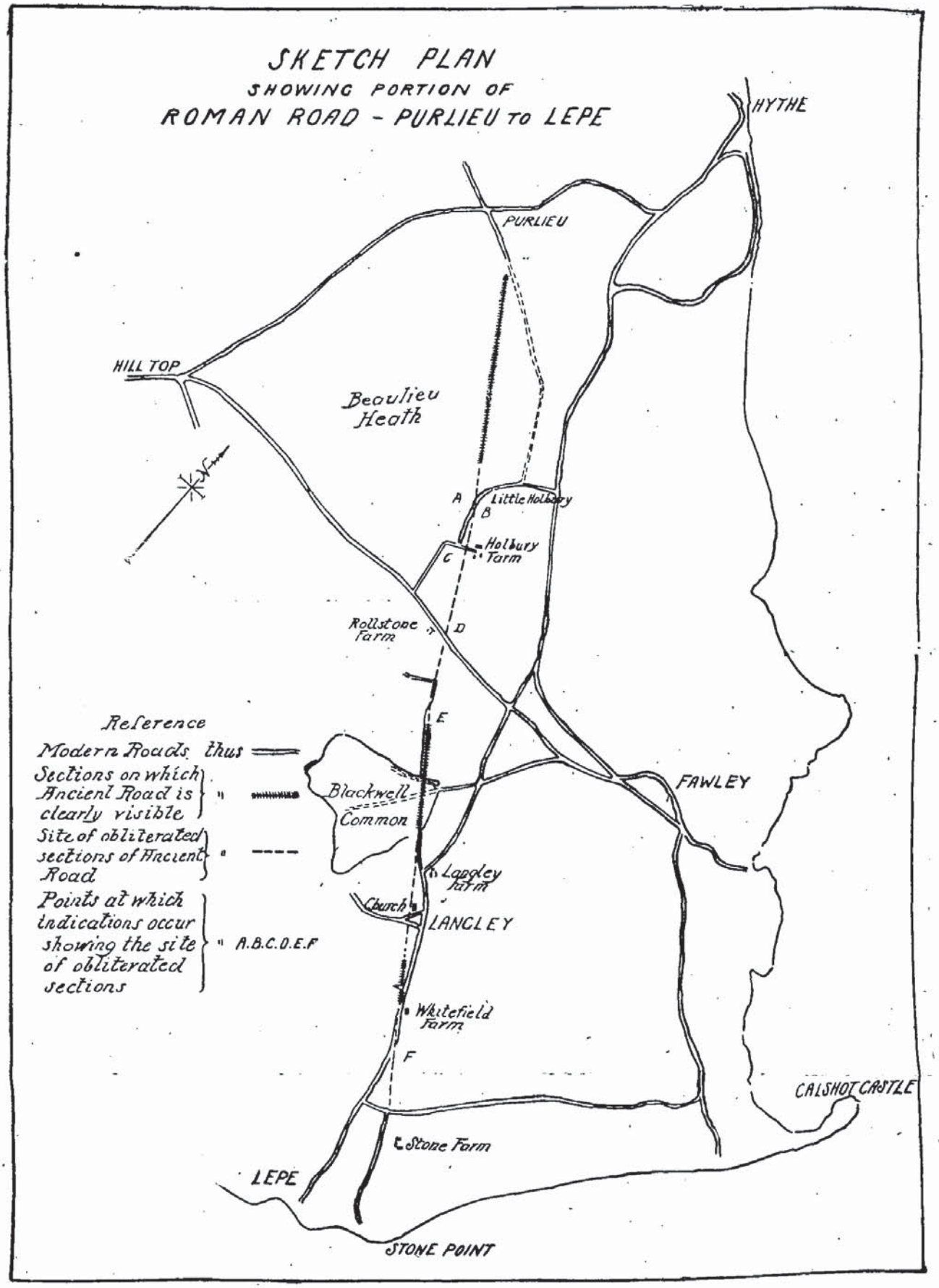


"Based upon the Ordnance Survey Map, with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office."

ANCIENT ROAD FROM PURLIEU TO LEPE.

BY INGALTON SANDERS, F.R.I.B.A.

I have examined the site of the road from a point at Butts Ash to Stone Farm. Between these points the road was constructed in four stretches, each of which is straight, but the compass bearing of each length is different.

THE FIRST LENGTH extends from Butts Ash to a point on the east side of the modern road, about 500 feet south of a cottage, known as "Little Holbury." Following this length southward, I make its compass bearing 161°.

THE SECOND LENGTH extended from the above-mentioned point at "Little Holbury" to a bend in Bell Lane, about 600 yards north of Blackwell Common. Following this length southwards, I make the compass bearing 170°.

THE THIRD LENGTH extends from the above-mentioned bend in Bell Lane to a point about 200 yards north of the west boundary wall of Langley Church. Following this line in a southerly direction, I make the compass bearing 156°.

THE FOURTH LENGTH extends from the above-mentioned point (on the north of Langley Church) to the end of the existing lane on the west side of Stone Farm. Following the line southwards, I make the compass bearing 160°.

