



Batham Gate, descending to Dam Dale.



Doctor Gate in October, 1910.



Roman Road, rising from the valley of the Noe.



Roman Road descending to Ashop Dale.

Notes on the Roman Roads called Batham Gate and Doctor Gate.

By WILLIAM SMITHARD.



IT is scarcely necessary to mention that Batham Gate is the Roman road from Buxton (Aquæ) to Brough (Anavio), and that Doctor Gate is the highest part of the Roman road between Brough and the fort, now called Melandra, near Glossop.

In walking from Buxton on this route the first portion of the Batham Gate encountered is a piece of straight road, in use as a modern highway, a little over a mile in length, branching off in a north-easterly direction from the Buxton-Chapel-en-le-Frith main road towards Peak Forest railway station. For about a mile therefrom the route is sinuous and more northerly, then there is a straight north-easterly length of a mile and a half to Dam Dale, at which place a decided kink occurs. At the top of the steep hill on the other side of Dam Dale is the High Peak Tavern, and it is in the field at the back of this inn that one comes across Batham Gate in its original and undisturbed form.

There its grass-grown ridge, or "hump," as the people of the locality call it, is quite distinct when seen at close quarters, though not prominent from a distance. The road is twenty feet wide, and does not show any external signs of ditches. It is only slightly raised above the general level of the adjacent land. About three inches below the surface is a layer of small cherty gravel, pieces of which can easily be got out with a pocket knife.

The ancient track may be traced across several grass fields and two ploughed fields. In one of the latter the gravel is very plain on the surface, and rattles as you walk over it. After twice crossing a narrow lane it strikes the rough ground of Bradwell Moor. Here it is not raised, and in places is formed by being cut out of the heathery slope and banked up on its outer edge. After reaching a height of 1,451 feet it descends a little to a bleak region where disused lead mines, with their great spoil heaps, abound. At the 1,131 feet level the ancient route coincides with a present-day road, which descends 500 feet in the next mile, and thus reaches Bradwell. The latter place is connected by Stretfield Road to the Roman fort Anavio at Brough. At Bradwell the designation "Batham Gate" ceases to apply, and Stretfield Road takes its place.

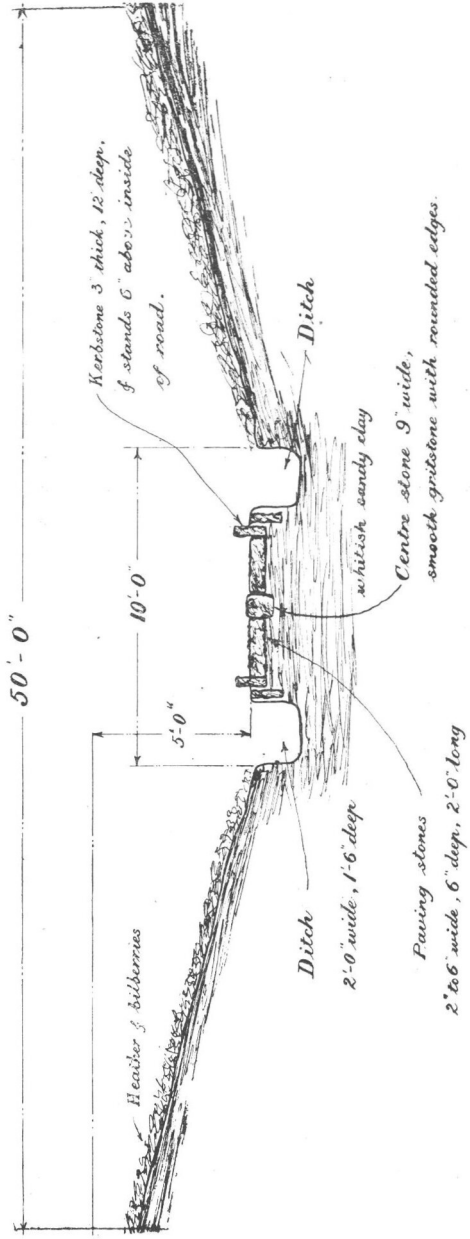
The level in the bed of the valley here is 513 feet above Ordnance Survey datum.

It is surmised that the first portion of the Roman road northwest of Brough is represented approximately by a cart track on the east side of the River Noe and the railway, but for two miles it is not marked on the map as such. It appears again as an authenticated Roman road, otherwise nameless, on the eastern slope of Edale, above Jagers Clough, at a height of 1,000 feet, and after rising a little higher it crosses the pass between Win Hill and Blackdean Moor, descends 250 feet to the widest part of Ashop Dale, and crosses the river Ashop close to where it is joined by the Alport stream.

