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**Investigation of Roman Roadway at Weston-sub-Edge,
Gloucestershire**

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INVESTIGATION OF ROMAN ROADWAY AT WESTON-SUB-EDGE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

by BENJAMIN G. COX, F.R.N.S.

A GLANCE at the 6 inch Ordnance Sheet for the North Cotswold area will show the Roman Icknield Street on its dead straight course from Bidford-on-Avon in Warwickshire passing through Bickmarsh and Honeybourne (where it is called Buckle Street) and on to Weston-sub-Edge in Gloucestershire where it meets the winding A.46 Stratford-on-Avon to Broadway high road.

On reaching Weston-sub-Edge this road ceases to be a motor road but continues its course in a southerly direction as a grass track-way and forms the boundary of the Parishes of Weston-sub-Edge and Saintbury.

At Easter 1957, the Vale of Evesham Historical Society visited the trackway for the purpose of cutting a section into it with the object of confirming that it was Roman, to ascertain details of its construction and dimensions, and to record such information as was available about the road and particularly to try and clear up the long standing doubt which has existed as to the true course of this road.

At a point about 800 yards up this grass trackway and at about 3 yards from the eastern extremity of the track a trench was put down to a depth of about 3 feet and no traces of laid stone were found, only heavy virgin clay which bore no evidence of previous disturbance. This negative finding was somewhat disconcerting as it was well into the present trackway.

Following this disappointment a second trench was put down a few yards to the west of the first trench and well over to the 'off' side of the trackway when facing from Honeybourne. Here we were more successful and after getting through about 4 inches of humus and about 5 of loose clay we came on to our Roman road just at its eastern extremity. The trench was



PLATE I. The commencement of the grassed-over Section showing the motor road diverting towards Willersey



