

X.—THE STANEGATE AT WALWICK GRANGE.

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The following abbreviations are used in this paper :

AA¹⁻⁴ *Archæologia Aeliana*, 1st to 4th series.
EE *Ephemeris Epigraphica*.
OS Ordnance Survey.

The following paper is a re-description of the course of the Stanegate across the Walwick Grange estate¹ in view of new evidence additional to that set forth by the present writer in "The Stanegate at North Tyne."² Starting from the point where the Stanegate appeared, from the evidence of that paper, to reach the river North Tyne, a search was made for the road on the left (i.e. east) bank of the river in July 1936. Extensive trenching failed to produce any evidence for the road, and so, in September 1937, a return was made to the right bank to cut further trenches along the line laid down in 1935. These additional trenches showed that the large stones of sections VI-VIII were the broken top of the natural limestone with sandstones and whinstones which had worked down the hill-side. In section v the regular and compact boulders were so very like road-bottoming that it was only by finding similar material covering the subsoil clay over a wide area to north and south that their natural origin was fully proved. With the elimination of section v, suspicion fell upon the whole line from sections III to IX as laid down in 1935.

¹ One-inch OS map 6 (square F 12).

² AA⁴ XIII, 201-5.

Positive evidence, however, was soon found by further work in 1937 and, as crops permitted, in September 1938. The sections have been arranged in a single series, numbered I to XIX on figure 1 (p. 143). Eight full cross-sections were cut and these are marked by a bar. The rest, marked by an arrow in the relevant position, revealed the kerb, or at least the edge, of the road. Of the cross-sections, IV, VII, VIII and XVIII were the most useful, and these are shown in diagram in figure 2 (p. 145).

Sections I and II gave the south edge of the rather scanty road-metalling. Section III (see plate XXII, fig. 1) produced eleven sandstone kerbs averaging 12 in. either way and forming a straight edge which lined up with sections I, II, and IV. The kerbs were backed by medium metalling which was uncovered for 5 ft. to the north. Beyond this, probing showed the road to be very fragmentary, so that no defined edge could be found on the north.

Section IV, a full cross-section (see fig. 2, p. 145), was 13 ft. wide and had no surviving kerbs. The bottoming, of 5-in. grade sandstone, was laid on the clay subsoil; the upper layer had been ploughed away, but traces of gravel and small-sized sandstone still filled the crevices of the bottoming. No ditch was found, although the trench was continued for 12 ft. to the south.

In section V (section II of the 1935 report) solid bottoming was found, and both edges were opened up for about 6 ft. One good kerbstone was found; the average width of the road was 19 ft. 3 in., which rather exceeds other sections.

Section VI, cut a few feet east of section I of the 1935 report, confirmed and amplified the evidence from that section. Once more only the bottoming of 6-in. grade sandstone survived, though gravel in the crevices gave evidence for an upper layer now ploughed away. The search for a ditch, by continuing the trench for 20 ft. to the north, was fruitless. The north edge was well defined by three consecutive kerbstones and three more within the next six feet

westward. The road was only 12 ft. 6 in. wide, but may well have lost a few feet by ploughing.

Section VII was located by probing. When opened out (fig. 2, p. 145) it proved to be a single layer of 6-in. grade sandstone, for a width of 12 ft. 6 in., without kerbstones. Before crops permitted a search in the centre of the field, a continuous trench had been cut at the east end of field 199 (as it is numbered on the 25-inch OS map): it ran from the south-east corner for 140 ft. northward, and thus crossed what was afterwards found to be the actual course of the road and was also that laid down on the OS map. An average depth of 9 inches of soil covered the subsoil, and conditions were favourable for the preservation of the road. Yet the whole trench was devoid of stones or any trace of a road; presumably the plough had done its work all too thoroughly in this section. It is worth stressing the point to show the unreliability of negative evidence.

Section VIII was once more a triumph for the probe, which made it possible to test without trenching a hundred feet of ground likely to conceal the road and to find an excellent example of the road-structure (see fig. 2, p. 145). The road, 16 ft. 6 in. wide, was well preserved: large sandstone blocks, of 8-in. or 10-in. grade, formed the southern part; then came a patch of clean clay, covering some stones; and, finally, the northern half was built in two layers, the lower composed of 4-in. grade sandstone, the upper of the same-sized material alternating with larger blocks. Both edges were well defined.

Progress was now possible by kerb-sections: sections IX-XIII marked the south edge of the road, which here made a slight swerve. Section XI had large kerbstones for 5 ft. and was backed by solid road for 10 ft. to the north. In section XII six consecutive kerbstones were found.

