

ROMAN ROADS FROM PEVENSEY

TO FIRLE AND GLYNDE, AND TO THE DOWNS
BY WANNOCK

BY IVAN D. MARGARY, F.S.A.

THE West Gate of Anderida looks out on the High Street of Westham and is one of the most imposing Roman remains in Sussex, yet no serious attempt appears to have been made to trace any Roman road connecting it with neighbouring settlements, and it seemed desirable that this should be done before building developments in this growing district masked any remaining traces beyond recovery.

There are certain points which require to be carefully borne in mind when this problem is considered. First, the present inland situation of Anderida is, of course, quite misleading: the tide flowed under its eastern walls well into historic times, and in the Roman period it was undoubtedly upon a narrow promontory with the whole of Pevensey Levels as a broad tidal estuary to the east, while to the west of the Stone Cross-Langney ridge a similar estuary over Willingdon Level, stretching inland nearly to Polegate, cut off the Pevensey area from direct approach to the Downs south of that point, except perhaps by ferries.

Then it must also be remembered that Anderida is a late Roman site, erected about A.D. 280 as a Saxon Shore fort, and that so far as is known there was little or no occupation on the site at an earlier date. The familiar straightness of Roman roads, though always adopted where convenient, was less strictly followed in the later years, and it is therefore likely that any road made to serve Anderida would not be on very accurate alignments, particularly in view of the narrow limits of a land approach to Pevensey, and perhaps also of settlements and cultivated land lying on its course. The

Downs had been densely occupied by peasant farmers throughout the period and it is probable, indeed proved by the remains found in certain areas, that this occupation was extending northwards from the Downs on to the Lower Greensand zone, where native trackways had doubtless been formed already to serve these settlements and might well be embodied in a late Roman road cut through the district. Such late roads, too, are usually metalled thinly, and are less elaborate than those constructed earlier.

It is well to emphasize these points before considering the actual evidence because it is, I think, unlikely that remains of a first-class roadway could reasonably be expected under these conditions, while, obviously, it would be much more difficult to identify with certainty the remains of such a road or to ascertain its route.

Earlier references to any Roman road from Pevensy are very scanty, except at Glynde, where other routes would join it.

In 1868 Robert Wright records in a note¹ dealing with some pottery, medieval and Roman, found at Polegate during preparations for building that

‘Distinct traces of the Roman road from Pevensy (Anderida) to Lewes are seen near the School house, not many hundred yards distant.’

Allcroft² writes that

‘. . . east to west across the [Berwick] Common ran another ancient road, Roman in construction, if not also in origin. The road passed the Cuckmere at Chilver Bridge . . . and ran thence east by Monken Pyn to Polegate. . . Westward it went by Selmeston Church . . . to join the Roman road through Firlle Park to the ford at Glynde.’

Lower refers similarly to the route,³ saying:

‘it has been clearly traced at Polegate eastward, and at Berwick Common and Glynde westward, of Wilmington’.

Any route towards Lewes from Firlle must cross the Glynde Reach, still a tidal stream and in Roman times no doubt a wide tidal estuary covering all Laughton Level. Glynde offers the narrowest and easiest cross-

¹ *S.A.C.* xx. 233.

² *Downland Pathways*, p. 60.

³ *S.A.C.* XIII. 55, note.

ing, for the chalk comes close on each side. Traces of two such crossings there have been recorded. In the Parochial History of Glynde¹ the Rev. W. de St. Croix mentions both, 'a distinct length of elevated roadway' on the Firl side of Glynde Reach leading in the direction of an old lane to Wick Street and Heighton Street in Firl (i.e. south-east from Glynde), and also traces of a buried metalled roadway or ford, 30 ft. wide, just above Glynde Bridge and parallel with the modern road (i.e. south from Glynde). A Roman coin of Antoninus was found on this buried road.

These two crossings are quite distinct, and the south-easterly embankment can still be seen. The buried road at Glynde Bridge was described in 1818 by William Wisdom, who was in charge of the excavations that disclosed it when a new cut for the bed of the Reach was being made, and he has left manuscript notes about Glynde which include this description:

'About the year 1801 or 1802 a new cut was made in the River just above Glynde bridge. I had the measuring the work, paying men etc. . . . About 2½ feet under ground, just above Bridge, we came to a Road about 30 feet wide, running in a parallel direction with the Turnpike road, covered with large flint and a few sandstones; about two stones thick. On the edge of this Road we found a piece of Coin about the size of a penny piece—a very plain impression of a head on one side with the name "Antoninus" very legible; on the reverse was "Senatus Consultam".'

Horsfield² gives extracts from a letter received from Wisdom in almost identical terms, save that he gives the date as 1794, describes the road as

'covered with large flints about 2 feet thick³ . . . 15 tons were removed . . .',

and then goes on to say:

'there were no piles near it but at the other end of the brook [i.e. water-meadow] where there was no road we discovered some. I found an Antoninus on the side of the road. This road was about 4 rods to the east of the present road and ran parallel with it; it seemed to proceed from the outermost chalk on the Glynde side to the nearest rising ground on the Beddingham side, a distance of about

¹ *S.A.C.* xx. 51, 52.

² *History and Antiquities of Lewes*, II. 114, note.

³ Probably this is an error for '2 stones' as in Wisdom's own notes above, the copy of which has been checked with the original at Glynde.

30 rods, pointing directly to a large tumulus on the land above, exactly where the windmill now stands.'

These accounts are remarkably definite and make it plain that a metalled road crossed the Reach here, evidently by a ford which could, no doubt, be used only at certain states of the tide.

Allcroft refers to this evidence in a paper¹ dealing with a route from Lewes to Firlle Beacon, and adds in a footnote² with regard to the south-easterly route, called 'A' in his paper, that 'Mr. Colgate, Expenditor of the Ouse Levels, informs me that he has seen the actual paving of this ford in the river-bed'.

There is, however, one piece of ancient documentary evidence which is of the utmost importance, particularly for the Pevensey end of the road, and seems to give us definite assurance that as long ago as 1252 there existed a road ancient enough to be termed 'the old road' even then, and important enough to form a defined boundary all the way from Westham to Selmeston.

I am much indebted to the Rev. W. Budgen, F.S.A., Curator of Deeds, for this information, and for kindly supplying the copy of the document and its translation which are here appended:

Patent Roll 37 Hen. III, m. 6.

Pro Petro de Sabaudia.

Rex Archiepiscopis etc. Salutem, Quia accepimus per Inquisitionem quam fieri fecimus quod a porta Castri de Pevenesh' versus Austrum usque ad Molendinum ad ventum Abbatis de Begham ex parte Occidentali de Westhamme et inde per vetus cheminum usque ad Ruding et inde per medium Dominici de Wodinton ex parte boreali Curie Godefridi Falconar et inde ad pontem de Chisilford per vetus cheminum et inde per veterem viam inter Alciston et Sihalmeston et sic inde usque Croteberge per regalem viam et inde usque ad pontem de Glinde per regalem viam et inde per filum aque de Lewes ex parte Australi usque ad mare et inde per costeram maris usque ad portam de Pevenesh', tenuit Willelmus quondam Comes Moreton Warrennam suam pertinentem ad Baroniam suam et Honorem de Pevenesham, Concessimus et hac carta nostra confirmavimus dilecto et fideli nostro Petro de Sabaudia quod ipse et heredes sui imperpetuum habeant liberam Warrennam per metas et divisas predictas sicut predictus Comes habuit Dum tamen ille non sit infra metas Foreste nostre.

¹ *Arch. Journ.* LXXII. 205.

² p. 206, note.

