

Records and Traces of Old Roads near Derby.

By WILLIAM SMITHARD.



IN studying the question of Roman roads adjacent to Little Chester, the subject may be regarded from several points of view, viz. :—

- 1.—Existing theories, and the evidence or surmises on which they are based.
- 2.—Comparison of site with situation of other Roman forts in Derbyshire.
- 3.—Purpose of the fort, and the social and military conditions under which its precise locality was selected.
- 4.—Levels, gradients, contours, and other physical conditions.
- 5.—Views of modern historians on Roman roads in hilly and remote districts.
- 6.—New evidence obtained recently by excavating.

In endeavouring to recover for himself the actual routes of Roman roads, the serious student naturally begins by accepting, provisionally at least, the existing theories, and this part of the work usually does not present much difficulty, but when the enquirer sets out to follow with his own eyes and his own feet on the actual surface of the earth the imaginary lines of the theorists, he may find the evidence somewhat slight, and be faced with awkward gaps that leave him unconvinced of the validity of the delightfully simple straight lines he has seen on the map.

The commonly accepted theory, that Rycknield Street came across Nuns Green and down Darley Slade direct to Little Chester in a straight line, involves the supposition that there was in Roman times either a bridge or a ford across the Derwent opposite the fort.

The earliest reference I have been able to trace in connection with a bridge at Little Chester appeared in 1695, when Edmund Gibson, Bishop of Lincoln, re-editing Camden, added this note, which was again published in 1722:—

“Where the Derwent turns its course to the east, it passes by Little Chester—*i.e.*, a little city, where old Roman coins are often dug up.

“It has now not above twenty houses in it, and none of them ancient, but its antiquity is sufficiently attested. *In a clear day the foundation of a bridge may be seen*, crossing the river to Darley Hill, which overlooks the town.”

Next came Camden's “*Magna Britannia*, with additions, collected and composed by an impartial hand. Printed by Eliz. Nutt in the Savoy, 1720.” There we read:—

“The Derwent, turning eastward from hence, comes to Little Chester, which in ancient times was a city, though but a little one, as the name imports, and now is converted into a small village. 'Tis not to be doubted that the Romans inhabited this place and the country adjoining, because several sorts of coins are found hereabout; but now it has not above twenty houses in it, and none of them ancient or remarkable.

“*In a clear day the foundations of a bridge may be seen*, which crossed the Derwent to Derby (*sic*) hill, which overlooks the village, and is near Derby.”

Apparently this anonymous edition is copied from Gibson, and in doing so “Derby” instead of “Darley” has been printed.

In 1724 Dr. William Stukeley's *Itinerarium Curiosum* was published, and his notes therein read thus:—

“A mile below Derby, upon the river Derwent, stood the old Roman city Derventio, now called Little Chester.

“I trac’d the track of the wall quite round, and in some places saw under ground the foundation of it in the pastures, and some vaults along the side of it. They dig it up daily to mend the ways with. Mr. Lord’s cellar is built on one side of the wall, three yards thick. It is of a square form, standing between the Roman way called Ricning Street and the river.

“Within the walls are foundations of houses in all the pastures, and in the fields round the castle (as they call it) you may see the tracks of the streets laid with gravel. In a dry summer the grass over them is very bare. *There was a bridge over the river, for it was too deep and rapid for a ford. They can feel the foundations of it with a staff.*

“A little further northward upon the Ricning Street is Horreston Castle, whose ruins in a hoary rock are nearly obliterated.”

Stukeley’s plan of Derwentio, which was published in his *Itinerarium Curiosum*, and dated September, 1721, shows the ruins of a bridge over the Derwent, viz., one pier on each bank and two piers in the water, and from these a gravelled road running due east outside the north wall of the fort. It should be noted, however, that he does not regard this gravelled road as part of Rycknield Street, but shows the latter going north and south some distance from the east wall of the fort in the position now occupied by Mansfield Road.

Perhaps, however, we ought not to take Stukeley quite literally, as in his preface he says: “I own it is a work crude and hasty. Many matters I threw in only as hints for further scrutiny.”

Stukeley died in 1765, and afterwards his *Iter Boreale* was published. The following is taken from the second edition, which is dated 1776:—

“In the year 1725 I travelled over the western and northern parts of England in company of Mr. Roger Gale.

“I was requested to transcribe these notes, which I wrote day by day during our journey.

“ A mile and a half off Derby we fell into the Rigning Street coming from Burton, which, leaving Derby a little on the east, passes over Nun-green to Derwentio; there it crossed the river on a bridge, and thence went to Chesterfield.”

In another part of the same volume Stukeley states:—

“ I find the Rigning proceeds over the common, by the mill and brook at the west end of Derby, and falls into a valley, which gives a gentle descent to the river side, everywhere else steep, over against the old city; this, no doubt, is the reason why the Romans placed it at that very spot. The river is very broad and deep, equal to the Medway at Maidstone; the sides steep, so that a ford was not at all practicable; it is six or seven feet deep here at least. Darley Slade is the name of the valley where the descent of the road is; they call the road the Foss hereabouts, which shows that no more is meant by the name than that it is an artificial work. The Foss and the Rigning therefore are but synonymous terms. *A little up the river, beyond the city, was the bridge; in time of a frost, when there is clear ice, they can see the foundation of the piers very plainly, and a piece of one is still left.*

“ Thence the road proceeds over the pasture, where, after a fortnight’s dry weather in summer, they can distinguish it by the parched grass. It goes up the valley north of Breadsall, by Priory hall, so to Chesterfield. Another such way, they say, went up the hill directly from the street of the city by Chadsden (*sic*). Part of it has been dug up near the town by the Crown alehouse, and its ridge is still visible.

“ The city walls were dug up in great quantities to mend the ways with, but they were so strong they were forced to blow them up with gunpowder.

“ I rode to the hill south of Littleover, upon the Rigning-way, which lies in a strait line under the eye as far as Etocetum, and the hills beyond it.

“ From the other side of the hill, north of Littleover, the road butts upon the valley of Bradsall, by Priory hall, directly over Derwentio.

“The Rigning is the common road from Burton to Derby, till a little north of Littlelover it descends the hill to the left of the common road, which there is drawn to the right on account of Derby.