PLATE II. A view of the trench with camera facing east

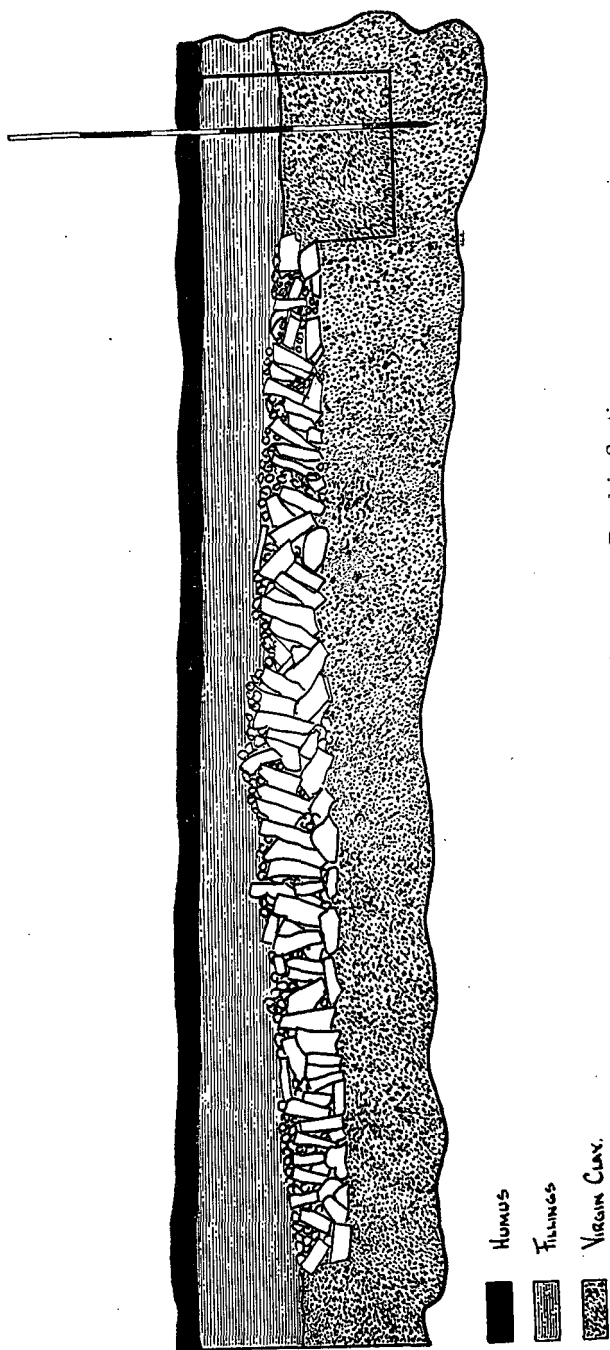


Fig. 1 Weston-sub-Edge. The Roman Road in Section

continued in a westerly direction to find the other extremity and this was found well in the bushes on the Saintbury side of the track. It was clear that the present grass track deviates somewhat and only shows roughly the course of the original road which I have no doubt is quite straight.

The present trackway is very rutted and is only used by farm vehicles and is known locally as Dirty Lane, which I am informed is a very appropriate description in wet seasons.

The Roman road, as will be seen from Mr J. G. Robinson's sectional drawing, was laid on the virgin clay without any preparation of any kind so far as could be observed. It was 14 feet 6 inches wide at this point and lay below 4 inches of humus and 5 inches of clay. It was constructed of rounded pitched stones 16 inches deep in the centre and cambered down to approximately 6 to 9 inches at the ends, the stones being of local oolitic limestone obtainable from nearby quarries and were covered with a shallow layer of metalling. The road was deeply rutted in several places and it was not possible to come to any conclusion as to the distance between the wheels of the carts which had made use of it.

One very large iron nail was found below the clay which covered the stones together with a piece of chain, the former being undoubtedly Roman but the latter uncertain.

There are three known Romano-British sites at Weston-sub-Edge which have from time to time yielded interesting finds including local and Samian pottery, a bracelet of Kimmeridge shale, coins and roofing tiles.

I think it is possible that this roadway was made much use of after the Roman occupation as it is a very direct route from the quarries to Weston-sub-Edge and places nearby and probably fell into disuse when the road was too badly in need of repair to justify the trouble of carrying out the work.

Before filling in, the road was photographed and drawn.

Having now acquired a considerable interest in this road, I have walked it for a distance of several miles and have made a very considerable study of it in relation to its course as shown on the Ordnance Survey Sheets, provided by the Ordnance

Survey Archaeology Division and have firmly come to the conclusion that it does not branch off in a south-westerly direction in the direction of Saintbury village where it is shown on the Ordnance Sheet as 'Buckle Street', but proceeds in a straight line along the western edge of Weston Park and continues up the hill and across the A.44 London to Worcester road at a point east of Peter's Farm and thence in a straight line past Hinchwick Manor where it clearly reveals itself as Condicote Lane and continues on to join the Fosse Way near Bourton-on-the-Water. This would give us a straight road all the way from Bidford-on-Avon to the Fosse at Bourton.

The true course of this road was known to Codrington¹ (p. 272) and was proved by Dr G. R. Malkin, who sectioned it in the 1930's at a point along the area in dispute. Dr Malkin recorded that he found the road to be 14 feet wide, well cambered and with a small ditch on the east side and some stone support on the west side where the ground fell away.

Mr I. D. Margary, M.A., F.S.A., mentions the road in the recently published volume II of his work on Roman Roads² and he concurs in my opinion as to its true course.

A copy of this report has been read by the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey Office and I am informed that the new 6-inch National Grid Provisional Edition (Sheet S.P. 13 N.W.) will show this road on its true course as described above.

The investigation was carried out under the auspices of the Vale of Evesham Historical Society, by Mr B. G. Cox, Mr J. G. Robinson, who made the sectional drawing, Mr I. Slocombe, who took the photographs, and Mr T. Keen.

¹ *Roman Roads in Britain* (1903).

² *Roman Roads in Britain*, Vol. II, p. 15.