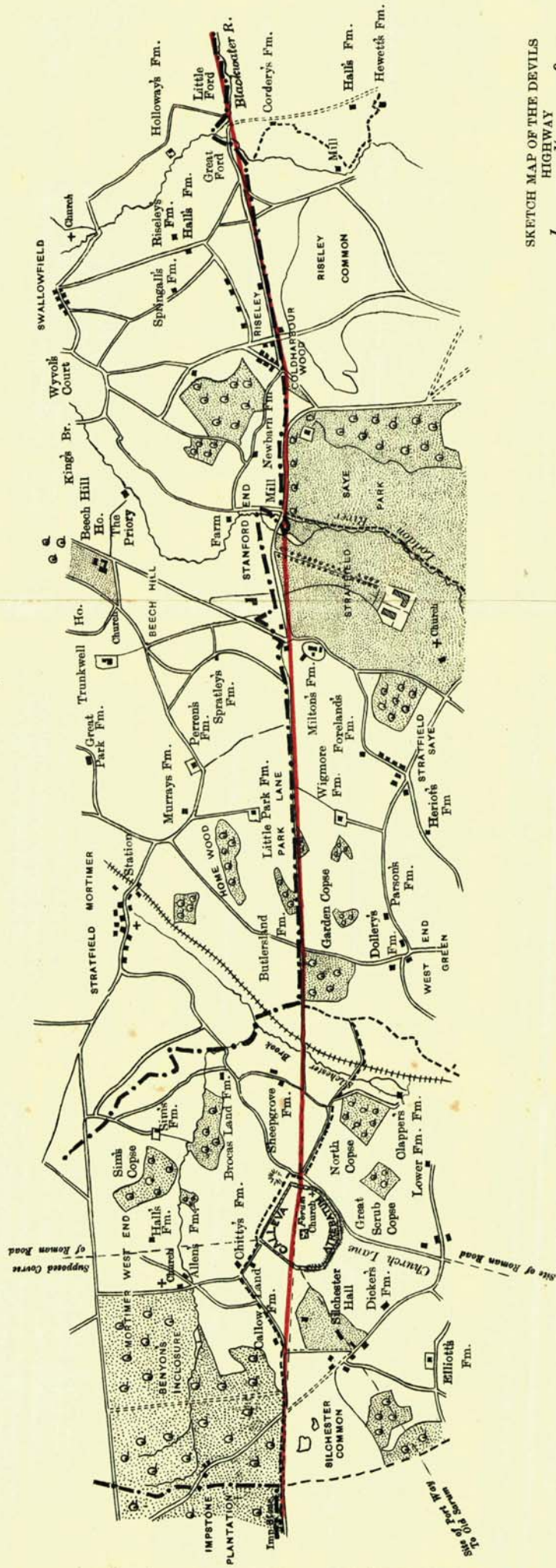


EXPLANATION

- ROMAN ROAD
- COUNTY BOUNDARY
- PARISH BOUNDARY



SKETCH MAP OF THE DEVILS
HIGHWAY
1
1/2
1 Mile

THE HAMPSHIRE PORTION OF THE DEVIL'S HIGHWAY.

BY CAPTAIN G. A. KEMPTHORNE.

As it is proposed here to deal only with that section of the Devil's Highway which for some eight miles skirts the northern boundary of Hampshire, it is necessary to record briefly only the general course of the Roman Road of which it forms a part.

It has been justly pointed out that the Roman routes between London and the West correspond, generally speaking, with the line now taken by the Great Western Railway; though in the construction of the latter, our engineers, following the line which traffic had assumed since Saxon times, took a somewhat more northerly direction, through Berkshire by Maidenhead and Reading, which latter town had long before succeeded to the position formerly held by Calleva as the capital of the district.

The Roman Road, after passing through Calleva, proceeded to Spinae, usually identified with Speen, near Newbury, and here divided, as the railway now does at Swindon, one branch going by Cirencester to Gloucester, the other to Bath, and so on to Wales by the passage of the broad estuary of the Severn. It left London by Oxford Street, Notting Hill, and Turnham Green, its course through Brentford towards Staines being indicated by the present coachroad. The Thames and the Colne were crossed by two bridges which gave the name of Pontes to the station which existed in the neighbourhood, probably on the high ground near Egham. From this point it pursued a course over the barren sandy tracts of Bagshot Heath and Easthampstead Plain, which, within the memory of many living, were

unenclosed and very thinly populated. Parts of the causeway still remain, part was incorporated in the system of hunting roads which were laid out in Windsor Forest during the 18th century, but gardens and enclosures made during the last fifty years have destroyed all traces in many places where the course was quite obvious to the Sandhurst officers who surveyed the whole road from Silchester to the Thames in the year 1836. During the survey the foundations of the road have been exposed in several places, and Roman remains have been found along its course.

