

**AN ACCOUNT OF THE ROMAN
ROAD FROM ALLCHESTER TO
DORCHESTER, AND OTHER
ROMAN REMAINS IN THE
NEIGHBOURHOOD**

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ROBERT HUSSEY

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ROMAN ROAD
FROM
ALLCHESTER TO DORCHESTER,
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ROMAN REMAINS
IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD:
BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A PAPER READ TO THE
ASHMOLEAN SOCIETY, NOV. 9, 1840.

BY
THE REV. ROBERT HUSSEY, B.D.
STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH.



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THE remains of antiquity, such as are now to be described, are so liable to destruction from the progress of agriculture, and other changes on the surface of the soil, that it may be useful to record the present state of them, even although they have been often noticed before. Let this be my excuse (if excuse be wanted) for including in the following account many observations which others have made in some parts of the same subject. But the same process which is daily in operation to destroy some antiquities discovers others: the plough has brought to light many an unknown Roman work. But a great part of these is likely soon to be lost and forgotten, unless put on record; it is important therefore that such notices should be collected, and that this should be done at the time when the discovery is made. Every accurate description of local antiquities, whether it be the actual condition of those which have been long known, or the discoveries of new remains, may, therefore, be of service to the general interests of history; and all who have opportunity for it, might be encouraged to examine and observe such matters of antiquity as fall in their way, by the thought, that while they amuse themselves by such pursuits, they may also

contribute something to increase our knowledge of the early state of our country. With this view I lay before the Society the following sketch of objects which are within the reach of all to examine.

But I wish first to acknowledge what I owe to the kindness of friends. Of the Rev. Walter Lucas Brown, rector of Wendlebury, and late Student of Christ Church, I am bound to say that he has not so much *assisted* me in the work as *shared* it with me, and the authorship really belongs in part to him. I consider that very much of the value of what is here produced is due to his excellent drawing of the ground of Allchester, and the information about it with which he supplied me. I am much indebted to the Rev. John Wilson, Fellow of Trinity College, for many interesting facts and observations, which I should not have had without him. His assistance has been of great service to my inquiries in many respects; and it has been given always most freely and kindly, which I acknowledge with pleasure. And I have also to thank the Camden Professor of Ancient History, Dr. Cardwell, Principal of Alban Hall, for some additional information, and references to authors with which I was not acquainted: and other friends also, whom I need not name here. Let me add an acknowledgment of the great help derived from the Ordnance Map. This excellent work has now given facilities to antiquarian researches of this kind such as they never had before; while it has, at the same time, collected together a great store of notices of the remains of antiquity, in a more accessible shape than formerly belonged to them, and preserved them in a record which will remain for purposes of

history, even although the increase of population and cultivation of the soil should obliterate every trace of the relics themselves from the surface of the country.

THE Roman Road running across Otmoor from north to south has long been known. In Camden's time the tradition of the country confounded it with the Akeman-street, and he described it by that name^a. Since this it has been observed by many antiquaries, and it is still familiarly known in the neighbourhood as "the old Roman Road." It has generally been thought to end at Allchester, to the north, although Camden was told that it was carried on to Banbury. Whither it went in the opposite direction, to the south, was for some time a doubtful question with antiquaries: the account given to Camden by the people of the country was, that it reached from Banbury to Wallingford. Plot also supposed that it went to Wallingford, crossing the Thames at Bensington, where he thought that there was a portion of it visible to the west of the church, under the name of Medler's Bank^b. Stukely con-

^a Camden (Dobuni) Oxfordshire.

^b Natur. Hist. of Oxfordshire, 27. p. 317, &c. I cannot find that the name of Medler's Bank is known at Bensington now. There is a *very faint* trace of something like a continued ridge running near the turnpike road all the way from Dorchester to Bensington in a straight line between the two churches, but it is too slight to found any speculation upon. If this however really was the line of a Roman road, it was a branch leading off from Dorchester, not in the straight direction of a continuation of the road from Allchester, but bending with a considerable angle from it.

jectured that it was carried to Sandford, and crossed the river there^c. Warton describes it as connecting Allchester and Dorchester; although it does not appear from his account of it, how much he had traced himself, and how much he derived from the information of others; and his description of some part of it, where he goes a little into details, does not agree either with the present form or the place of it^d.