For 100 ft. east of section XIII no certain trace of the road could be found. Then in sections XIV-XVI it was possible to define the north edge, marked in sections XV and XVI by good kerbstones. Section XVII provided a cross-

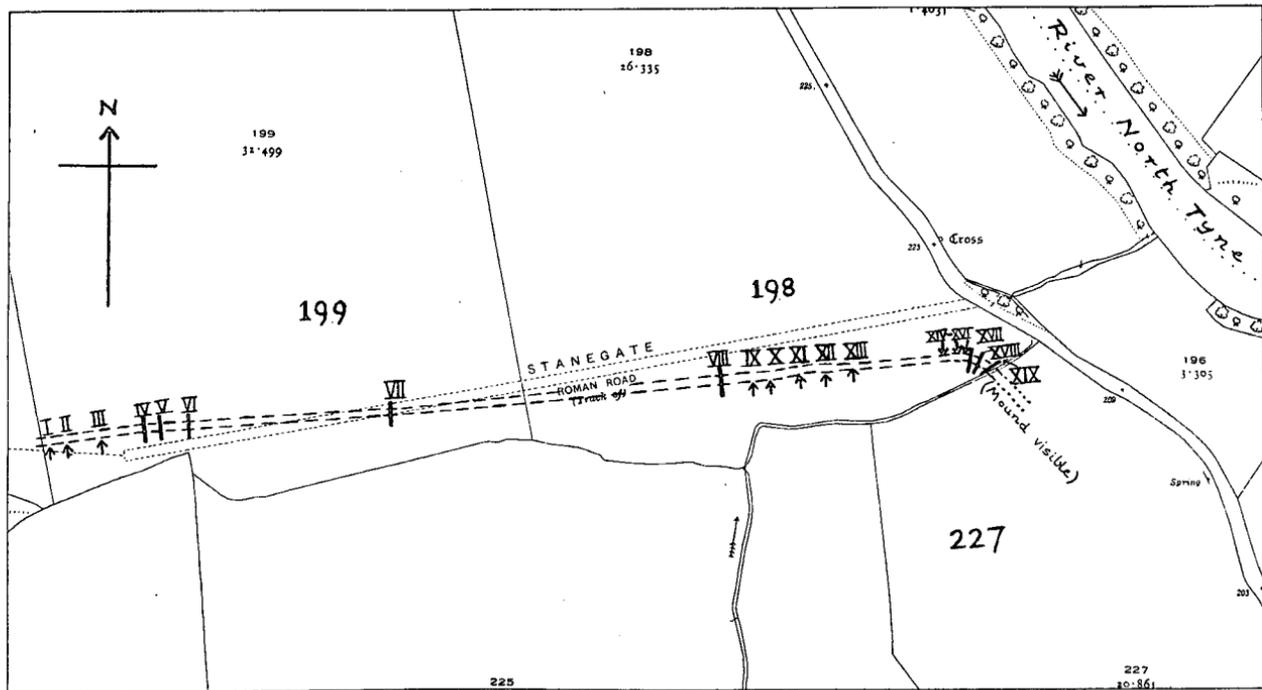


FIG. I. THE STANEGATE AT WALWICK GRANGE.

Reduced to $\frac{1}{2}$ from the 25-inch OS map of Northumberland NXCI.2 (ed. 1922), with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

section 20 ft. 6 in. wide, and formed of 5-in. grade metalling.

At this point the road swung sharply to the south-east through an angle of 35° . Sections XVIII and XIX tested the road in the middle and end of this turn, and the outer, north-eastern kerb was bared from sections XVII to XIX, a distant of 55 feet. Though missing in parts, it was continuous for 24 ft. at one point and had been built in short, straight segments. Beyond and north-east of this definite kerb-line there was some laid metalling, which at section XVII added five feet, and near section XVIII six feet, to the width of the road. This appears to be nothing more than an irregular widening of the road, which was all too narrow in any case, and particularly for a turn.

Section XVIII yielded the best example of road-structure (see fig. 2, p. 145). The lower layer, 12 ft. 6 in. wide, was formed of blocks averaging 8 in. either way and was bounded by excellent kerbstones; the upper layer was composed of smaller metalling and had a pronounced camber.

Section XIX (see plate XXII, fig. 2) marked the end of the turn and was cut alongside the wire-netting at the south edge of field 198. By good fortune the structure was hardly disturbed, although barely covered by soil and much exposed to the plough as it comes up the head-rigg. Here the road was 15 ft. wide, and had probably lost its north-east kerb. A single layer of 12-in. grade sandstone blocks remained.

In structure the road is lightly built. The stones used for the bottoming are very moderate in size, being much smaller than those used on the same road at Chesterholm.³ As might be expected, nearly all the top surfacing has been removed by ploughing. What is, indeed, surprising is that so much of the road has survived in the arable fields 198 and 199, where no more than 6 or 8 inches of soil conceal the road. In recent years the bailiff of the farm, Mr. B. Cartmell, has encountered the remains of the road in ploughing and was able to point out its approximate

³ AA⁴ XIV, 189.

