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Early Road Planning in the Middle Cotswolds

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EARLY ROAD PLANNING IN THE MIDDLE COTSWOLDS

by BRIG.-GENERAL A. C. PAINTER, C.M.G.

WHETHER wild animals, or the Cotswold sheep, or our own pre-Dobunian ancestors were responsible for the original tracks, or whether this responsibility must be shared between them, that portion of the Cotswold which lies, roughly, between the Windrush on the north and the Thames on the south, is covered with a network of roads nearly all of which are old, although it is not, as a rule, easy to say how old. The planning of a road may, however, disclose its purpose, and from this its age may, to some extent, be deduced.

The names of roads are of little use as a guide to their dates; even the well-known main Roman roads do not bear contemporary names. Where, however, an ancient road has a name, as, for instance, Buckle Street or Salt Way, references in early documents will often enable portions of it to be located approximately, and roads without names can sometimes be located exactly if they have been used as boundaries and are referred to in Saxon charters. If, for example, in one of these charters a boundary is described as running along a ridgeway, a highway, a hollow way, a herepath or a street, and the position of this boundary can be identified, it is obvious that the road in question is at least as old as the charter. Even without such documentary evidence an examination of parish boundaries may reveal the course of an old road when it has become almost, or quite, invisible, as roads often afforded convenient boundary lines when these were first settled. A conspicuous example in the middle Cotswolds is the Fosse Way, which, in the 15 miles between

Cirencester and Bourton on the Water, forms part of the boundaries of 15 parishes.

Failing documentary evidence and excavation, one is dependent upon surface indications,* topographical observation, an idea of the principles of early road-planning and a little—very little—of that kind of reasoned imagination without which history itself is not always convincing. Field-names also play a part in elucidating road problems. Unfortunately the most frequent surface indication is an existing road in which the original road is only recognizable with difficulty, and then only, as a rule, by its planning or purpose, roads having undergone similar changes to families, in both directions; a pre-historic track may have become a motor road, and an 18th century turnpike road may be represented by a field wall.

To associate roads with events adds to their interest. We know the route followed by Edward IV and his army along the edge of the Cotswolds the day before the battle of Tewkesbury,† but it would be still more interesting to know by what route (if any) the builders of Stonehenge man-handled the trilithons across the Cotswolds in transit from the quarries in Pembrokeshire to their present site. What follows is an attempt to reconstruct a road map which might have been useful to Ceawlin after the battle of Dyrham, but which William the Conqueror would have found out of date when he travelled to Gloucester to hold his Domesday Parliament.

The primitive road engineer, when every man was a road engineer, had for his stock-in-trade two maxims and a caution:—the higher the ground the better for travelling; a long walk is better than wet feet; and, beware of valleys, cross them quickly if at all. Adherence to this last rule often made him scramble up a steep spur

* Vide *Trans. B.G.A.S.* XLVII, 78.

† 'The Battle of Tewkesbury', by the Rev. Canon Bazeley, 1904.

when a more leisurely route would have been a better one; a riparian road is, *prima facie*, of comparatively late origin. When he had overcome his aversion to valleys, he found that nature had provided fords for crossing rivers. Roads leading to bridges are not however necessarily of more recent origin than those leading to fords, as the accidental falling of a tree across a deep stream, where the banks are steep, and the approaches sound owing to opposing spurs, would have led him from the first to prefer this to a ford which might often be impracticable owing to flat, marshy approaches, and as soon as a man learned to fell a tree he could make a bridge, in the district under consideration where the rivers are small. Later came the discovery that an easy gradient could be obtained, in spite of a steep hillside, by laying out a road at an acute angle to the contours instead of at right angles to them. That is not exactly how the discoverer expressed his idea, but it is what he did, and it is what gives a relative date to his roads. It also marked the entry of road planning into the region of applied science. Another chronological guide is afforded by the fact that, generally speaking, the Celtic settlements were on high ground, whereas the Saxons preferred valleys for theirs. If, therefore, a road appears to have been originally planned so as to serve a present day parish village of Saxon foundation, it may safely be pronounced to be of later date than one which was clearly planned without reference to that village.

The choice of routes for descending the steep western escarp of the Cotswolds also shows the methods of the early pathfinder. Unlike other districts where the conditions were reversed, civilization in Gloucestershire spread from the hills to the plains, and the explorer, in venturing down the slopes, would naturally descend by way of the spurs, where he could get the best view of his objective, where he could most easily retreat in case of danger, and where there would be no tributary streams

to drive him up hill again to find a crossing place ; hence the earliest tracks down the steep declivities are to be looked for on the spurs and not in the combes. Some of these roads would be steep, others of later date would be graded, and some would serve shoulder settlements on the way. It would take too long to deal fully here with the roads which connect the crest of the Cotswolds with the Vale of Gloucester.

The earliest traces of roads are contemporaneous with the earliest traces of the inhabitants. There is abundant evidence that the high ground in the middle Cotswolds supported a large population in neolithic times, and that this population, at least in the first instance, was scattered and not concentrated. The widespread diffusion of flint flakes and the cores from which flakes have been struck, shows that they made their own flint implements, and they must have imported the raw material, as the Cotswold country does not produce it. The nearest flint producing area from which they could have obtained their supply was the chalk downs of Wiltshire, from which, no doubt, they themselves must have come. As the Thames and Severn valleys were closed to them,† these people must have come by way of the low watershed which separates the tributaries of Thames and Severn, and which connects the Marlborough Downs with the Cotswolds. This ridge may be described, approximately, as running in a NW to SE direction between the lines Tetbury—Charlton—Brinkworth—Wootton Bassett on the SW side, and Rodmarton—Crudwell—Hankerton—Minety—Purton—Swindon on the NE side, its narrowest and lowest point being at Hankerton, and there is nowhere any obstacle to the drift of population.

Reaching the crest of the Cotswolds in the neighbourhood of Minchinhampton, they turned right and left, the

† The neolithic finds at Barnwood do not preclude this statement, *Trans. B.G.A.S.* LI, 201.

northerly migration proceeding along the edge of the Cotswolds by Sapperton—Winstone—Birdlip—Wistley Hill—Dowdeswell, leaving behind them as they came a ridgeway track back to their own country, and on this they relied as the means of replenishing their stores of ammunition, tools and implements, or rather of the material for making them. Unlike the corresponding ridgeway in Berks and Wilts, which is still conspicuous, any traces of the main Cotswold ridgeway are lost owing to cultivation, except in so far as portions of its course may have been perpetuated by later roads. Near Dowdeswell this track entered the miniature plain of which Andoversford is the centre; the neighbourhood combines the characteristics of ridge, crest, 'col', saddle, watershed and table-land, and in these capacities would naturally have attracted to itself most of the primitive traffic from every direction; moreover the only watercourse in this area is provided with at least two easy fords, at Andoversford and Syreford. Owing to these topographical features, Andoversford became a radiating centre for several later, but still ancient, roads. The further course of the track from Wiltshire is a matter for conjecture, as there are so many possibilities, but for consistency of principle its main course would probably have been by Whittington—West Down—Roel Gate and thence northwards along the watershed to Chipping Campden. The approximate course of this ridgeway is marked RW in figs. 1 and 4, minor ridgeways also existed.