FURTHER PARTICULARS OF EACH STRETCH OF ROADWAY.

THE FIRST LENGTH OF ROAD is clearly defined across Beaulieu Heath for a distance of about 1,630 yards. It is here raised above the general surface to a height of from 12 to 18 inches; the crown of the road is from 6 to 8 feet in width, with slopes extending from 5 to 6 feet on each side, beyond which lies a shallow ditch.

The surface of the heath slopes appreciably downwards from east to west, and the course of the road is intersected by several gullies or shallow valleys crossing it from east to west. On the high land the road runs upon a bank, as above described, but as it descends the slope of each gully the bank merges into the general surface, and at the bottom of each gully the surface is flat. There is also a noticeable difference in the section of the road at the crest of each slope, at which point both ditches grow wider and deeper, particularly that upon the upper or eastern side of the road.

The wider and deeper ditch on the east side is partly due to erosion, but both were clearly so designed to conduct water more quickly from the side ditches. I could find no trace of culverts in the bottom of the gullies, and the absence of a bank suggested that these, with the bank, had in time been either washed away or silted and buried, or that the roadway was constructed level with the surface to allow the water to drain over it.

On both sides of the road across the Moor there are shallow depressions at frequent intervals, which clearly were gravel pits.

All trace of the road disappears at the fence to a plantation above the Fish Pond. Beyond this point the land sinks into a bottom, then rises steeply, and is intersected by a sunken lane. The bearing which the road should follow here passes for a distance of about 150 feet through the tail end of a wood, close to the cottage known as "Little Holbury." This point is interesting; the ground falls steeply in the wood, forming a precipitous bank some 30 feet in height. In this bank a benching or shelf is formed of sufficient width to form a road 8 feet in width. The benching itself climbs steeply, and is encumbered with mould which has washed down from the bank above, but excavations in this revealed the gravel surface of the road.

The bearing of this point, together with the nature of the benching and the position of the gravel metalling, leaves no doubt in my mind that this is a portion of the ancient road.

Following the same bearing across the modern road, there is evident (upon the roadside waste on the eastern side of the road) a raised and rounded hump, in which excavation revealed gravel surface at a depth of about 4 inches. The hedge and ditch break back at this point with a bearing 171°, as though in digging the ditch the hard surface of the road was encountered, and was skirted for a distance of about 19 yards, when the road was crossed at a more direct angle. The bearing 171° had a further significance in view of later investigation, and I believe this to be the point at which the road alters its direction.

THE SECOND SECTION of the road from Holbury Farm to Bell Lane is elusive. The first section can be clearly traced, as described above, also the third section is definitely marked up to the first bend in Bell Lane; but the second section is more difficult to trace.

The following facts lead me to the conclusion that the site of this section of the road commences at the hump upon the wayside waste, close to "Little Holbury," and thence follows a line southwards on the bearing 170°.

First, the diversion of the hedge, for a length of 19 yards on the east side of the modern road at "Little Holbury," has

a bearing 171°, which would follow the new line of the road. Secondly, after following this bearing for about 300 yards, a shallow valley is crossed, traversed by a causeway, which, I think, is a portion of the road. Thirdly, the short piece of hedge to Warren Copse, and again a diversion of the hedge at Rolleston Row, run parallel with the line of road. Fourthly, this line at its southern end coincides with the short length of Bell Lane beyond the first bend, and there occurs upon the west side of this portion of the lane a causeway similar to earlier portions of the road.

If Bell Lane were part of an ancient forest track,[1] and it were used by the Romans in construction of their road, it would account for the position of the hedgerows at Rolleston Row and Warren Copse; it would also give reason for the changes in direction in the road which they constructed upon the existing track.

THE THIRD LENGTH OF ROAD is very clear, and, in my view, is beyond dispute.

Commencing at the bend in Bell Lane, 600 yards north of Blackwell Common, it is merged for a length of about 300 yards in the bank and ditch on the east side of the lane; the heave of the viaduct can be clearly defined inside the gates of the first two field gateways, but at the last gateway it has crossed the hedge and bank, and can be seen outside the field gate. From this point it emerges as a distinct and unmistakable viaduct, occupying the eastern side of the lane, and continues on a bearing of 156° for a distance of about 700 yards, traversing Blackwell Common down to the ford, which crosses the stream south of the Baptist Chapel. This viaduct has all the characteristics previously described for the length on Beaulieu Heath. The viaduct is lost in the cultivated land beyond the ford, but its bearing intersects with that of the following section at a point about 200 yards north of the west end of Langley Church.

