

THE LONDON-CROYDON-PORTSLADE ROMAN ROAD.

BY

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THERE has always been a strong tradition of the existence of a Roman road from London through Streatham, Croydon and Godstone to the Sussex coast, and certain roads in Surrey have been generally accepted as parts of the route, but in Sussex its course was almost wholly conjectural. During the summer of 1935 a systematic investigation of the most probable line resulted in the discovery of undisturbed remains of the roadway at a number of points and the almost complete ascertainment of the exact route followed.

Full details of the Sussex portion of the road have been published in Vol. LXXVII of the *Sussex Archæological Collections* and it must suffice to say here that the main Sussex alignment was evidently sighted from Clayton Hill (on the South Downs above Brighton) to Selsfield Common (near West Hoathly), and continued to a point near Hophurst Farm, Felbridge; that the alignment was closely followed, save for a slight deviation past the Roman Cemetery at Hassocks (Stonepound Cross-roads) and another near Ardingly to facilitate the crossing of the River Ouse and Shell Brook where they cut the alignment inconveniently; and that sufficient undisturbed remains were found to provide good sections proving the nature and position of the road at Hassocks, Burgess Hill, Ardingly, Selsfield and Felbridge.

It has generally been assumed that this Sussex alignment would join the accepted route through Godstone and Blindley Heath south of Newchapel, and that the modern Eastbourne Road formed part of the route as far as Woodcock Hill, Felbridge, although this part of the modern road is far from

GENERAL MAP LONDON TO THE COAST.



SCALE OF MILES

ROMAN ROAD PROVED ———
 " " INFERRED - - - -
 EARLY TRACKWAY ·····



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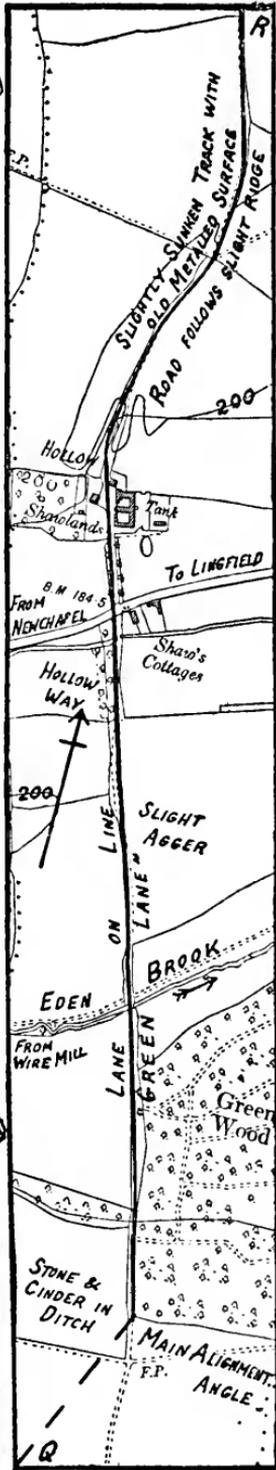
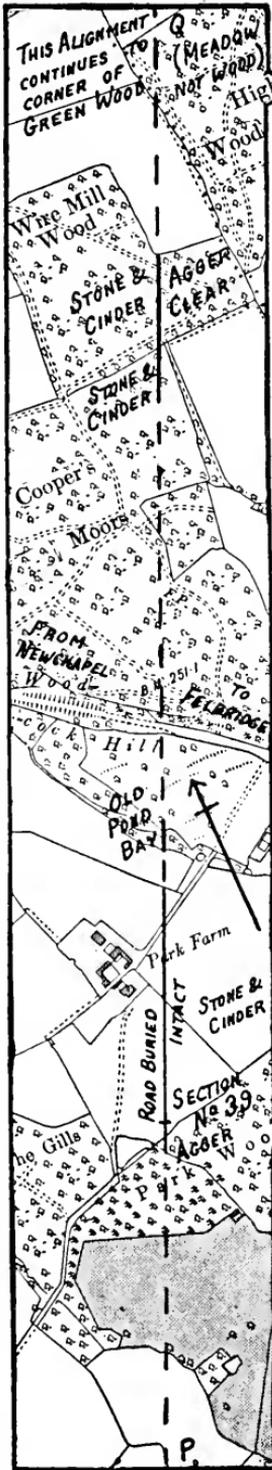
MAP I.

straight and makes a long and rather difficult crossing of the Eden Brook between Wire Mill and Hedgecourt Lakes where the valley is very marshy. Investigation showed, however, that the Sussex alignment definitely ended near Hophurst Farm, Felbridge, just before the Surrey boundary was reached, at a point where the road crossed the prominent Crawley Down—East Grinstead ridge, and a new alignment 11° more to the north-east carried the road along the east side of Rowplat Lane, Felbridge, across Woodcock Hill and through Cooper's Moors Wood to the south-west corner of Green Wood, south of Shawlands, in the remarkable narrow strip of Tandridge parish.

This part of the route is abundantly proved, for a portion of the agger with the cinder (iron slag) metalling partly scattered is plainly visible across the two fields at Hophurst Farm, just south of the ridgeway lane, and indicates the change of alignment there. At Leaping Well, just south of the county boundary, a short length of the agger, 27 feet wide, remains undisturbed in the south-east corner of the orchard, complete with a layer of cinder metalling 15 feet wide and 6 inches thick; and in the next field, just south of the Crawley Down Road, a light hollow marks the line where the metalling was removed about seventy years ago by the father of an old resident there. The agger can also be clearly seen in some of the gardens on the east side of Rowplat Lane, and cinder metalling has been found on it. The line is practically coincident with the south end of the lane, but gradually diverges until at the north end it lies 43 yards to the east.