From the top of the Cotswolds, neolithic man must have looked out with a sense of security over the impenetrable and waterlogged valleys of the Severn and Thames, and reflected with satisfaction that all was well with his line of communication with his Wiltshire friends. He must, however, have felt some misgiving as to how he was to pay for his imports, unless there was trade in some other commodity than flint; an adverse trade balance was disastrous then, as now. There seems to have been

one way, and apparently only one, in which that anxiety can have been allayed. Close under the edge of the middle Cotswolds, and rising to nearly half their height, is an isolated mass of blue clay forming the foot-hill, or rather promontory, called Battledown. This, on account of its unusual nature and position, could have been worked long before the alluvial clay in the Thames and Severn valleys became accessible, and the Wiltshire people may have been glad to barter their flint nodules for lumps of Battledown clay for making pottery. In any case there is an ancient road leading up from Battledown to the crest above, and continuing towards the ridgeway which led into Wiltshire. If they had anything in the nature of a market, it would have been somewhere near Andoversford.

There do not appear to be any road systems which can be directly associated with the occupation of the strongly defended camps or hill-forts along the edge of the Cotswolds, that is to say roads in the sense of means of communication with distant places. This suggests that they were emergency camps of refuge and not permanently occupied. An exception is a short length of road leading from Ullenwood towards Leckhampton camp, this has however been ascribed a Roman origin, and assigned to a period of Roman re-occupation of this camp. It is otherwise, as will be seen later, with the lightly defended enclosures, also called camps, which exist in other parts of the Cotswolds. The fact that the hill-forts conform generally to the line of the main ridgeway does not necessarily make them contemporary with it, but shows that the same considerations influenced the siting of the hill-forts and the planning of the road.

In describing the various road systems, the main Roman roads, Ermin Street, Fosse Way and Akeman Street will be omitted for the sake of clearness, and as being self-evident, as well as being national and not local roads. An endeavour will be made to exclude also medieval roads

and those which from their inter-settlement character appear to have a Saxon origin, and to consider only those which are known to be ancient or which appear to be so, wholly or in part. In cases where names are duplicated, Norbury camp near Colesborne and Norbury camp near Farmington will be referred to as Norbury (c) and Norbury (F), and Pen Hill near Colesborne and Pen Hill near Salperton as Pen Hill (c) and Pen Hill (s), respectively. As far as possible, the names used will be those which occur in the 1 inch O.S. map.

THE CIRENCESTER SYSTEM (c)

Many roads have their origin at Cirencester, but there can be no doubt that the converse is also true, in that Cirencester owes its own origin to a road, a long forgotten precursor of the Akeman Street. The Celtic Britons departed from their usual practice when they founded Caer Corin on a low-lying site just where the river Churn, after a course between hills, began to spread itself out over a widening plain, and entered a region which in that day must have been swampy. They would not have done this without good reason; the spot they chose was the lowest point at which a road could cross the Churn. The obstacle to the passage of the upper Thames valley was not so much that river itself as the marshy condition of its banks for some miles on either side, extending approximately as far as the 350 foot contour, consequently any traffic having to cross that valley, and aiming at securing the shortest possible route for a necessarily circuitous journey, would follow this contour on the north side of the valley, keeping as low as solid ground would permit. The resultant road must necessarily have crossed the Churn where Cirencester now stands, the town having sprung up at the crossing. As it was, they ran it a bit fine, and the Romans found it necessary to provide the Churn with two channels at this point, so as to carry off the water more quickly. The importance which Cirencester acquired is

shown by the fact that it became the hub of a system of roads which spread out from it in every direction, not only in Roman times, for if the important Roman roads which converged on this centre are removed from the map it is

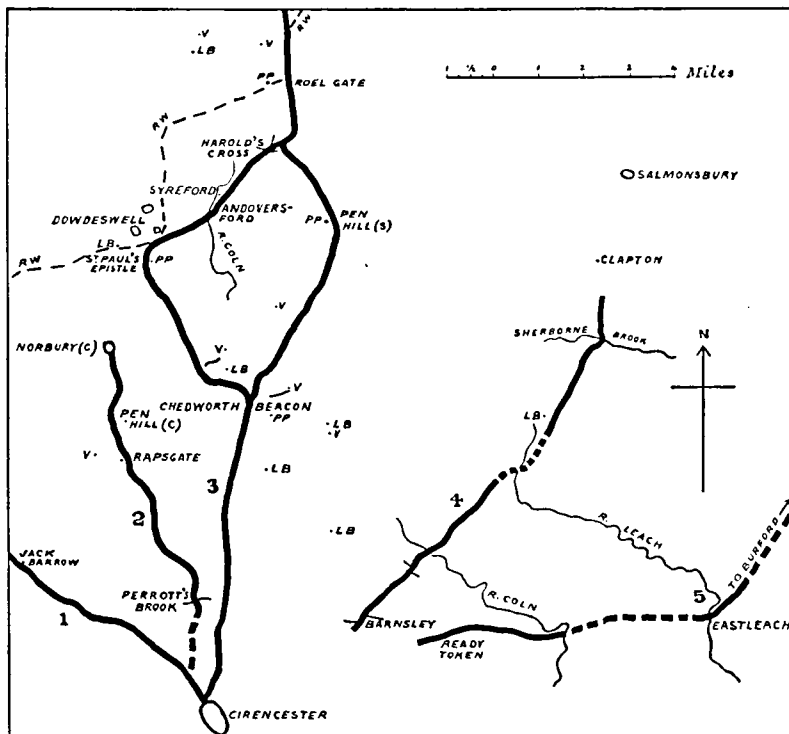


Fig. 1. The Cirencester System (c)

clear that even in pre-Roman times it was a place of considerable importance, as nearly every road in the district led to it.

1. There is, first, a road leaving the town in a nw direction, as the Ermin Street now runs. It bears to the left at Stratton, passing through Daglingworth and to the

west of the Duntisbournes, past Jack Barrow, to the declivity of the Frome valley. Beyond that I hesitate to follow it without more detailed knowledge of the topography of the broken country west of the upper Frome. I suppose, however, that its ultimate objective was Gloucester, by way of Miserden, Foston's Ash, Prinknash and the Port Way, making this the only direct means of communication between Caer Glow and Caer Corin in pre-Roman times. The Romans naturally superseded this difficult route by the more scientific one via Birdlip, the distance traversed remaining the same.