“I saw a great number of coins found here. I measured the castrum with exactness; it is 600 ft. long, 500 broad. We saw the wall on the outside of Mr. Lord’s house; the mortar is full of pebbles as big as nuts, but excessively hard. Darley Slade is a fine descent for the road.”

We see that in the four years between 1721 and 1725 Dr. Stukeley changed his view somewhat. In 1721 the foundations of the bridge could be felt, and Ryckniel Street did not cross the Derwent at Little Chester. In 1725 the foundations “can be seen when there is clear ice,” and Ryckniel Street did cross the river by the bridge.

Again, however, we ought to be cautious in accepting Stukeley’s statements, for they are printed in a rough and jumbled condition, and the editor of *Iter Boreale* says in the preface he is sensible that the many defects, which must unavoidably happen in publishing a posthumous collection from loose papers and notes carelessly thrown together, will stand in need of the reader’s candid indulgence.

In *A New Survey of England*, by N. Salmon, LL.B., published in 1729, we read:—

“Little Chester hath the traces of a razed city yet manifestly remaining, besides what the name shows. Its streets and partitions are discoverable from the languid corn and grass that is over them, and its walls are not yet totally carried off and put to other uses.

“Camden takes notice of a chapel upon a bridge over the Derwent at this town. Many of these were built on publick passages, where travellers dropt their arms and received their benediction. The annotations inform us that, after it had fallen to decay, it was repaired in the reign of Charles II. and made a meeting house; that it is since new built and converted into a Dye House.”

Although Salmon deals with Little Chester, the only bridge he mentions is St. Mary's bridge.

The next record we have to consider is in vol. iv. of the *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannia*, and is entitled, "The Roman Roads, Ikenild Street and Bath Way, discovered and investigated through the country of the Coritani, or the County of Derby," by Saml. Pegge, M.A., London. Printed for and by J. Nichols, 1784. The publisher's advertisement contains these remarks:—

"Whereas Mr. S. Fox's second impression of his map was printed soon after 1761, many years before Mr. Pegge's pamphlet was printed, and in this impression he has added as follows: 'The famous Roman road called Ikenild Street may be traced in many parts of this county, viz., at Monk's Bridge, Egginton Heath, Littleover, and so to the station at Little Chester, etc.,' a description which accords in the main with the subject of the ensuing pamphlet. Mr. Pegge, however, did not collect the least information from Mr. Fox's map, having actually perambulated the road anno. 1760. Mr. Fox's description was obtained from Mr. John Reynolds, who attended Mr. Pegge in his walk, and to whom Mr. Pegge had imparted a transcript of his observations."

The following extracts are taken from Pegge's record:—

"It appears for a considerable way together on Eggington Heath, where it points (for it is seen but little after that, by reason of the country being cultivated) to Derby, or rather Little Chester, to which place it came by Little Over, across Nun Green, and so down Darley Slade to the river Derwent, where from very ancient time there was a bridge, this river being a very uncertain one, and subject to sudden and very high floods. *The remains of a bridge at this place are now to be seen when the water is very low.*

"Some antiquaries, I find, are of opinion that the Romans built no bridges, but only made use of fords; but as we know they did in other parts, why not in England, especially when the nature of the river seemed so greatly to require it?

“ After crossing the river, the road passed eastward by the wall of the station of Little Chester, on the north side of it, and it is reasonable to suppose there was an entrance from the road into the station.

“ From Little Chester we must suppose the road kept on the east side of the Derwent, never crossing that river any more.

“ What might give occasion to the erecting of the town of Derby on its present site I presume might be the ford or passage there over the river where St. Mary’s bridge has since been erected. These fords though were not always necessary upon great roads, because there were ferries, from great antiquity, on the great rivers. This ford or ferry was in the direct road to Nottingham, another station of the Romans, so that to the west of Derby, we will suppose about a mile, the Roman road became divided (I speak of the latter times of the residence of the Romans in Britain) into two branches, whereof one went to Little Chester, and, crossing the Derwent there, took its course northward or north-eastward towards Chesterfield; and the other, crossing the same river at Derby, proceeded more easterly to Nottingham. After going a short space due east from Little Chester, it enters the open fields, and turns to the northward, the course of it being, from its first entrance upon Morley Moor, throughout N.N.E.

“ There are no traces of it now to be seen until you draw towards Morley Moor, but as soon as you have left Bredsal (*sic*) priory on your left hand, and begin to rise up to the almshouses on Morley Moor, a large raised fragment appears on your right hand.

“ After the town of Derby was become a place of note, which was very early, it was more natural and more direct for the inhabitants to pass on to Duffield, and to cross the Derwent there than at Little Chester, and, consequently, to begin and prosecute a new road that way, to wit, the present road. There is a ford now at Duffield called Makeney Ford. Secondly, after Duffield bridge was erected, the river would then be more safely crossed there than before, insomuch that

then everyone would be tempted to go that way, especially as from Derby, the present town, it certainly would be nearest.

“A bridge indeed there once was at Little Chester, but this has long been ruined, and nobody knows how long; and it is not at all improbable that the failure of the bridge at that place might contribute more than anything to the desertion of the old Roman road, and the bringing of the new one by Duffield into vogue.”

It will be seen that in Dr. Pegge's account just cited we get some interesting developments of the Little Chester Roman road theory. There is a variation in the conditions under which the remains of the bridge are on view: “They can be seen when the water is ‘very low.’” At the same time it appears that some antiquaries then questioned whether there had been any bridge at that place. Pegge also puts forward the view that there were two Roman roads over the Derwent, viz., one with a bridge at Little Chester, and the other with a ford about where St. Mary's Bridge is now. Something of this sort was perhaps implied in Stukeley's plan of 1721, though he did not put it into words. Dr. Pegge does not specify the exact position of the Little Chester bridge, but he endorses Stukeley's theory of a road on the north side of the fort, so presumably he agreed with the site of the bridge on Stukeley's plan. Pegge's view that Nottingham was a Roman station is, of course, quite unfounded, and his speculations as to the influence which the decay of the Roman bridge had on the building of Duffield bridge seem somewhat far-fetched at the present day.

