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PLATE I. ROMAN ROADS IN WEST KENT.

ROMAN ROADS IN WEST KENT.

BY IVAN D. MARGARY, F.S.A.

THE Wealden area of West Kent is intersected by a group of Roman roads which, although well known in certain parts and even marked upon the Ordnance Survey maps for many years, have, nevertheless, received very little attention from archaeologists. Scarcely any reference to them can be found in the literature, save for a recent article in the Roman section of the *Victoria County History of Kent*, and no attempt at a detailed survey of them seems ever to have been made.

There are three main routes to be considered :

- I. Rochester—Maidstone—Hemsted—Bodiam—Hastings.
- II. Maidstone—Kingsnorth—Lympne.
- III. Hemsted—Tenterden—Ashford—Canterbury.

Of these, the first was laid out on a course nearly due north—south, with the obvious intention of bridging the Wealden area in a manner exactly similar to the London—Lewes, London—Brighton and London—Chichester roads farther to the west. In this case, however, being much farther to the east, the road connected with Watling Street at Rochester for its northern terminus, whilst its southern destination was clearly to be the iron-working region that lay inland from Hastings. Moreover, this road was near enough to the important settled area of East Kent for the need of connecting branches to it to be felt, and it was this which led to the provision of the other two roads, one from Maidstone to the south-east, the other from Hemsted (the most southerly point that was conveniently accessible from the east) to the north-east and Canterbury. Thus the three roads formed a triangular network giving inter-communication between the Rochester—Maidstone area in the north, East Kent, and the Wealden iron district in the south.

THE ALIGNMENTS.

Considerable lengths of all these roads were evidently laid out upon properly surveyed alignments, selected with the usual care and eye for country that is such a striking feature of Roman road construction, but the ground in the Weald is often difficult, necessitating much local modification of the main alignments, whilst in some parts the definite remains show quite plainly that rigid straightness was not insisted upon. It may well be, too, that the date of these roads is relatively late and their purpose entirely commercial, circumstances that would also lead to a less rigid application of constructional rules.

I. ROCHESTER—MAIDSTONE—HASTINGS.

The following alignments are clearly shown :

- (1) Rochester—Horsted.
- (2) Horsted—Bridgewood Gate.
- (3) Bridgewood Gate—North Downs escarpment.
- (4) Downs foot—Maidstone North.
- (5) Maidstone North—Mangravet Wood.
- (6) Mangravet Wood—Amber Green.
- (7) Amber Green—Staplehurst (Iden Bridge).
- (8) Staplehurst (Iden Bridge)—Hemsted Park.
- (9) Numerous short alignments onwards to suit the ground.

Of these, (1) and (2) form very nearly a continuous line, only turning very slightly at Horsted to follow the ridge there, and (4) and (5) are much the same, (3) being a short linking alignment along the edge of the steep Downs escarpment to the chosen point of descent. Thus far the intention is clearly to provide a direct north—south route. Next, with (6) we have a distinct turn to the south-east, and, since the point where Route I descends the greensand escarpment towards Staplehurst is not more convenient than a similar point farther west, near Boughton Monchelsea, would have been, it seems likely that (6) was definitely planned that way to lead to a fork for Routes I and II at Amber Green.

With (7), the longest and most obviously Roman of all the alignments on this route, we resume the southward direction, pointing straight at the area of the Sussex ironworks. This is the last alignment that the road closely follows, for, although (8) is indicated by the general layout of the remains, it was greatly modified to suit the ground which becomes increasingly difficult beyond Sissinghurst. Indeed, it would be almost impossible to lay a straight route through this country of deep gills and steep-sided ridges, and short straights along such ridges as were available was the obvious method to be followed.