It seems reasonable to suppose that in pre-Roman times there was a track connecting the British tribal settlements which centred round the hill forts at St. George's Hill in Surrey, Cæsar's Camp, so called, on Easthampstead Plain, and old Calleva. Into this the Roman Road to the West struck at Duke's Hill, Bagshot, making an angle of 35 degrees west of its former direction, and from here onwards to Calleva it was metalled, embanked, and improved where necessity arose. On the summit of Easthampstead Plain, about half-a-mile south of the old stronghold, a substantial rest-house was constructed round which rose a small hamlet; and from a point near this spot (*424 feet*) the Roman engineers could distinguish their objective at Calleva on a clear day at a distance of 14 miles.

Between West Court, Finchampstead, and the crossing of the Blackwater River one small section of the road only remains where it follows for 260 yards the course of Joulding's Lane. In laying out this part of the road an alignment was taken from the Finchampstead Ridges (*300 feet*) over the northern shoulder of the church hill, on the north-east corner of Stratfield Saye Park (*260 feet*), where there is now a fine clump of trees—oak, elm, and fir. Deviating a little southward, the line crosses the Blackwater and Whitewater Rivers, shortly before their junction, at the two ancient fords known respectively as Little Ford and Great Ford, at the latter of which, a trifle over 6 miles from the east gate of Calleva, it enters Hampshire. The county boundary now strikes the Whitewater River somewhat higher up, and

follows it to the junction of the two rivers ; so for some 300 yards after the second crossing the line passes again through Berkshire. Continuing, however, across the meadow, a bank, surmounted by a line of trees, is encountered, which separates the two counties and the parishes of Heckfield and Swallowfield. Following this for about 250 yards it enters the road running from Riseley village to Great Ford, obviously the Roman Road itself (*B.M.* 158 *feet.*) The road continues for a little over a mile over Riseley Common, now enclosed, between two hedges, deviating occasionally a little from the original line, which in places can be traced at the side of the present track, the county and parish boundary following, at first on the south, afterwards on the north of the road. The counties so divided were originally Hampshire and Wiltshire ; for the older maps show a large wedge-shaped piece of the latter county inserted, having its base on the Roman Road between the Blackwater and the Loddon, and its apex about Three Mile Cross. Entering the Odiham-Reading road at a right angle, the road we have been following terminates ; but a footpath continues the line along the county boundary for another 300 yards into the Basingstoke road at the north-east corner of Coldharbour Wood (230 *feet*). This is $4\frac{1}{4}$ miles from Calleva. A track may be followed for a short distance into the coppice, after which it deviates and is lost ; but continuing the line from the far side across a ploughed field, the clump of trees before-mentioned is reached on the crest of the hill at an elevation of about 260 feet.

From the fields of New Barn Farm round this spot, Finchampstead Church (the supposed site of a Roman Camp) with the Ridges behind are visible in one direction, and the site of Calleva on the other. It would appear indeed to be a very likely place for the establishment of a small post ; for, by means of a beacon fire or some primitive form of heliograph, communication could be thereby kept up between these two places. The name "Coldharbour" is perhaps suggestive. Speaking of the name generally, Isaac Taylor says: "The ruins of deserted Roman villas were no doubt

often used by travellers who carried their own bedding and provisions, as is done by the frequenters of khans and serais in the East. Such places seem commonly to have born the name of 'Cold Harbour.'"¹ With this must be recorded Professor Haverfield's remarks: "The connection of the name with things Roman has yet to be proved. 'Cold Harbour' occasionally occurs on the line of Roman roads, and occasionally, though less often where Roman remains have actually been found, but many of the cases in which it is employed have no connection with Roman remains or Roman roads."² He mentions two only in Hampshire as on the line of Roman roads, of which this, however, is one.

Having arrived at a position from which Calleva was clearly visible, the road made an angle of 23 degrees north of its old direction, an alignment being taken on a point near the site of Silchester Church. The line follows for a short distance the modern road along the north of Stratfield Saye Park, but enters the park itself just before Stanford Bridge, crossing the present course of the Loddon at the junction of Swallowfield, Heckfield, and Stratfield Saye parishes, and continuing right across the lake to emerge on the west of the park a little north of Chequer Cottage. Here the county boundary follows an irregular course northward by Stanford End. The road cannot be traced across the Loddon Valley. This stream, emulating one of Mr. Montgomery's famous rivers, meanders (approximately) "level with its fount" over the meadows, and has no doubt frequently changed its bed; besides which its course was interfered with by extensive alterations made in the park at the beginning of the last century. Earlier maps show no lake on the site of the present one, and Stanford Mill stood originally some distance further up stream. It seems useless, therefore, to look for the site of the ancient ford.