The next certain trace is in the fields of Park Farm, Felbridge, where the entire metalled roadway, of sandstone with a little cinder, was found buried intact, running diagonally north-eastwards across the field south of the farm, and again across corners of the next two fields towards Woodcock Hill. A section (Fig. 1, Section 39) was opened at the southern side of the first field and showed the metalling to be of sandstone mixed with a small amount of cinder, 21 feet 6 inches wide and 3-7 inches thick, in a very solid layer containing large stones (16 × 13 × 4 inches and 13 × 9 × 5 inches for example) mixed with the small metalling.

Towards the north side of Cooper's Moors Wood, and again in Wire Mill Wood leading up to its north-east re-entrant



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angle, the agger becomes plain, with traces of cinder metalling, which also show in the ditch on the west side of the old lane at Green Wood which runs down the Tandridge parish strip. All these certain traces lie very close to the exact alignment from Hophurst Farm, but no indications of a north-east continuation of this line through Green Wood have been found, and the reason for the slight change of direction at Hophurst and its relation to the northward continuation of the road to Godstone suddenly become quite plain. The Tandridge parish lane crosses the Eden Brook very easily, with only a very short stretch of rather wet ground (for it is here upon a slight north-south ridge), and is continuously traceable northward past Shawlands, bending slightly eastward to follow the crest of the little ridge, and so through the east side of Shawlands Wood to rejoin the Eastbourne Road just south of Stanton's Hall, Blindley Heath. Thus all the difficulty of the marshy crossing below Woodcock Hill is avoided, and it is obvious that this is what the Roman road gained by means of that slight change of direction at Hophurst, and also that the old Tandridge lane past Shawlands is the Roman line, and not the modern Eastbourne Road through Newchapel as had been supposed.

Traces of a buried layer of sandstone metalling can be found on the old road north of Shawlands, and a long raised shaw south-east of Shawlands Wood looks suggestive of a derelict earth agger, which can also be distinctly seen crossing the field between the wood and the point where the Eastbourne Road is rejoined. Moreover, information very kindly given me by our member Mr. G. C. Crowter, Godstone Divisional Highway Surveyor, Surrey County Council, shows that in a series of holes dug along the Eastbourne Road some years ago to test the character of its foundation, it was definitely found that some variation occurred near this point, the part northward to Blindley Heath being mainly an earth embankment with a well-defined layer of metalling, whereas southward towards Newchapel it seemed made up of numerous layers of varied material, pointing to successive attempts at reconstructing a bad road made originally upon insufficient foundation, and therefore most unlikely to have been Roman in origin.

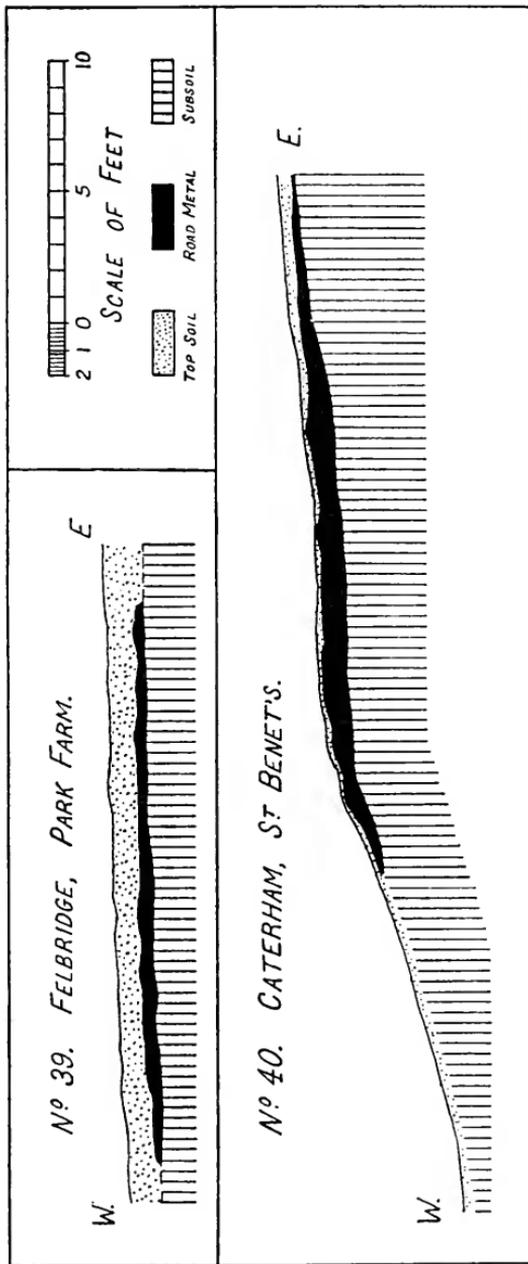


FIG. I.

Although the northern, or (as it may be termed) the Surrey, portion of this road has long been traditionally regarded as Roman, it must be admitted that little concrete evidence has hitherto been proved, apart from the existence of certain straight lengths of modern roads and significant place-names. It is, therefore, most reassuring to have this confirmatory evidence of a continuous Roman route across Sussex connecting with the southern end of the traditional portion, and it justifies considerably greater confidence in the remainder of the route even where direct evidence is not available.