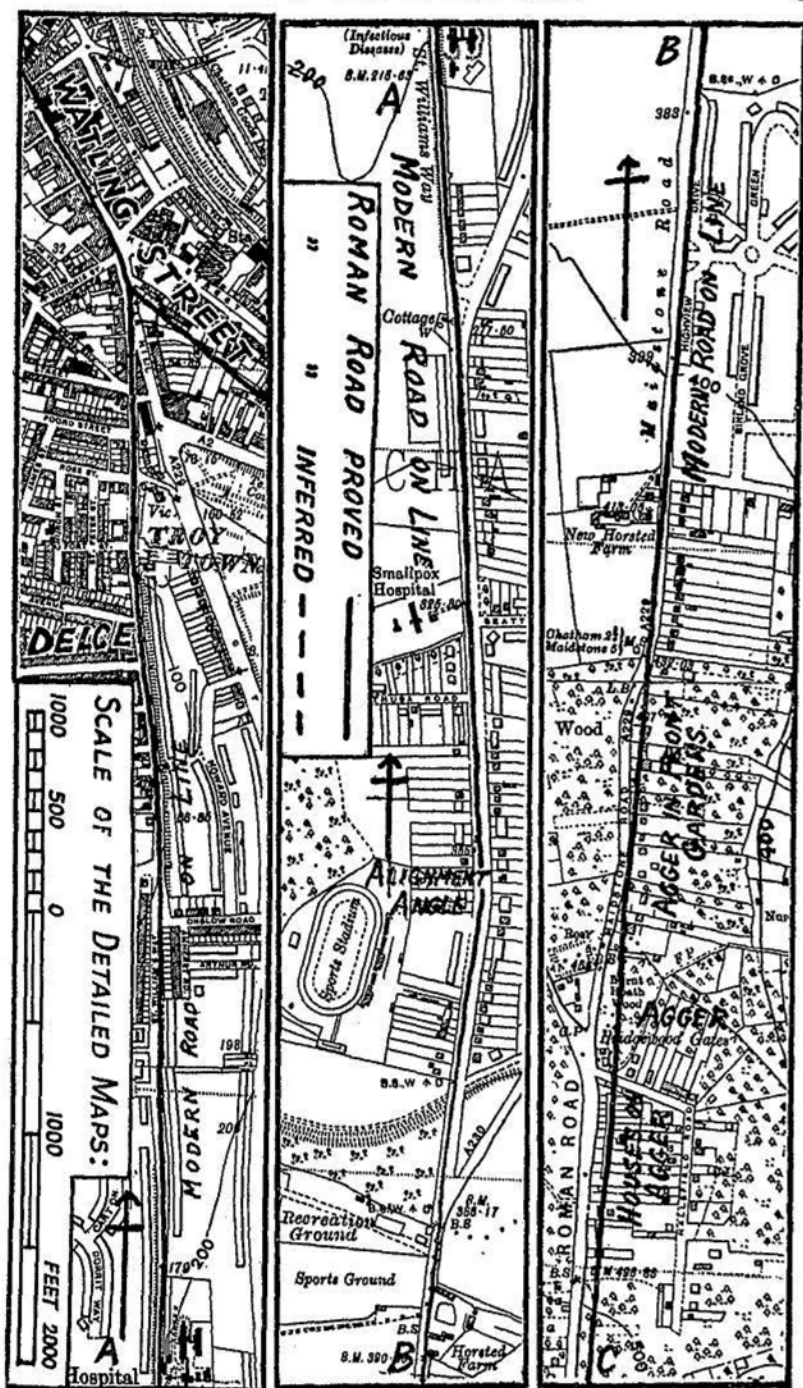
II. MAIDSTONE—KINGSNORTH—LYMPNE.

From the fork at Amber Green, one main alignment seems to have been laid, from the greensand escarpment at Sutton Valence to the beginning of the coastal range of hills at Aldington, south-east of Ashford, though it was locally modified in some hilly areas, as near Pluckley. On reaching the coastal hills the road was laid out in short alignments to follow the ridge.