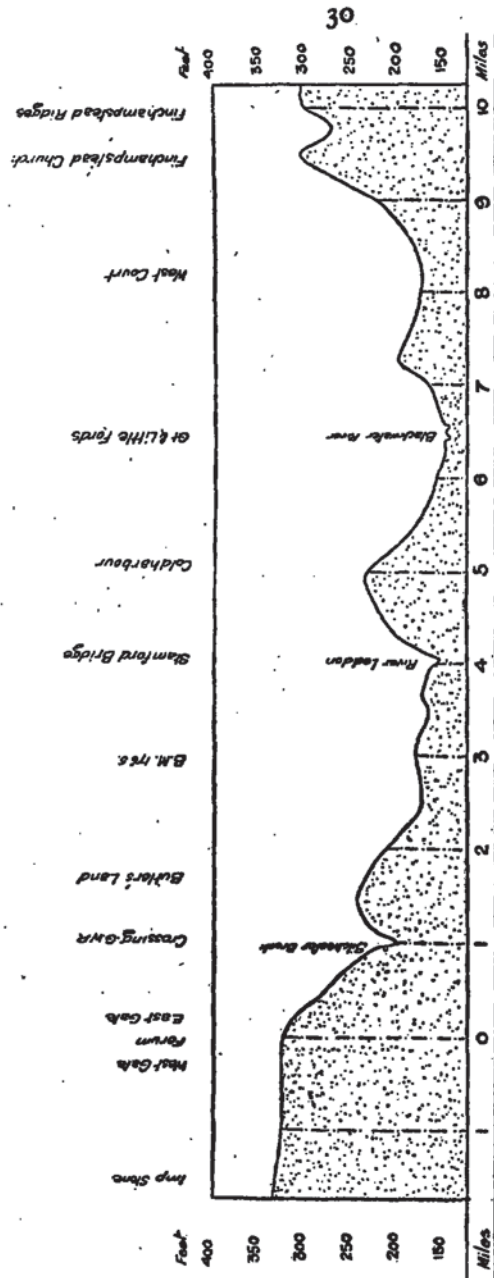
¹ Isaac Taylor—"Words and Places"—where this author states that 70 places of this name are found, all in the neighbourhood of ancient lines of road.

² V.C.H. Hants.

Emerging from the park on to Chequer Green the remains of an old boundary bank and a row of large trees run straight along the line indicated by the direction of Park Lane for a distance of 280 yards. Across the fields of Milton's Farm there is no indication of the course of the road, till, at the junction of the parishes of Beech Hill, Stratfield Saye and Stratfield Mortimer, at a level of 172 feet, the entrance of Park Lane is reached. This is 3 miles from the east gate of the town. For a mile and a half the lane pursues its course between fields, bounded on either side by a hedge. The outline of the road remains, and the ditches at its side, but the surface is grass-grown, and the track unmetalled. It is impassable for carts, and, owing to the stiff clay soil, in winter time sometimes even dangerous for riding. Passing by Wigmore Copse and Hog's Plat, the former 2 miles from Calleva, the Mortimer Road is crossed at Butler's Land Farm (235 feet). From here onwards the lane is gravelled, forming the regular approach to "the ruins" as the old town is locally called. Just after passing Ticklecorner Lane the county boundary, which has followed the Roman road from the commencement of Park Lane, makes a wide detour to the north round the parish of Mortimer West End, a development of comparatively recent date. The early ordnance maps identify it with the boundary of Silchester parish, which on the north follows the ramparts of Calleva.

The last mile is entered on shortly after passing the Silchester Arms. The road then crosses the Great Western Railway by a bridge and later divides right and left, while the line of the Roman road, now undefined, pursues its course up the hill across fields bearing the general name of High Lands to the entrance of the town.

