

## Notes and Queries.

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### CAISTOR-BY-NORWICH AND THE ROMAN ROAD SYSTEM.

The exact course of the roads which linked the Roman town at Caistor-by-Norwich to the other towns and villages in East Anglia is unknown. Of two roads which seem to go there, that which approaches from Wainford Mills in the south-east is lost soon after entering the county and the other, which seems to come from Colchester via Scole and Long Stratton has never been described in detail and has never been proved to be Roman. If allowance for medieval deviations is made, it seems not improbable that the Colchester-Norwich road north of Scole does indicate the course of the Roman road. Eighteenth-century topographers called this highway "Pye Road" and their successors (*e.g.*, Woodward in *Arch.* xxiii, 1831, 368) worked on too small a scale to describe (even if they knew it) the course of this road near Caistor. Thomas Codrington (*Roman Roads in Britain*, 1918, 187) indeed realised that the Roman road must diverge from the present main road if it was to reach Caistor. "The present road crosses to the west side of the river Tas at Saxlingham Thorpe, and then points straight for two miles to the Roman fort at Caister St. Edmunds, with a parish boundary along it for a quarter of a mile. The road then turns off, and straight on, one and a half miles further north, on the east bank of the river Tas," is Caistor. Such a description is of little use in following the Roman road on the ground. The following suggestions as to the approach to Caistor are tentative but it is unlikely that excavation of the road described would be so fortunate as to prove its Roman date from the nature of its construction and associated relics of that period.

The Roman road leaves the modern road about 100 yards north of Swainsthorpe School (O.S.6-in. Sheet 75 S.E. near spot-height 79) crosses an arable field on the east side of the road, marked by a slight depression (field 106 on O.S.25-in. Sheet 75.15 (1928 ed.) and crosses Stoke Lane to enter

Dunston parish. In the dry summer of 1929, I noticed in field 106 a broad discoloured stretch of corn crop on the line indicated. North of Stoke Lane, the road is overgrown with thick hedgerows and old trees at the sides. South of Gollifer Green in Dunston Park the road forks. The west branch rejoins the present main road by the milestone (Norwich 4; Ipswich 39), and can be traced on the west of Gollifer Green plantation, across the park; where it is cambered with a bank on each side, then north through plantations (Nos. 104 & 91) crossing the Hall drive and finally under another plantation (No. 51). The course described is apparently that of the old Colchester-Norwich road prior to about 1838-40 when a mile of new road was made between the points described, and to the west of them.

The other branch from Gollifer Green continues the same alignment as the last stretch of main road south of Swainsthorpe School and passes through this plantation, over parkland (No. 108) through a plantation (106 on O.S. 25-in. Sheet 75.11), passing about 100 feet from the west front of Dunston Hall, through plantations (79, 80, 60) and more parkland and then joins the present road running north for a quarter of a mile, then degenerating into a field road for 200 yards and then ceasing abruptly. This point is 600 yards from the west gate of the Roman town. But the 1838 edition of the 1-in. O.S. (Sheet 66) marks as through roads the routes described. It indicates that the branch towards Dunston Common was fenced throughout the Park (part still survives) and to the end of the farm road described. Yet on this map the road continued straight on by the west side of fields 18 and 17 to a point on the Tas bank opposite the west gate of Caistor. In 1838 the road was fenced on the east side to this point, where it enters Markshall parish, and then only does it change direction. It went to Markshall Farm, at first unfenced and after White's Hill fenced on the north side. How the road entered the west gate is unknown, but a paved ford or more likely a timber bridge over the Tas is suggested.

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