2. A second road left the town at the same place, branching off to the right somewhere in the neighbourhood of Stratton, perhaps following the line of the modern road, but more likely using the higher ground to the west, and dropping to the level of the Churn on approaching Perrott's Brook so as to get the best crossing of the valley. Here it climbed by way of Cutham Lane and continued by Woodmancote to Rapsgate, receiving presumably, in Roman times, a branch from the Combend Roman villa somewhere near the latter place, whence it ran in a fairly straight line across the Churn to Norbury (c). There are traces of two former courses of this road to the east of the present road where it crosses the ridge west of Pen Hill (c). Although Rapsgate is situated on this ancient road, and although, as the meeting place of the hundred, it must once have been the concentration point of many paths, there is no need to see in it the north country word 'gate' meaning 'road', the Domesday form *Respigete* suggests, as an alternative to the usually accepted ownership meaning, the gate, or gap, where the bramble grew—the wild 'rasp'-berry. Rapsgate may have been an important place before it gave its name to the hundred. Taylor's map (1777) gives it the alternative name of Rendon, and we may have here the Celtic name *Rend-dun* in contradistinction to *Rend-cwm* (*Rendcomb*), which is in the valley below. The suffix

'don' is however rare in this neighbourhood. Bagendon must, from its position, surely be a 'dene' or a 'tun', and not a 'dun' name.

3. The next road is the White Way, known also as the Race Road from the fact that it led to the old race-course on North Cerney downs. Starting at the northern end of Cirencester it climbs at once on to the high ground east of the Churn and continues to follow the ridge as far as Chedworth Beacon. Whatever its original course beyond this point may have been, it is certain that in Roman times it was extended in a northeasterly direction, up and down hill, regardless of anything but direction, across the Coln at Cassey Compton, into and out of Compton Abdale, and then on to the very small camp at Pen Hill (s).

The White Way so completely changes its nature at Chedworth Beacon that one is forced to consider the extension from that place to Pen Hill (s) as being of later date than the southern portion, and it is necessary to look in an apparently less obvious direction for its original northward course, as it is not likely to have stopped at Chedworth Beacon. This is not difficult; the people who planned the southern portion of the White Way kept strictly to the principle of the ridgeway throughout, and left Chedworth Beacon northwards by the only route that admitted of this form of road; that is to say they continued their road along the ridge between Churn and Coln by way of Postcombe—near Withington long barrow—above Staple Farm—by Shill Hill—over Withington Hill—along a narrow saddle at Pegglesworth Hill—past St. Paul's Epistle and on to the camps at Dowdeswell, and beyond. When therefore the Romans started to exploit the Coln and upper Isbourne valleys, and to construct villas there, this was no pioneer work, but the development of country already opened up by a system of roads. By means of short branch roads they connected the Chedworth and probably the Listercombe villas with the White Way at Chedworth Beacon, and the supposed villa

at Compton Abdale would have been connected to the extension referred to previously; moreover during the Great War the cutting down of Withington Woods revealed a line of earthwork which seems undoubtedly to mark the course of the branch road which served Withington villa, and connected it with the older portion of road which passes Withington long barrow, thus connecting this villa also with Chedworth Beacon. This, and the presence of St. Paul's Epistle, go to show that the Romans used the road from Chedworth Beacon to Dowdeswell on the right bank of the Coln as well as, and presumably before, the extension to Pen Hill (s) on the left bank. When they extended their operations beyond the headwaters of the Coln, and established villas at Wadfield and Spoonley in the upper valley of the Isbourne, they found ready for their use a ridgeway running on the east side of these rivers, and by making a connexion, if it did not already exist, between St. Paul's Epistle and Andoversford, where traces of Roman occupation have been found, they were able to bring the whole of the villas in these districts, and beyond, into direct communication with Cirencester.

St Paul's Epistle, a very small rectangular earthwork, has usually been described as a Roman outpost. It is not, however, easy to see how its position could have satisfied the requirements of an outpost in relation to any possible enemy of the Romans. It is much more likely that it was a police post, perhaps, as will be discussed later, one of a series extending from Cirencester to beyond Winchcomb. It was well placed for this purpose, dominating the country, and close to a road affording easy access to all parts under its protection. Its water supply was derived from a dew-pond close by.

In course of time apparently, the Romans made another connexion, from a point near Harold's Cross on the last mentioned ridgeway west of Hawling, to Pen Hill (s), connecting up here with the White Way 'extension', thus shortening, and perhaps superseding, the older route

by Pegglesworth Hill. It is extremely probable that the branch road from Chedworth Beacon to Chedworth Roman villa did not stop there, but proceeded across the Coln and up through Yanworth Wood and beyond, but it is not easy to connect it up with any other old road at this end, except by guesswork. It may possibly have led to Pen Hill (s) before the White Way 'extension' was made. Listercombe not only had a branch road to Chedworth Beacon, but also a connexion with the Fosse Way, first climbing alongside a little stream which has defied the laws of nature ever since the Roman occupation, by following an artificial, road-like gradient across the hill side; and then by way of Drove Way, Green Lane, across Gadbridge Lane (now and for over a century past known, less euphoniously, as Garbage), and along Sigden Way.

4. Obliterated by the construction of the Akeman Street, an earlier road must have left Cirencester on the eastern side and gone towards Ready Token. Whether it was the road now to be described, or whether it was the one numbered c5, or whether both these roads coincided for the first portion of their course, cannot be stated. The former of these somehow reached Barnsley, where its course was so definite as to deflect the Welsh Way (*q.v.*) from its objective for a short distance. Continuing north-east it appears between Cadmoor Copse and Ablington as a drove road, in which stretch it was able again to deflect for a short distance the course of another road, showing in both these instances that the later roads found it easier to use short lengths of the earlier one, or that they were compelled to do so, perhaps for reasons of private ownership of adjoining land; in either case the deflected roads must have been of later date than the road which deflected them. Crossing the Coln at Ablington, this road intersected the Salt Way (L2) on the ridge at Saltway Barn, one of two buildings so named in this neighbourhood, and then, after a short disappearance,

ran past a long barrow in Lodge Park and crossed the Sherborne Brook, and thence up hill, losing itself on the high ground near Clapton, the end of its traceable course being near the plantation called The Fork. It is not unreasonable to suppose that from Clapton it ran on to Salmonsbury, perhaps direct, less probably by connecting with IC 6 (*q.v.*). The road from Sherborne Brook to The Fork is part of one of the old salt ways (not L2), and so is a road connecting The Fork with IC 6, but this does not necessarily mean that this connexion is one that existed originally, more especially as the direction of this salt way, considered as a whole, is from NW to SE, whereas that of this road, also considered as a whole, is from NE to SW. Evidence of a connexion between C 4 and IC 6 is therefore wanting. It is not unreasonable to look upon either this road or IC 6 as a continuation of Buckle Street, although the name is not applied to anything south of Salmonsbury.