The East Gate is situated at the Manor Farm. When the site was recently excavated by the Society of Antiquaries the bare foundations only were found. These were of a very massive character. There was a double gate passage, flanked on each side by a pair of guard chambers. The latter projected beyond the front of the gate passages and



Horizontal Scale 1" = 1 Mile
 Vertical Scale 30" = 1000 Feet

Section of Roman Road Silchester to Finchampslead.

were probably carried up as a pair of flanking towers to protect the entrance. The arches each had a span of 12 feet, and the total width was 56 feet 3 inches. As in the other gates, the roadway here appears to have been formed of a layer of flints 12 inches thick, the flanking walls resting on the same bedding. The upper surface of the road was gravelled like the streets of the city. The course of the road through the town was apparently diverted at one period, for foundations of buildings have been discovered on its original course. The west gate, by which it left the town, closely resembled the east gate, and both were partly blocked up at a late period of the town's history.

Beyond the town the probable line of the road is indicated in the ordnance maps, sections of modern roadway being found for $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles along its course. At the Imp Stone, at the junction of the parishes of Silchester, Pamber, Mortimer West, and Aldermaston, the county boundary is again encountered, but now pursues a westward course to the south of the road, leaving the latter in Berkshire.

The geological formation of the high ground on which the town stood is that of the Bagshot Sands. For a short distance at Park Corner the road crosses ground of a similar nature, otherwise from the Blackwater River nearly to Silchester it is laid on the London clay. Pending records of excavation it would seem probable that gravel, being the most accessible, was the material used. In Berkshire the road has been dug into in several places, showing it to have been of simple construction. The causeway on Bagshot Heath is said by Lysons to have been 90 feet wide. As measured from ditch to ditch near Riseley the width is about 30, while Park Lane averages 20. Both, however, may have been modified when the inclosing hedges were planted. At Crowthorne, in Berkshire, a small part of the

We are indebted to Mr. J. B. KARSLAKE, F.S.A., of Silchester, for the following information:—About 100 yards west of the West Gate the road takes a new direction north-west across Callow Lands Farm, the Slade, Aldermaston Soke and across Aldermaston Park to cross the Kennet somewhere near the present bridge. Its general direction thence to Speen is Bucklebury Common, Carbin's Wood, Fence Common, Hermitage, then south-east to Speen.

causeway remaining measures 23 feet. This was dug into by the present writer several years ago and the surface of the road was found consisting of finely pounded gravel and clay extending to a depth of 12 inches and about 11 feet broad.

From its position we cannot but conclude that the Devil's Highway was intimately associated with many of the events which shaped the history of Roman Britain. But historical evidence is scanty, and speculation in the present writer's case would be as impertinent as it would be unprofitable. The subject, however, is a fascinating one. One incident therefore may be recalled which is a matter of history. It will be remembered that during the reign of Diocletian it was found necessary owing to the ravages of the German pirates to establish a fleet at Boulogne. The Imperial generals of the time, being unacquainted with the art of navigation, the command was given to Carausius, a Menapian of low birth, but a good fighting man, and a skilful seaman. The new admiral made short work of the pirates. "His fleets rode triumphant in the Channel, commanded the mouths of the Seine and of the Rhine, ravaged the coasts of the ocean, and diffused beyond the Columns of Hercules the terror of his name."¹ Strong in the possession of the whole available naval forces of the Empire, Carausius then proceeded to assume the Imperial dignity of Britain, where he reigned undisturbed for 6 years. He was then murdered by his first minister Allectus, who succeeded to his position. The latter, a man apparently of no particular ability, was in difficulties from the first. Boulogne, his naval base, was already lost, and Constantius was preparing a fleet, and training a navy for the recovery of Britain. The end came in the year 296 when a squadron under Asclepiodatus left the mouth of the Seine, evaded the fleet of Allectus in a dense fog off the Isle of Wight, and effected a landing some-

¹ *Archæologia*, Vol lxi.

¹ Gibbon.

The levels are taken from the 6 in Ordnance Survey which has also been used in drawing the section.

where in the West. Having burnt his ships, the general advanced towards London, where Allectus was posted to meet the expected attack from Boulogne. On the receipt of the news, the usurper started to meet the enemy, advancing by forced marches, almost certainly along our road. His soldiers, however, were in bad condition, and perhaps without confidence in their general. The army straggled on the way, and Allectus found himself, in the presence of the opposing force, at the head of a small body of harassed and disheartened troops. In the resulting engagement his army was routed and he himself slain. A few days later Constantius landed unopposed in Kent, and after 10 years separation Britain was again united to the Empire.

Mr. Joyce, the first excavator at Calleva, favoured the idea that this engagement took place in the neighbourhood of the town. It seems an undoubted fact that the original basilica with the surrounding buildings was burnt down about this period, and it was beneath the ruins that the Roman eagle was discovered.