Bray's *Tour into Derbyshire and Yorkshire*, first published in 1777, with a second edition in 1783, has the following notes:—

“A mile above Derby is Little Chester, the *Derventio* of the Romans. *Remains of a bridge are said to have been seen near this place.* Though it is not doubted that the Romans had a station at Little Chester, yet there has been much doubt whether there was any road from thence to Chesterfield, or whether the latter was a station. (Salmon's *Survey*, p. 540.)

“ It was reserved for the industry and the ingenuity of Mr. Pegge to ascertain these facts, the latter of which he seems to have done very clearly.

“ He states the road to come out of Staffordshire, over Eggington-heath, by Little-over, Nun-green, and down Darley-slade, to the river, where was the bridge, and he traces it over Morley-moor, by Horsley-park. He guesses the station at Chesterfield to have been Topton, or Topton Hill.”

It will be observed that Bray does nothing to substantiate the existence of the remains of a bridge, but merely repeats what other people have said.

Richard Gough's edition of Camden, printed in 1789, has the following note :—

“ At Little Chester Dr. Stukeley on good ground places the Derwentio of Ravenmas. Dr. Stukeley traced the wall all round, and some vaults and foundations. It is square, between the Ricning Way or Ikenild and the river. *The foundations of a bridge may be felt in the river crossing to Darley Hill, which overhangs the town.*”

It is no longer stated that the bridge foundations can be seen, but now again they may be felt, as in the year 1724.

James Pilkington, in *A View of the Present State of Derbyshire*, published in 1789, wrote (p. 4) :—

“ According to Mr. Pegge, the Ikenild Street entered Derbyshire at Monk's Bridge, about two miles from Burton, and extended in a direct line over Egginton Heath to Littleover. From this village it ran in a north-east direction on the west side of the town of Derby. It was carried across Nun's Green, and down Darley Slade to the station at Little Chester.

“ *It is generally allowed that there was once a bridge over the river Derwent at this place, and I have taken some pains to determine its precise situation.* Some writers have fixed it a little way northward of the walls of the station, but it is the opinion of some of the inhabitants of Little Chester that it was in the same line with the street, which appears to have been carried through the middle of it. From Little Chester

the road is very evident in dry seasons in the pastures on the north side of the village. It passes to the east of Breadsall priory, and on the right hand of the almshouses on Morley Moor."

On p. 198 of Pilkington's book, we may read:—

"He (Dr. Stukeley) mentions, besides the Roman way called Ricning street, another, which he was informed went up the hill directly from the street of the city by Chaddesden. Part of it, he says, had been dug up near the town by the Crown alehouse, and its ridge was visible in 1725.

"From frequent examinations and repeated enquiries, I think that there is reason to consider the observations of Dr. Stukeley as just and accurate. Doubtless alterations have been made in the state of the place since he visited it. I believe that, whatever there might have been formerly, no tracts (*sic*) of streets are now to be discerned in the pastures. The only ways laid with gravel which I have been able to discover are one which runs east and west, and intersects the station into two nearly equal parts, and another which extends from the north-east corner in a direct line across the pastures towards Bredsall."

We see that when Pilkington tried to find the foundations of the bridge they could neither be seen nor felt, and their exact location was not known.

William Hutton's *History of Derby* appeared in 1791.

Hutton, in his preface, praises Pilkington highly, and says he has borrowed largely from Pilkington's *Present State of Derbyshire*. On p. 13 we find the following:—

"A passage over the Derwent was absolutely necessary in very early ages to connect the eastern and western banks. St. Mary's bridge therefore in various forms must have been that passage, because there are not the least vestiges of another in that part of the country.

"At Derventio (Little Chester) the Roman power is marked in visible characters.

"*Over the Derwent, at this spot, they erected a bridge;*

the foundations are yet seen in clear water. I have felt them with the oar. This ancient bridge indicates that one more ancient must have been used at St. Mary's, perhaps many centuries prior to the Romans.

“There is no waste land, except Nun's Green, which in my time was rough as a brickyard, but now improved into pleasure ground.”

The plan in Hutton's book shows a wavy road across Nun's Green lying about north-east, and turning a little more north to join Lodge Lane.

However greatly we may admire Hutton for his forcible and capable work as a historian, his assumption of a pre-Roman bridge at St. Mary's can hardly make us regard him as a safe guide to conditions in periods B.C. in Britain.

Hutton's *History of Birmingham*, which was published in 1809, describes Rycknield Street thus:—

“The road proceeds . . . along Egington Heath, Littleover, the Rue-dyches, Stepping Lane, Nungreen, and Darley Slade, to the river Derwent, one mile above Derby.

“In drawing the flewks of his oar along the bed of the river as he boats over it he may feel the foundations of a Roman bridge nearly level with its bottom. The inhabitants being in want of materials to form a turnpike road, attempted to pull up this renowned military way for the sake of those materials, but found them too strongly cemented to admit of an easy separation, and therefore desisted when they had taken up a few loads.

“I saw the section of this road cut up from the bottom; the Romans seem to have formed it with infinite labour and expense. They took out the soil for about 20 yards wide and one deep, perhaps till they came to a firm bottom, and filled up the whole with stones of all sizes, brought from Duffield, four miles up the river, cemented with coarse mortar.

“The road here is only discoverable by its barren track along the cultivated meadows. It then proceeds over Morley Moor, etc. . . .

“The stations upon the Ikenield Street in our neighbourhood are Little Chester (Derventio), a square fort, nearly half an acre, joining the road to the north and the Derwent to the west.”

In view of what is known about Roman roads in Derbyshire and elsewhere, it is very difficult to accept Hutton's account of a road at Little Chester twenty yards wide and one deep, filled with cemented stones. It is much more likely that what he saw was not a road, but the wall of the fort. Unfortunately, we have no record of the exact position in which he saw the supposed road.

In 1817 Dr. Bennet, Bishop of Cloyne, wrote thus in Lyson's *Magna Britannia*:—

“Its crest is visible on Egginton Heath, though much obliterated by the modern turnpike road, which continues in its line as far as Little Over, where, a little before it reaches the two-milestone, the Roman road keeps its north-north-east direction, while the present one slants to the east towards Derby.

“The old road, though not easy to be distinguished in the cultivation so near a populous town, crossed Nun's Green, and proceeded down Darley-slade to the banks of the Derwent, *passing that river by a bridge (the piers of which may be felt in a dry summer) to the station at Little Chester.*

“It is by no means improbable that the British Rykneld Street crossed the Derwent lower down at a ford.