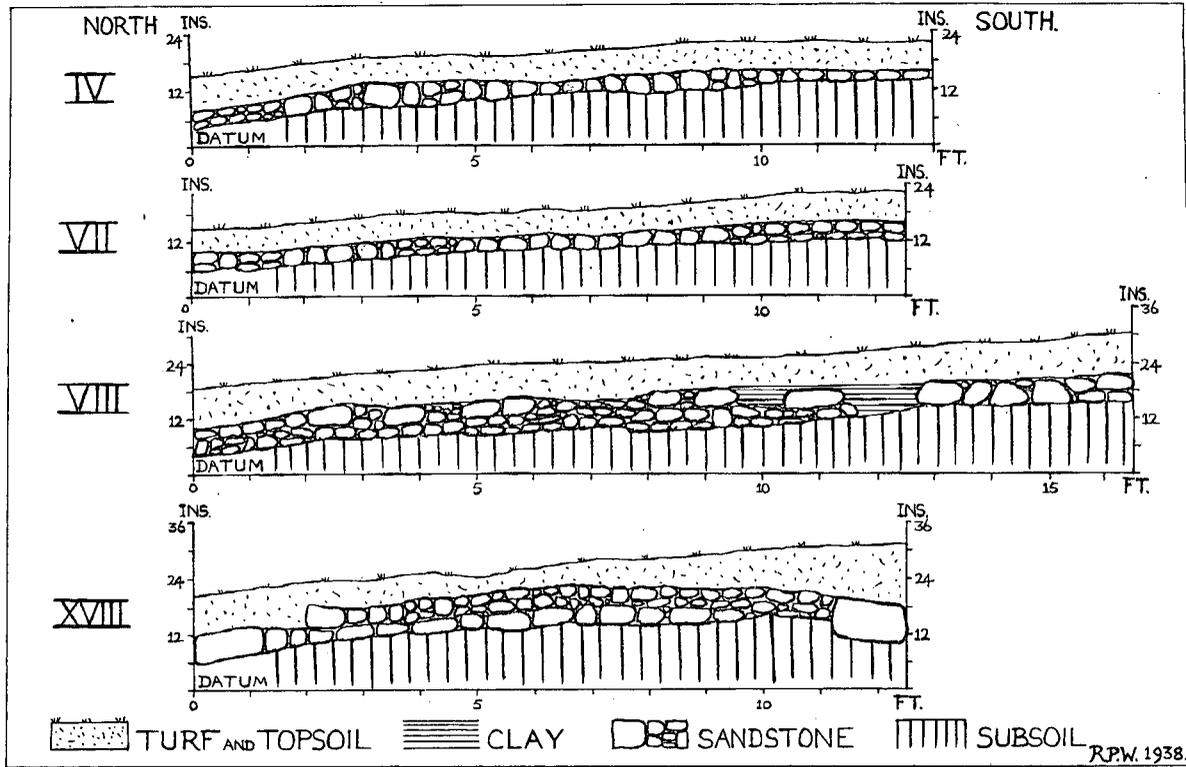


FIG. 2. CROSS-SECTIONS OF THE STANEGATE AT WALWICK GRANGE.

line. It was not, however, possible to see the track either when the land was under plough or the corn was ripe, and conclusive evidence was only forthcoming by systematic excavation.

We may take section VIII, which was 16 ft. 6 in. wide, as a representative width for the road, for this compares well with the Stanegate at Chesterholm. While sections v and xvii exceed this figure, the narrowness of the remainder (about 13 ft.) may well be due to removal of stones by ploughing. Despite the absence of ditches, the road exhibits all the other features of a Roman road, bottoming, traces of surfacing, pronounced kerbs, and straightness of layout. Since it is unrelated to any modern boundaries and continues the well-known line of Roman road from Chesterholm, Newbrough and Fourstones, we need have no hesitation in accepting it as a further sector of the Stanegate.

The map (fig. 1, p. 143) shows that the road, appearing at the west end of field 199, runs straight in sections I-IV. Then on the slight ridge at section v it swings about 3° to the south and, falling out of sight of sections I-IV, maintains a straight course across fields 199 and 198 till it reaches section xvii. Here, instead of proceeding towards the steep descent to the river, it swings south through 35° and now heads towards the south-east. The slight mound of the road can be seen for the next twenty yards in the grass field 227, where it crosses into another estate, not open to excavation. Further work upon the problem is, therefore, in abeyance. It is, however, satisfactory to note that, whatever the further detailed course of the Stanegate may be, it here makes a decided turn to the south-east and heads in the direction of Corbridge, which, as a milestone would suggest, seems to be its obvious destination.⁴

Although extensive probing tested the ground for several yards north of the turn in field 198, no trace was found of any branch-road running to Chesters (Cilurnum).

All the excavation was done by the present writer on

⁴ EE VII, 1108; AA⁴ XIII, 200.



Fig. 1. STANEGATE AT WALWICK GRANGE: SOUTH KERB AT SECTION III., LOOKING WEST.



Fig. 2. STANEGATE AT WALWICK GRANGE: SECTION XIX., LOOKING WEST.

behalf of the Durham University Excavation Committee. He wishes to thank Captain Keith for permission to excavate; and his bailiff, Mr. B. Cartmell, for information and facilities for the work; and Mr. W. W. Gibson, Mr. W. P. Hedley, Mr. I. A. Richmond, and the Rev. T. Romans for valuable help of various kinds.