Translation

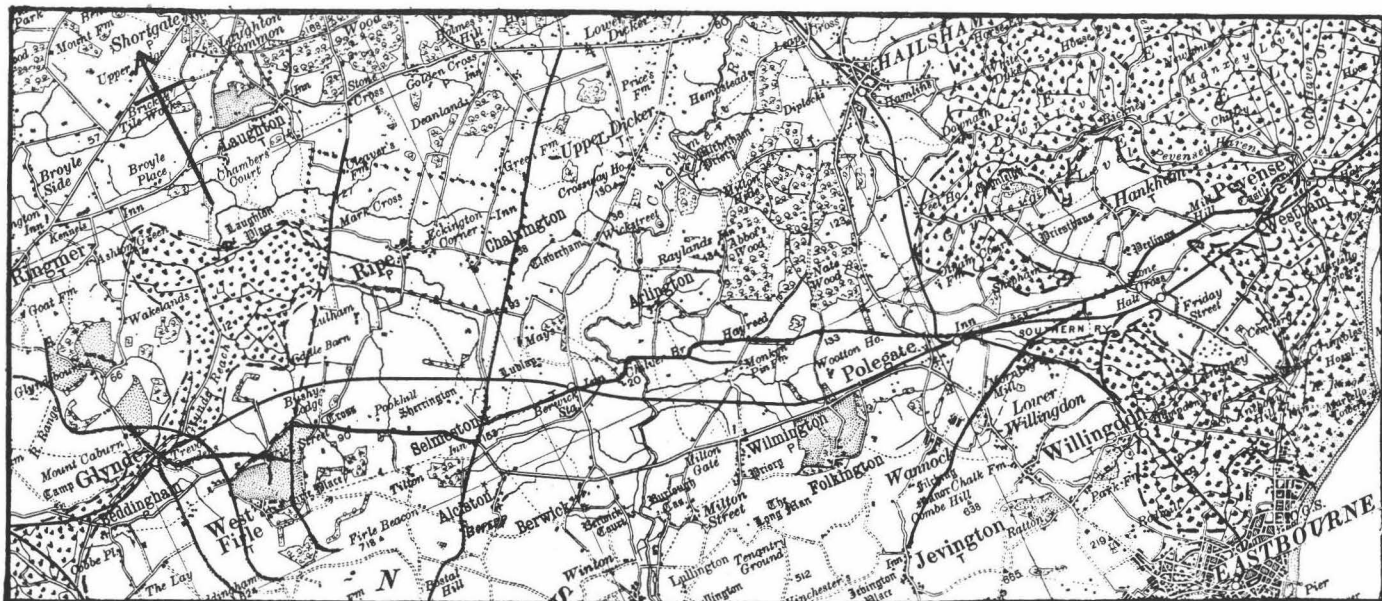
For Peter of Savoy.

The King to Archbishops &c., Greeting, Because we understand from the Inquisition that we have caused to be made that from the gate of the Castle of Pevensey towards the South as far as the Windmill of the Abbot of Bayham on the west side of Westham and thence by the old road as far as Ruding and thence through the middle of the demesne of Wodinton on the north side of the Court of Godfrey Falconer and thence to the bridge of Chisilford by the old road and thence by the old way between Alciston and Sihalmeston and so thence as far as Croteberge by the king's highway and thence as far as the bridge of Glinde by the king's highway and thence by the line of the water of Lewes on the South side as far as the sea and thence by the Sea coast as far as the gate of Pevensey, William sometime Count of Mortain held his Warren belonging to his Barony and Honour of Pevensey, We have granted and by this our charter have confirmed to our beloved and faithful Peter of Savoy that he and his heirs may have for ever free Warren by the metes and bounds aforesaid as the said Count had, so long, nevertheless, that it is not within the metes of our Forest.

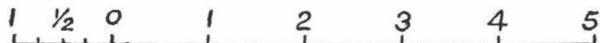
The document is a charter giving the King's grant of free warren over a wide area bounded on the north by a line of roads all the way from Pevensey Castle to Glynde Bridge, on the west by the River Ouse, and on the south by the sea. The boundaries are thus clearly intended to follow important and easily distinguished lines, so that the roads mentioned must have been well known and their line suitable for the run of this boundary.

The windmill of the Abbot of Bayham 'on the west side of Westham' must be the one which gave its name to Mill Hill, for the mill at Stone Cross is known to have been first built at a later date. 'From the gate of the Castle of Pevensey towards the *south*' seems curious, for 'west' is the only possible direction for this boundary from Pevensey; Westham High Street does, however, run west-south-west, so perhaps we may assume that the orientation is faulty to that extent. This would also fit with the description of the windmill as 'west' of Westham, for it is actually north-west.

Wodinton is of course Wootton, and as the road went through the middle of the demesne but *north* of the



SCALE OF MILES.



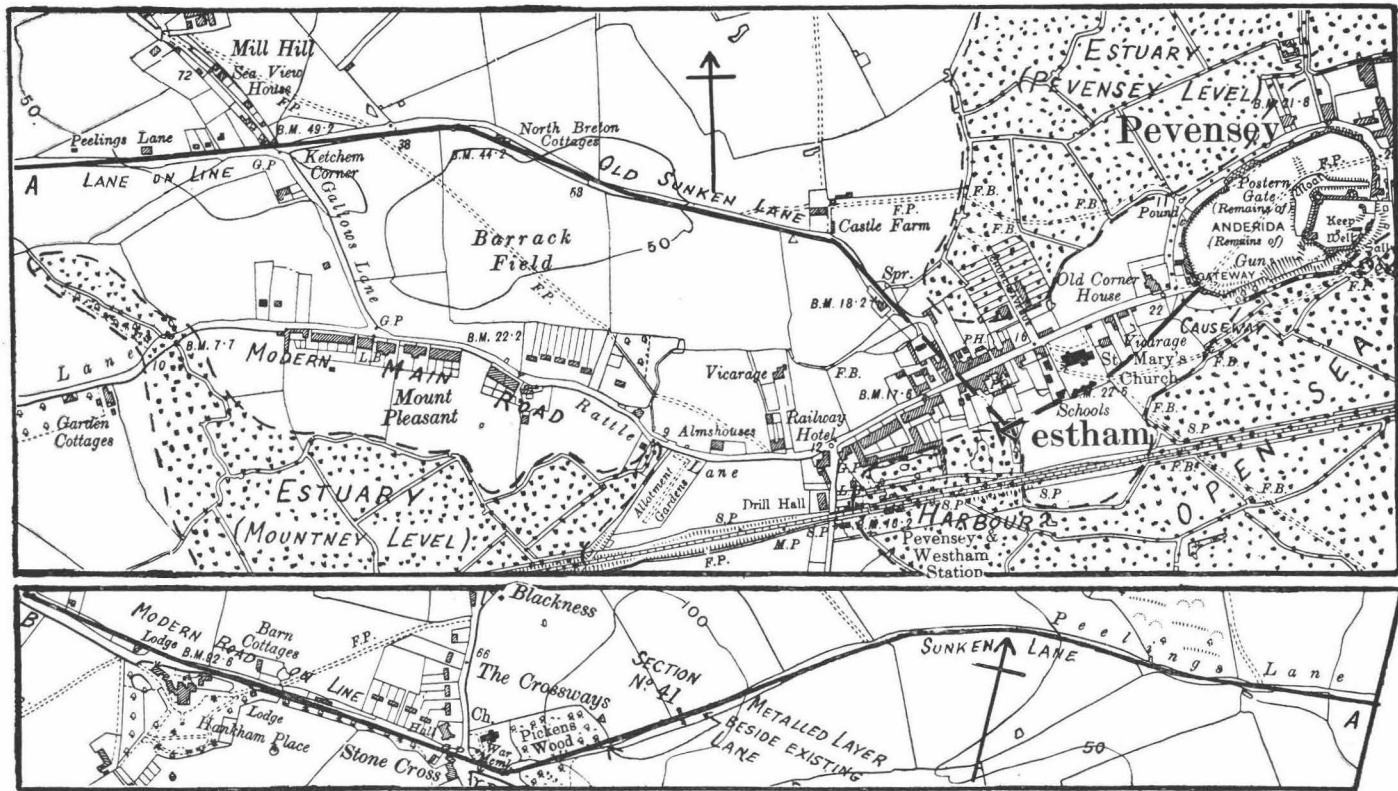
ROMAN ROAD
 ROMAN LAND SETTLEMENT AREA
 ESTUARY.....

Court (i.e. Wootton House) it cannot be anything else than the old road, now derelict, which runs prominently along the ridge westwards from Polegate, a most suitable boundary line. A field adjoining this old road on the south, just east of Wootton, is actually called Farnestreet in another old document, so that we even have an ancient name for the road here.

The boundary follows 'the old road' to Chilver (Chisilford) Bridge, and as no mention is made of the prominent landmark Moors Hill, or of Monken Pyn, which would probably have been included had the boundary gone that way, it seems most likely that the 'old road' went straight on by Hayreed and Pickhams, as the coach route did later, to turn by Whiteing Lane into Moorshill Lane west of Moors Hill, and so to the bridge. It is at least clear that this important line of old lanes from Polegate to Chilver Bridge formed the boundary, and, further, that they were regarded not merely as a 'king's highway' but as 'the old road'.

Next, the boundary goes 'by the old way *between* Alciston and Sihalmeston (Selmeston)'. As these places lie almost north and south of each other, it seems clear that the old way cannot have *led* between them but must *lie* between them, i.e. on or near the boundary of the parishes. This is supported by the fact that the boundary between these villages does follow the present road from the west side of Berwick Common for over a mile, to a point west of the Barley Mow corner, Selmeston.

The boundary is then continued 'by the king's highway', first to a point called Croteberge and then to Glynde Bridge. Croteberge is not known with certainty, but the existence of two fields called 'The Old Burgh' and 'Burghs', lying about 350 yds. to the north of the main Lewes-Eastbourne road near Newhouse Farm, Firle, close to the point where this road makes a right-angled bend which we shall see later to be of special significance, seems to make it very probable that this is Croteberge. It would be natural to mention an old landmark occurring at a point where the highway made a



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pronounced change of direction. The boundary then followed the highway to Glynde Bridge, probably by the most direct route.