“The Roman road, on crossing the Derwent, seems to have passed the meadows near the north gate of the station, and after clearing the houses of the vicus would fall into the Rykneld Street near the north-east angle of the vallum, and proceed with it in its old line. The ground about the modern Little Chester being chiefly under the plough, the ridge of the road near it has been long destroyed, but on passing Breadsall Priory on the left, and rising up towards the almshouses on Morley Moor, a large fragment of it is visible on the right hand.”

In Bishop Bennet's statement we get the first reference to a British Rycknield Street probably crossing the Derwent at a ford, and he also varies the description of the conditions under which the piers of the Roman bridge can be felt.

A Collection of Fragments Illustrative of the History and Antiquities of Derby, compiled from authentic sources by Robt. Simpson, was printed in 1826, and in it we find the following :

"It is not improbable that the Britons had a settlement here. This is an opinion which has been supported on circumstantial evidence of much probability, though neither memoirs nor monuments exist from which we can establish its immediate certainty. The Romans, it is well known, generally fixed their stations in the vicinity of some town, and the small distance of Derwentio, now Little Chester, must be admitted as a strong collateral argument in favour of the remote origin of Derby. Besides, a passage over the Derwent must have been necessary in the early ages, as at present, to facilitate the communication between the eastern and western parts of the county, and no point to which the roads tend could be found more convenient than this for the situation of a bridge."

Simpson does not mention Rycknield Street, and it is not quite clear as to whether he is arguing in favour of a bridge at Little Chester or lower down the river.

Stephen Glover's *History of the County of Derby*, published in 1829, on page 287 repeats word for word Bishop Bennet's remarks in *Magna Britannia*, which have already been quoted.

Glover, on page 293, also quotes Pilkington's statement that "no tracts of streets are now to be discovered in the pastures," etc., then continues: "*The foundations of an ancient bridge, leading from Little Chester across the Derwent, may still, it is said, be seen when the water is clear.*"

The statement that Glover printed reappears almost exactly in Bateman's *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire* (1848), the only important variation being that Bateman says, "The foundations of an ancient bridge may still be seen when the water is clear"—thus omitting Glover's "it is said."

And so we come to John Keys and to living writers without any new evidence being recorded either for or against the theory, implied perhaps by Bishop Gibson in 1695, but first definitely advanced by Dr. Stukeley, that Rycknield Street crossed the Derwent by a Roman bridge at Little Chester.

Mr. A. W. Davison, in *Derby: Its Rise and Progress* (1906), shows the Roman bridge at the end of Old Chester Road, which thoroughfare he considers to mark the north wall of the fort, whereas if anything is certain about Little Chester it is that Old Chester Road represents the centre line of the fort. Further, one of the maps in this work announces itself as based on Money Penny's map of 1791, but it may be advisable to point out that, so far as Rycknield Street is concerned, the map shows some radical alterations and additions, for which there is no apparent warrant or justification.

A long study of the Roman bridge theory in all its aspects led me to question its authenticity. To begin with, the evidence is decidedly unsubstantial. Of all the writers who have mentioned the foundations, not one admits having personally seen or felt them except Hutton, who says he touched them with an oar. No doubt he touched something with an oar, but how could he tell it was the pier of a Roman bridge? An oar is not a very delicate surveying instrument, and we have it recorded that Pilkington, the only one who tried to locate the foundations, found that the situation was a matter of dispute.

The following points also appear to be worthy of serious consideration in discussing this problem:—

1.—There was in Roman times a ford across the Derwent where St. Mary's bridge now is. A ford is a natural product, not hastily formed or quickly destroyed, and although it can be improved by man it never originates as an artificial product. In fact, we might say, "once a ford always a ford," and the names, Ford Street and Ford Lane, old thoroughfares on either side of the Derwent leading direct to St. Mary's bridge, indicate that there was a ford in that spot before the bridge was built.

2.—The Romans in Britain frequently utilized fords for the passage of their roads over rivers, and for this purpose sometimes improved them with strong paving.

3.—As there was a ford so near, it is scarcely likely the Romans would go to the trouble of building a bridge. The increased distance involved is not more than half a mile, while the route to the ford is easier and less liable to attack from a concealed enemy.

4.—A bridge across the Derwent at Little Chester would weaken the defence of the fort by making a short cut for a sudden rush by any hostile combatants who contemplated a surprise attack. The fort was placed where its occupants had a wide outlook every way except westward, and on that side they would therefore be likely to depend on the river as a barrier, across which any assailants from that direction would have to swim, thus placing them at a great disadvantage.

The other two Roman forts in Derbyshire, viz., Brough and Melandra, were placed where a river gave protection from attack.

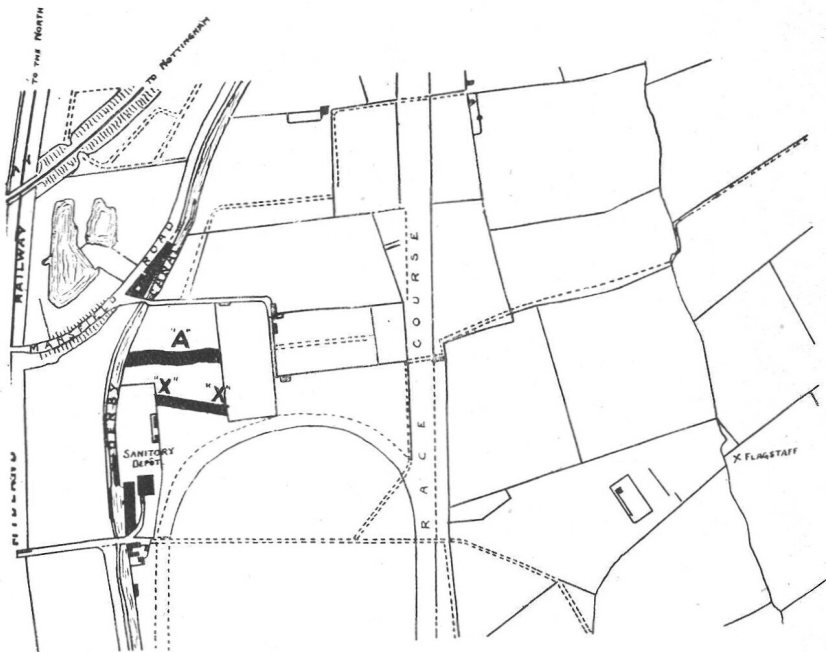
5.—If there ever was a Roman road direct from Nun's Green to Little Chester, it is strange that all traces of it have disappeared so completely. No writer has given a scrap of evidence of any physical remains of such a road, and although the ground above Darley Grove has been cut deeply in all directions for the making of streets in recent years, no vestiges have been found that give the slightest support to the theory.