Major James Dunning ¹ in his book summarizing the existing evidence and theories was naturally more concerned to deal with the then unknown Sussex portion and said little about that of Surrey. Mr. Albany Major, in a Presidential Address to the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society,² considered possible routes for the road through the Croydon district. Codrington,³ after mentioning the traditional Sussex portion, refers to the route through Godstone, but then adds "it is said to have gone by Caterham and Coulsdon," and continues it west of Croydon along the line of the Mere Bank to Waddon, although he then says that it "was formerly visible on the west side of Broad Green." We shall see later that a route by Mere Bank and Waddon cannot possibly pass through Broad Green, and, similarly, Coulsdon is not on the probable line from Caterham, so that this account must only be taken as a collection of current traditions by one not well acquainted with the district. The reference to Coulsdon, derived from Manning and Bray's *History of Surrey*,⁴ is due no doubt to the existence of a holding called Stanstead, formerly Stone Street, on the west side of Caterham, which may quite possibly indicate an ancient road, but one, nevertheless, entirely distinct from that here considered. These three authors give, I believe, the only accounts of the road hitherto published and it seems desirable therefore to collect here all the evidence that is still available for the northern part of its course.

¹ *The Roman Road to Portslade.*

² *Proceedings*, 1920.

³ *Roman Roads in Britain*, p. 56 (3rd edition).

⁴ Vol. II, p. 434.

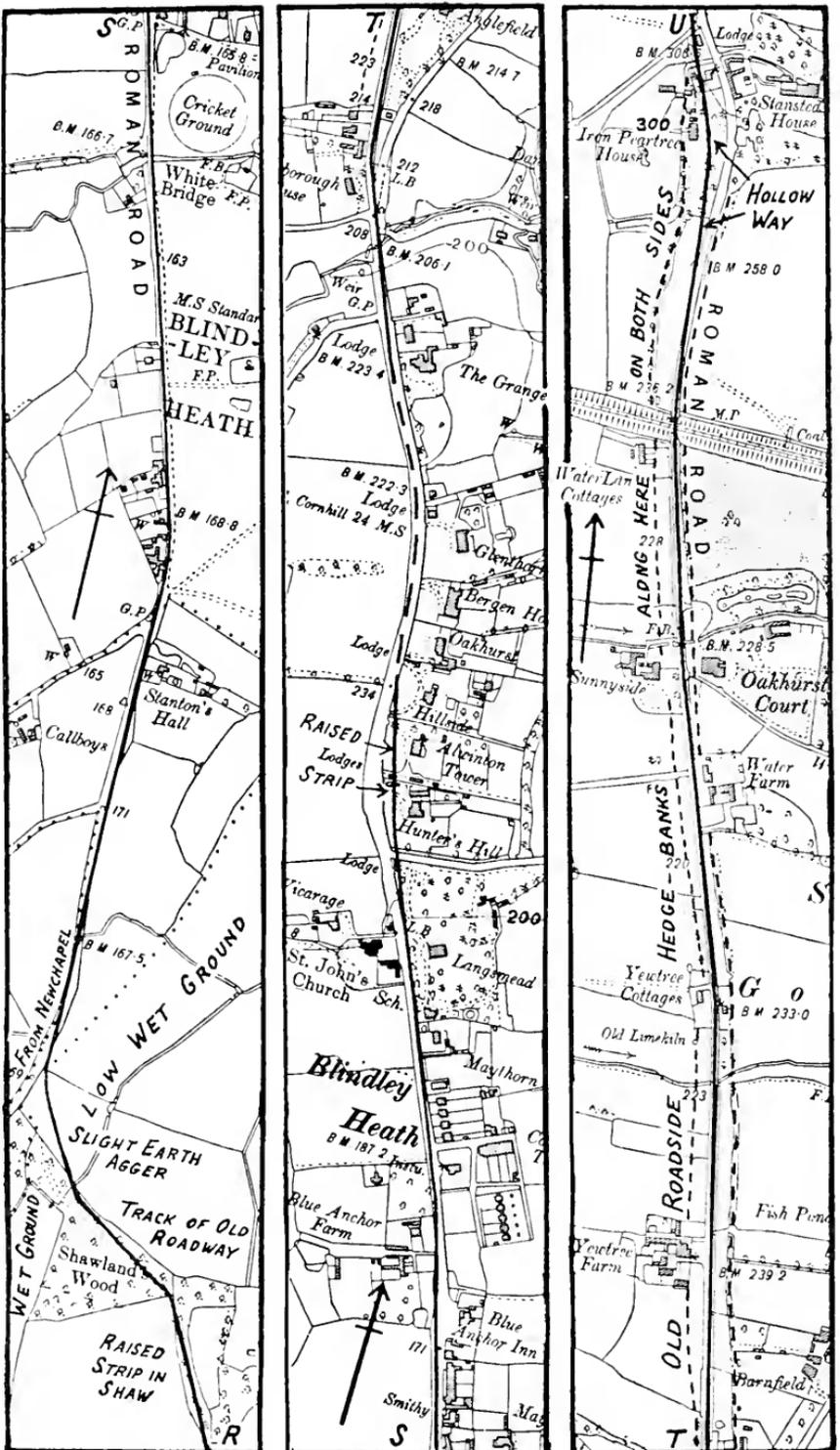
The Surrey portion divides itself naturally into three sections, I. Blindley Heath—Godstone Hill, II. Godstone Hill—Croydon (the passage of the North Downs), III. Croydon—London. Of these, I and III are fairly certain and it will be best to consider them first, as some light may thus be thrown upon the more difficult problems of II.