The importance of this evidence for a line of old road between Pevensey and Glynde, recognized as old in 1252 and still definitely identifiable for a considerable distance, cannot be too greatly stressed.

DETAILED SURVEY

Main route. The edges of the marshland, or former estuarine areas, are usually very well defined and it is thus fairly easy to reconstruct the former coast-lines. They correspond, in this district, with the Ordnance Survey level of 12 ft., or thereabouts, and this fact is useful for fixing the probable coast-line in some doubtful places.

When allowance has been made for these profound changes in the Pevensey district, it is clear that the available ground for a road to Anderida has become narrowed down to a single ridge between Polegate, Stone Cross, and Westham. Any other route would have involved ferrying, and, though there may have been such crossings too, I think that a through road would certainly have been provided to such an important fort.

At Westham the estuary levels come close along the north side of the village almost to Castle Farm, and on the south side they come close to the houses all the way from Pevensey Castle to the railway station. The station lies in a nook sheltered from the south-west by a small ridge, then a headland, along which runs Gregory Lane. To the west of this ridge Mountney Level stretches in north of the railway again and just cuts the present main road, Rattle Lane, west of Mount Pleasant. Langney ridge then formed a wide peninsula stretching south-east from Stone Cross, with an estuary over Willingdon Levels to the west.

From all this it is, I think, quite clear that Westham High Street cannot be taken as a guide to the direction of the Roman road. If continued beyond the railway

station, it would have become involved in a 560-yds.-wide crossing of the Mountney Level estuary, with another estuary beyond Langney ridge before the high ground of the Downs was reached.

It seems far more likely that a Roman road would follow the main ridge, and there is still a lane which actually takes that route. This is Peelings Lane, an old lane, deeply sunken in places, which leaves Westham High Street at right angles, just where it is clear of the low ground to the north, passes Castle Farm, and proceeds in a series of short but distinctly straight lengths, apparently designed to keep it on the high ground, all the way to Stone Cross, carefully avoiding the Mountney Level, which the present main road fails to do. The short alignments seem strikingly intended to circumvent the low ground, and look distinctly Roman in character as in Fig. 1, thus:

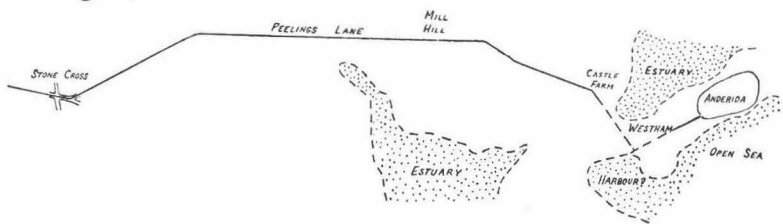


FIG. 1.

It is difficult to see how a road could have been planned more conveniently, in straight lengths, from the neighbourhood of Stone Cross to Pevensey, avoiding these obstacles, than this route, and the probability of its being the Roman road is thus greatly strengthened. Moreover, it will be remembered that the old boundary described above ran from Pevensey 'as far as the Windmill of the Abbot of Bayham on the west side of Westham', and Peelings Lane goes direct from Westham to Mill Hill where this mill must have stood. It is thus almost certain that this lane formed the first part of the boundary which, as we saw above, was planned to follow a prominent landmark, 'the old road', all the way thence to Selmeston.

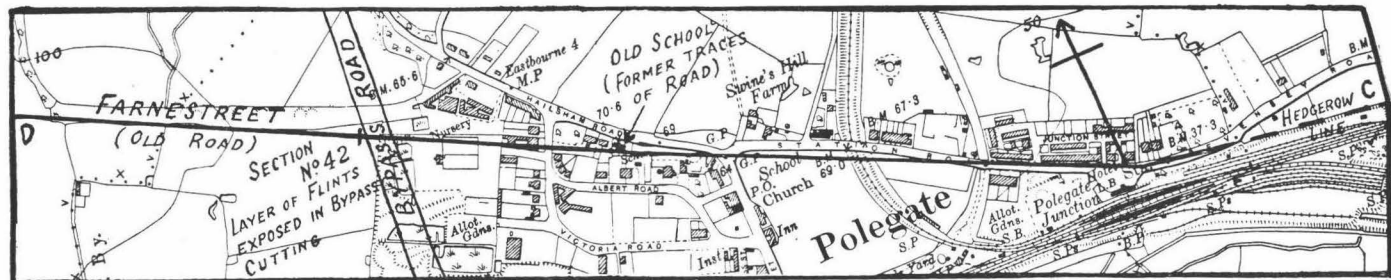
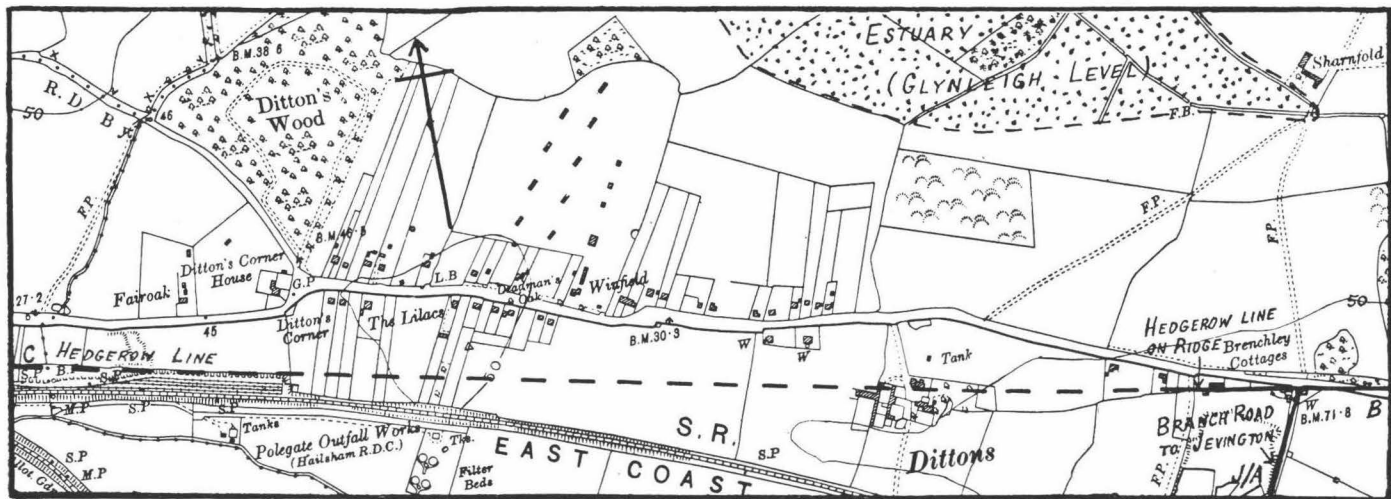
There is, however, some constructional evidence too. The modern metalled surface of the lane is very narrow, particularly from Mill Hill to Stone Cross where traffic now follows the main road near by. For 170 yds. before reaching Pickens Wood, near Stone Cross, there is a raised bank of soil on the north side of the lane, and the present roadway is only 7 ft. wide beside it. Investigation showed that the metalled surface extended right under this bank of earth, which had been dumped there at some time, and had formerly been 22 ft. wide there, of small flints, with a thickness of about 4 in. This wider metalled layer is traceable among the road-side scrub on into Pickens Wood in a way which suggests that it is old and not merely an earlier but modern form of Peelings Lane. A similar strip of wider metalling was also traced by probing in the wide grass verge, south of the lane, between Mill Hill and North Breton Cottages. Both these instances occur just where they would well fit the original alignments.

We may, I think, accept Peelings Lane as a definite route throughout for the Roman road, and only one small but interesting point remains to be considered at the Westham end. Why does the lane appear to be merely a side-turning off the High Street there, when the approach to the main gate of Anderida seems to have run almost parallel to the street, but on the south side of the church?

When the contemporary coast-line is taken into account it is seen that a distinct bay existed where the railway station stands. This would have been sheltered from the south-west by a small headland, and, though of course less secure than the extensive estuary behind Pevensey, it is possible that it might have had advantages for small shipping, such as an access less restricted by tides than the inner estuary. That this nook may have been used as a small harbour should, I think, be considered, and, if so, it would account for the approach road being connected in Westham as a T junction, to serve both the harbour and the fort.

Recent work¹ by the Ancient Monuments Branch out-

¹ Information kindly supplied by Mr. B. W. Pearce, F.S.A.