6.—The story of bridge piers being seen in the river at Little Chester may have arisen through confusion with the remains of former bridges at St. Mary's. On the 1851 Ordnance Survey Map, two feet to a mile, an isolated pier is shown in the river south of the existing St. Mary's bridge and near the west bank. St. Mary's chapel is built on the arch of a destroyed bridge, the foundations of which were doubtless visible in the river for a long period dating from several centuries ago.

7.—The same map of 1851 shows a little wharf on the river bank at the west end of Old Chester Road, and it is probable that this was used either for mooring a ferry boat or as a harbour for small pleasure or cargo craft which plied on the Derwent and canal. It may be, therefore, that any masonry

PLAN NO. I.

Scale: 6 in. to a mile. The thick black lines "A" and "XX" are not to scale.



A.—Buried road in Corporation Road at Little Chester.

XX.—Earthen ridge in same field.

Based upon the Ordnance Survey Map, with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

or other artificial work in the river at this point was provided in connection with the wharf. An old man has told me that when he was a boy he and his friends used to bathe there in summer, and at times they could get across the river by wading and jumping from one protuberance to another, but

whether the irregularities in the river-bed which they utilised were natural or not he cannot say. Another person, I believe, claims to have seen a row of stakes across the river at this place.

In October, 1910, permission having very kindly been granted by Mr. T. Keetley, the estate agent, and Mr. Bricknell, the tenant of the farm, a trench 8 ft. long was made halfway across Dr. Stukeley's so-called "gravelled road" outside the north wall of Little Chester, marked "C C" on plan No. 2.

This "road" is a grassy ridge or bank on the northern side of the second field east of the footpath from Old Chester Road to Folly Houses, and is in line with the stile that gives access from this footpath to the fields. On either side of the "road" are two shallow ditches, that on the north being slightly the deeper of the two. The width of the "road" between the centres of the ditches is 20 ft. 6 in. The trench showed that the "road" consists of black soil, which had been heaped there artificially, and it contained many fragments of pottery, a few animal bones, and numerous large pebbles of flint, sandstone, gritstone, chert, or silicified limestone. These, however, were not in regular layers or in any sort of order. They were distributed throughout the mass of soil like currants in a pudding. Every spadeful of earth contained some pottery and pebbles. The natural undisturbed soil was reached at a depth of 3 ft. 9 in. below the highest part of the "road."

Six feet north of the centre of the "road," and 2 ft. 6 in. below its maximum height, is an irregular double layer of gritstone boulders, about 2 ft. wide, dividing the ditch from the bank, and placed longitudinally between them. A typical specimen of these boulders measured 14 in. long by 12 in. wide by 4 in. thick, and was trimmed at the edges.

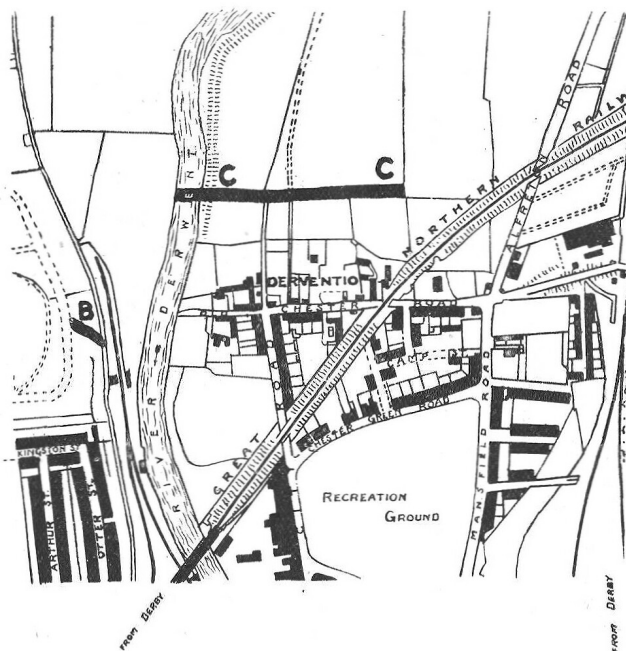
In June, 1911, a trench further east was made right across Dr. Stukeley's "road" and its adjacent ditches. This was 42 ft. long, and its greatest depth under the crown of the "road" was 4 ft. 6 in. The crown of the road is 1 ft. 6 in.

higher than the bottom of the northern ditch, which was excavated to a depth of 3 ft. See plan No. III.

To a depth of 2 ft. the soil contained fragments of pottery, animal bones, and pebbles, which were all embedded here

PLAN NO. II.

Scale: 6 in. to a mile. The thick black lines "B" and "CC" are not to scale.



B—Approximate site of trench in Strutt's Park near Darley Grove.
 CC.—Dr. Stukeley's so-called "gravelled road" at Little Chester, Derby.

Based upon the Ordnance Survey Map, with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

and there quite erratically throughout the mass. Below that level nothing special was observed until, at a depth of 4 ft. 6 in. we came to a damp, dark, sandy clay, which contained some portions of animal bones and blackened bits of wood, presumably charcoal.

