or Rockley Wood, but lately cut down, and by an ancient chalk pit, to which further attention will be required in discussing the antiquity of the Erming Street, which it joined at Reed-mill Hill. Then going directly up this road for a short distance southward, it turned again at right angles down a parish road to Dane End, went for-

⁷ Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries, vol. iv. p. 285, where a plan of the camp is given.

ward through Therfield, and along the same lofty ridge of hills as far as Kelshall by a road still called the Ridgeway. Another and shorter track, however, appears to have crossed midway over the northern slope of these hills from Barley, to join the Ridgeway at Therfield. It then probably passed through the village of Kelshall, and went down a lane by the church to Sandon ; from whence it proceeded to Red Hill, and so on to Wallington and Clothall. A branch probably descended from thence in the line of the modern road, to join the Icenhilde road at Baldock, which it probably followed through Hitchin and Offley towards Dunstable, while other branches on the higher ground may be presumed to have run through Wymondley and Stevenage towards Verulam. A large portion of this road commands magnificent views to the west and north-east over the country of the Iceni. It is still, as anciently, a wooded district ; and, when defended by fastnesses and guarded approaches, must have constituted a formidable frontier.

The antiquity of much of this line is supported by evidence, showing its occupation and use in British and Roman times. In the road, for instance, from Chesterford to Stretthall, which is undoubtedly British, gold torques of great value have been found. Also at Elmdon, and in the neighbouring villages of Lofts and Barley, abundance of bronze celts, Roman pottery, and likewise coins ; and the road coming up from Littlebury exhibits decided traces of Roman construction. In a high wood at Catmere End, adjoining Stretthall, there is a lofty vallum and ditch, which, though probably forming part of a mediæval residence, bears strong indications of an earlier occupation by the Romans. Close by the Causeway from Barkway to Reed End, which united the Hare Street and Erming Street roads,—in the ancient chalk pit already mentioned,—were found, in 1743, the bronze statuette of Mars and the silver plates, probably forming parts of military standards, presented by Lord Selsey to the British Museum. A short and straight road ran up from this spot towards a square area, enclosed with a low bank and ditch, in the centre of which stood a mediæval mansion, surrounded by moats and ditches now recently levelled, but which very probably occupied a Roman site. On the most conspicuous part of the hill at Therfield, in a field called Tothills, there are very extensive earth-works,

the remains, no doubt, of a great mediæval mansion ; but its commanding position creates a strong probability of its having originally been the site of a Roman camp. Roman coins, both silver and copper, and of early reigns, are not unfrequently found in this village ; and immediately below it, on the downs, stood an ancient tumulus, described in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries,^s from which were dug up, some years ago, several beautiful British vases, with ingots of hammered copper and other remarkable remains now in my own possession. On the Bury Leys at Sandon, a lofty hill overlooking the down, vast numbers of Roman coins have been found with several British coins, one of them of an unique type, and the appearance of the soil shows marks of very extensive combustion. This was probably a British *oppidum*, subsequently occupied by the Romans, and ultimately destroyed by fire. Still further westward, at Red Hill, a small Roman cemetery was discovered not long ago, as indicated by a number of funereal vases, and several silver coins of an early date. Beyond this spot my researches have not proceeded.

III. The Dykes or Ditches which cross the Icenhilde road, and their peculiarities, will next occupy our attention. My object will be to show that these dykes, in connection with other strong works, formed a series of defences for a people always occupying positions to the east ; and the peculiarity which attaches to all of them (with one doubtful exception) is that their strongest face is always towards the west, indicating the quarter from whence the chief danger was apprehended. The two first and principal of these are the "Devil's Dyke" and the, "Fleam" or "Balsham Dyke," but they lie beyond the limits assigned to this memoir, and have been often described. It will suffice therefore to observe, that in both the vallum is to the east and the ditch to the west. Their antiquity cannot be exactly ascertained ; but, as forming part of a general system of defence, their British origin may, I think, be fairly presumed. It is certain that they existed before the time of Canute ; and judging from the name of the second, the "Balsham Dyke" (which probably has some relation to the custom of cremation), it may be inferred to have existed before the adoption of Christian rites of burial. Both these dykes stretched

^s Vol. i. second series, p. 306.

across an open country, from the Cambridgeshire low grounds to the Essex woodlands, and both traversed the Icenhilde Street.

