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**Roman-British stone bedding on the Fossway near Stow**

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## NOTES

## THE ROMAN FOSSWAY, NEAR STOW

In November 1931 Mrs E. C. Sewell drew my attention to what appeared to Miss Francis, of Broadwell, and Mrs Whitmore-Jones to resemble old foundations that had become partly exposed within 11 feet of the eastern edge of the present Fossway upon a bank-side about one mile and a quarter north of Stow on the Wold. The clear illustrations here reproduced (plates 1-11), made from photographs by Mr J. Henry Thomas kindly given to the writer, vividly present the appearances.

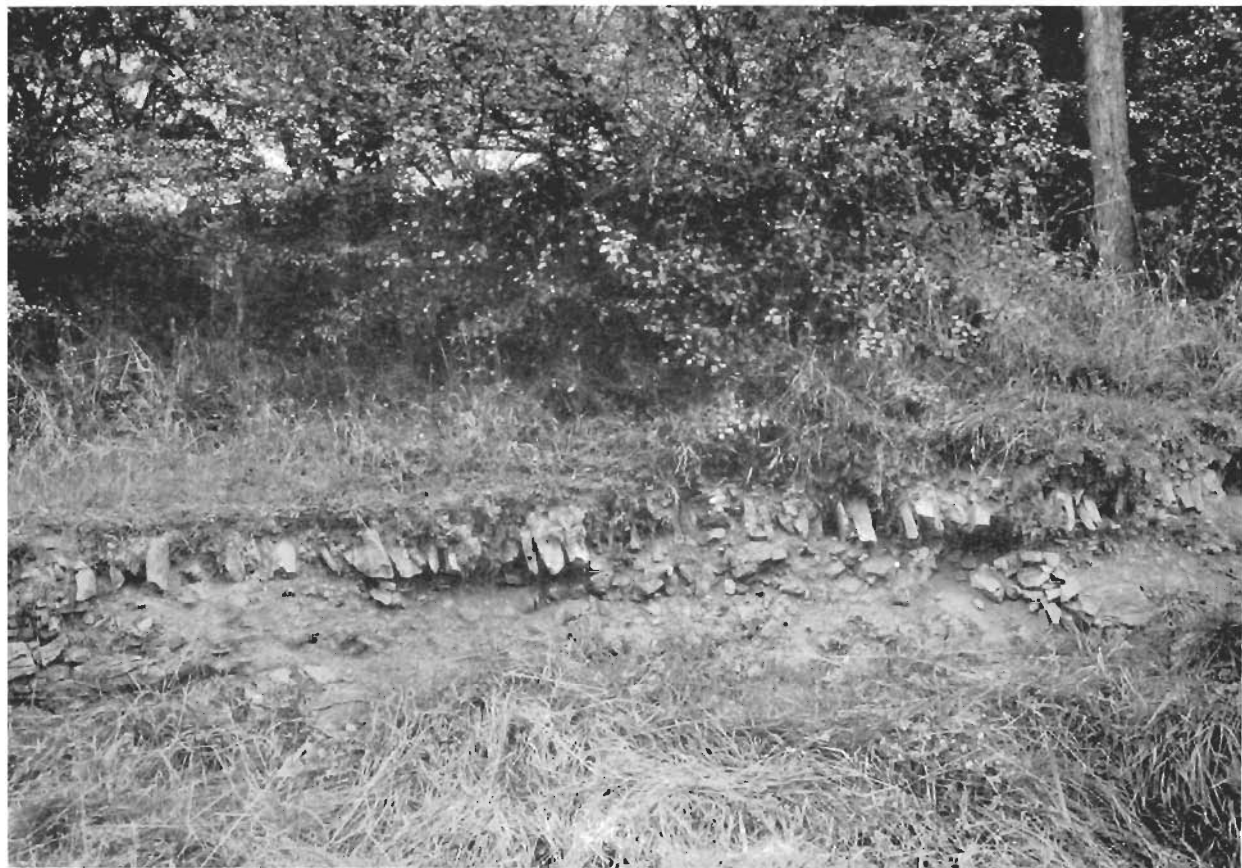
Upon close examination there remained no doubt that, as in the Akeman street, in Woodstock Park, and as at Durdham Down and several other sections of Roman roads, a typical line of oolite stones set edge-wise thus upon the trimmed local bed-rock by the Romano-British engineers of the *Cursus Publicus* was here exposed, constituting the vertebral foundation of this highway. The chief modern facts about it may be briefly put. The old level at this hill section (after 1700 years wear and tear), needed, and received, drastic improvement by changes carried out in 1873-4, including a slightly-lowered level immediately west of the ancient one, as here seen. (Information from Mr P. Buckle, Divisional Surveyor). Doubtless, in spite of weeds, grass, and brambles, this line of stones may have been seen, though not questioned, or noticed, by many another passer-by. The bank rises rather steeply up to bushes, trees, and occasional telegraph-poles, and it ends with the dry-wall of a great upland field commanding the near edge of Oxfordshire.