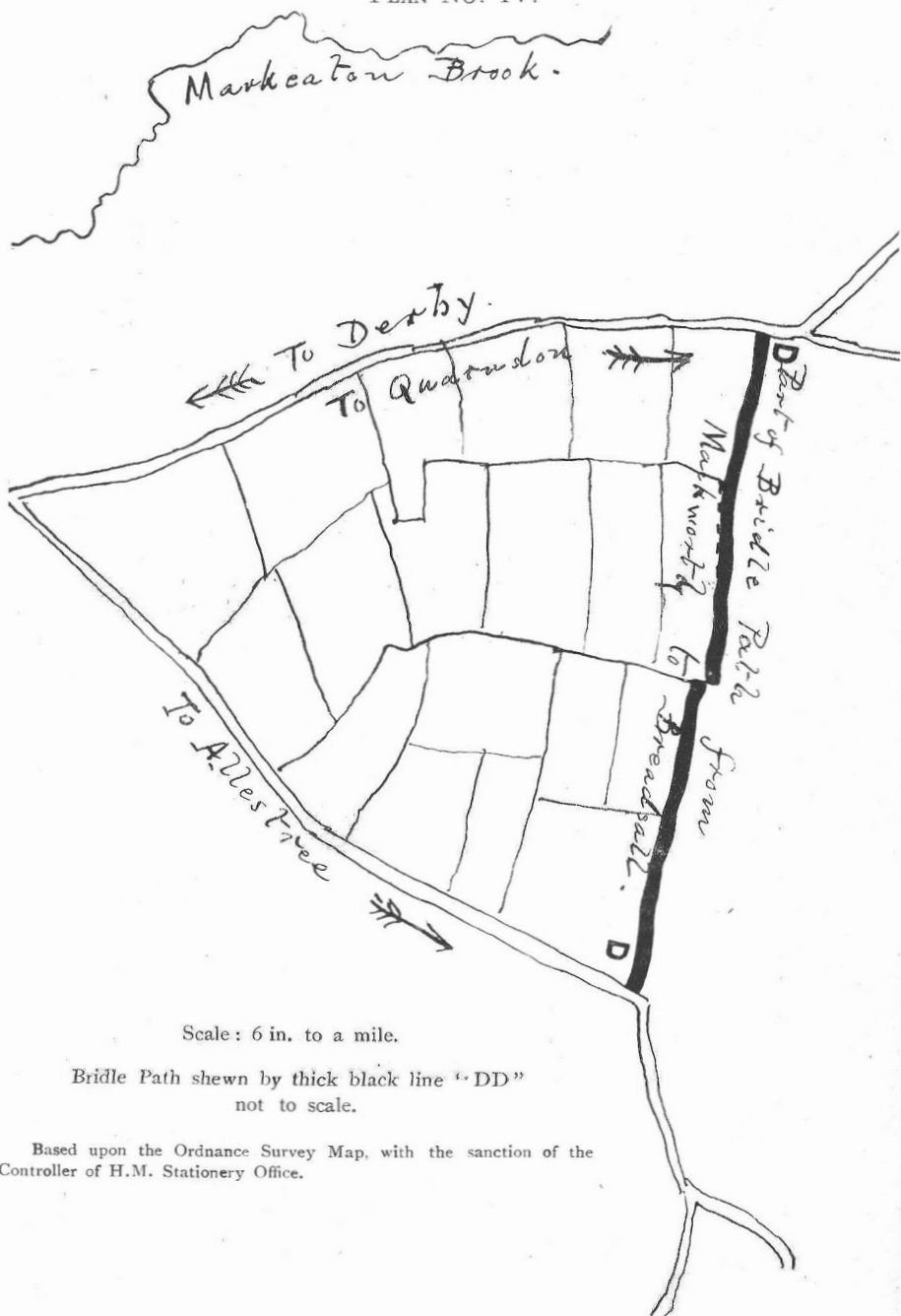
The upper soil in the northern ditch is a clearly cut layer of alluvium 4 ft. wide and 14 in. deep, which appears to have been washed into an earlier and deeper ditch that became choked. At the bottom of this alluvium, on damp, black soil, was a thin layer of small, smooth, whitish gravel, apparently spread there by the action of water flowing towards the Derwent, and in the soil on the north side of the ditch, 18 in. below the surface, was a rough layer of rubble 3 ft. long, formed of boulders of gritstone about 3 in. thick and 6 in. long; broken pieces of brick flue-slabs (with mortar adhering), 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick, 9 in. long, 7 in. broad, one marked with a diagonal pattern; a piece of blue slate, 6 in. by 8 in. by 1 in. thick, and some fair sized smooth pebbles.

Some of the fragments of pottery found are unmistakably Roman, while others appear to be of mediæval or later date, one appertaining even to the early part of the nineteenth century.

There was no indication whatever of metalling or paving, and I am of opinion that Dr. Stukeley's so-called "gravelled road" was merely a flood bank to keep the water away from the walls of the fort when the river overflowed. The layers of rubble adjacent to the ditch may be regarded as remnants of a rough gutter to keep the bank from being damaged by the rush of water. A little further west, in exactly the same line, this gutter survives in the form of a strongly built channel of heavy dressed stone, but it is choked with alluvium, leaf-mould, and tree roots.

In September, 1911, having been favoured with permission from Messrs. Crompton and Evans' Union Bank and Mr. George Linnell, I had a trench made in the south-east corner of Strutt's Park, close to Darley Grove, approximately at the site marked "B" on plan No. 2, across the theoretical line of a direct route from Nuns' Street to Little Chester, and in the most likely place for a descent to the river. The trench, 18 ft. long, was cut through glacial drift, containing some fragments of coarse heavy pottery, to a depth of 2 ft.,

PLAN No. IV.

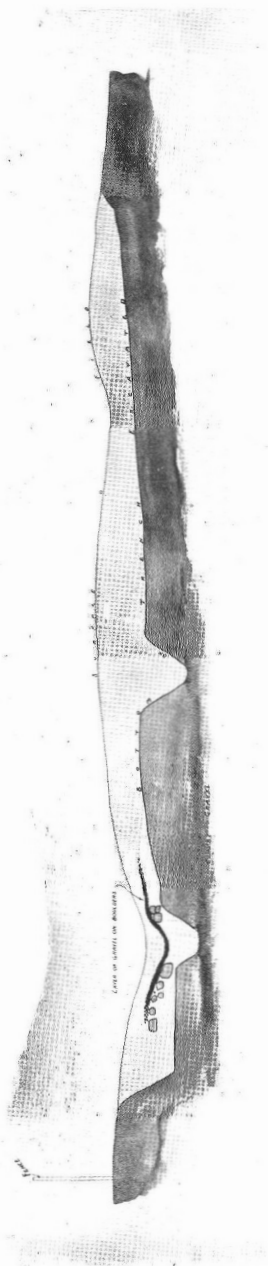


Scale: 6 in. to a mile.