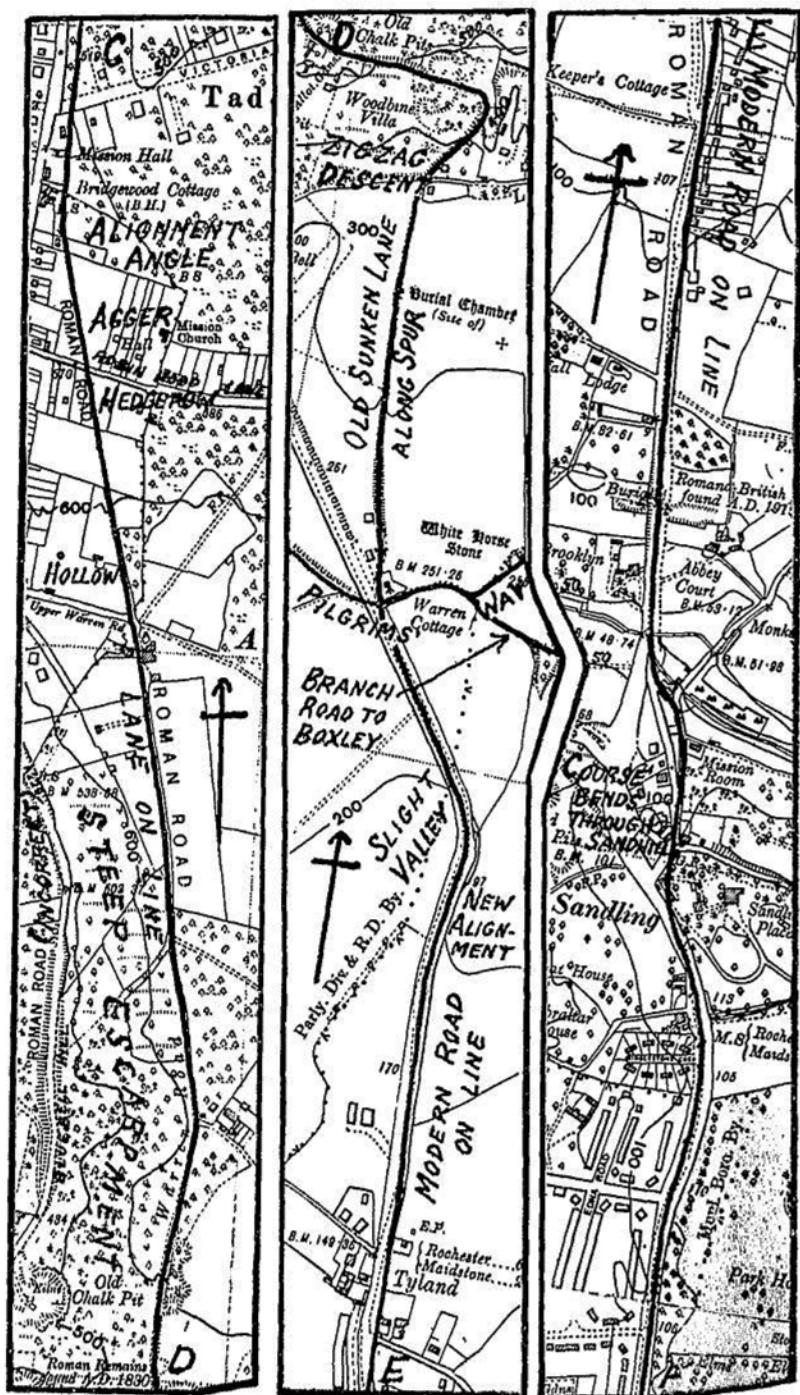
III. HEMSTED—TENTERDEN—ASHFORD—CANTERBURY.

Two major alignments are traceable here :

- (1) Tenterden, St. Michael's Church—Ashford, Stanhope School.
- (2) Ashford—Godmersham Downs.



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Modifications occur upon both alignments in order to avoid low ground. West of Tenterden the course is laid entirely in short straights to follow the main ridge as far as possible all the way to Hemsted. North-east of Godmersham the route followed an old trackway and is, therefore, not an aligned road.

THE ROUTES.

I. ROCHESTER—MAIDSTONE—HASTINGS.

This road forked south from Watling Street at a point near the junction of Star Hill and Delce Road, and its course is marked by existing roads all the way to Horsted, where a slight turn of 7° was made in order to follow the crest of the ridge.