1. The Pampisford or Bran Ditch is the first barrier within our limits: its purpose was evidently the same. It runs from the wet ground at Pampisford over the open tract to the Essex woods at Abingdon Park. The branch road, known further west as the Ashwell Street, passed between it and the Pampisford morass, and the Icenhilde road crossed it about midway, in the line of the Chesterford and Newmarket Road; but the priority in point of age between the road and the dyke has not been definitively ascertained, though perhaps it may be inferred from discoveries recently made in connection with two of the other dykes shortly to be mentioned. After a careful examination of this dyke, I am unable to say whether it had any vallum, but certainly there was none that would offer any defence, supposing the ground to be unchanged. The earth appears to me to have been thrown up almost equally on both sides, though possibly the elevation on the western side is slightly the greatest.

2. The Heydon or Brand Ditch, our second barrier, commenced at the beautiful springs on Melbourn Common, and extended across the open country to Heydon, a distance of about four miles. The vallum, which was lofty, is on the eastern side, and the ditch, which was deep and wide, is on the western. Within a recent period, however, the vallum has been nearly levelled, and the ditch filled in as far as Heydon Grange, from whence, to its termination on Heydon Hill, the ditch has also been filled in, but the vallum is only partially lowered, so as to make a double causeway from the village to the farm. The actual dimensions of this great work cannot be exactly given, but I judge from stepping it, that the entire width from the western edge of the ditch to the eastern edge of the vallum, must have been at least 80 ft., and I infer, from some small remaining portions of the crest, that its altitude was probably 7 ft. above the ground level. Near to Heydon Grange it traverses the Icenhilde Road; and here, with a view to ascertain which of the two is the older, by the permission of the tenant, I ran a trench across the road, as near as possible to the point of junction, and where (if any) the ditch must have been; I found a solid and undisturbed bottom at the depth of about 2 ft. 6in.,

from which the inference seems certain that the road existed before the dyke, and the oblique direction in which the dyke traverses the road seems to confirm this conclusion. Close upon the Cambridgeshire border, the dyke is again traversed by a road running from Whittlesford bridge to Royston; and if this were an ancient track, as there is reason to believe, another opening must have always existed here—a conclusion rendered more probable by the fact, that at this point the natural drainage of the Barley Hills comes down, in its way to Foulmire, and must have always had a passage through, unless an overflow of waters here were designed to give additional protection to the dyke. A third gap occurs in this dyke, nearer Foulmire, to make way for the Braughing and Cambridge Road, which Dr. Stukeley and other antiquaries, with great probability, believed to have been Roman, though, of course, of a much later date than the dyke. After many inquiries, I have heard of no antiquities discovered in levelling this dyke, except a few bones in the vicinity of Heydon Grange. There is a vulgar tradition, however, that the Heydon people came down to the Melbourn Springs to fetch water, but water is now sufficiently abundant at Heydon. The only antiquity near it is a subterranean cell or chamber, described by the late Lord Braybrooke as having been found at the Heydon end, and which contained ashes, bones, some articles of bronze, and a coin of the emperor Constantine. But this excavation appears to me to have had no certain relation to the dyke, and the contents only show that it was open about the age of that emperor, though it might have existed long before. Dr. Guest has concluded that the Heydon Ditch probably formed the western *limes* of the Iceni. But their territory is believed to have stretched to the north of the Cassivellauni; and though the line of division east and west, between these states, probably descended from the Essex Hills to the borders of Cambridgeshire, somewhere near this dyke, I shall endeavour to show that the principal western boundary of the Iceni must have been much further to the westward.

3. The third barrier across the Icenhilde Road, within our allotted range, is found on Royston Heath, about a mile and a half from the town, on the Baldock Road. It consisted of three ditches, very rudely cut between four banks, which commenced from a tumulus on the heath, a quarter of a mile

to the south, and went straggling down to the Bassingbourn Spring-head, a distance of about two miles and a half, crossing the Icenhilde Road, over a gentle ascent coming up from the west, which gave additional protection to that side. The entire width of the banks and intervening ditches was about 100 ft.; the width of the banks and ditches respectively, though not quite uniform, was about 13 ft.; the depth of the ditches below the surface about 5 ft., and the elevation of the banks above the surface about the same. Though no doubt used for procuring water, their main object must have been to stop the intervening country. On the Bassingbourne side of the road, they have wholly disappeared among the modern enclosures, but they are well remembered, and my neighbour, the late Dr. Webb, Master of Clare Hall, accurately described their course to me before I had commenced my own investigations. The tumulus on the heath was evidently the key to these defences. Immediately behind it was a British habitation cut deep into the chalk, and consisting of two chambers—one of a lozenge, the other of a semi-lunar celt-like shape, united by a very narrow passage; some of the articles found in it make it probable that it was open in Saxon times. On a loftier elevation behind it, called the Beacon Hill, are evident traces of military works, apparently of the Roman period: a deep vale, in the immediate vicinity, exhibits a series of small enclosures known by the name of the Hopscotch, and no doubt of British origin; and in a grave on the hill above, have been recently found a flint arrow-head with other contemporaneous vestiges. The approaches to all these spots have abounded in silver and other coins, some of them in high preservation, and being of the early imperial reigns; and at the opposite terminus of these ditches, near the springs, I have found British pottery, burnt flints, stag's horns, and other vestiges of the same period. The main question to be solved was, whether these barriers or the road passing through them were the oldest, and to this I am now able to give a definite answer. As a trustee of the old Icenhilde Road (now the Baldock Turnpike Road), I have recently ordered the spot to be examined, and ascertained that the ditches terminate on either side of the road, leaving a space of solid chalk of about 16 or 18 ft. in width, over which the ancient road undoubtedly passed, and proving therefore the priority of the road to the ditches.