I. Blindley Heath—Godstone Hill.

The road crosses Blindley Heath on a considerable embankment raised some 3 feet above the general level of the flat and very waterlogged surface of the Heath. It is almost straight until just north of the church where slight bends, first west and then east of the line, occur. No trace of any metalling could be felt on probing in the field west of the road at the eastward bend, but it may perhaps be significant that, just where the westward bend is, the ground level inside the frontage of the gardens of Hunter's Hill and Alwinton Tower, east of the road, is distinctly higher than the modern road, as though, perhaps, on the agger, whereas farther north the entrances to similar gardens lie well below road level.

Northward from Anglefield Corner nearly to Tilburstow Hill it is clear that the highway was formerly in a broad strip, some 50–60 yards wide, with large banks on each side, and though this meanders slightly, especially by Iron Peartree House, it remains very close to one general alignment throughout. The bank on the east side is frequently of such a size as to raise doubt as to whether it might not itself be the Roman agger; indeed, it is pointed out by some local inhabitants as the Roman road, but it is quite devoid of traces of metalling and when it is seen that a similar, though usually less prominent, bank exists west of the modern road, I think it is clear that both must be regarded as ancient boundary banks, and the modern road between them as the successor to an old track, winding down the middle of a broad green lane which was itself the successor to the original Roman road.

It is unlikely therefore that much ancient evidence can now be hoped for, but the place-names are significant, for there are Stansted House and Stansted Borough, south of Tilburstow Hill, and Stratton and Stratton Brook on the north. Stansted is here an ancient name, actually a corruption of "Stane



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Street," formerly the title of this section of Godstone parish, and Stratton is, of course, Streat-ton.

Tilburstow Hill ridge is crossed in a deep cutting which may quite possibly be ancient, and I have been unable to detect any traces of an older road on the banks beside it. Nearly opposite the junction of Rabbits Heath Road (the turning to Bletchingley) the site of a find of buried urns is marked by the Ordnance Survey close to the Roman road.

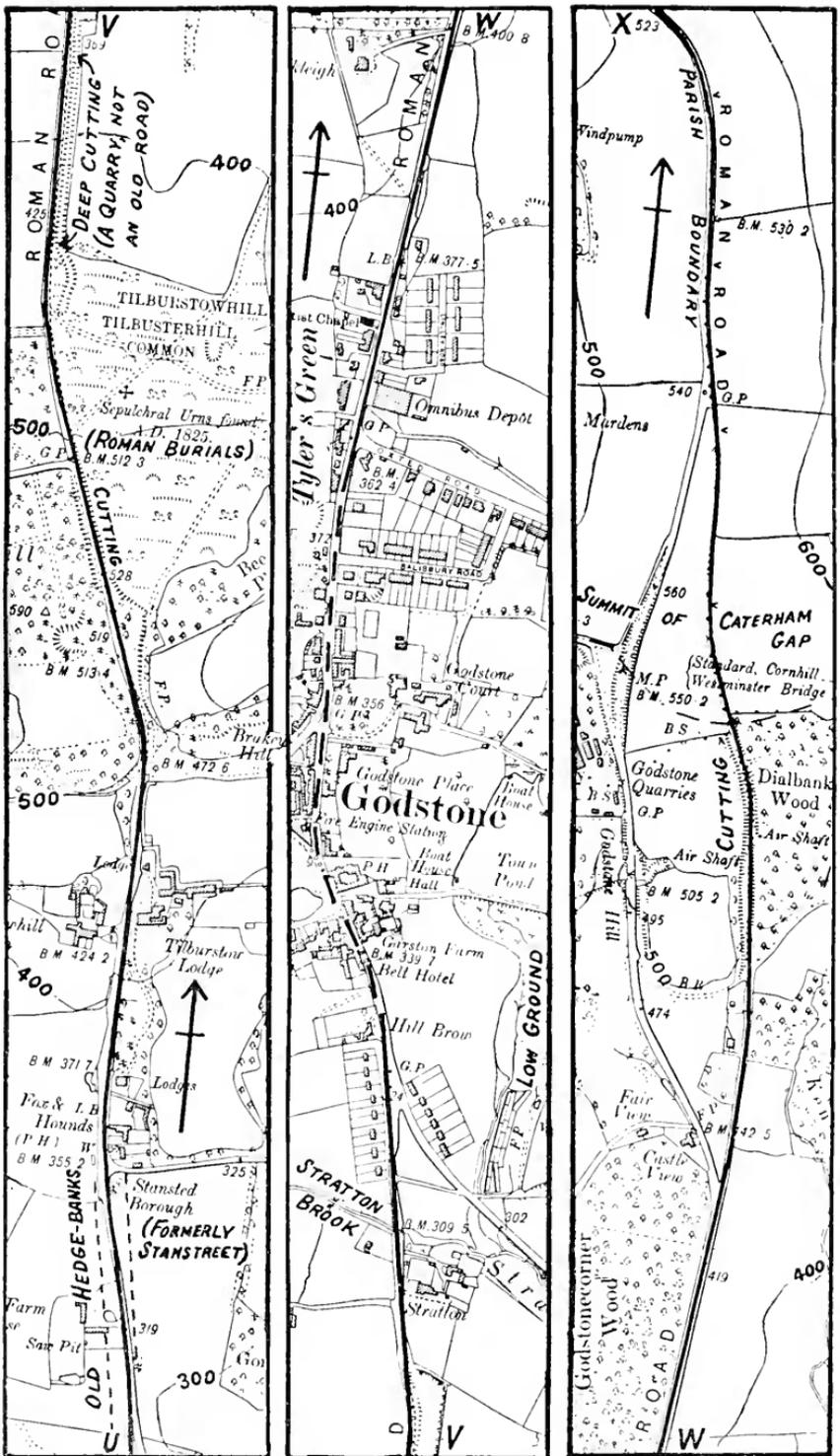
Down the northern slope, from the end of the common to Stratton, a remarkably deep cutting in the greensand rock runs close along the east side of the modern road. At the southern, or common, end this cutting ends so abruptly, with merely a rough track scrambling out of it, that it seems clear that it is not really an older road or hollow-way, and I think that it is most probably a mere elongated quarry, made in the broad roadside waste, possibly at the time of the construction of the new Godstone Road, and that it should be disregarded as evidence of the Roman road.