From Horsted the Maidstone Road is on the line for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, but then lies just to the west of it, and the *agger*, or embankment of the road, can be very clearly seen running through the front gardens of the houses as far as Bridgewood Gates Corner, after which the houses themselves stand upon it. Then a turn of 15° to the south-east was made, in order to keep along the escarpment above Bluebell Hill, and the *agger* is visible where it crosses Robin Hood Lane, first as a ridge in the field and then as a hedgebank. Then it joins Upper Warren Road as a derelict hollow, and the road carries on its line to the point where, as a zig-zag, it descended the Downs escarpment. Some confusion exists here upon the Ordnance Survey maps, for the older editions marked Bluebell Hill, incorrectly, as the Roman road. In recent editions the correct line is shown whilst *retaining* the inscription upon Bluebell Hill too, suggestive of an arrangement of Roman "one-way streets" !

From the foot of the Downs a lane, slightly sunken, continues the southward course to Warren Cottage, where the Pilgrims' Way was crossed and where, too, a branch Roman road seems to have led south-eastwards, marked by a straight alignment of lanes, past Street Farm, Boxley, and Boxley, Detling and Thornham churches.

The modern road to Maidstone now represents the Roman line, though at the north end of the town it seems certain that a track through the allotment gardens, followed by the small streets Albert Street, Scott Street, and the first part of Boxley Road beside the Prison, which are strikingly in line with the main southward continuation by Week Street and Lower and Upper Stone Street, must lie upon the actual course there.