THE FOURTH LENGTH OF ROAD follows a bearing of 160°. The first 340 yards are lost in cultivated land. The line coincides with the west boundary wall of Langley Church, and passes across land at the rear of the public house in Langley Village. It here crosses two fields, which apparently have only recently come under the plough, and a wide belt of white gravel occurs, which is clearly the scattered viaduct. Beyond this point, for a length of about 300 yards, the viaduct runs clear and distinct across heath land (broken into at one point by a cottage garden),

[1] The soil across Beaulieu Heath and Blackwell Common consists of a thin layer of mould lying upon gravel, and is heath-covered moorland; the land between these points has a much greater depth of vegetable mould, the hedgerows contain large trees and copses, *viz.*, Warren Copse, Rolleston Row, the wood at "Little Holbury," and the copse in Bell Lane are thickly wooded with thick and tangled undergrowth. There undoubtedly was a thick belt of forest at this point.

and dies into the hedge adjoining the modern road at a point about 100 yards north of Whitefield Farm. From this point it is merged for a distance of about 800 yards in the modern road.

On the west side of this modern road there is a bank running parallel with the road, which would at first appear to be a continuation of the road viaduct. I examined this bank, and found it to be entirely different in character from the viaduct across Beaulieu Heath, across Blackwell Common, and through Langley Village. In all cases these sections of viaduct were constructed of gravel, and the gravel surface of the road was not more than 3 or 4 inches below the vegetable mould which had gathered upon its surface.

In the case of this bank, however, I excavated in several places to a depth of some 18 inches, and found it to be composed throughout of a bed of light vegetable mould. I feel, no doubt, that this is merely a "spoil bank," formed from the surface mould, which was excavated in construction of the modern road, and that the ancient road is merged in the modern. I followed the bearing of the existing portions of viaduct on the fourth section, and that bearing coincides at its termination with the north end of the lane on the west side of Stone Farm. There appears to be no trace left of the viaduct, except on the heath land south of the stretch of modern road, where a suspicious heave occurs on the line which I have indicated.

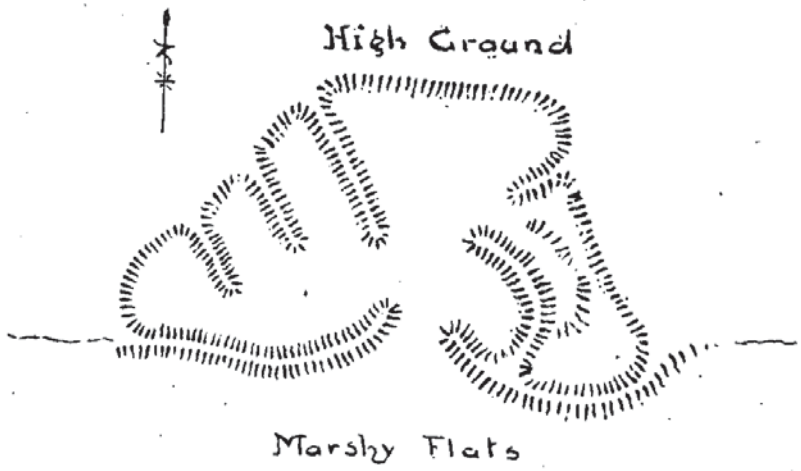
Sundry Details.

Some details are of interest.

Construction of Road and Viaduct.—I examined the construction of the viaduct at various points. The clearest section occurred at Langley, where a portion of the bank has been removed fairly recently, exposing a complete cross-section. The viaduct was composed throughout with gravel, containing a large proportion of sharp, coarse binding material (*i.e.*, there was more binding material than was necessary to fill in the interstices between the stones). There was a covering of about 4 inches of vegetable mould with heath growing upon it, and I examined the top layer of gravel to ascertain first if it showed signs of consolidation and wear; and, secondly, if the "metal" for the road had been screened or a specially coarse gravel selected for this purpose. The roots of the heather had penetrated and disintegrated the top surface of the gravel, so that one could not tell if it had originally been consolidated, but I found that the fine material in the surface layer to a depth of 3 or 4 inches was composed largely of the top mould, from which I judged that the interstices between the stones were more open in the top layer, and it was probably either screened or carefully selected gravel.

STRUCTURAL WORK.—I could find at no point any trace of culverts, masonry, or concrete construction. I found a piece of Binstead stone beside the lane at Stone Farm, also a lump of concrete, which was, I think, without doubt Portland cement concrete, which, of course, was unknown in early work.

PITS COPSE.—I was much puzzled by the earthworks in Pits Copse. They consist of a series of banks, constructed somewhat on the method shown by sketch. The outer bank on



Sketch Plan of Pits Copse

the seaside curves inwards, forming an entrance in the centre, through which the sea would have flowed when the present flat land was an estuary. The promontory in which these earthworks have been formed is a bank of gravel, and the projecting banks appear to be composed of mould, which probably was the covering material from beneath which the gravel was dug. That these banks are of considerable age is proved by the size and number of the trees with which they are covered (probably, at least, 300 or 400 years). The name, "Pits Copse," suggests that it is the site of gravel pits, and the method of the banks suggests that the gravel was removed by vessels which lay here in shelter whilst they were loaded.

These facts suggest to my mind, first, that the flats up to Stone Farm were originally an open estuary, up which vessels laden with stone were wont to sail; that, after unloading, they required ballast for the return voyage, and here are the pits from which they took it, and the extent of these pits is evidence of the large amount of traffic of which this was the scene.