Apart from the "Street" place-names and evidence of burials there is little concrete evidence on this section, and although the road north of Godstone, through Tyler's Green and up Godstone Hill by the *old* road through Dialbank Wood to the Caterham Gap, is very straight, it is not in the same alignment as the road over Tilburstow Hill. It may be that sighting was done from the south to Tilburstow Hill without regard to what lay north of it at Godstone, and that the short length between the two ridges had subsequently to be modified to keep the road farther from the little valley in which Town Pond lies. From Dialbank Wood right on through the Caterham Gap the road carries a parish boundary.

III. Croydon—London.

There can be little doubt about the southern part of this section of the route, for the London Road runs very straight from Broad Green, Croydon, through Norbury to Streatham, and at Broad Green we have one of the most definite of the early references to this road, that it was actually visible on the west side of the Green. In Manning and Bray's *History of Surrey*¹ we are told that "it took its course by Old Croydon

¹ Vol. III, p. 381.



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and the West side of Broad Green, where it is still visible." Another reference occurs in a paper by Mr. W. Bray¹ on a Roman road in Surrey :—" Mr. Manning observes . . . that after leaving Beddington on the west this Street is supposed to have passed through Old Croydon ; that it is visible on the west side of Broad Green, in a direct line northward to Stretham."

These important scraps of observational evidence are supported by Rocque's map of 1762 and by the plan attached to the Croydon Commons Inclosure Award, of 1800, which both show a line of little plots (numbered 68 to 74 on the Award map) along the west side of Broad Green, with a straight boundary behind them, running from London Road, behind the Half Moon Inn, to Handcroft Road, which aligns almost exactly with London Road. It seems fairly certain that it was in this line of plots that the road was still visible, and, though very short, I think this little piece may be regarded as very strong confirmatory evidence for the whole of London Road and Handcroft Road being on the Roman line. Handcroft Road leads southward to the old centre of Croydon, the modern High Street being on a highway of relatively recent origin.

It should also be mentioned that a workman employed on the laying of Post Office Telephone ducts in Croydon informed me that the old Roman metalled surface was met with in London Road during these excavations and was always recognized as being a serious obstacle. It was not found continuously, but only at certain points along the road, and this is just what might be expected, for the modern road with its footways (in which such ducts are usually laid) is much wider than the Roman road, and has also become distorted in places from the true line, so that a trench dug along one side of it would only encounter the Roman surface at intervals.

North of Norbury Station there is a bend in the modern road which is probably due to some early difficulty at the crossing of Norbury Brook, but the line is soon resumed by Streatham High Road.

From Streatham there must, I think, remain some doubt as to the exact route. If the main alignment was still followed,

¹ *Archæologia*, Vol. IX, p. 104 (1788).

the road would join Stane Street near the south end of Clapham Common in about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. On the other hand Streatham High Road, Streatham Hill, Brixton Hill and Brixton Road offer an almost straight course, leading direct towards London and joining Stane Street at Kennington Park. The earlier name, Brixton Causeway, is itself very suggestive. Even if the road was originally carried direct into Stane Street at Clapham it seems extremely likely that, with the growth of London and increasing traffic, this second and more direct route might have been found a desirable improvement, and, in the absence of definite evidence for the former, I think it may reasonably be assumed to form the final northern portion of this Roman road.

II. Godstone Hill-Croydon.

This section presents the most difficult part of the problem when it comes to defining the *exact* course of the road, though it is clear enough that *some* route through Caterham Valley did exist, on the evidence of these points: (1) An aligned road from Streatham to Croydon pointing directly at the northern mouth of the valley; (2) an aligned road through Godstone leading right into the Caterham Gap; (3) remains of an old metalled road on Tillingdown just north of Caterham; (4) reference to a "Walstrete" (*i.e.* "Britons' road")¹ in old documents describing the boundary of the Manor of Coulsdon between Purley and Whyteleafe.

Between the north end of the Godstone alignment in Caterham Gap and the south end of Handcroft Road, Croydon, is a distance of about $7\frac{1}{4}$ miles, practically all of it blanketed with modern building development, and with nearly all the old tracks metalled as suburban streets. It would be surprising if much still remained visible, for the sides of the valley rise steeply and it is certain that the road, if not on the valley floor (which is, I think, improbable owing to the water-level then), would have been formed as a terrace. This

¹ It is possible, however, that the element "Wal" may have the meaning "spring," in which case Walstrete would merely mean a damp highway, such as might now be termed "Water Lane," and in view of its use here for what is, in part at least, a valley route this meaning is quite likely, although in most instances the element does refer to the old native inhabitants.

would by now have become either a modern by-road or a property boundary, which is just what, in fact, we find along the most probable route. Experience of such Roman engineered terrace-ways on the more unspoilt South Downs shows that they were generally unmetalled on chalk hill-sides, depending upon their own drainage ditches to maintain a dry surface, and so it is by no means certain that remains of heavy metalling are to be expected where such roads have become derelict and now appear only as terraced boundaries. A further element of uncertainty is thus added in searching for definite *traces* of the road in this section, and I think we cannot hope now to be able to do much more than examine the most probable route, on the visible evidence still remaining, without expecting a full proof of Roman work.