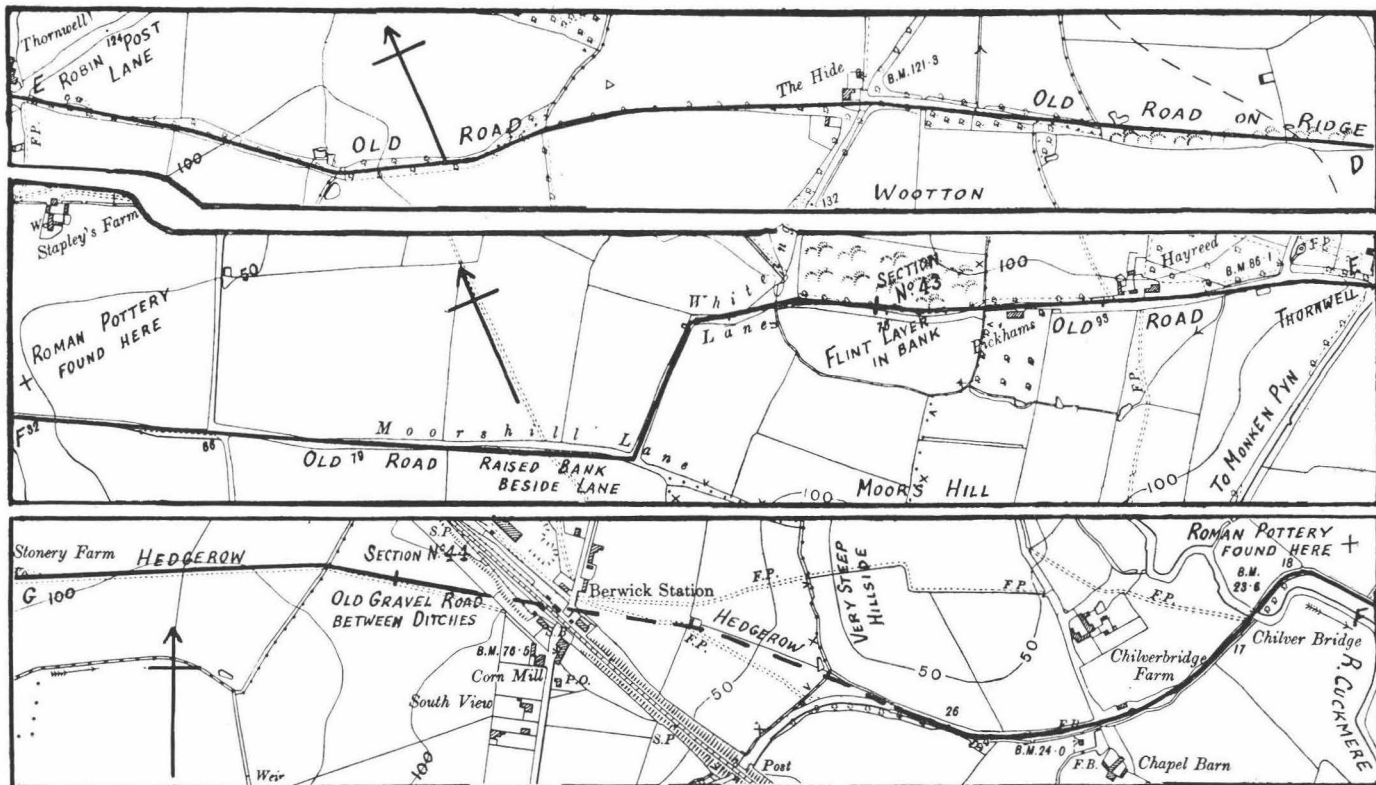


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side the West Gate has disclosed a causeway of large stones across an earlier ditch, with a cobbled roadway leading from the centre of the gate towards a line of hedgerows along the south side of gardens and Westham churchyard, a direction which takes it direct to the nearest corner of the little bay, where it would meet the line from Peelings Lane just west of the school buildings.

West of Stone Cross there is no definite evidence till Polegate is reached, but, as the road there is certain, it is clear that it must have run somewhere along this ridge by Dittons, for there were estuaries close to the ridge on each side. Near Hankham Place enclosed strips on the north side of the road mask its straightness, but the modern road must be practically on the line as far as Brenchley Cottages. There are now two alternatives, for the most likely route is a continuation of the same alignment close to a line of hedgerows to Dittons Farm, following the highest part of the ridge, and so on across the fields to skirt the edge of the railway for 630 yds. along another hedgerow, and rejoin the existing road at a bend 170 yds. east of Polegate Station. It seems most probable that this was the original aligned road, although no trace of it other than the hedgerows mentioned can now be found. The only alternative is that the existing road still marks the route, although this involves accepting several curves, with a sharp double bend at Dittons Corner, and a descent from the top of the ridge to lower ground on the north slope. I think the first route is decidedly the most probable here, even though the existence of some bends farther along the road is fairly certain.

West of Polegate we have the 'old road' of the charter, Farnestreet, for three miles to Chilver Bridge. For about a mile this is on a distinct ridge, and it is probably an old ridgeway utilized as part of the Roman road; it is direct but not rigidly straight. A good deal of flint metalling still remains in places but, although the lane is now quite impassable and overgrown, it must be remembered that it once formed part of a main coach road from Lewes to Eastbourne, and so the metalling



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may be of modern origin. One important piece of constructional evidence was, however, found which cannot be modern. The London-Eastbourne road has recently been cut through the ridge just west of Polegate. In the sides of the cutting, which show a distinctly stoneless clay soil, there were traces of a thin layer of flint below the top soil, like an old road surface. On the west of the cutting this lay some 30 ft. south of the existing old lane and was quite distinct from it. A section excavated behind the edge of the cutting disclosed a layer of flint, evidently a laid surface, 10 ft. wide and 4 in. thick, and a similar deposit can be seen on the east side of the cutting. It is evident that this formed part of the original Roman road, just on the general alignment of Farnestreet, where the later lane has wandered slightly north of the true line. Moreover, if the line is continued eastward it passes practically through the grounds of the old school, where traces are said to have been noticed when the school was built.¹

Taken together, it seems that we have here a convincing body of evidence for an east-west Roman road through Polegate, namely a traditional 'old road', the name Farnestreet, actual metalling found, and traces reported previously at the old school, which gives us grounds for confidence that the route is at least a Romanized one.

Continuing westward, the old road is plainly visible throughout, very direct though with one slight bulge southward, perhaps to keep on drier ground, for no signs of any earlier road remain within the bulge. At Thornwell it crosses Robin Post Lane, an old track on generally straight lines from Milton Street to Hailsham, but as our road obviously goes straight on for another half-mile to Whiteing Lane, Arlington, there is no reason to suggest any connection. The ridge we have been following from Polegate dies away near Thornwell, and another one, Moors Hill, takes its place slightly to the south and parallel with it. To gain this ridge our road has to make a double turn, which it appears to have done originally,

¹ *Loc. cit.*

where Whiteing Lane now is. The connecting link is 230 yds. long. Moorshill Lane then carries the old road on in a straight line for 1,100 yds. to Chilver Bridge. Roman pottery has been found close to the lane north-east of the bridge.

It may be recalled that the old charter makes no mention of Monken Pyn or Moors Hill and, if the 'old road' had turned at Thornwell and Monken Pyn to take that course, they would surely have been mentioned, for the hill is quite a prominent landmark. It seems probable, then, that the bends at Whiteing Lane are original and the kink too insignificant to be referred to in the charter.

The possibility that the road might have continued straight on by Stapley's Farm was fully examined. A cart-track and line of hedgerows runs past the farm, but it leads to a point on the River Cuckmere where the farther bank forms a high scarp, an inconvenient place for a crossing, and there are no likely indications beyond. The route is thus very improbable.

A valuable piece of structural evidence was found just west of Pickhams. The lane is slightly sunken, with the metalled surface of the now derelict modern road clearly visible in places. This metalling is 15 ft. wide and forms a well-defined layer, but on the north side of the sunken lane *another* metalled layer about 2 ft. above the other, and existing to a width of $6\frac{1}{2}$ ft., remains on a ledge among bushes. This upper layer is traceable from Pickhams to the junction with Whiteing Lane, just along that part of the existing lane which bulges southward from the true line. It is difficult to see what else this upper surface can be but the original Roman metalling, for the road at the lower level represents the now derelict coaching road, and the difference in level the sunken way that formed *before* this early modern metalling was laid. It is very unlikely that this road would have been metalled at any other time between then and the Roman period.

We may, I think, accept the course of the road as certain all the way from Polegate to Chilver Bridge, but

in continuing westward there are some complex problems to be considered.

First of all, the road mentioned by Allcroft is still plainly visible, just south of the railway at Berwick Station, as a wide agger with a hollow or ditch on each side, running across a meadow, formerly part of Berwick Common, almost direct from the station towards Stonery Farm. It is part of an old road past the farm to Selmeston Church, now represented by a footpath and lanes not quite on the original track of the road. This evidently lay just north of them, to judge by the bit of visible old road which now disappears into the hedgerow west of the common, and by certain walls alongside Stonery Farm. The route is again practically a ridge-way. A section was examined 230 yds. west of the station and the agger proved to have a simple layer of gravel 24 ft. wide and 3-5 in. thick, perhaps derived in part from the hollows on each side, for the ground has a natural layer of gravel there. But for the very clear hollows defining the road it would have been difficult to tell it from the natural gravel layer, and it seems possible that the roadmakers took advantage of this by simply adding to the natural layer when excavating the side hollows for drainage.