4. The last of these dykes which it will be my duty to mention, are those now known as the Gray's Dykes, and which cross the Icenhilde Road between Lilly Hoo and Dunstable. These dykes, which strongly resemble the Royston Dykes in character and construction, consist of two trenches between three steep banks ; they come straggling down from a tumulus on the Warden Hills, a little to the south of the Icenhilde Road, and traverse that road exactly at its point of junction with the old Luton and Bedford Road, taking the direction of the lofty hills and camp of Hexton, about a mile and a half distant, but now disappearing in the cultivated fields just beyond the road. The purpose of defending the open space between these two elevated positions cannot, I think, be doubted.

Various opinions have been entertained respecting the origin of this succession of dykes. By some they have been considered of British, by others, of Saxon or Danish construction. The description that I have given will probably lead to the conclusion that most of them existed in Roman times, and some, at least, at an earlier period. Their position and uniformity of construction show them to have been designed to protect a people against enemies approaching from the west ; and, in this view, they have been ascribed by some persons to the East Angles, as works of defence in their gradual advances into the interior. But several of these dykes must have been long anterior to the East Anglian invasion ; while the supposition of their Saxon origin lacks also the corroborative evidence of an earlier date, afforded by the co-existence of a chain of British camps and Roman forts in evident connexion with them. Regarding them, therefore, as forming together one system of defence for the same people, I can imagine no people so likely to have constructed them as the Iceni, as a protection in the first instance, probably, against the encroachments of other native tribes, and ultimately against the Romans during their last great struggle for independence. It is not the less likely, and indeed it may be considered certain, that both Saxons and Danes did afterwards employ them for their own military ends ; and, as regards the last of these dykes, the Gray's Dykes, which seem to have formed part of the treaty line between Alfred and Guthrum, it appears to me highly

probable that this ancient and long recognised boundary was purposely selected on that occasion.

It remains only, under this division of our subject, to mention, somewhat more particularly, the British camps which flanked the northern side of the Icenhilde Road and completed the defensive frontier. Of these strong places, there are four within our allotted survey—namely, the camp called Vandle Bury on the Gog Magog Hills; the camp called Arbury Banks, near Ashwell; the camp at Wilbury Hill, near Ickleford; and the camp at Hexton, known by its Danish name of Ravensborough. With the exception of the Wilbury Hill camp, through the midst of which the Icenhilde Road passes, each of these camps stands at the distance of about one and a half or two miles to the north of that road, and the principal defences, I believe, in each case, are to be found facing the south and the west. 1. Vandle Bury, a well-known British camp—but (as the coins found there attest) early occupied by the Romans—crowns a lofty hill which slopes down towards the south and west, and thus affords additional security to those quarters. 2. Arbury Banks was originally a British camp, as proved by my own investigations reported in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries,⁹ but not less certainly occupied at a later period by the Romans, in connection with the Ashwell Street. Its strongest side was towards the south, where the ground rapidly descends from the rampart, and it appears to have had a double ditch towards the west, while the springs which supplied it, rise towards the north and the east. 3. Wilbury Camp was undoubtedly of British origin, though subsequently used by the Romans. Its strongest ramparts faced the south and the west, while its defences towards the east, if any, must have been very slight. 4. Hexton or Ravensborough Camp, in all probability a British fortress, and of the most formidable dimensions, resembling in form and extent the Arbury Banks. It stands in the midst of lofty and precipitous hills, encompassed on its southern and western sides by deep and almost impassable ravines; while the approach from the east was comparatively easy, and its supplies of water were obtained from that quarter. Its position and prodigious strength point it out as a frontier fortress, a character which it must have maintained while in

⁹ Proceedings Soc. Ant., vol. iv. p. 285.

