

# The Roman Road, Godstone

by L. KETTERINGHAM

A Roman road running north-south along the line of hills parallel with and to the east of the Caterham Valley is marked on most O.S. maps and has been reported upon in detail by I.D. Margary.<sup>1</sup> An opportunity of checking the course of the road occurred when the trench for the M25 - A22 intersection and roundabout was cut early in 1973 at a point nearly one mile north of Godstone Village Green and opposite Godstonecorner Wood (TQ 351529). A line of small sandstone blocks showed in the side of the trench at a depth of 1ft 10in (55.8cm) beneath dark topsoil mixed with brown gravel and above grey-blue Gault clay.

The Archaeological Group of the Bourne Society carried out a rescue dig by cutting a short trench 4ft (1.21m) wide (later extended to 24ft (7.31m)) by 8ft (2.43m) long, at right angles to the line of the motorway trench, across the sandstone feature and was able to confirm road metalling of smallish, irregular lumps of sandstone, 8ft wide and about two courses thick, laid on coarse gravel over the clay. Running diagonally across the road was a gutter edged with larger blocks of sandstone about 9in deep (20cm) by about 1ft (30.4cm) wide (see Fig. 1).

Further north, where the road runs above Caterham, there is a very substantial flint and gravel agger still visible as a bank just beneath the summit of the ridge. At the point under discussion there is no agger and no indication of a road on the surface. It is suggested that the sandstone blocks, being very tightly packed and held by the Gault clay, have resisted erosion by water whereas the gravel agger, except beneath and close to the sandstone has been washed away. The land here is low-lying and just beneath the spring line at the base of the chalk. Evidence of movement by water was noticed further south in the trench cut for the by-pass, where large sheets of gravel were spread above and beneath Gault clay.

The actual route of the road through Godstone has never been confirmed. The present road through the village is remarkably straight from the bottom of Quarry Lane to the Green. Through the village itself it twists slightly, taking a more easterly course to the bottom of Tilburstow Hill, from where it has always been firmly marked 'Roman Road'. It will be noticed (see Fig. 2) that the route of the road now found if projected south would not follow this course and would in fact miss the village altogether. There has been no trace so far of Roman occupation in either Old Walkensted or Godstone, but about one mile south of the village on the lower north-facing slope of Tilburstow Hill earlier O.S. 6-inch maps show a site where 'Cinerary urns' were found in 1825. The line of the road would pass