Upon reaching the hills to the south a turn was made towards the south-east in Mangravel Wood (now a large cemetery). The course is represented by a derelict lane which ran past the south-west side of an irregularly-shaped camp (now obliterated by houses) aligned with the road, and then by Pested Bars Road which follows the line as far as

Joy Wood, where a Roman walled cemetery was found close beside the road upon the north.¹

The next mile of the road is lost, but if the alignment were continued accurately it would have passed 140 yards east of the Roman villa at Brishing Court² and would reach Amber Green just at the point where the southward alignment through Staplehurst and the alignment of Route II from Lympne would both meet it. The land here is under very intensive orchard cultivation, and since the line of the road lies diagonally across the general layout it seems to have been very thoroughly obliterated. The coincidence of the three alignments, however, makes its course here practically certain.

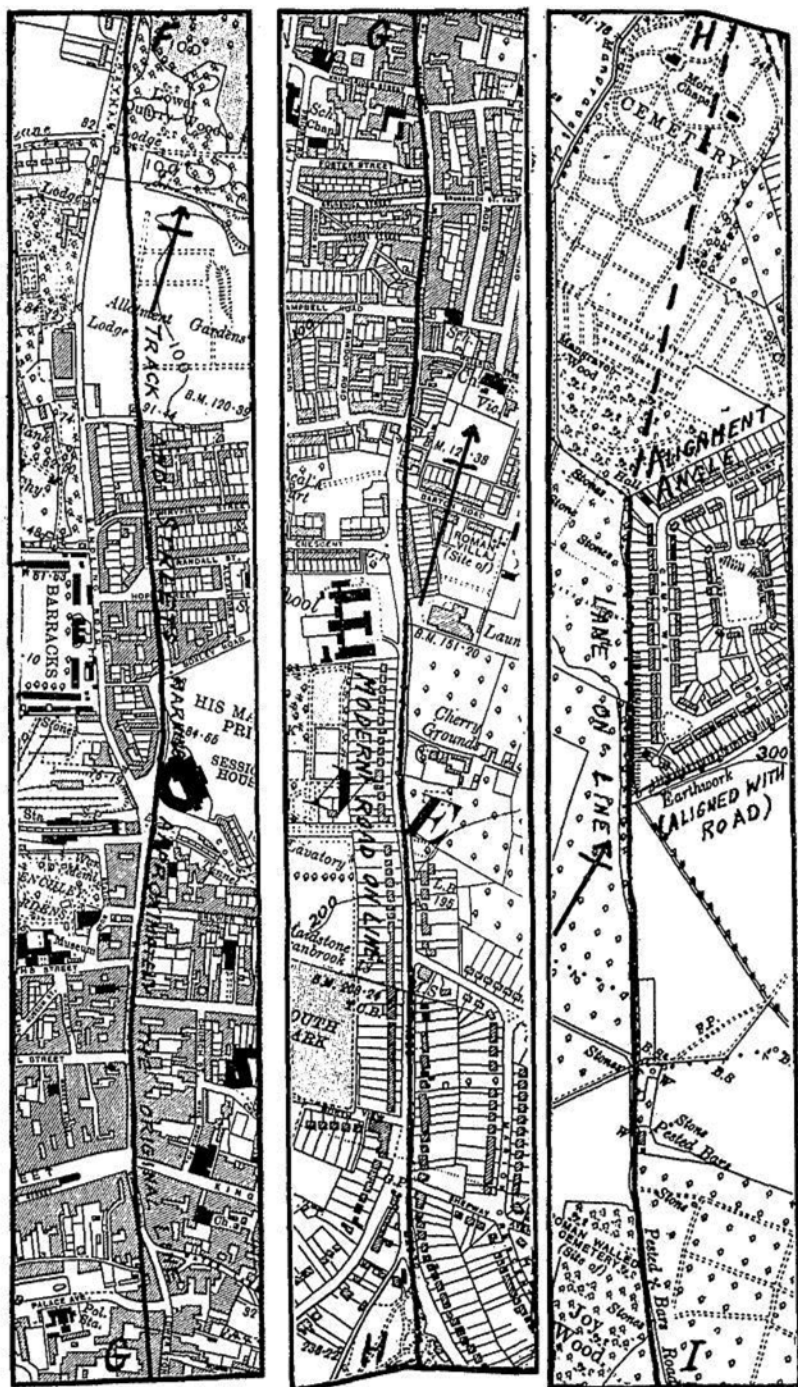
Amber Green is situated near the north-west corner of Chart Sutton parish, upon the northern side of the level plateau, some 1,200 yards wide, which forms the top of the highest range of the greensand hills, here. To the north the ground falls gradually, and the junction point, though now obscured by orchards, would have afforded good views in that direction for fixing the alignment towards Maidstone. To the south the plateau continues to rise very slightly until at its southern edge it ends in an abrupt escarpment, in places quite precipitous.