Danish occupation ; it may, perhaps, be deemed a confirmation of its having been the terminal fortress of the Iceni in this direction, that the next British fortress along the Icenhilde Road, at "Magiovinium," appears to have reversed the rule of protection, leaving the south and south-west quarters comparatively exposed, and presenting its strongest front towards the north and the east. It seems to me a fair argument from the unity of purpose discernible in this series of dykes and camps, that they mark and protect a continued and common frontier.

Before quitting the subject of dykes, however, it will be proper to state, that in addition to these external defences, traces of two other dykes were observed by Dr. Mason a century ago, extending between Whittlesford and Foxton, and likewise between Foulmire and Newton, which more completely secured the interior in that quarter.

IV. We have lastly to consider the question of boundaries between the three great British nations who occupied this part of the Island, namely, the Trinobantes, the Cassivellauni,¹ and the Iceni. On this subject, it must be confessed, the information derived from ancient historians is scanty and obscure. Almost all that we gather is, that the Cassivellauni inhabited a district deemed to have extended over the greatest part of the counties of Hertford, Buckingham, and perhaps Bedford ; that the Dobuni were a subject people, stretching to the west of them as far as Gloucestershire ; that the Trinobantes inhabited, at least at one time, the counties of Essex and Middlesex ; and that the Iceni occupied territories lying more or less to the north of both these states, certainly comprising the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, and probably a large portion, if not the whole, of Bedford and Huntingdon. The difficulty will be to fix the exact line of demarcation between them. It must be borne in mind that the outline of counties affords no certain criterion of these ancient limits. Counties themselves are divisions of a comparatively modern origin, and their actual configuration has grown out of arbitrary and accidental circumstances. These ancient limits, therefore, may be oftener found in the natural features of the country—in hills, woods, rivers, marshes, mounds, and other distinguishing objects, having been always more easily recognised, and

¹ See the note at the close of the memoir.

consequently less likely to occasion contention. Now, applying this rule, if we look at the extremely irregular and broken outline of the present Essex boundary between Chesterford and Known's Folly, which, moreover, has no distinguishing feature, it seems obvious that it cannot represent the ancient boundary between the Trinobantes and the Iceni in this quarter, and, adopting the presumption that the dykes which stretch across this open country must have been the work of one and the same people, and that people, the Iceni, for whose protection alone they could have had any value, we are driven to the conclusion that, territorially, the whole of these downs belonged to them, though, very probably in peaceful times, the rights of pasturage and occupation might be shared with their neighbours. In this case, the actual frontier of the Trinobantes must have been the brow of the Essex Hills, while the villages and marshes at the foot of the downs became the defensible frontier of the Iceni.

In endeavouring to ascertain the boundary between the Cassivellauni and the Iceni, we begin with the short line which separated them east and west, and which in all probability was identical, or nearly so, with the present Hertfordshire border, descending from the hills near Barley to a point to be afterwards noticed, a little to the south of Known's Folly. But the boundary line between these two states north and south is not so easily determined. The present division line between Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, from Known's Folly to Odsey Grange, is the middle of the Icenhilde Road, but this could not have been the line of separation between the two ancient states. As a probable means of deciding where it ran, we must again have recourse to our theory of the dykes, and conclude, that the territory of the Iceni in this part must have extended to the south of the Icenhilde Road, at least as far as the southern terminus of the Mile Ditches on Royston Heath. This opinion is, in fact, confirmed by the existence of an ancient trench which runs eastward from this point, over the brow of the lowest range of hills, towards the spot already indicated as being a little to the south of Known's Folly, being further distinguished by a line of tumuli along the whole distance. Traces of this ancient trench are still visible, and very distinct, for more than a mile over the heath to the west of

the town of Royston. In its construction it altogether resembles the Mile Ditches. The average width of ditch and bank is about 20 ft. ; the depth of the ditch and the elevation of the bank were, probably, together about 10 ft., the bank being on the northern side or that of the Icenii. Such a trench could have been of little avail for the purpose of defence, but it was well adapted for a boundary line. It has no known relation whatever to any parochial or other local division, and can be accounted for only as being a line of demarcation between two ancient states, a conclusion which seems additionally confirmed by the appearance of numerous cuttings and scarpings, and other evidences of defence, which mark the combes or valleys ascending from this level towards the high country. Beyond the point, at Odsey Grange, where the Icenhilde Road ceases to divide the county, the line of separation between the ancient states becomes more difficult, and must be somewhat conjectural. Yet finding it almost impossible to admit, in contradiction of the continued system of defence apparently accompanying the Icenhilde Road as far as the Gray's Dykes, that the present outlying and dislocated portions of the county of Hertford to the north of that road ever really formed part of the territory of the Cassivellauni, I am brought to the conclusion, that the true line of division throughout the whole of that distance must have run a little to the south of the Icenhilde Road. And once more adopting the extent of the dykes to the south of that road as the criterion, we have two certain points to assist our inquiry, namely, the tumulus on Royston Heath forming the southern terminus of the Mile Ditches on the east, and the tumulus on the Warden Hills forming the southern terminus of the Gray's Dykes on the west ; a line drawn from one to the other of these two points would probably, with tolerable accuracy, define the actual boundary. This line appears to me to have passed over the lowest range of hills, forming the sight horizon from the road, from the Mile Ditches towards Baldock, and from thence, nearly following the present turnpike, pursuing its course by Letchworth to Hitchin, and from Hitchin by Offley, over the Lilley Hoo Downs to the tumulus on the Warden Hills.