Traces of the road seem to have been found on the same line just east of the station when some houses were built there. Tracks and a piece of hedgerow suggest a direct continuation eastward to Chilver Bridge just to the north of Chilverbridge Farm, but this involves a steep climb over a small rounded hill, which shows no trace of any road down its steep western face, just where any such signs ought to be most obvious had the road existed. It seems to me more probable that the road curved round the south side of the hill, just as it still does, then along a hedgerow towards the station; and this, in fact, fits even better with the line of the road west of the station.

There is thus considerable evidence for a continuation of our road past Berwick Station and Stonery Farm to Selmeston Church along the slight ridge there. At

Selmeston it meets a road which comes north-eastward from the Downs at Bopeep Farm. This is an important connection, for there is a straight track right across the Downs from Newhaven, near the mouth of the Ouse, to Bopeep, descending the steep escarpment at this convenient point, obviously one of the main traffic routes across this part of the Downland region. Where, for 300 yds. just north of Bopeep Farm, it crosses low ground, the road runs on an embankment as much as 8 ft. high, and 10 ft. on the lower side, with a width at the top of 15 to 18 ft. Though it once formed part of the main Lewes—Eastbourne coach road and may therefore have been improved for that traffic, the road elsewhere was a poor one and it seems likely that so large an embankment dated from an earlier period. North-east of Selmeston this road follows an alignment from May's Corner through Poundfield Corner, Chalvington, traceable back to Selmeston Church by hedgerow lines, which appears to have formed a base line for an important series of Roman land measurements covering the rectangular lay-out of the land at Chalvington and Ripe.

It is evident that this north-east road was of some importance, and it is even possible that our easterly route had its origin here at least for a time. Traffic passing north-east from the Ouse Valley or the Downs near it would use the main route past Bopeep, and so this would be just the point at which there would be a need for a direct road east towards Pevensy and its estuaries.

But I think there was a westerly continuation too, although it may have been formed at a different time. The present Lewes—Eastbourne main road is very straight from a point 630 yds. west of Selmeston Corner to near Stanford Pound, and for nearly 1,300 yds. it carries the parish boundaries between Alciston, Selmeston, and Firle. It was not the main road until after 1810, but it is shown, exactly on its present course, on Gardner and Yeakell's map of Sussex in 1795, as a lane from Firle as far as Selmeston and Alciston. Its straightness is perhaps all the more important as evidence when it is con-

sidered that it was then only a lane and not the main road. At Stanford Pound slight bends occur, and where one has been cut back in front of the garden of the old workhouse a distinctly stony layer can be seen in the face of the bank. The name Stanford (Staneford in 1463¹) is itself suggestive.

If the alignment from Stonery Farm to Selmeston Church were continued westward it would meet the present main road just where the straight length begins. The route would be a possible one, but no trace could be found along it, and so it is perhaps reasonable to accept the existing line of road from the bend up to Selmeston Corner as the most probable line, for the parish boundary follows it throughout. The route keeps on somewhat higher ground and meets the north-eastward road at Selmeston Corner.

It will be recalled that the old charter ran its boundary along 'the old way *between* Alciston and Selmeston' from Chilver Bridge. If, as seems probable here, 'between' means 'on the boundary between', this exactly describes the road we have been discussing with, no doubt, its present eastward continuation to Berwick Common and Chilver Bridge. Whether this part of the road should be included as Roman too is uncertain. The way in which the parish boundary runs for 420 yds. as a hedgerow line straight from Selmeston Corner to the point where its line is picked up by the Berwick road at a sharp bend looks most suspiciously like a derelict bit of road, though there is no trace now, and if so it was already derelict at the date of Gardner and Yeakell's map. It is quite likely that this route is the 'old road' of the charter, but the other road by Stonery Farm is from its situation probably the older and, unless both roads are to be accepted as Roman (which is possible), I think it should be so taken.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that while I was examining the hedgerow line east of Selmeston Corner an old countryman came up. I told him I was looking for traces of a possible line of Roman road and asked if

¹ English Place-name Soc., *Sussex*, VII. 362.

he had ever seen any remains of an old road there. He said he had lived in the district over eighty years but had never seen anything on that line. Then, turning round and pointing to the Stonery Farm ridge, he added, 'But there's an old road over there'. This seems clear indication of a local tradition supporting the other route.

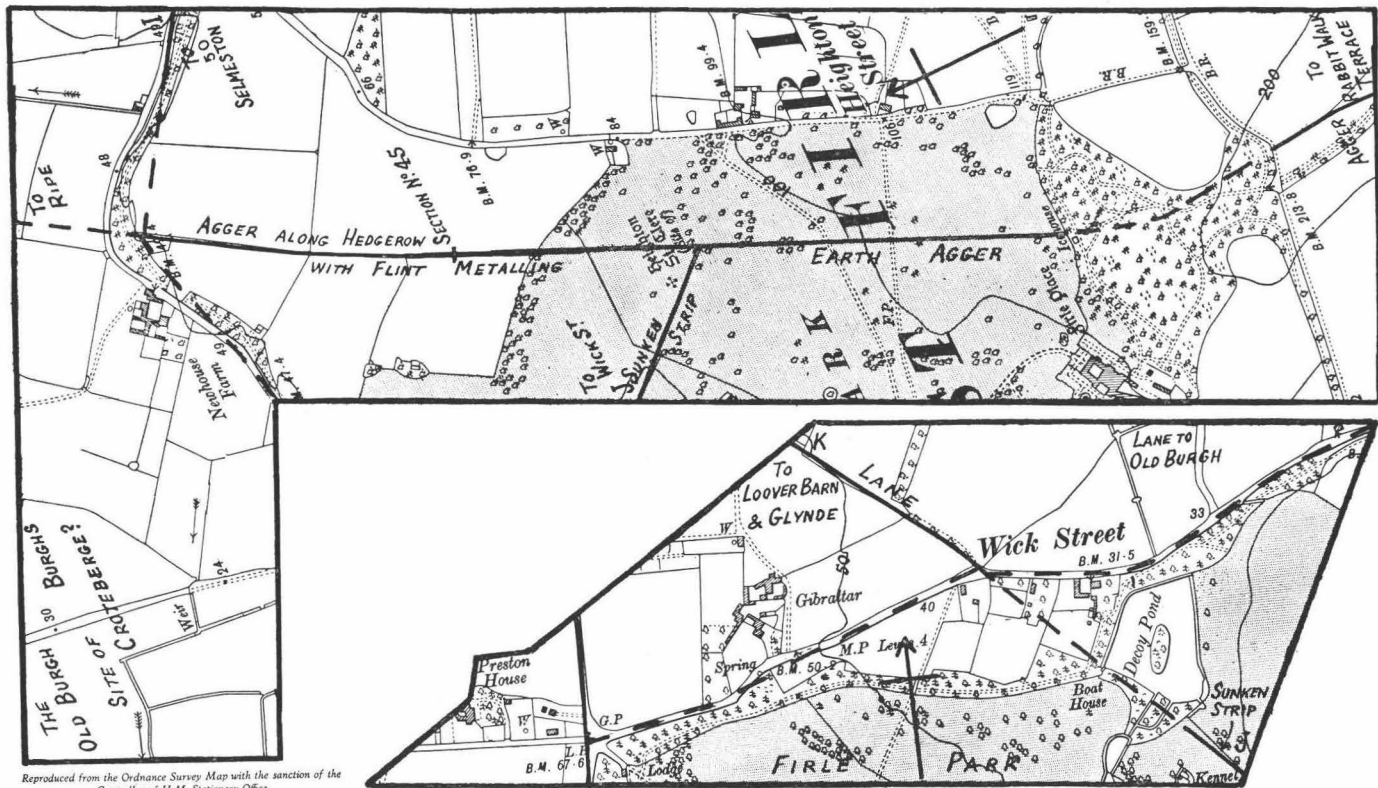
Branch road from Rabbit Walk. Just west of Stanford Pound the straight part of the present road ends with a right-angled curve south-west along the edge of Firle Park, close to Newhouse Farm, and it is particularly to be noted that just at this point another Roman road meets it. This road is plainly visible right across Firle Park, parallel with, and 550 ft. west of, the Heighton Street lane, as a distinct agger. Southward it mounts the Downs by a convenient spur leading to the Rabbit Walk Roman terrace-way described by Allcroft,¹ who was, however, content to accept the existing lane as its continuation northward.