From the junction point, where traces of a stony *agger* on the line of Route II can be seen, an alignment for Route I was evidently laid almost due south, which is closely followed from Hermitage Corner, near the foot of the escarpment, through Staplehurst and beyond, but at first a serious difficulty was encountered, for the escarpment is here quite formidable. The existing track negotiates it by diverging slightly eastwards, and cuts through the rocky edge in a deep cleft which must be quite 50 ft. deep, with nearly vertical sides. It seems certain that this must be the course of the Roman road, for the descent is eased by a convenient spur between the escarpment and Hermitage Corner, and it is the only practicable route. It is tempting to assume that the parish boundary which runs west of this, almost straight from Hermitage to Amber Green, represented the original line, but it takes the escarpment at quite an impossible point and so must be disregarded.

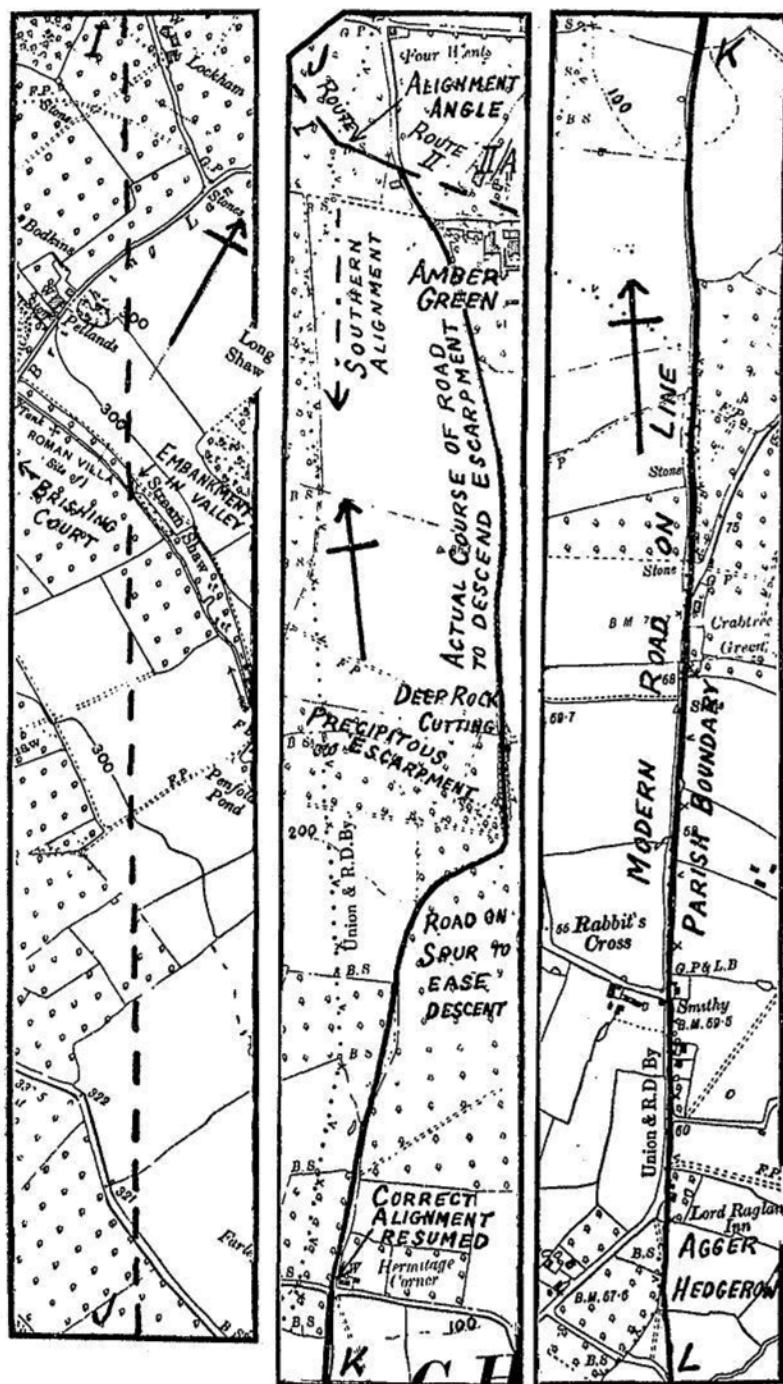
From Hermitage Corner the course of the road is plain for a long distance; even where derelict near the River Beult some hedgerows mark it, and then the modern road through Staplehurst and on to Sissinghurst follows it. Between Iden Bridge and Sissinghurst it runs in short straight lengths to suit the ground which now becomes increasingly difficult for a straight road. For instance, if it had been continued straight on from Camden Park to the Bull Inn, Sissinghurst, where it was seen during road excavations, two small but deep transverse valleys would have had to be crossed, and the road almost certainly avoided this by the present route, more to the west, over Cranbrook Common.

¹ *Arch. Cant.*, XV, 81.