Further inspection showed that the bedrock, although damaged by exposure and pickings for modern road-



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mending, had been deliberately levelled of old for no other purpose than the original road-making. It therefore, as elsewhere, forms a valuable and incontrovertible witness to the prevailing method of the Romano-British engineer in carrying forward his design in many places, while it shows that the present road lies 2 ft. 6 ins. lower, and the field, above, is 5 ft. 6 ins. higher than it. Beneath the outspread knotty roots of a tree behind the baths at Chedworth villa are to be seen, edging the original owner's bridle-path from the White-(or Stan-) way, similarly bedded stones. Even in Gloucester near the Shire Hall traces of such road-bedding were noticed in 1909. South of Ilchester, Stukeley (*Itin. Curiosum*, 155) long ago noticed that the Foss (so-called) presented there an exposed section, laid edgeways, and resembling the side of a wall fallen down.

It may now be mentioned that, while observing the middle section of the thus exposed line, there disclosed itself a small wedge of stone bearing a very different complexion to its fellows on either side of it. Upon a nearer acquaintance it showed tiny crystals and the presence of rust. As it could not be a dark sandstone it was worth critical examination as being foreign to the oolite system. It was, therefore, sent for analysis to the Director of the Museum of Geology in Jermyn street, by his courtesy. The result was in the nature of a further surprise; having already convinced myself that no further examples of the stone present themselves at the site in point.

The following interesting identification reached the writer from the Museum petrographer, Mr H. Herbert Thomas, F.R.S.

'The specimen of rock from the Roman Fossway is a very fresh example of an Olivine-dolerite, of the variety known as Crinanite. It is most certainly of tertiary age; and, still more certainly, of Scottish origin . . . As far as I know, ice-borne boulders of

Scottish rocks are unknown so far south, although they do come down into the Midlands as far as Wolverhampton *via* the Cheshire Plain . . . If you are convinced that it is Romano-British, and there are no more like it, then I should be inclined to regard it as a stray ice-borne boulder'.

Meeting thus unexpectedly ice-borne and alien materials in this district proved to be a second experience of the kind, as, in 1926, upon Yanworth-down at about 650 ft. a thunder-shower exposed at the writer's feet quite a number of large sea-rounded pebbles precisely identical with those found (but not described before) in the baths at Chedworth villa, and probably of old used there as 'cooking-stones' for quickly heating steam-baths (used as such still in Finland and elsewhere). These were also identified for me by the Director of the Geological Survey as having been brought down in the last Ice-Age, unspoiled, but deposited at a rather higher level than any specimens hitherto recorded in this latitude.

For kindnesses thus received, the writer gladly records his obligations. Owing to the increasing zeal and care for the interesting ancient sites of this Shire the County Surveyor, Col. E. S. Sinnott, has judged well to save and protect, while preserving to the view of the passer-by, this described relic of *c.* A.D. 75.

It has been obviously known to a good many local folk that, to a certain field north of the road leading into Broadwell (which has a well and tokens of terraced former structure) there has been attributed villa-remains:—bones of deer, (Kentish) oyster-shells of 2nd century, pot-rims, bits of painted stucco ; but no Samian occurs.

This situation (probably the original suggestion of an ultimate Saxon village-site), seems not to point to a villa (as supposed), but to an official statio of the *Cursus Publicus* attached to the great Imperial highway, as was witnessed-to at the side and rear of the George Inn,

Birdlip in 1917-18 by the writer : and where (unknown to him), in 1890-1, over 200 Roman coins were recovered by the then owner of Cowley Manor close by.

ST. CLAIR BADDELEY.

### A CAVALIER PORTRAIT

The not-strictly conventional head here reproduced (plate III), from a rubbing taken February 1933, is of the actual size, and scratched by a skilled hand, which declared itself through some thin plaster-wash and old paint upon the chamfered mullion of a two-light upper west window at Prinknash Priory, and became first noticed by the brethren there. The writer's attention was called to it by Rev. Father Prior and the rubbing was taken by his kind permission. It should belong clearly to the days in 1643, when that house, then the abode of the Dowager Lady Bridgman, became occupied by Prince Rupert and his staff, his uncle, Charles I, after passing a night, with his sons, as Sir Ralph Dutton's guests at Painswick Park Lodge (now Lodge Farm), having taken up his residence at Matson, two miles nearer Gloucester.

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