At the south end of this difficult section we have the Caterham—Tandridge parish boundary following the Roman road in the Caterham Gap. Just at the southern entrance to the town the boundary diverges northward up Tillingdown Lane, but some 220 yards farther on it strikes off as an "undefined" line across a large meadow on the Caterham side of the lane, to join an immense plough-bank or lynchet, which it then follows for 1,100 yards, right along the east side of the town, high up above the houses. In some places there are distinct indications of a broad terrace below the lynchet, but in others, and especially along the steeper parts of the hill-side, the lynchet has apparently obliterated it. This route eventually rejoins Tillingdown Lane, north of the allotments, at a small beech-wood, just where the lane begins to descend into the valley again, which it does very directly down the summit of a small ridge, pointing to the cross-roads by Wapses Lodge, where the road from Woldingham joins Caterham Valley.

Through the beech-wood a distinct terrace is clearly visible, heavily metalled with flint, and it is traceable southwards through the grounds of St. Benet's till it meets, and is swallowed up by, the large lynchet adjoining the allotments. A section (Fig. 1, Section 40) was cut through this terrace at a point 83 feet south of the northern fence of St. Benet's, showing a thick layer of flint for a width of about 25 feet, the greatest thickness being about 12 inches. Such a definite metalled layer, even in country where flint is abundant, seems to prove



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the presence of the road at this point beyond any doubt, and hence necessarily right along this hill-side past Caterham. We may, I think, regard the route as proved to the north end of Tillingdown Lane.

It will now be best to consider the problem from the Croydon end. The remains of the road actually seen in former days on the west side of Broad Green necessarily indicate a southward continuation down Handcroft Road to the centre of Old Croydon. It is known that the present main road by the High Street is of modern origin. It is possible, of course, that the Roman road then went on southward by a valley route following the line of Old Town and Southbridge Road, but this way was, even in coaching times, liable to flood, and it seems probable that a drier route would have been chosen.

It is generally agreed that rainfall in Britain was considerably heavier during the Roman period, and in that case we may assume that the bournes would have flowed, perhaps quite regularly and strongly, where they now only appear occasionally. In such an event traffic would have avoided the valley floors, crossing them only where necessary, and the course of the road at Caterham supports this.

If one looks at early maps of the Purley area it is very clear that the Tram Terminus corner is just such a crossing place, for a number of tracks converge upon the main valley just at this point. Among them one, now partly obliterated by Purley Way, led up Russell Hill and thence almost straight to Old Croydon by a lane called Violet Lane and by Duppas Hill Terrace. If a high-level route was followed south of Croydon it is probable that these tracks represent it. South-east of Purley it is noteworthy that Downs Court Road, formerly an old track (part of it still remaining as a footpath leading on to Riddles Down), continues the alignment of the road along the highest part of Riddles Down right to the crossing at Purley. This alignment seems too definite to have been purely accidental and I think it may reasonably be accepted as evidence for an aligned, and (in the circumstances) therefore Roman, road. There is, in my opinion, a very striking appearance of continuity about the route Violet Lane-Downs Court Road-Riddlesdown Road, which seems to dominate the topography of Purley Corner when seen on

maps, suggesting that it was, at least, one of the primary tracks, if not the very first, established before other routes came into being.

A Land Revenue Survey of Edward VI¹ (c. 1548) giving a detailed description of the bounds of the Manor of Coulsdon refers thus to a "Walstrete":

Metes and bounds of the Manor of Cullesden begin at Purleestret by Smythe deene in the east part and thus as far as the wood called Combeswoode and thence as far as Sondayesfurghes in the heath towards Warlingham and thus descends by the said heath in the valley as far as the royal way which leads towards Godstone called Walstrete and thus by the said royal way as far as the ditch called the Newdyche or Wydedyche and thus over that ditch as far as the place called Shepcott. . . .

In this the reference to Coombs Wood (on Riddles Down) makes it certain that "Newydche or Wydedyche" cannot be where the Ordnance Survey formerly marked it, as the name of the earthwork between Coombs Wood and Little Roke, but must be farther south near the road to Godstone, after the descent of Riddlesdown Road into the valley and presumably somewhere near Whyteleafe. Walstrete was apparently the name of the Godstone Road but, unfortunately, it is not quite clear whether the expression "descends by the said heath in the valley as far as . . . Walstrete and thus by the said royal way . . ." means that Walstrete was entirely a valley road (*i.e.* the present Godstone Road all the way from Purley) which the boundary only joined when it left the hill, or that the boundary lay to the east of Walstrete *on* Riddles Down (as the parish boundary still does with respect to Riddlesdown Road) but that road and boundary only met when both reached the valley. Considering that Rocque's map does not show any road on the site of the present Godstone Road between Little Roke and the Rose and Crown Inn, and also that it is known that Riddlesdown Road, despite the steep hills involved, was actually the main road for coaches, it seems to me most unlikely that the route of Walstrete was any other than Riddlesdown Road.