In the park the agger, though continuously visible as a flattened ridge up to 55 ft. wide but more generally 24 ft. wide, has apparently been robbed of its metalling. Towards the north edge it still remains, and north of the park a line of hedgerows to Newhouse Farm marks its course, with some undisturbed remains of the metalled agger alongside. A section was examined here and showed a definite stony layer containing big flints for a width of 9 ft. on the west side of the hedgerow and up to a foot thick.

It is also to be noted that the alignment of Cleaver's Bridge lane in the Ripe area of Roman land measurements, if continued southward, would meet these roads at the corner by Newhouse Farm. Though no trace of a metalled road has been found between that point and Little Lulham, the coincidence of alignment is too striking to be overlooked, especially as it fits so well with the low-lying ground of Laughton Level, then an estuary, by just avoiding it at two points, as though that might have been the original intention.

Only 350 yds. north-west of Newhouse Farm lie the

¹ *Arch. Journ.* LXXII. 207.



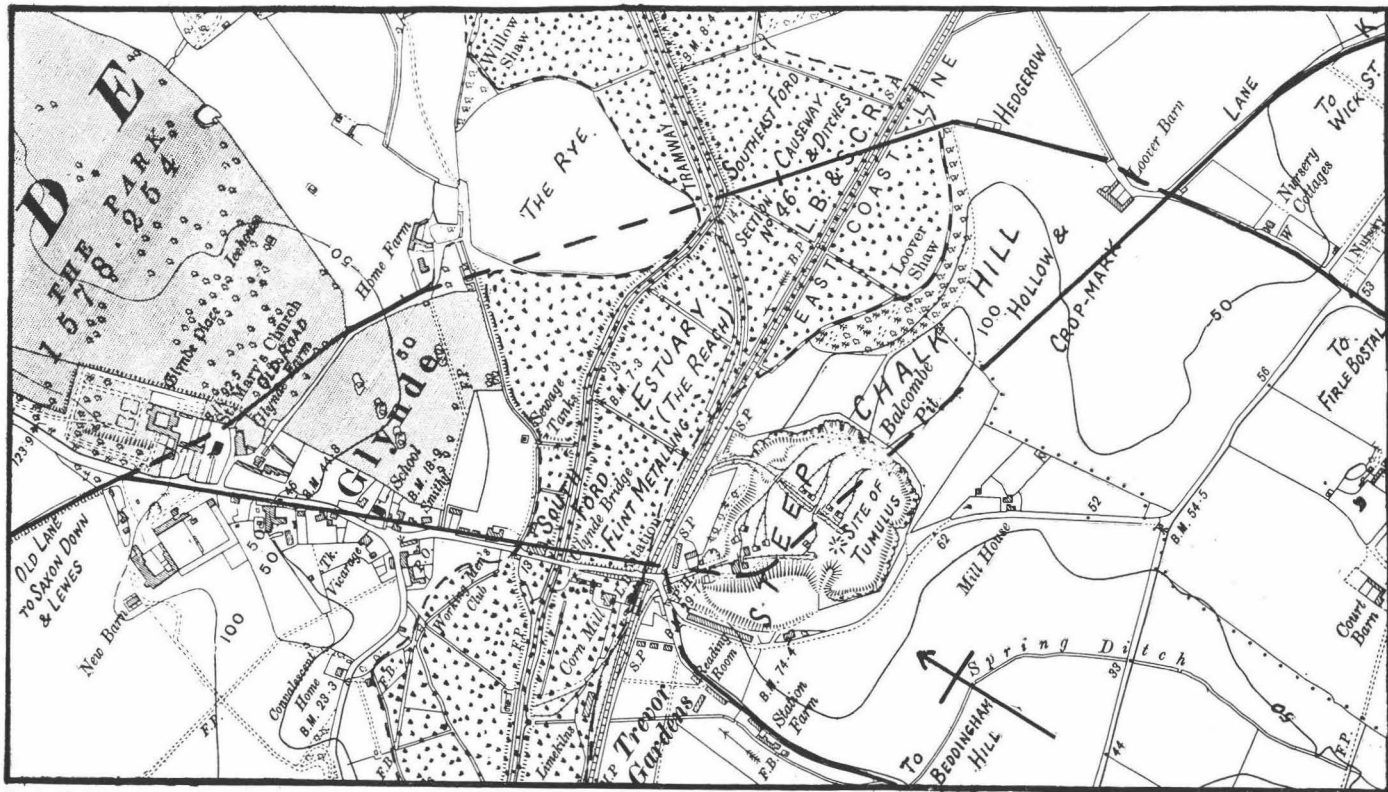
Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the
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fields called Old Burgh and Burghs, which may be the site Croteberge of the old charter.

Main route continued. We have now to consider the roads between Firle and Glynde, with the certain knowledge from earlier observations quoted above that there were two ancient fords across the Reach to Glynde. It is reasonable to expect several connections here, for the Glynde crossing was a most important link between the eastern Downs and the Caburn block, which gave a valuable dry route north-westwards to the Lewes area, the western Downs, and to the main Roman roads now known to exist north of Lewes.

For convenience let us call the crossing at Glynde Bridge South Ford, and that farther east South-east Ford. Of these the South Ford had much the shorter crossing over wet ground, some 170 yds., for it directly connected two spurs. From it a lane still runs practically straight to the Downs on Beddingham Hill past Prestoncourt Farm, although for the first 470 yds. it bends slightly round the foot of the chalk hill south of the crossing. Such a direct continuation from the ford to the Downs is just what we should expect of the original road, and I think we should accept it as such. It climbs Beddingham Hill by a convenient spur and, although the existing track forks half-way up, it is clear that the eastern route is the earlier of the two. This curves eastward round the head of a combe, just as the Rabbit Walk does, reaching the main ridge just north of Males Burgh tumulus. On the steep escarpment it is a terrace-way, usually 11 ft. wide, with a modern metalled road slightly sunk into its surface for the inner 6 ft., leaving a raised turf strip at the outer edge. From the appearance of the hill-side above, it seems probable that the terrace has been widened in modern times, but the similarity of its course up the hill to that of the Rabbit Walk is very striking.

The embankment leading across the flat ground from the South-east Ford can still be seen as a ridge 30 ft. wide, with ditches 130 ft. apart, though that on the west is not now very plain. It leads from a spur of high



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ground, which actually touches the Reach on the north side, to the eastern tip of the chalk hill south of the Reach, where an easy passage round this hill was possible. Though a longer crossing of low ground, 340 yds., than the South Ford, it thus gave a more direct route for east-bound traffic; and it should perhaps be noted that both routes pass this small but steep hill in a similar manner on east and west, so taking advantage of its dryness while avoiding awkward gradients.

Returning now to Heighton Street, in Firlie Park, there are, as Allcroft observed, traces of an old lane, marked now only by hedgerows and a sunken strip, which leads north-westward past the site of the church of Heighton St. Clere, through the park to the west bank of the decoy pond, and so to Wick Street, beyond which a lane continues in the same direction for 400 yds. before bending slightly west to Looover Barn.

The westward bend to the barn is important and has been overlooked in previous work. The lane there is sunken and of considerable age, whereas there is no trace of a direct continuation towards the ford except by way of the barn. The explanation was given me recently by a former resident at Gibraltar Farm and can indeed still be seen on the ground. The line of the lane from Wick Street is continued past Looover Barn on the south and straight up the hill towards the Glynde chalk-pit as a faint hollow in the arable on which crops grow with visible difference. A kink in the 50-ft. contour on the hill marks the position of this faint hollow even on recent maps.

Although remains of undisturbed metalling cannot now be found, I think the appearance of this strip and its alignment direct to the hill above the South Ford is sufficient to show that the south-east road originally came that way. It involved a stiff climb right over the hill and so, later on, the South-east Ford and causeway were made to obviate this. The junction of the new route with the old would then occur naturally at Looover Barn with the slight bends observed, and it may well be, too, that at the same time, if not earlier, the southward

route to the Downs by Preston, Newelm, and Firle Bostal came into being. The present lane is very straight and climbs the escarpment very similarly to the other two approaches, so there seems no reason why it should not be ancient.

Thus a cross-roads at Loover Barn would have been formed, of which the north-western limb would soon become disused, leaving the plan now seen there. It is also probable, of course, that an eastward link connected Preston, Wick Street, and Newhouse Farm corner directly, but this may well have been a rough track which just formed without proper laying-out.

To sum up, it seems probable that South Ford, the easiest crossing, was formed first, with a direct southward route to the Downs, and then a south-east route leading to the Rabbit Walk north-easterly road. Later, the South-east Ford was formed, and perhaps the route to Firle Bostal. It seems clear that our eastern route from Newhouse Farm was probably formed last or the bends there would scarcely have occurred. All these connections are quite natural and important links which a population living mainly on the Downs would have required for their traffic to other districts through this area.