In September and October, 1910, a three-inch water main, some miles in length, was laid under this road. A trench three feet deep was made, and it could be seen that there is no paving, metalling, or gravelling of any kind in the formation of the road. It is merely "stepped" in the solid rock of the hillside.

For some distance from Alport Bridge the course of the road is on the east slope of Ashop Dale, and evidently it was placed there to avoid the deep cloughs on the western slope. From Alport Clough to Glossop the track is disused, but it was in use as a pack-horse road until the modern highway close by was made about a century ago.

— Cross section of Roman road at —
 — Doctor Gate, Cold Harbour Moor. —
 — Near Glossop. (1654 feet above sea level.) —



From Alport Bridge to Doctor Gate culvert it is a narrow unpaved sunk track, deeply hollowed in places, and frequently obscured by dense growth of heather and bilberry bushes.

In order to cross Oyster Clough the road makes an ogee curve with a sharp point, and its frequent bends are a rebuke to advocates of the view that the missing Roman roads of Derbyshire must have been continuously straight right through their course. It may be retorted that this is a British road which was never altered by the Romans, except in its highest portion. Very likely so, but nevertheless all antiquaries are agreed that it was the road used by the Romans to connect their forts at Anavio and Melandra.

Beyond the Snake Inn the old track is a little below the modern road for some distance, and at the top of Lady Clough both roads make a very pronounced bend. Then the new road goes due west towards Glossop, and Doctor Gate strikes north-west across Cold Harbour Moor, at an altitude of 1,654 feet. The structure of the Roman road here is extremely interesting, and one must admire the energy and skill of its makers. The track is five feet below the surface level of the peat moss, through which has been made a cutting fifty feet wide at the top, with sides sloping gently to the ditches on either side of the road. The track is constructed of gritstone slabs, the centre stone being nine inches wide and laid longitudinally. It is flanked at right angles by slabs two feet long, six inches deep, and from two to six inches thick. The kerbstones are three inches thick, a foot deep, and one foot nine inches long. They stand about six inches above the inside of the road, and the ends of the kerbs, where they fit into each other, are not rectangular but slanting. The width of the road, exclusive of the kerbstones, is four feet nine inches; the ditches are two feet wide and eighteen inches deep.

It will be seen that the combined width of the ditches is nearly equal to that of the road itself, and no doubt the long preservation of the track is due to this ample drainage. The ditches, however, are now choked, the paving is overgrown

with rank vegetation, and water has undermined the stonework in many places. The road, in fact, is in imminent danger of falling to pieces and becoming unrecognisable, which would surely be a misfortune from an archæological point of view. There are not so many original portions of Roman road left in Derbyshire that we can afford to lose with equanimity one of the best remaining. The cost of suitable repairs, one would think, should not be beyond the Society's resources, and, if necessary, it is probable that a special fund could be raised for the purpose. The writer ventures to hope that the Council will consider the question worthy of their attention.

Doctor Gate, which is in a gritstone area, furnishes a striking contrast in construction to the Roman roads on the Derbyshire limestone uplands, which were laid with convex surfaces and without ditches, the latter evidently being considered superfluous, owing to the perfect natural drainage afforded by the rapid disappearance of all rainfall through the hidden fissures in the rock.

The place-names in connection with these Roman roads are of interest. "Gate," of course, is a Danish word meaning a road. Batham may be a corruption of Bootham, the ham or village with the booth or market, which might refer to Bradwell or Brough. Batham Gate would thus mean the road to the market town, and in the Derbyshire dialect Bootham would easily be distorted to Batham.

The second syllable of "Doctor" is clearly the British "tor," a name which occurs a number of times in close proximity to the Roman road between Buxton and Melandra. For example, there are Laughman Tor and Broctor near Peak Forest, and Dinas Sitch Tor near the Snake Inn. Doubtless the name of "Oyster" Clough refers to some tor, but its identity, like that of the "Doc" tor, has not yet been ascertained so far as the writer is aware. There is a "Dog-Rock" about a mile north of the point where Doctor Gate crosses the Shelf brook.

The word "clough" means a cloven place, and is closely akin to the Dutch "kloof"; "Dinas" is Welsh for a

fortified hill, and "sitch" is Anglo-Saxon for a small water course.

In his *General View of the Agriculture and Minerals of Derbyshire*, published in 1811, John Farey recorded that lead ore was carried on pack-horses, a drove of such horses being called a "jag," and the persons engaged in this occupation were called "Jaggers." Across Jaggers Clough there is an ancient bridle path which connects the lead mining districts with the Roman road. It is probable that these facts point to the reason why the clough got its peculiar name.