5. Of the next road in this system little can be said because the indications are scanty. It is perhaps in places identical with the 'long forgotten' road referred to earlier as having originated the town of Cirencester. It also followed, more or less, the line of the Akeman Street. This similarity of plan is due to the fact that all these roads had a common purpose, namely to reach the south side of the Thames valley with as short a *détour* as natural obstacles would allow. After leaving Cirencester this road appears to have passed over the high ground at Ready Token, to have crossed the Coln at Quenington and the Leach at Eastleach Turville and Eastleach Martin, and then to have made for Burford, crossing the Windrush there. Barrow Elm, which is believed to have been the meeting place of Brightwells Barrow hundred, lies near the intersection of this road with the Salt Way and with another old road.

THE LECHLADE SYSTEM (L)

The roads which radiate from Lechlade afford evidence that during one or more periods this place was the principal southern entrance into the middle Cotswolds. This was due partly to its position at the head of the navigable waters of the Thames, and partly to the ferry which preceded the medieval St. John's bridge over the Thames at this place, and which opened up communication with the south of England. The name Lechlade denotes the existence of an early ferry there, probably far earlier than the name itself. It is usually taken to mean 'the ferry (or road leading to the ferry) across the river Leach'. This, however, is not its exact meaning, for one thing the Leach is not big enough to require a ferry, and for another it is not customary to name ferries after the rivers they cross, but rather from some neighbouring point by which their position can be identified, and, in this case, the name Lechlade refers to the ferry across the Thames *near* the Leach.

The traffic, having converged on Lechlade from the southeast, was distributed over the middle Cotswolds by two main ways.

1. The first road in this system is the Welsh Way, sometimes called the Gloucester Way. The course of this road over the Cotswolds, from Lechlade to Birdlip, is rather like that of a ship beating to windward. The cause of this was the policy of the road planners, or road users, of linking up portions of existing roads, even with consequent loss of distance, a reversal of the Roman practice. During the last $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles up to Birdlip it follows the line of the Ermin Street, and between Lechlade and Perrott's Brook there is evidence of a similar use of stretches of earlier roads which were quitted when they seemed to be leading too far away from the objective. The use by a comparatively late road of the slight eminences at Sunhill and Ready Token, although not in a direct line, also

points to its having followed an older road made when these eminences were dry oases in an undrained country. In spite of this want of directness, the saving of distance

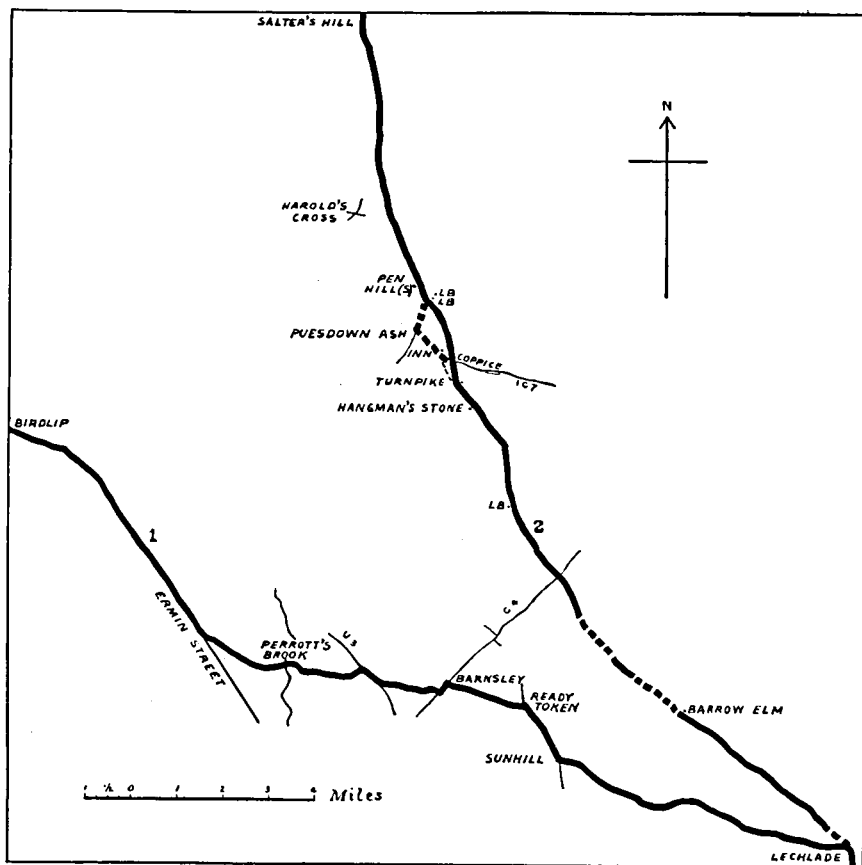


Fig. 2. The Lechlade System (L)

seems to have been one of its objects, as it cuts out Cirencester by crossing the Churn 3 miles further to the north, showing that after the decline of Roman Corinium it counted for little on the trade route to Gloucester and

Wales. During part of its life the Welsh Way appears to have used an additional stretch of the older road (U 3), as Taylor's map shows it going as far north as Downs Farm (close to the old race course), and then curving south again with a better gradient to Perrott's Brook.

2. The Salt Way, one of several bearing the name in this county, enters the Cotswolds from the north at Salter's Hill, at the junction of the three parishes of Hailes, Winchcomb and Pinnock and Hyde. It passes by way of Roel Gate— $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of Hawling— $\frac{3}{4}$ mile west of Salperton—Pen Hill(s)—Hangman's Stone—Crickley Barrow—Hatherop—Barrow Elm—and on to Lechlade. Portions of this road have already been referred to as forming parts of another system; the length from Salter's Hill to Hawling was considered to have been an early ridgeway used later by the Romans to give access to their villas in the Isbourne valley, also the portion from Hawling to Pen Hill (s) was regarded as an extension of the White Way made by the Romans. The junction of these two portions in the neighbourhood of Harold's Cross differs from the junction described under c 3. The Salt Way is therefore not all of one date, and, although as a whole generally ascribed a post-Roman date, parts of it are pre-Roman and Roman. The course of the Salt Way between Pen Hill (s) and Hangman's Stone is not altogether clear, but it is usually taken, and Taylor's map seems to support this view, as running along the White Way extension as far as the old Northleach turnpike road (identical here with the modern main road), and then turning approximately at right angles at the cross roads and running to Hangman's Stone. This road intersection was formerly, and is perhaps still, known as Puesdown Ash, from a tree which stood there in the 18th century. During the same century there were two turnpike roads near here connecting Burford with Gloucester, one of which passed through Northleach, and the other a short distance to the north, without passing through

Northleach, partly by way of the old road referred to later as IC 7. The two turnpike roads joined each other near Puesdown Inn at a place called Flintgoe Corner in Taylor's map, a name still retained by the adjoining field which is called Flitgo. For the last mile or so of its course the latter road is accompanied by a plantation called Old Road Coppice, which ends a quarter of a mile before reaching the corner at Flitgo. In 1777 there were turnpike houses on both these roads; the site of that on the present main road is marked by a wayside clump of trees $\frac{3}{4}$ mile NW of Hangman's Stone, and it is on the parish boundary. It is evident that the modern road between this point and Puesdown Inn (*i.e.* Flitgo Corner) is a straightening of the old road which formed a loop to the eastward, running from the turnpike to the western end of Old Road Coppice and then to Flitgo Corner, in fact the end of Old Road Coppice was the actual road-junction in earlier times, and this is moreover the point at which three parishes meet, and likely therefore to have been an important intersection. This digression into the modern history of the locality is necessary in order to elucidate the course of the early road by identifying points on it. It seems most probable that the Salt Way originally left the White Way extension at the Hazleton long barrows and ran by the western end of Old Road Coppice to the turnpike.