After crossing the Reach by the South-east Ford the line of the embankment is continued north-west beyond a field called The Rye, in which traces are said to have been found, by a lane leading up towards Glynde Place. It is now deflected westward through the yard of Glynde Farm, but an old map of the Manor of Glynde in 1717 shows a distinct portion of it inside what is now the park. Beyond Glynde Place an old lane, on the same alignment, runs straight up to the Downs above Glynde Holt, where connection with various ridgeways is made, and this is clearly the route that led direct from the fords on to the Caburn block of Downs.

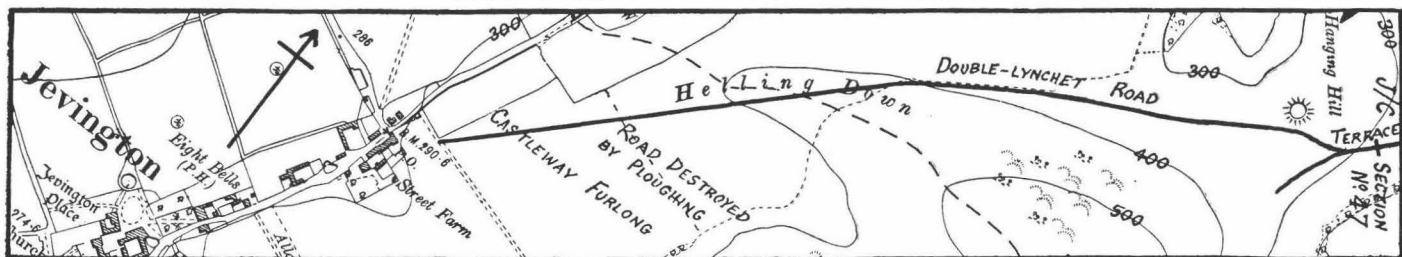
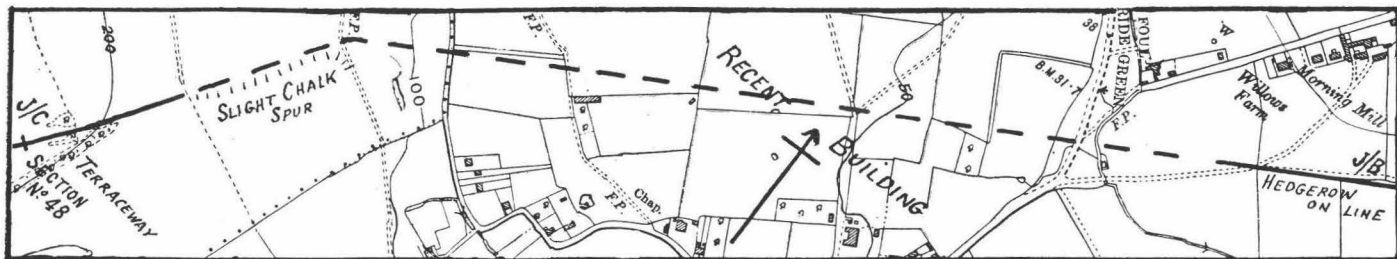
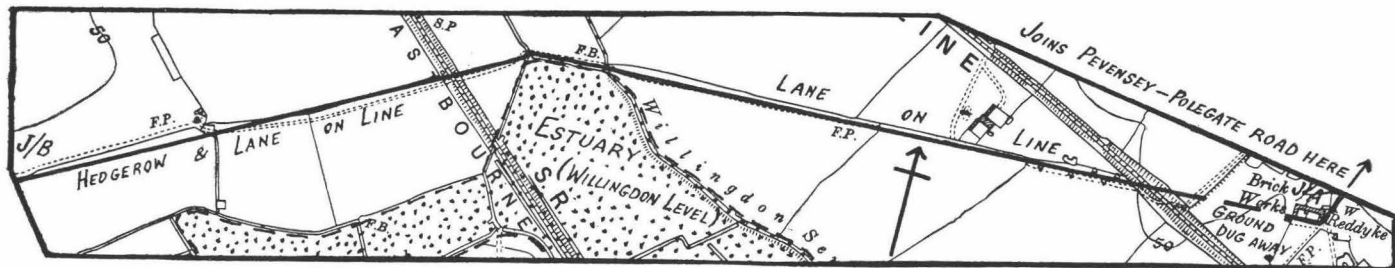
Stone Cross—Jevington branch road. This main route from Pevensey, which is so clearly defined through Polegate as to leave no doubt about its general direction, was evidently designed to run parallel with the Downs

and not directly to them. It is thus exactly similar to the Roman road from Barcombe Mills to Streat, Hassocks, and Washington¹ which takes a like course in that area. There would, however, be an obvious need for a direct connection from the eastern end of the Downs towards Pevensy, and, when the existence of the estuary over Willingdon Levels is allowed for, I think its route is quite clear.

This estuary must have extended to within 1,170 yds. of Polegate Station, and this would have been the nearest point to the coast at which a dry crossing to the Downs could have been made. To this very point run two straight lines of hedgerows with traces of a lane beside them, one, aligned eastward on Stone Cross, from the Reddyke Brickworks to the head of the estuary, the other thence to Foulride Green, Lower Willingdon. Lengths of hedgerow continue the same line towards Wannock Lane, across land now covered by houses, and the foot of the Downs is reached at a spur east of Hanging Hill, Wannock. Up the side of this spur runs a very fine example of a Roman terrace-way, generally 18 ft. wide, but in one place 34 ft. wide, then gradually narrowing towards the top where it fades out completely, but there are soon distinct traces of its continuation towards Jevington as a double-lynchet road, 12 ft. wide, across Helling Down. This disappears abruptly where plough-land is entered, but the track is shown on the old edition of the 6-in. map as continuing right on to Jevington, which it reaches at Street Farm. On Gardner and Yeakell's map the whole route is shown as a dotted lane from Jevington to Reddyke just as here described, and, from the directness of its alignment together with the nature of the terrace-way, there can be little doubt that this is the direct Roman road to the Downs, although owing to the stony soil below the Downs traces of metalling could not be proved with certainty.

After these lines were written I learnt from the Rev. W. Budgen that the field near Street Farm, through which the road runs, is actually called Castleway Furlong

¹ S.A.C. LXXVI. 7.



in the Tithe List, and the name might conveniently be adopted for this branch route.

Construction. The sections examined along the Pevensey-Selmeston road showed in every case a simple layer of flint or gravel metalling 3 to 5 in. thick, with little trace of other preparation. This is in accordance with what might be expected of a relatively late-period Roman road.

In Peelings Lane, near Stone Cross (Section No. 41, Fig. 2) the metalling was 22 ft. wide, of which 7 ft. on the south side forms the existing road surface, the remainder being deeply covered in places by dumps of earth. At the Polegate by-pass, Section No. 42 showed the layer of flint metalling to be intact for a width of 10 ft. and about 4 in. thick.

In the old lane near Pickhams the earlier road surface still remains on the bank north of the lane to a width of $6\frac{1}{2}$ ft. and about 4 in. thick. Section No. 43 shows its relation with the coach road which had been made at a much later date when medieval traffic had worn down the roadway by about 2 ft. The coach-road metalling is about 9 in. thick in the centre and there are, of course, abundant traces of it more or less undisturbed, though buried and derelict, all the way from Polegate by Thornwell to Moorshill Lane. This clear relic of the earlier metallated surface at Pickhams is therefore valuable as being independent of the modern work.

The road near Berwick Station (Section No. 44) shows up plainly on the ground owing to the hollows or shallow ditches bordering it. They are 24 ft. apart and the gravel layer, 3 to 5 in. thick, extended right into them at each side of the road. It was, indeed, difficult to distinguish from the natural gravel layer to be found beyond them. The ditches are quite definite, and it seems possible that, finding gravel *in situ*, the road-makers merely skinned the surface to expose the gravel, strengthened the gravel layer, and made the hollows to give the surface more drainage. This piece of road owes its preservation to the fact that the field formed part of Berwick Common and has not been heavily cultivated.