To recapitulate the evidence in favour of this extension of the Icenian boundary, we have, 1st, the series of dykes ;

2ndly, the corresponding chain of British forts; 3rdly, the strong probability that the territory of the Iceni to the north of the Cassivellauni extended much farther than Odsey Grange, and included at least the passage across the river at Ickleford; 4thly, the additional probability that the western frontier of the Iceni, of the East Angles, and of the Danes, being all determined in great measure by the configuration of the country, were nearly if not quite identical.

On this presumption, I am disposed to think that the territory of the Iceni, westward, probably commenced, like that of the Danes, somewhere near the source of the River Lea, and from thence proceeded northward, either along the line afterwards adopted by Alfred and Guthrum, to Bedford, and thence again eastward, along the River Ouse towards Huntingdon, or else that it ascended a branch stream of the River Ivell, passing by Shefford to the main stream of the Ivell, leaving the great British fortress at Sandy to the east, joining the Ouse, afterwards pursuing the course of that river to Huntingdon, thence by the Bullock Road or some other route to Peterborough, and so either by the old River Nen, or some other outlet to the German Ocean. To set against this conclusion, I can see nothing which appears to clash either with ancient or modern authority, except the position of the British fortress at "Sandy." And even that objection seems to be far more apparent than real. It is true that this ancient site has been identified by some eminent writers with the Roman station of "Salenæ;" the principal reasons for this allocation being, that this station is placed by Ptolemy within the territories of the Cassivellauni, and that certain fanciful authors have been induced to derive the modern name of the place from that ancient appellation. But, in the first place, the Saxon name of "Sandy" never could have been a derivation from the Roman "Salenæ," which must surely have signified a spot famous either for its salt works or its medicinal springs; and even supposing its position to have been correctly assigned by Ptolemy to the territory of the Cassivellauni, we are justified by the same author to conclude, that it stood much farther to the west, within the territories of the Dobuni, who, being a subject people to the Cassivellauni, might in so general a description be naturally identified with them, and one of their principal towns be consequently included.

At all events, it would be extremely difficult to believe that this fortress, whatever its name, belonged to the Cassivellauni. It stands on the eastern bank of the Ivell, within a couple of miles of the Cambridgeshire border, and must have been designed, like all camps and defences of the Iceni, to protect a people inhabiting a territory to the east and not to the west. For such a purpose this fortress occupied a site of great importance, while it would seem comparatively useless for any other; and the many vestiges of Roman occupation along the whole of this supposed western frontier of the Iceni, appear to confirm the narrative of Tacitus, that much of the brunt of war fell upon the rivers, and that the greatest efforts were made by the conquerors in every quarter to subdue this "valida gens," and effectually to crush any future attempt to regain their liberty.

Within a few days after the foregoing memoir had been read, at one of the Monthly Meetings of the Institute, the painful intelligence was received of the sudden decease of the author, one of our earliest and cordial supporters. Whilst deeply regretting that this his last communication should be published without the advantage of his own revision in passing through the press, we feel persuaded that these latest archæological labours of our lamented friend cannot fail to be received with no slight measure of interest. The memoir will be found to comprise the results of many years of personal and indefatigable research in a district replete with remarkable vestiges, and in which he was long a resident. Had his life been spared he might possibly, through the publicity given to his observations submitted to our Society, have been disposed to reconsider certain conclusions which, as he was aware, were not wholly in accordance with those of other antiquaries who have devoted attention to the subject. We may particularly advert to the name invariably given by him to an important tribe, usually called by other writers *Catuellani*, or *Catyeuchlani*, possibly the *Cassii* of Cæsar. There are difficult questions in connexion with their history, and as Mr. Beldam has invariably designated them *Cassivellauni*, for which unhappily we can no longer ascertain the grounds of his conclusions, it has been thought better to retain the name as written by himself.