Despite the interference of the railway and other developments, the steepness of the hill-side makes it clear that no

¹ Translation of L.R. $\frac{2}{156}$ (Land Revenue Surveys), 1-3 Edw. VI. (Copy kindly supplied to me by Mr. E. Straker.)

considerable terrace could ever have existed south-east of the end of Riddlesdown Road, which may be definitely regarded as continued southward by the Godstone Road from the Rose and Crown Inn, where it therefore had to cross the bourne stream. Godstone Road crosses the stream three times between the inn and Wapses Lodge corner, and this must have been a difficult part of the route in early times. South of Upper Warlingham Station it is just possible that a drier route, hugging the foot of the eastern slopes, now partly obliterated by the railway, might have been followed. At the southern end this is represented by Court Bushes Road, and the line of this road was continued northward to Well Farm by a very distinct turf terrace which was particularly clear when seen above from passing trains, though it is now quite obliterated by houses. North of the farm the railway has covered it, but faint suggestions of a continuation to rejoin the Godstone Road seem indicated behind the houses by differences in level. I am afraid that the exact route here is likely to remain in doubt unless definite ancient metalled surfaces under Godstone Road are ever traced.

To sum up the evidence on this Godstone-Croydon section, we may, I think, be reasonably sure that the road followed the course of the Caterham-Tandridge parish boundary along the edge of Tillingdown; from Wapses Lodge to Riddles Down there is some uncertainty, but it must either be represented by Godstone Road or (as far as Whyteleafe) by the eastern route, of which Court Bushes Road forms part; from Riddles Down to Purley and Croydon it is highly probable, though not actually proved, that it followed the direct course of the tracks (Downs Court Road and Violet Lane) via Purley. It is also possible, of course, that the northern part of Riddlesdown Road was in use at that period, perhaps as a later short cut towards Croydon, but the alignment of the Downs Court Road track suggests that that was the earlier route.

A few outstanding points should perhaps be mentioned here to complete the study of this route.

Course of the Bournes at Wapses Lodge.—After several dry years the flow was observable again in 1936, and showed that from Woldingham to Wapses Lodge, and on the side stream

from Tillingdown, the courses followed the lines of parish boundary there. This precludes, apparently, any likelihood that the Roman road would have followed the straight line of the boundary from Tillingdown to the Lodge, for this is just at the wettest part of the valley, and it also makes it probable that Godstone Road, which is on slightly higher ground, marks the line there.

Mere Bank and Coldharbour Lane.—This very substantial bank, 30 feet wide and 4 feet high (or more in places), has attracted the attention of other workers, particularly Major James Dunning, by reason of its straightness for about 2 miles, directly north from Purley Corner to Waddon Mills, and again, less straight and trending slightly more to the *west*, for another mile to near Mitcham Road Cemetery. Two Roman villas near Beddington lie half a mile west of this line. Major Dunning had sections cut through the Bank in the Aerodrome during November 1925 and gave the following account in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* dated November 28th :

I hope you may let me report a small but consequential discovery of Roman road on Croydon Aerodrome, . . . which has just been made. . . . The discovery which took place on November 24th is quite definite.

My excavator, following theoretical indications arrived at, uncovered the road in the centre of the aerodrome, pointing due North and South. The camber of mould and gravel was removed in levelling the aerodrome, which thus accounts for the top level. Below this remains a stratum of rammed chalk, on a bed of flints 6-8 in. deep, under which lies the local clay. The flint bed is at this point about 14 ft. wide, which would have meant an original over-all width for the whole roadway of about 60 ft., including both the actual hard track, the two tapered-off side spaces, and the ditches which one infers existed.

The significance of this discovery (the known sections as apart from the inferred ditches which I have not yet uncovered) lies in the similarity between this section at Croydon to that uncovered and reported on in 1781 by Stephen Vine. . . .

. . . Vine's examination . . . disclosed an exact counterpart of the discovery on Croydon Aerodrome.

This full description is quoted here because the newspaper issue is now unobtainable and these important observations have not, I think, been properly recorded in the literature hitherto. The section undoubtedly proves that Mere Bank was at that point very solidly based upon a well-laid foundation

such as would hardly be prepared for the support of a boundary bank only. The supposition that the Bank is the agger of a Roman road seems to me quite a strong one, and in the light of this evidence it is not reduced by Major's observation (mentioned below) that at another point near the Aerodrome no trace of metalling or foundation was found in the Bank, for we now know that earth aggers were sometimes used, and they are indeed found on this very route through the Weald. Metalling at one point will thus prove the route to be a road even when earth only was used elsewhere.

Too much stress seems to me to have been laid, however, upon the similarity to Vine's observations. A full extract of his report will be found in my paper in *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, but it may be said here that he only reported the finding of a buried layer of flints, 18–20 feet wide and 8 inches thick, such as I have myself found on this line, without any of the more elaborate structure which Dunning indicates at his Mere Bank section. I really cannot see a very striking similarity. Moreover, his suggestions that there were side ditches and a roadway 60 feet wide over-all, remain mere suppositions in the absence of further digging. But the definite evidence of the section itself remains important and clearly suggests a road. The direct connection to the Purley crossing-place, the long alignment and the proximity to the villas, all lend support to its being a road. Nevertheless, it cannot, I think, be part of the *main* route we have been studying, for it bears no relation to the remains at Broad Green or the alignment thence to Streatham, being too far to the west.