What looks like an alternative route to the east of the northern portion of the Salt Way is presumably no older than the villages it serves, *viz.* Hawling, Salperton and Hazleton.

THE INNER CAMPS SYSTEM (IC)

The next system is a complex one, having several nuclei instead of one, and is probably not one system but several. The roads are associated with those lightly defended enclosures which form an inner ring of camps on the reverse slope of the Cotswolds, differing fundamentally from the

strongly entrenched camps fringing their outer edge. For the present purpose they may be referred to as the Inner Camps. They are Norbury (c), the group of camps at Dowdeswell, Pen Hill (s), Salmonsbury and Norbury (f). Scrubditch 'camp' is excluded for reasons that will be given later. Some of the above are reputed Roman camps, but were built on sites previously inhabited, so this does not necessarily affect the date of the roads which serve them.

1. There is, firstly, the road previously described as c 2, connecting Norbury (c) with Cirencester.

2. The ancient Green Way which climbs the face of the Cotswolds from Shurdington to Ullenwood passes close to two long barrows in the comparatively short portion of its course which is traceable after reaching the crest. It heads straight for the Churn in such a manner as to leave no doubt that it crossed this river, probably near Coberley Mill. On the left bank its course is lost, but there seems no reasonable alternative to ascribing Norbury (c), only $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away, as its objective. In tracing this road in the opposite direction considerable interest arises, and it is necessary to go beyond the limits of the Cotswolds to appreciate its significance. Judging by its course westward from Norbury (c) to the point where it leaves the Cotswolds, one might jump to the conclusion that it continued in the same direction by way of Churchdown to Gloucester, and thence into Wales. In reality as soon as it reaches the Vale it is deflected a little to the right to the slight eminence at Badgeworth, and then, bearing still further to the right, it runs northwards past The Reddings, along the parish boundaries of Staverton, Boddington and Cheltenham to Uckington. From there it can with probability be traced, in places, northwards to the crossing of the Carrant at Northway near Ashchurch. The inference is that this road, and Norbury (c) which it serves, are of earlier date than the establishment of Gloucester as a place for crossing the Severn. It

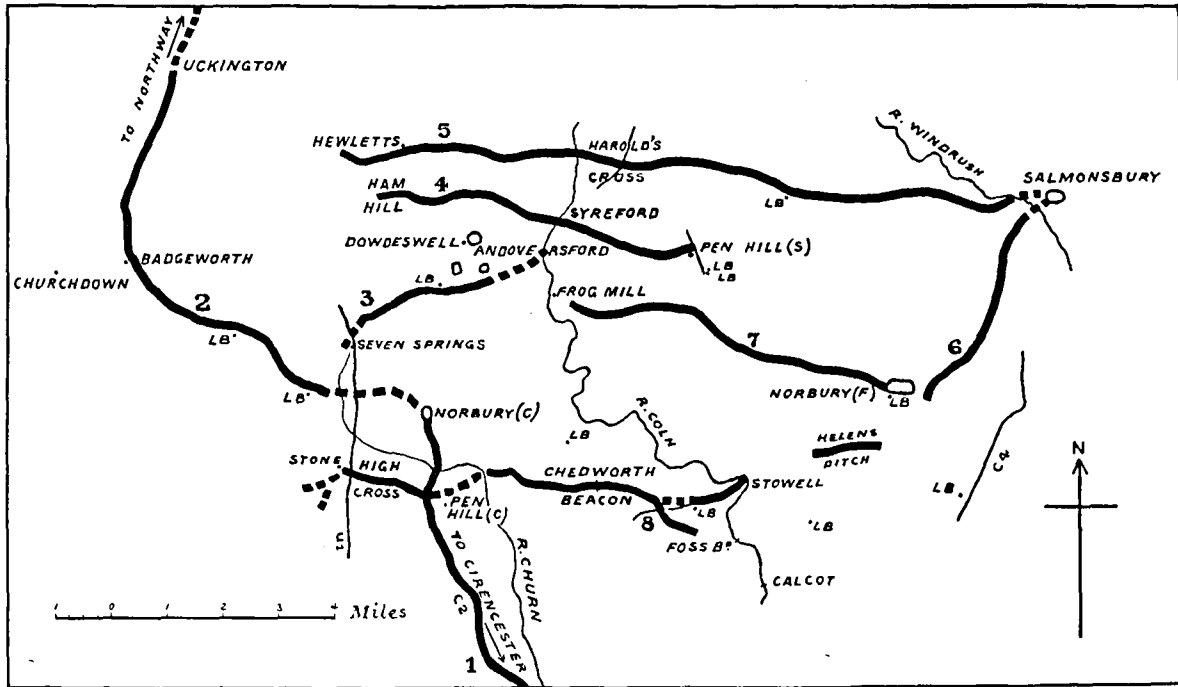


Fig. 3. The Inner Camps System (1c)

is generally accepted that Gloucester owes its origin to being at the lowest position where a road could cross the Severn into Wales, but there was a time when the skill of the inhabitants was not advanced enough to carry a road across here, and when it was necessary to go much further north to effect a crossing. As tributaries can be more easily crossed before they have combined to form one large river, the crossings would naturally have been made above Tewkesbury, and Northway would be the first of them. The fact that this and several other early roads are associated with long barrows (marked LB in the diagrams) does not necessarily mean that they belong to the same period as the latter. It does however imply an early origin for the following reason—the beech, now the most conspicuous tree in the Cotswold landscape, is supposed not to have existed in England at the time of the Roman occupation; in prehistoric times therefore the high ground was bare, field walls non-existent, roads undefined, and long barrows, when on high ground as is usually the case, afforded the best landmarks and guides for the traveller; there was a tendency therefore for tracks to converge on long barrows and to pass them. Standing stones were turned to account in the same way. The fact that a road passes a long barrow is therefore presumptive evidence in favour of the road being an ancient one. In the case of this particular road, the long barrows adjacent to it are also near the track of the older ridgeway, which may therefore be contemporary with them.