# ROMAN ROAD, GODSTONE.

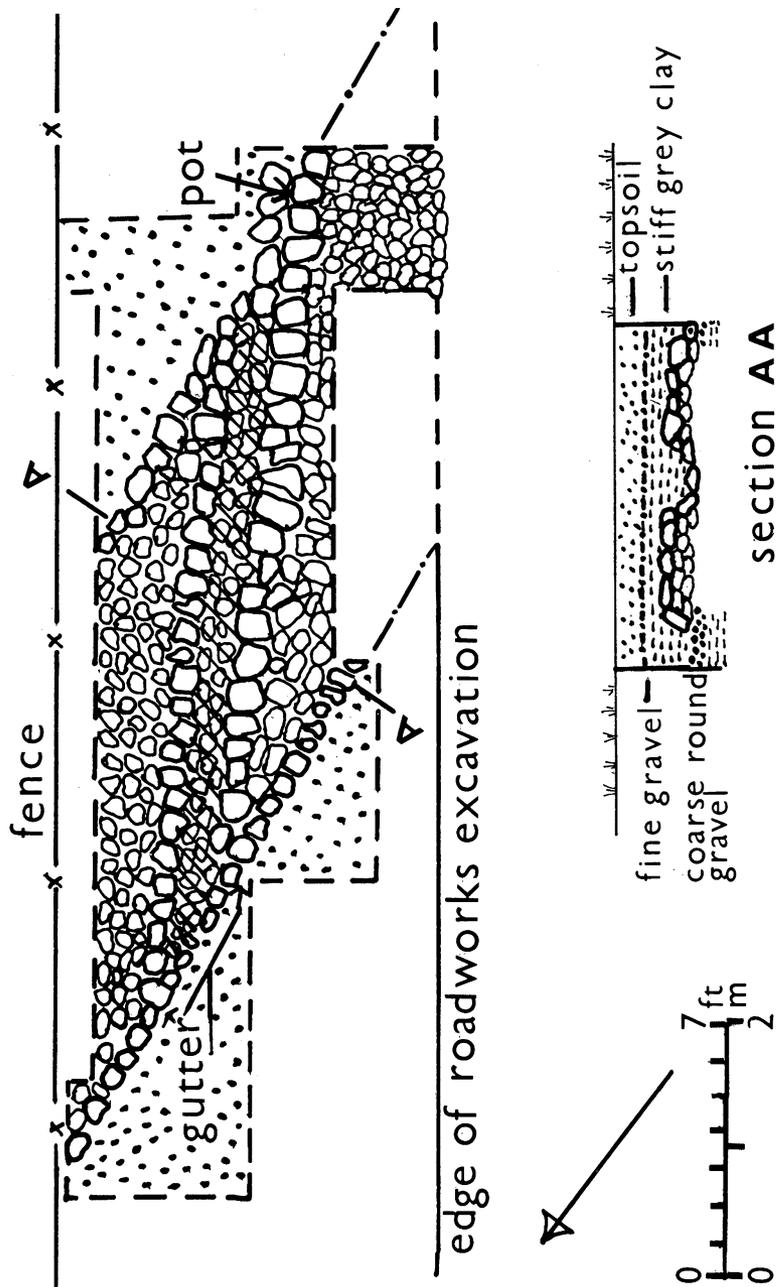


Fig. 1. The excavation: plan and section

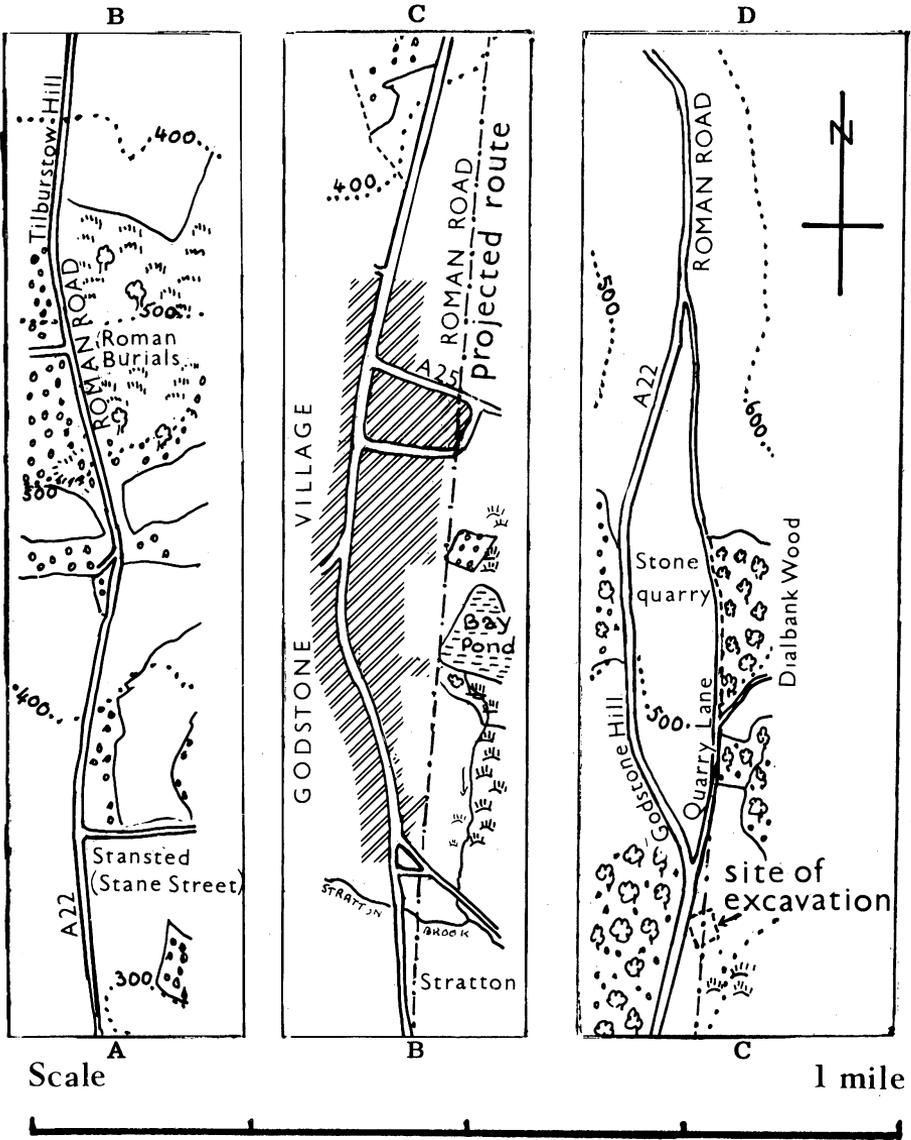


Fig. 2. The route of the Roman Road if projected from the bottom of Quarry Lane through the site would re-join the old route at the bottom of Tilburstow Hill

Based on O.S. 6-inch Map. Crown copyright reserved

through the spot marked on the O.S. map if it were drawn without any deviation from Quarry Lane through the site southwards. It is, however, unlikely that this could have been the route, as it would have taken the road through the marsh which is now Town Pond, when a slight diversion westward would have kept it on firmer ground. It would still pass near the Burial Ground.

**Pottery**

1. Embedded in the gutter in the road were pieces of a pot (Fig. 3) which has been examined by F. H. Thompson, FSA, who has described it as follows:- 'This is an example of a two-handed flagon of amphora type. The awkward junction between the horizontal rim and the vertical neck was probably secured by a small strip of clay before firing and traces of this can be seen. Date: late 1st to early 2nd century.'

Colour: light buff with a pinkish tinge.