There remains, however, Coldharbour Lane to be considered. This lane, now merged in Purley Way from near the summit of Russell Hill, where it joined Violet Lane, to Waddon, ran parallel to Mere Bank, and there are indications of a continuation of its alignment northward by the southern part of Waddon Court Road, a hedgerow now marked by the eastern edge of the waterside gardens called Wandleside, the northern part of Waddon Marsh Lane and the southern part of Thornton Road (now mostly part of Purley Way). All these roads are shown on Rocque's map (1762) and are therefore not of modern origin. The Commons Inclosure Commissioners for Croydon refer to Coldharbour Lane as "the antient lane and road,"

and it seems quite possible that the whole route may be ancient and therefore, from the alignment, probably Roman. But, again, it is clear that it could only have been as a branch from the main route at Thornton Heath by Thornton Road.

So many Roman remains have been found west of Croydon that it seems to me quite reasonable to expect to find additional roads there for local traffic, and this may very well be such a route, but, in the absence of definite finds of old metalled surfaces (and there may have been little or no metalling) under the modern roads, I fear that proof is now impossible. Most of the suggestions in favour of Mere Bank as a road apply with equal or greater force to this line, especially as a connection with Thornton Heath is possible in this case. It is hardly likely that both these routes served as roads, though in a populous district it would be possible. If Mere Bank is a road, it probably did not rejoin the main route towards Streatham, but if a Roman road rejoining it at Thornton Heath is to be accepted here, the Coldharbour Lane (Purley Way) alignment probably represents it.

Mr. Albany F. Major's Observations.—It would be improper to conclude this paper without referring to this important summary of earlier work,¹ now perhaps difficult to obtain. With Mr. Hadrian Allcroft he examined the route of this road through Surrey, agreeing with the route east of Caterham as described above. He mentions the cutting of a section in the garden of Chasewood and finding no trace of metalling. This is next door to St. Benet's where the successful section was cut, but the reason is plain, for the terrace at Chasewood lies below and out of alignment with that at St. Benet's, which at that point has become buried in the lynchet above Chasewood. He offers no definite evidence for the route from Wapses Lodge to Riddles Down, and then follows Riddlesdown Road throughout its length. Beyond this point a serious error is introduced which it seems desirable to correct. The ledge west of the Brighton Road, along the edge of Haling Down, continued northward by a back lane between Avondale Road and Brighton Road is definitely part of the track of the old

¹ Presidential Address to the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society, 1920.

Surrey Iron Railway and is therefore inadmissible as evidence for an ancient trackway such as he suggested. Where, for a short distance on Haling Down, the ledge is unspoilt, its appearance is too narrow and modern in construction to suggest that an older terrace might have been used for the railway.

Mr. Major's route through Old Croydon is then closely similar to that suggested above, by Duppas Hill Terrace and Handcroft Road to Broad Green, but at this point he forsakes the obvious straight route to Streatham, on grounds of wetness around the Hermitage Bridge crossing which seem to me wholly insufficient, and takes the Roman road by a circuitous route farther east, by Bensham Lane and Green Lane, and so into the road to Streatham. In view of the straightness of the London Road, and considering that it is not a modern cut, I cannot see any reason for ignoring it as the Roman road because it crosses a short stretch of clay, but it seems desirable to review these suggested routes here while the matter is under consideration.

With regard to Mere Bank, he considers this disproved by sections cut across it at the Aerodrome (some years before Dunning's investigation) which showed no trace of road foundation, and he also thinks the crossing of the Wandle would be difficult, for Mere Bank reaches it at a point where there is a high bank, though not, I think, an impossibly high one. Of Coldharbour Lane he says :

There is, however, a very ancient trackway, known as Coldharbour Lane, running from Russell Hill in the same direction as Mere Bank, but diverging gradually from it to cross the Wandle above the copious springs that rise at Waddon, continuing on along the edge of Waddon Marsh. The Romans would almost certainly have followed the same line.

His point that the crossing of the Wandle is secured *above* the springs is important, and with this additional support for the Coldharbour Lane route we must be content to leave the matter.

FINDS IN OLD TOWN.

Through the kindness of Mr. C. C. Fagg I was informed that some observations had recently been made by Mr. C. G. Paget upon an old road surface in Old Town during some

excavations there. It seemed desirable to add a note on it here and I am greatly indebted to Mr. Paget for his prompt reply with the following description :

About two years ago in the course of rebuilding St. Andrew's Schools and other buildings in Old Town, the workmen cut two trenches for the foundations of the new buildings which exposed beneath the surface at a depth of about 18 inches a layer of flints about 12-15 feet wide and about 6-7 inches thick. I have marked the approximate positions in red ink on the enclosed plan. [These were on the north-east side of Old Town, clear of the existing road.] I also noticed that where I have put a red cross [North side of St. Andrew's Church in Lower Coombe St.] flints were being turned up in the course of road repairs.

The old highway in Croydon was via Southbridge Road and Old Town, but if what I saw was a Roman road its alignment appeared to be rather up Lower Coombe St. with its continuation Coombe Road leading to the Addington Hills.

I may mention that the bed of flints to which I have referred was quite clear of the existing road.

This information is important, especially that regarding the alignment, for it suggests, not an alternative southerly route for our main road, but an easterly branch towards Addington ; and as such it lends considerable support to the Handcroft Road-Violet Lane route, as suggested for the main road above, from which it would be an offshoot, intended, perhaps, to connect with the other Roman road through West Wickham.