3. There is a short length of old road on Wistley Hill which seems to have formed part of one coming from the group of camps at Dowdeswell. It might seem at first sight as if it ran on to Leckhampton camp but for a deflection to the south in the last few yards at its western end, indicating a course just above the Seven Springs and so avoiding a water crossing. If these surmises are correct, then this road was not only the forerunner of a

portion of the coach road from London to Gloucester, included in the stretch from Frog Mill to Air Balloon, but was also on the site of the main ridgeway. Two roads descending to the Vale either emanate from or cross this road, one at Dowdeswell long barrow and one at Ravensgate Hill, both of which present problems which it would take too long to discuss here ; it can only be said that neither of them is likely to have come from Norbury (c) if the interpretation given to IC 2 is correct.

4. References have already been made (*vide* c 3) to a road passing over Pen Hill (s) ; another starts from there in a westerly direction, running through Syreford, Whittington and over Ham Hill, and down (not by the existing road but to the south of it) into the Vale. At Syreford, where this road crosses the Coln, the Romans had an important station, no doubt as a protection to this river crossing and to the cross roads close by (this road and c 3), and also linking up the whole of the Roman villas in the Coln valley.

5. Buckle Street and Icknield Street, running northwards from Salmonsbury, are of interest, but lie outside the scope of this article, that camp being just north of the Windrush, close to its left bank. A road starting westward from Salmonsbury forded the Windrush a little to the west, then running past Notgrove long barrow (Stane Barrow) across Hawling Downs, forming, with the extension of c 3, the cross roads known in coaching days as Harold's Cross, it passed through Brockhampton, north of Puckham Farm and down the steep spur at The Hewletts on to the Vale. Certain vicissitudes in this road's history show how the course of a really early road may be disguised by later uses. This road was the Cheltenham-Stow road in the 17th century ; in 1756 part of it was combined with part of IC 4 and with part of a third road to become a turnpike road from Cheltenham to near Puesdown Ash (see L 2). Within 20 years it was superseded by another route through Dowdeswell, and this in its turn gave place within half a century to the modern road.

6. Another road from Salmonsbury crossed the Windrush towards the south, and ran to the eastern end of Norbury (F). This may in effect be a continuation of Buckle Street although it does not bear the name (see also c 4). If Norbury (F) had been the terminal station of this road it would have entered the camp directly, but the evidence is against this, and apparently it skirted it on the eastern side, with a bend which suggests a short branch entering the camp on that side. It is therefore fairly certain that the road continued its course in a southwesterly direction, and this course can be traced with probability across the Coln at Calcot, and across the Churn at either North Cerney or Perrott's Brook, but as there are other alternatives it is safest to leave it *en l'air* outside Norbury (F).

7. An old road leaves Norbury (F) on its west side and runs to Puesdown, collecting half way on its route that portion of the old turnpike road from Burford to Gloucester which passed on the north side of Northleach, and is now to be identified by a field wall. If the character of the traceable portion of the early road in relation to the configuration of the ground can be taken as a guide to that of the obliterated portion, then the modern road marks its course beyond Puesdown at least as far as Frog Mill. It may either have crossed the Coln at Frog Mill, in which case it must have joined up with road 1 c 3 near the Dowdeswell camps, or if not it ran on, along the same ridge and spur, to Andoversford. Appearances favour the former course.

8. The next road is a puzzling one, and may, perhaps not belong to this system at all. It first appears a short distance west of Foss Bridge, and runs along the ridge between the Chedworth and Listercombe valleys, across the Stowell—Chedworth road at Highland Cross, and along the edge and ridge to Chedworth Beacon. This portion of the Stowell—Chedworth road cannot be older than the time when the valley became populated, *i.e.*

when Cedda established his 'worth' on one side of the valley, and Aldhelm his 'ton' on the other (later Almstone and now becoming Armstrong!) with his watering place at Aldhelm's Pool, now Adam's Pool, on the boundary between their farms. This road can only have crossed the steep valley to serve these two places, there being a much better, level, through route within a few hundred yards. It is possible however that the valley portion is a later diversion of a much older road, and if so we may perhaps start its eastern end from somewhere near Norbury (F), running along the old road called Helen's Ditch on the high ground south of Northleach, crossing the Coln at Stowell Mill and running up the spur to Wood Barrow (long barrow), then continuing along the ridge and joining the previous road at some point between Highland Cross and Chedworth Woods, and coinciding with it to Chedworth Beacon. From the last-named place it travelled westwards to Boys Grove where it crossed the valley, whose old name, Dry Bottom, suggests that there would have been no difficulty here, and climbing steeply across Monkham Wood, dropped again to cross the Churn at Colesborne. Here again we are at fault; there is no trace of it climbing the opposite slope, nor are there any traces on the top of Pen Hill (c). If it did not follow the existing road, which seems too well graded although the direction is good, it may have run to the rough ground on the northern slope of Pen Hill (c). Can this be a settlement or is it only the remains of quarries? There is an indication of a road climbing out of this rough ground to the saddle above, where the presumed course crosses c 2. In any case its further course is along the ridge, crossing u 1 at High Cross, and a furlong further on it reaches an ancient stone, perhaps the eponym of the parish of Elkstone whose boundary it marks. Here its course again becomes indefinite, and, although there is evidence of a convergence of old roads on this point from the west and southwest, any attempt to trace them in detail is speculative.

UNGROUPED ROADS (U)

There are several old roads which, for various reasons, cannot be classified in groups or systems. Only a few of these need be described, as there are many fragments of old roads which cannot be connected up satisfactorily.

1. The first of these is a road, portions of which belong to several different periods. The general line of the neolithic ridgeway already referred to is perpetuated by a later road coming from Minchinhampton Common, a populous district in early times, and entering the area now under consideration near Sapperton. Following the edge of the eastern escarp of the Frome valley, and crossing c 1 at Jack Barrow, it separates from the ridgeway near Winstone, leaving the latter to continue its characteristic course as the shape of the ground led it, near Birdlip, round the head waters of the Thames at Seven Springs, and along the ridge to Andoversford, following the route taken by 1C 3. After parting company near Winstone, the later, but still early, road crossed the Ermin Street at Beechpike and entered on that portion of its course which in the 18th century was made into a turnpike road, passing through Elkstone to High Cross, where it crossed 1C 8, then down a steep declivity to Cockleford, crossing the Churn and running straight to Seven Springs, where the turnpike road left it. Inclining slightly to the west, the old road began to descend the eastern face of Hartley Hill, at first at a skilfully graded angle, changing halfway down to a steep and direct descent, and proceeding to the crossing of the river Chelt at Sandford. Its general direction seems to indicate a course towards Northway on the Carrant (cf. 1C 2).