Texture: fine, hard ware with no grey core. Fine grit temper giving a sandy, matt surface. Slight wheel marks on the shoulder.

Assembly: The body of this pot was wheel made but the neck seems to have been fashioned by hand and fitted separately. The rim was then attached and secured by the inner fillet and the two strap handles with their central channels attached last. (*cf. Brockley Hill Trans. Lond. & Middx Archaeol. Soc.*, 10, 1951, 14-16 and Fig. 11, nos. 84, 85, A.D. 70-120)

2. Eleven small body sherds of very coarse ware, black throughout but red or buff on one side, tempered with crushed flint and small stones.

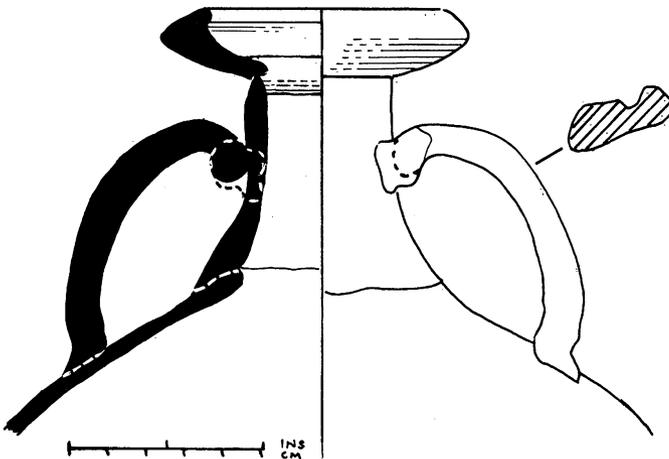


Fig. 3. The two-handed flagon found embedded in the gutter

This is similar to some pottery found at Netherne (TQ. 293559), believed to be Iron Age.

**Bone**

1. Ox humerus of a small adult fully grown animal, semi-fossilised because of the slightly acidic soil. Identification by the Natural History Museum, South Kensington.
2. Two pieces of bone sharpened to a chisel-like point; one polished with use.
3. Part of an antler tine  $2\frac{3}{4}$ ins long.

**Reference**

Margary, I.D. *Roman roads in Britain*, rev. ed., 1967, 63;  
'The London-Croydon-Portslade Roman road', *Sy. A. C.*, 45, 1936, 125