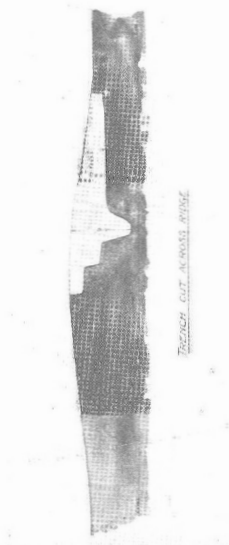
Bridle Path shewn by thick black line "DD"
not to scale.

Based upon the Ordnance Survey Map, with the sanction of the
Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

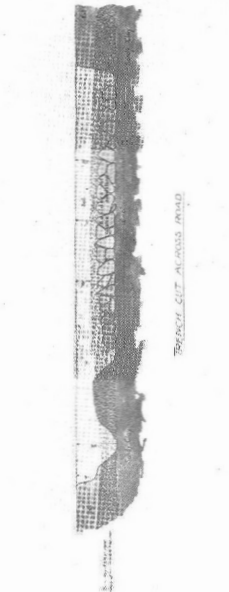
PLAN NO. III.



Trench at Little Chester across Dr. Stukeley's so-called "gravelled road" thought by the author to be merely a flood bank. Site marked "CC" on Plan No. 2.



Earthen ridge in Corporation field at Little Chester, marked "XX" on Plan No. 1.



Buried road in Corporation field at Little Chester, marked "A" on Plan No. 1.

where the natural undisturbed subsoil, consisting of stiff red clay, was reached, and not the slightest trace was found of any road having ever existed there.

A BURIED ROAD EAST OF LITTLE CHESTER.

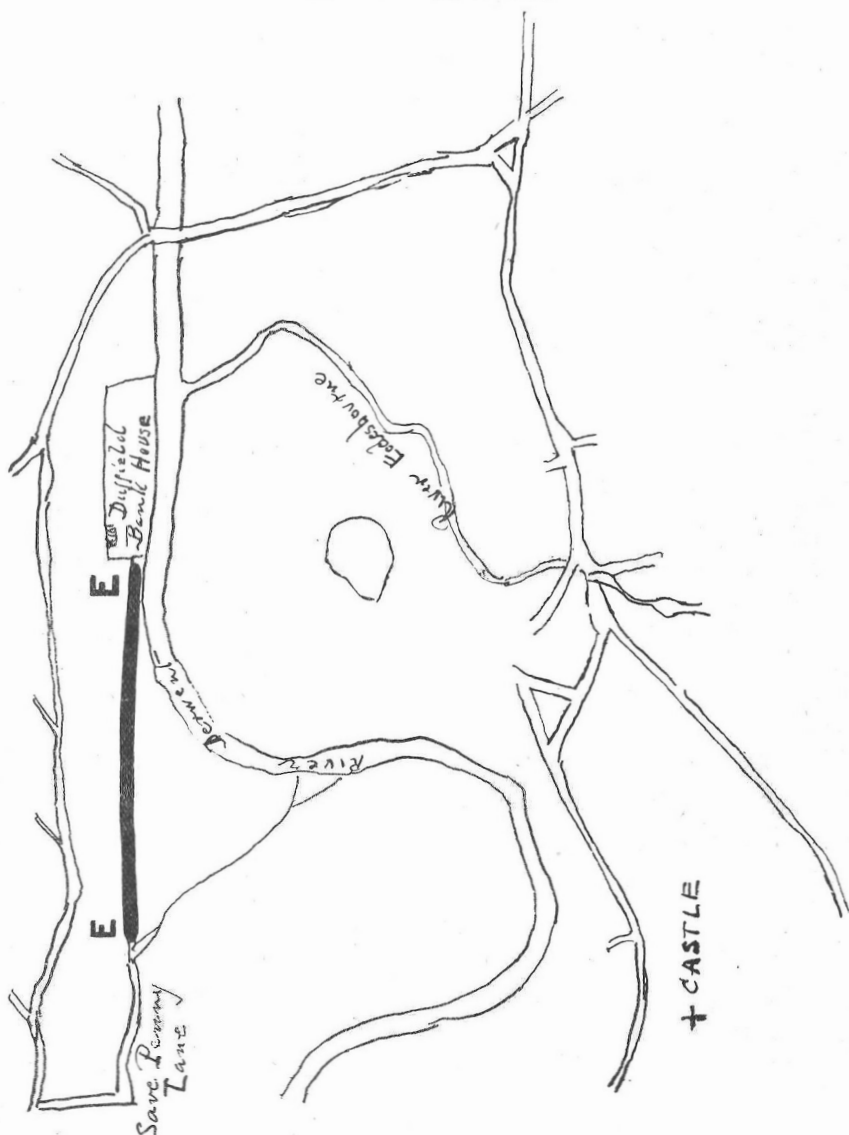
In October, 1910, by permission of the Corporation of Derby, some excavating was done in a field adjoining the race-course and the refuse destructor near Little Chester, and a substantial disused road was located there, at the site marked "A" on plan No. I., p. 126.

It is situated about 80 yards south of the occupation road—which branches from Mansfield Road to the canal bridge, and then lies due east—and about 300 yards north of the public footpath across the racecourse. The old road which the trench revealed is 12 ft. wide, and it is buried under 8 inches of turf. The metalling consists of heavy coarse sandstone boulders, a typical one of which was 17 in. long by 10 in. wide at one end. The bed of metalling is 10½ in. deep, and it is covered with a 3 in. layer of smooth gravel. The road rests on a natural bed of sandy clay, and on either side of it is a natural bed of gravel, above which is the layer of soil which forms the surface of the field. See plan No. III.

A number of fragments of coarse earthenware and roofing tiles were found amongst the gravel forming the old surface of the road, but none of these appear to be Roman, either in form or texture. Several portions of rims of large cooking pots, apparently mediæval, were in the gravel quite close to the side of the road. No traces of ditches were observed, but about 60 yards south of the buried road, and nearly parallel with it, is an obvious earthen ridge, about 20 ft. wide, marked "X X" on plan No. I. This was excavated to a depth of 2 ft. 3 in., but beyond the black soil of which it is composed, nothing was found except a few small pebbles and bits of thin, smooth pottery, which have a distinct Roman look, but are too small to give any idea of shape of vessels or mouldings. It seems likely this

PLAN NO. V.