2. An existing road entering this area also near Sapperton, and passing through Daglingworth, joins the Welsh Way (L 1) about half-a-mile west of Perrott's Brook, and it is quite clear that this is an older road than the Welsh Way, and that it originally crossed instead of

joining it, as it is distinctly traceable from the point of crossing, along and down a pronounced spur running directly to the Perrott's Brook river crossing. This portion lies between C 2 and L 1, and is the only old road in this neighbourhood not provided with one of the dykes

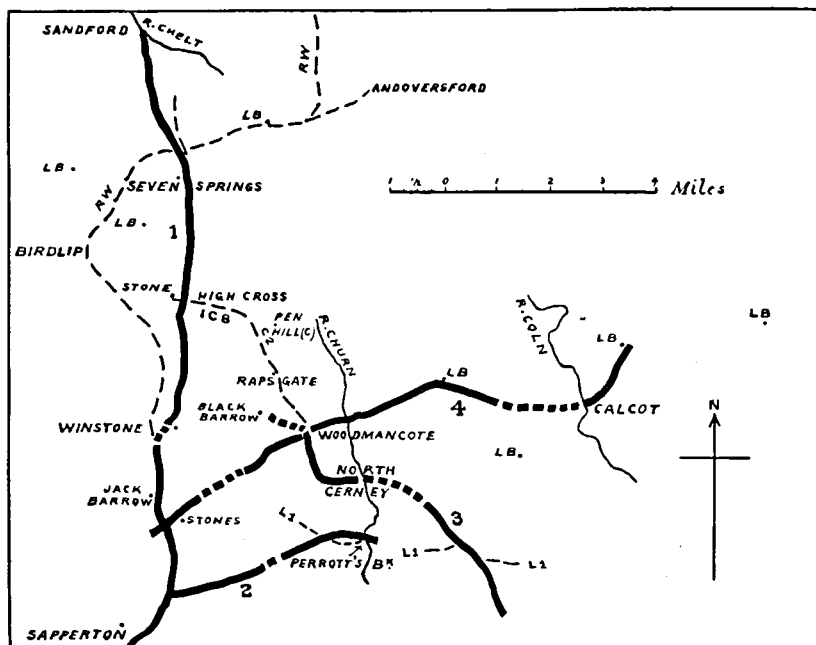


Fig. 4. Ungrouped Roads (u)

referred to later. After crossing the Churn it would have run straight up the opposite spur, but its further course is conjectural; it must, however, have been an important road judging by the traces already referred to, and it may be that we have here the continuation of IC 6, left *en l'air* outside Norbury (F), but it would be rash to try to suggest its course over the intervening nine miles. All that can be stated confidently is that, in its course eastwards it must have trended towards the north, otherwise

it would not have crossed the Churn at Perrott's Brook, but at Cirencester.

3. Mention has been made of the effect produced on the course of the Welsh Way (L 1) by its use of stretches of older roads, making it appear to vacillate instead of going straight to its objective. One of these roads has been described as c 4, another running through Sunhill and Ready Token has been mentioned, a third is u 2 which carries the Welsh Way on the east side of the Perrott's Brook crossing, but not on the west side. Omitting Ermin Street, which absorbed the Welsh Way instead of being absorbed by it, only one such road remains to be described. It seems to have come from somewhere near the Ampneys, and to have crossed the Churn at North Cerney and to have run along Scrub Ditch (see later). Just before the western end of Scrub Ditch disappears, it makes a slight, but distinct, bend northwards. This is not, I think, to avoid a slight depression in the ground, which is probably artificial, but to conform to a corresponding bend in this road, indicating that the latter ran northwards with, or more probably under, c 2 for about three quarters of a mile, leaving it at Woodmancote and bearing to the west to the high ground where Black Barrow once stood. This portion of road passes fields called Great Ditches and Little Ditches (now one field), and on the continuation northwards of c 2 is another field called Old Ditch Piece. These names, as in the field-names containing the word Scrubditch, imply the presence at one time of dykes such as were associated with roads (see later under Perrott's Brook). The words Great and Little apply to the size of the fields and not to that of the ditches or dykes, which today are non-existent, except perhaps for a causeway on which this particular road runs for about a quarter of a mile, just at the place where these names occur, and whose object is to carry this road on the level across a dip in the ground. It is quite possible that this causeway was made in later times to facilitate transport of stone from the

quarries near Black Barrow, and in any case it differs in style from the dykes referred to elsewhere, but some dykes must have existed in or near these fields. The evidence for this piece of the road is admittedly slender, and it may possibly not have turned west at Woodmancote, but have continued northwards, as a ridgeway combining c 2 and ic 8, by way of Old Ditch Piece—Rapsgate—Pen Hill (c)—High Cross and onwards.

4. A road crosses U 1 half a mile south of Jack Barrow and runs northeast past some standing stones, crossing the Ermin Street to the northeast of Duntisbourne Leer, and between this point and Woodmancote is known as Burcombe Lane. Thence crossing the Churn at Rendcomb, it heads straight for a long barrow near Pinkwell which deflects it wsw towards the ford at Calcot, and from there it runs to another long barrow (Crickley Barrow) where it is lost. This long barrow probably again deflected it, perhaps towards the next long barrow to the eastward, perhaps to join c 4 at the crossing of Sherborne Brook, perhaps to join ic 6 outside Norbury (F), but nothing definite can be said about it beyond Crickley Barrow.

CHEDWORTH BEACON

A detailed examination of important road crossings and their surroundings may reveal something of the functions of the roads. The plateau known as Chedworth Beacon is so well protected by nature against the worst forms of modern traffic, that it is difficult to realize that for a long period it must have been the hub of the mid-Cotswold traffic. It lies in the centre of a region of long barrows, neolithic finds have been of unusual importance, remains of Roman occupation surround it, and the road makers of all ages seem to have been impelled by a common impulse to concentrate there. A beacon fire lighted here would have been visible throughout the Vale of White Horse, as well as over a large extent of the Cotswolds. It is probable however that it is not to this fact that it

owes its name. The Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem maintained a cell and chapel here, only 500 yards from the parish church, but, unlike that church and most others in this district, it was not built in a sheltered valley but on the bleak and exposed plateau 100 feet above. The Knights of this Order were the protectors of travellers, and it was most appropriate that they should have had a cell near this important road centre, with, no doubt, a beacon light to guide travellers across the open and wind-swept Cotswolds. The light would moreover have been visible from their preceptory at Quenington, eight miles away. It is difficult to account for the presence of St. John's chapel here on any other hypothesis; moreover the roads instead of crossing, as now, at a well-defined intersection, must have straggled all over the plateau, which is about a square mile in extent.