It seems evident that this road must be the same which is mentioned by Richard of Cirencester in the route from York to (near) Southampton. In the eighteenth iter Richard gives the distance from *Ælia Castra* (Allchester) to *Dorocina* (Dorchester) as fifteen miles; and the editor in his comment on the place observes, that the road "runs plainly almost all the way to Dorchester^e." The true distance

^c *Itinerarium Curiosum*, Iter II.

^d *Specimen of a History of Oxfordshire*, p. 57.

^e The following is from the London edition, 1809, of Richard of Cirencester, p. 164.

Iter XVIII.			Sites of the Stations.	
Ab Eboraco per medium insulas Clausentum usque, sic :			From York through the middle of the island to Bittern.	
	m. p.	Corrected numbers.		
Legiolo	XXI	XXI	Carleford.	
Ad Fines	XVIII	XXIII	Temple Brough on the bank of the Don.	
.....	XVI	XVI	Tapton Hill near Chesterfield.	
.....	XVI	XII	Camp near Pankridge.	
Derrivione	XVI	XII	Little Chester.	
Ad Trivonam	XII	XII	Berry Farm in Branston.	
Etoceto	XII	XII	Wall.	
Manduesudo	XVI	XVI	Manchester.	
Benonnis	XII	XII	High Cross.	
Tripontio	XI	XI	Near Dove Bridge.	
Isannavaria	XII	X	Burnt Walls.	
Brinavis	XII	XII	Black Ground near Chipping Norton.	
Ælia Castra	XVI	XVI	Alesster near Bloester.	
Dorocina	XV	XVI	Dorchester.	
Tamesi	VI	VI	On the Thames.	
Vindomi	XV	XX	Sikchester.	
<i>Calleva</i>				
Clausento	XXXXVI	XXXXV	Bittern near Southampton.	

from Allchester to Dorchester by this line is sixteen miles, one more than Richard reckons ; but this variation is inconsiderable, being much less than what is found in many of the numerals of the old itineraries. About half of it has been traced by the antiquaries above-named. The course of the road can be seen on examination every where, except in a few portions, so small, that the direction is easily recovered ; and these intervals lie towards the middle of the whole distance ; so that at each end it is most plain.

To begin then from the north, the road passes through the middle of the area of Allchester in the form of a high ridge, which is continued through the meadows to the south, in a course a little westward of Merton. It is now about twenty yards in width, being measured over the curve of the surface, which was the regular width of the *Via Prætoria* in a camp¹, and about two feet and a half high :

Instead of Chipping Norton we should read Chipping Warden, which is half a mile from the Black grounds, the supposed site of *Brinavia*. See Mr. Beesley's *History of Banbury*, p. 27. But even this seems too far to the westward for the direct line. If it were certain where *Isannavaria* was, we could guess the site of *Brinavia* with more probability. Gale supposed that *Isannavaria* (or *Isanta Varia*, (Richard, *Iter* 1.) or *Isannavatia*, or *Isannavenna*, or *Bennaventum*) was Weedon near Daventry. (ad Antonin. *Iter Britann.* VI. and VIII. See also Horsley *Britann. Roman.* III. 2. p. 436.) This is in the right direction, being about north of Allchester ; and the straight line thither would pass nearly through Brackley. Camden thought that Stony Stratford might be *Isannavaria*. *Cattieuchlan.* (Bedfordshire.)

¹ *Item via que ducit ad Portam Prætoriam (a Prætorio sine dubio via Prætoriam dicitur) latitudine, ut supra, pedum sexaginta. Hygin. de Castramet.*