Scale: 6 in. to a mile. Old road at Duffield Bank shewn by thick black line "E E" not to scale.



Based upon the Ordnance Survey Map, with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

bank was raised to protect the road from floods, and, presumably, there would at one time be a similar bank on the north side of the road. No doubt this buried road is the one mentioned by Stukeley as going from Little Chester towards Chaddesden, but I am not aware that any precise details of its situation and structure have hitherto been published.

This buried road is in a direct line with Old Chester Road and with the position occupied by the beginning of Mansfield Road before it was diverted to cross the railway by a bridge. Evidence of its former existence in the next field is afforded by a slight ridge, which persists in spite of frequent ploughing, and the line of route is maintained by a field-path up the slope beyond the racecourse and across the plateau until it comes at right-angles into a field-path from Breadsall to Chaddesden on the edge of the plateau, and in view of a wide valley.

RYCKNIELD STREET AND ITS BRANCHES.

My view is that the buried road is Rycknield Street, and that the field-path up the hill and across the plateau represents the route of the Roman road, which would cross the wide valley on its way to Morley Moor, while from it on the edge of the plateau branched one road to Sawley and another to Buxton. The latter, I am convinced, is now represented by old roads and field-paths along the 200 ft. contour line through Breadsall, Little Eaton, and Duffield Bank to Milford, where it crossed the Derwent and proceeded along the Chevin, as mentioned by me in a former number¹ of the Society's *Journal*.

There is a remarkable length of disused and grass-grown road at Duffield Bank, marked with thick black line "E" on plan No. V., which was pointed out to me by the late Hon. Frederick Strutt, at one time President of this Society. It is a third of a mile long, and lies in a straight line on the 200 ft. contour level between Duffield Bank House and Save Penny Lane, the latter being an old road to a ford

¹ Vol. xxxii. (1910), p. 138.

across the Derwent near Duffield railway station, and, at the same time, a parish boundary.

This road is strongly constructed of heavy rough pieces of coarse local sandstone, the principal layer of which is 17 ft. wide and 9 in. thick. Above this is a 4 in. layer of smooth river gravel, which is covered by five inches of turf soil. The surface is slightly convex, and below the pitching a few exceptionally large chunks of sandstone are placed here and there, apparently to strengthen the substratum of the road. A cross section is shown on plan No. VI.

This road was out of use before the year 1789, at which date it was enclosed. What is now called "Save Penny Lane" was then "Ford Mouth Lane," and there was a foot-path to the ford along the east side of the Derwent from near Duffield Bank House.

It is difficult to think this is a modern road, as it seems hardly likely that such a well-made road, if constructed in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, would have been abandoned so soon afterwards. The depth of soil accumulated on it is very considerable, though somewhat less than that on the buried road adjacent to the canal at Little Chester, which I take to be Rycknield Street.

This road on Duffield Bank would be well under the observation of persons on the site of Duffield Castle, which, of course, was occupied in Roman times.

THE ROMAN ROAD FROM ROCESTER.

The approach of this road to Little Chester is most probably represented by the lane past Mackworth Castle and Church. Very likely this road continued through Markeaton Park before that was enclosed, and in Markeaton Street, Derby, I think we have the final portion of it. Here the Rocester road would be absorbed by Rycknield Street, so that only one crossing of Markeaton Brook would be required for the Roman road, and its route thence, I venture to suggest, is indicated approximately by Bridge Street, Bridge Gate, and City Road to Little Chester.

In this article, however, I do not claim to have disproved completely the time-honoured Roman bridge theory, but it seems to me that the time has come to review it exhaustively, as the evidence for it is somewhat weak and contradictory, while there are a number of strong points in favour of the alternative route.

A BRIDLE ROAD FROM MACKWORTH TO BREADSALL.

An interesting short-cut between the Rocester Roman road and Rycknield Street east of the Derwent exists in the shape of a bridle path from Mackworth to Breadsall. This path, which was pointed out to me by Mr. W. H. Hanbury, doubtless was used in Mercian times, if not earlier. It begins at Mackworth Castle, and proceeds by Lower Vicarwood Farm to the southern end of Quarndon. There is a slight break where it crosses Kedleston Road, but it may be picked up again about $2\frac{2}{3}$ miles from Derby at the last right-hand gate before the road to Kedleston branches from the road to Quarndon, as shown on plan No. IV. The entrance is by an ordinary five-barred gate, and there is nothing to indicate that it gives access to a public bridle road. For sixty yards the path, with a hedge on the left-hand side only, and at an altitude of 249 ft. above Ordnance Survey datum, is level with the surface of the field, and then for about 185 yards it is sunk between the red-clay banks of a "V"-shaped trough, which in one part is 37 ft. wide at the top and 17 ft. deep. The edges of the trough are lined with bushy fences, and in summer the hollow is prolific in rank vegetation, amongst which tall stinging nettles predominate. The narrow bed of the trough has been deepened a little in recent years by the flow of surface drainage down it, and in places the Keuper sandstone can be seen cropping out.

This deep cutting is an excellent example of the way in which bridle paths, particularly on a clay slope, were hollowed out by the hoofs of the animals—oxen, mules, and horses—which carried packs over them.

On emerging from the trough the path crosses the 300 ft. contour line, and continues at surface level through three more fields until it reaches the high road near to Allestree pinfold at a point where a footpath from Penny Long Lane to Quarndon crosses it.

The route thence is represented by modernized roads or paths to the ford across the Derwent at Allestree, whence there would be a choice of tracks, some of which still exist as bridle paths, to Breadsall, Morley, Little Eaton, and Chaddesden.

In addition to acknowledgments already made, my thanks are due to Mr. Addison Titley, Mr. W. R. D. White, and Mrs. Draper for permission to excavate the old road on Duffield Bank, while I am much indebted to Mr. John Ward, F.S.A., for kindly examining the pottery, etc., found at the several trenches; to Mr. A. E. Goodey, Mr. W. H. Hanbury, and Mr. J. W. Puttrell for assistance of one kind or another in connection with the excavations and observations; and especially to Mr. Edmund Potts, who was good enough to prepare several of the plans.

References to the foundations of a bridge, on p. 112, *et seq.*, are put in italics for the sake of emphasis, but they are not so printed in the volumes from which they are quoted.