Field-names—Portway, Hither Portway and Far Portway—reveal the existence of an obliterated road named Port Way between Foss Cross and Chedworth Beacon, and the name discloses its purpose, namely 'the road to the market'. Strangely enough the position of the market has been preserved in the name of the farm Newport, *i.e.* new market, at Chedworth Beacon. It must have been more than a coincidence that the main street of the village of Chedworth, seemingly parallel to, or perhaps forming part of, the Port Way, and leading to the same destination, is called Cheap Street—O.E. *cēap*, a market. Whether it was once the custom in this country, as it is now in West Africa, to hold temporary markets at country cross roads, or whether this is another indication of the importance of this particular road-centre, it is clear that the place was associated with a market. Where this particular Port Way came from, south of Foss Cross, cannot be stated, it may have been the second of the roads whose course is mentioned as having been diverted by C4.

A group of farm outbuildings at Chedworth Beacon bears the pretentious name of The Castle, and stands in

the Castle Field; it may be permissible here to overstep the line between observed facts and surmise. This name, generally with a derogatory prefix, *e.g.* Rat's Castle, was sometimes applied to derelict Roman buildings while they were still visible above ground. Failing evidence of a medieval castle therefore, the name suggests a Roman site, possibly that of a small building such as must have existed at St. Paul's Epistle, and, allowing a reasonable height for the latter, just visible from it over the shoulder of Withington Hill. The small so-called Roman camp on Pen Hill (s) may have been similar, and there is another earthwork called a camp, but unusually small for such a purpose, close to Roel Gate. It is not improbable that we may have here four of a series of police posts, each visible from the next, all spaced about four miles apart, all at or near road junctions and on roads giving access to known Roman villas, and, unlike other Roman sites in the neighbourhood, all in exposed situations and commanding a wide field of view. Assuming one other such post about four miles out of Cirencester, where the ground affords similar conditions, there would have been a complete chain of police posts from Winchcomb to Cirencester (marked PP in fig. 1) protecting all the known Roman villas in the valleys of the Coln and Isbourne, with facilities for patrolling all the roads serving these villas, and in rapid communication, visual and actual, with each other and with Cirencester, and having perhaps a subsidiary headquarters centrally situated at the Roman station known to have existed at Syreford.

PERROTT'S BROOK

Another interesting road crossing is at Perrott's Brook, with moreover a river crossing added. It is difficult to see why this exact spot should have been chosen for a bridge, as it has distinct disadvantages; the left (east) bank of the Churn is firm and steep, but on the right (west) bank the abutment of the bridge is just below the inlet of a

tributary stream having a catchment area of about 5 square miles, and it would have been a far easier problem to cross the river above this junction. The bank is low and marshy, and the builders could not have made this bridge until they were skilled enough to adapt the approach by means of a causeway; the old name, Barford Bridge, shows that there was a ford here before the bridge was built, and a ford is seldom the easiest place for building a bridge. The marshy nature of the right bank is due to natural causes and not to the construction of the bridge, and the field-names Bank Flag and Bog Flag show its extent. These fields are just above the tributary stream. I have not met 'Flag' as a field-name elsewhere, it seems to suggest a flagged or paved track leading down the 'bank' and across the 'bog' to the exact place where the ford would naturally have been found. It seems probable that there was an earlier bridge about a mile further north, at North Cerney where both banks are steep and firm, and that the ford at Perrott's Brook was later superseded by a bridge when force of circumstances required one here in spite of difficulties. The impelling force must have been the need of the Welsh Way traffic to use as much as possible of the Roman Ermin Street, of which it would have lost $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles if it had crossed the Churn higher up. This change of objective accounts for the sudden bend $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles east of Perrott's Brook.

Associated with those old roads in the neighbourhood of Perrott's Brook which are on the west of the river Churn, are certain embankments which, as far as I know, have never been systematically examined or satisfactorily explained. They have been described as 'Intrenchments', and are also asserted to have been thrown up by the Britons as a defence against the West Saxons in 556. Although at first sight they bear some resemblance to defensive parapets, consideration of them as a whole shows that they cannot form part of any tactically defensive system, in spite of the name Bloody Hill immediately

adjoining one of them. It is easier to say what they are not than what they are; from their plan and distribution they are not camps, enclosures or defences, and while parts of them look like old roads other parts negative this idea. If they are frontier lines, then the 'state' they defined must have consisted of the whole of the valley in which Bagendon lies, warning the hill men to keep at a distance, and therefore of Saxon date. In alluding to them it is safest to follow the latest edition of the 6 inch o.s. map, in which they are called 'Dykes'. The two most conspicuous ones run alongside old roads (C 2 and L 1) which radiate from the river crossing, and climb gentle hills, on reaching the top of which they disappear. Against this must be set one disconnected fragment, a mile to the west, which does not radiate from the river crossing, and which only exists on the top of the hill. These dykes are not causeways, as the ground does not require them, nor are they the detritus thrown out of the old roads, as it could have been more easily and less symmetrically disposed of. Excavation would show if the volume of earth taken from the ditch balanced that of the embankment originally, and air-photography would reveal any lengths which may have disappeared altogether from the surface. It is now only possible to end as we began by saying that these banks, with their ditches, are associated with old roads.

Reference has been made under U 3 to two other places in this neighbourhood where field-names suggest that the adjoining roads were formerly provided with such dykes. About 100 yards to the east of the dyke which runs along C 2 there are two traces of ditch without bank which look distinctly like parts of an old road, while at the same time their direction seems to associate them with the dyke in question. Taylor's map (1777) shows a road exactly in this position running from North Cerney church to Perrott's Brook, and this is confirmed for the remainder of its course by the tithe map of 1842, in the form of field

divisions which no longer exist. These traces have therefore no connexion with the dyke running parallel to them.

About a mile to the north of Perrott's Brook is the earthwork known as Scrubditch camp, situated in fields bearing the name of Scrub Ditch. I do not know on what evidence this has been called a camp, there is no sign of an enclosure, and it is not sited as camps usually are. It consists of a single line of bank and ditch, nearly half a mile long, running east and west up a hill from a river crossing, and disappearing shortly after reaching the top; in fact it so much resembles the dykes at Perrott's Brook that there can be little doubt that it is another of these, and although no present-day road runs along it, it is on the line which an old road, crossing the Churn at North Cerney, would have taken, and it will be observed that this course has been ascribed to U 3. There is another elongated piece of earthwork at Perrott's Brook, but it has none of the characteristics of the roadside dykes, and more the appearance of a dump.

Only a comparatively small area of the Cotswolds has been considered, in order to concentrate upon details, and even so there are several other places which would repay a close examination, as for instance the road centres at Ready Token and Crickley Barrow, and the old roads which descend the steep western slopes, with the shoulder settlements which some of them serve. Some of the opinions I have expressed may be wrong, as the observed facts will often admit of more than one interpretation, and the one accepted may not necessarily have been the correct one. These conclusions are therefore tentative and not didactic, and if air-photography, or excavation, or further topographical study should either confirm or disprove any of them, the result would be to increase the value of the old roads of the middle Cotswolds as a help to local history.