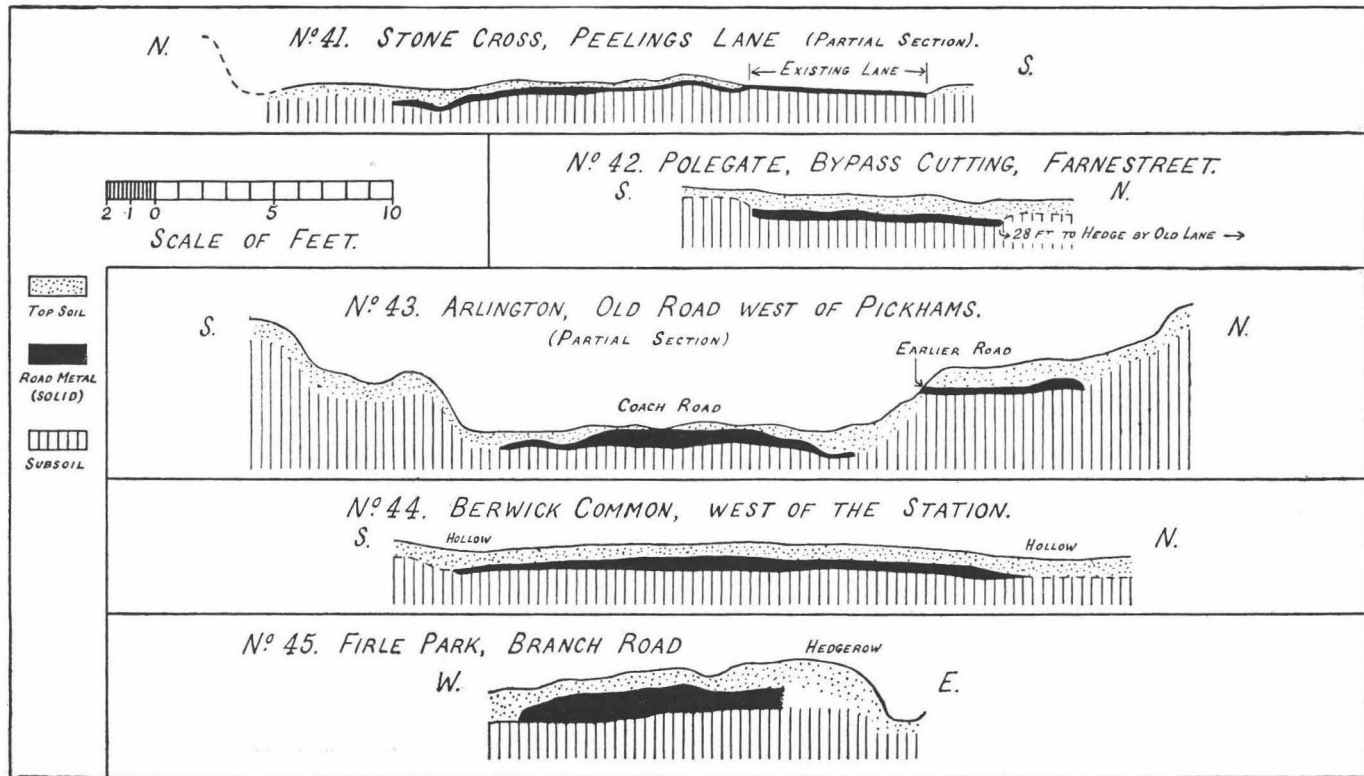


FIG. 2.

The road through Firlle Park from the Rabbit Walk terrace-way (which has been fully described elsewhere¹) is more heavily constructed. Traces of an earth agger, now much flattened in the park and robbed of its metalling but still plainly visible right across, suggest that this was about 24 ft. wide. At the north edge of the park flint metalling remains in places, and, in the fields just beyond, where the agger is very distinct along a hedgerow, Section No. 45 disclosed a heavy layer of flints and earth, up to 14 in. thick, still intact for 9 ft. west of the hedgerow, through which it had certainly extended eastward for perhaps a further 20 ft. The evidence would be consistent with an earlier date for this road than for the one from Pevensey.

Section No. 46 (Fig. 3) shows the surface profile of the South-east Causeway at Glynde and a partial examination of the agger. This large work, still plainly visible, consists of two parallel ditches about 130 ft. apart, centre to centre, the western one now nearly silted up, and a large earth agger, 30 ft. wide and 22 in. high in the middle. A perfectly flat space some 46 ft. wide separates the agger from the ditches on each side, rather like the appearance of Roman roads with small side-ditches, sometimes called triple roads, which have been observed occasionally.² This space makes it clear, I think, that the earthwork is a causeway and not merely a floodbank or dam, for such banks usually rise close beside the drain which provided their material. The agger was found to be entirely of earth and no metalling was seen, but it is known from Mr. Colgate's evidence above (p. 32) that there was a paved ford in the river-bed here.

We may also recall here the evidence collected by Wisdom about the road to the South Ford at Glynde (p. 31), which showed that the metalling there was of large flint with a few sandstones, about 30 ft. wide and two stones (say 6-8 in.) thick.

Sections 47 and 48 show the surface profile of the terrace-way that led down the escarpment of the Downs

¹ Loc. cit.

² Margary, *Ant. Journ.* xix. 53.

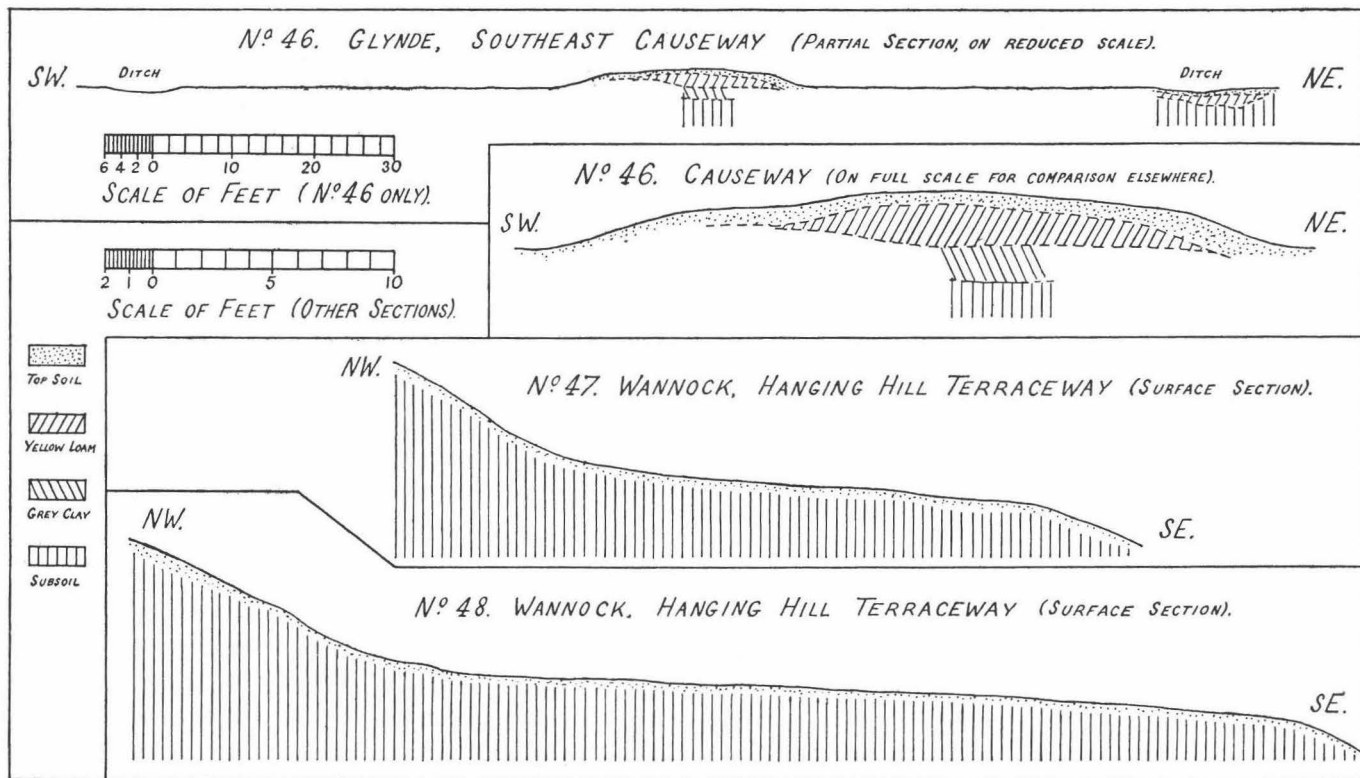


FIG. 3.

at Hanging Hill, Wannock, on the direct road from the Downs to Pevensey. It is a very good example of a Roman terrace-way, showing the gradual slope towards the outer edge for drainage. No. 47 shows a portion of average width, 18 ft., while, a few yards farther down, the terrace widens considerably to about 34 ft. as in No. 48. South-westwards from the terrace-way the road is continued towards Jevington on Helling Hill as a double-lynchet terrace about 12 ft. wide.

SUMMARY

The estuaries around Pevensey in Roman times make it clear that the approach road must have run by Peelings Lane from Westham to Stone Cross, then straight along the ridge to Polegate. Old lanes continue to mark its course by Thornwell, Chilver Bridge, and Berwick Station to Selmeston, where it meets a north-easterly road from the Downs. The main road, formerly a lane, continues it to Newhouse Farm, Firle, where it joins another road from the Downs by Heighton Street. Connections thence with the two fords at Glynde are traceable. The route is clearly described in a charter of 1252 as a boundary and much of it was called 'the old road' even then. A branch road from near Stone Cross gave direct access round the head of the Willingdon estuary to the Downs at Jevington.

In conclusion, thanks are due to those owners and others who so readily gave permission for these investigations to be made.