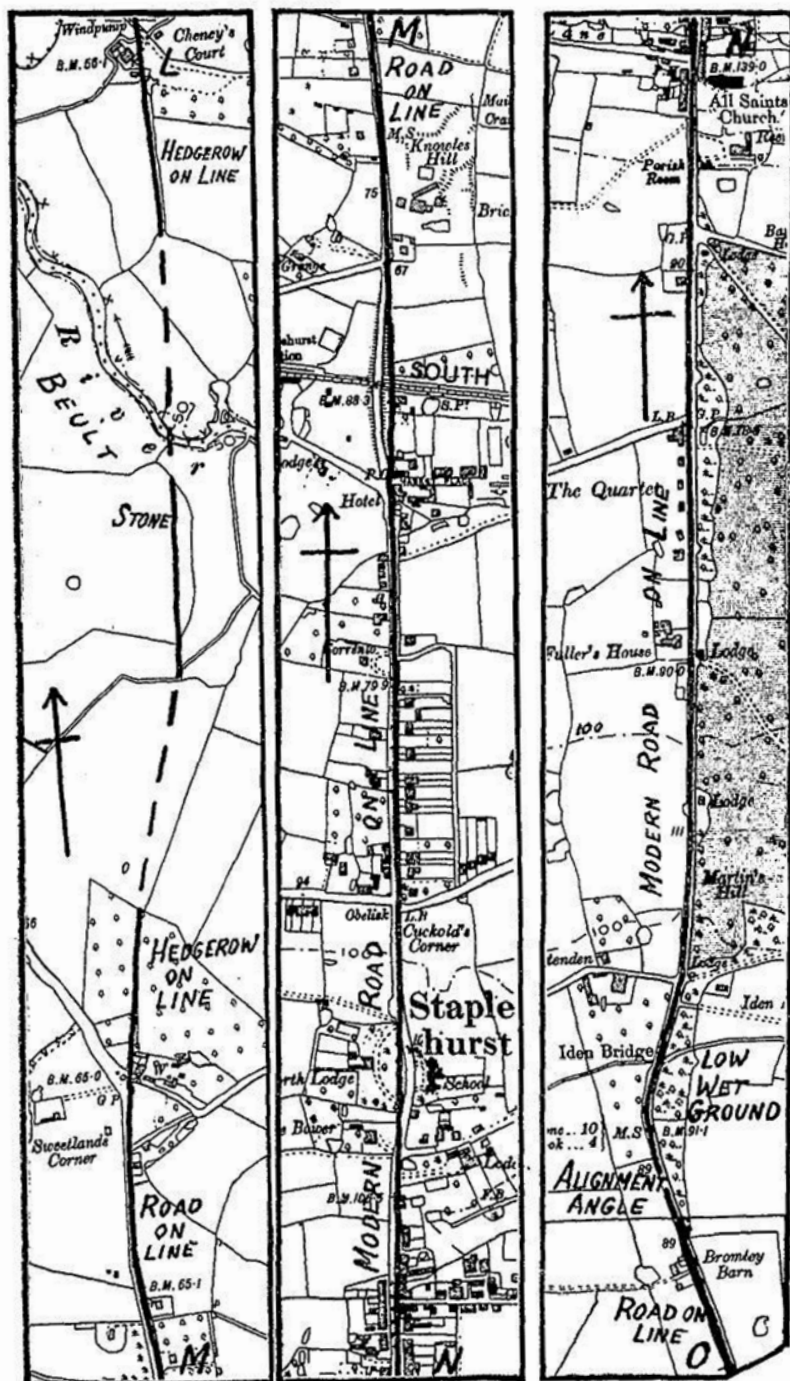
² *Archæologia*, XXIX.



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PLATE II. ROMAN PAVED FORD AT IDEN GREEN, KENT.
(With acknowledgments to O. G. S. Crawford, F.S.A.)

From Sissinghurst the route lay a little to the west of Chapel Lane, and traces of the metalling, sandstone, flint and pebbles, occur in the fields there, with some iron slag south of Crane Brook. Upon approaching Chapel Lane again the buried road surface was actually found intact, for a width of 9 ft. with a nicely cambered surface, and then the Lane crosses it, for up to Golford it diverged slightly to the east where a hollow appears beside the road. In the garden of the house south-east of the crossroads the metalling was so noticeable that a large sandstone block inscribed "Ancient Road—Site of" was erected by the late Mr. R. Butt-Gow, the owner, to mark it. Southwards the course is lost for 400 yards, but then a derelict lane appears to mark it down to Folly Gill, beyond which some traces of the metalling have been found.

Just west of Chittenden it again appears plainly, first as a section of metalling, about 12 ft. wide and 11 in. thick, exposed in a hedgebank, and then as a very distinct hollow up the next slope to the wood at the north side of Hemsted Park. The hollow can be traced very faintly in the park, about 230 yards south of its northern end; the route skirted the west side of a deep gill, now occupied by the lake, turning slightly east at its head towards the mansion of Hemsted, which stands upon the highest east-west ridge here.

At Hemsted, Route III branched off to the east from a point just behind the north-west corner of the mansion, near the stables block. Our route continues through the park to the south as a distinct terrace, 30 ft. wide, running between some very large oaks, to the east side of a small pond where it is again very plain as a slight hollow 33 ft. wide leading up to the edge of the park at Corner Cottages. The slight eastward bend near Hemsted looks as though it was planned so as to meet Route III more conveniently, and, if so, the roads must have been constructed upon a combined plan.

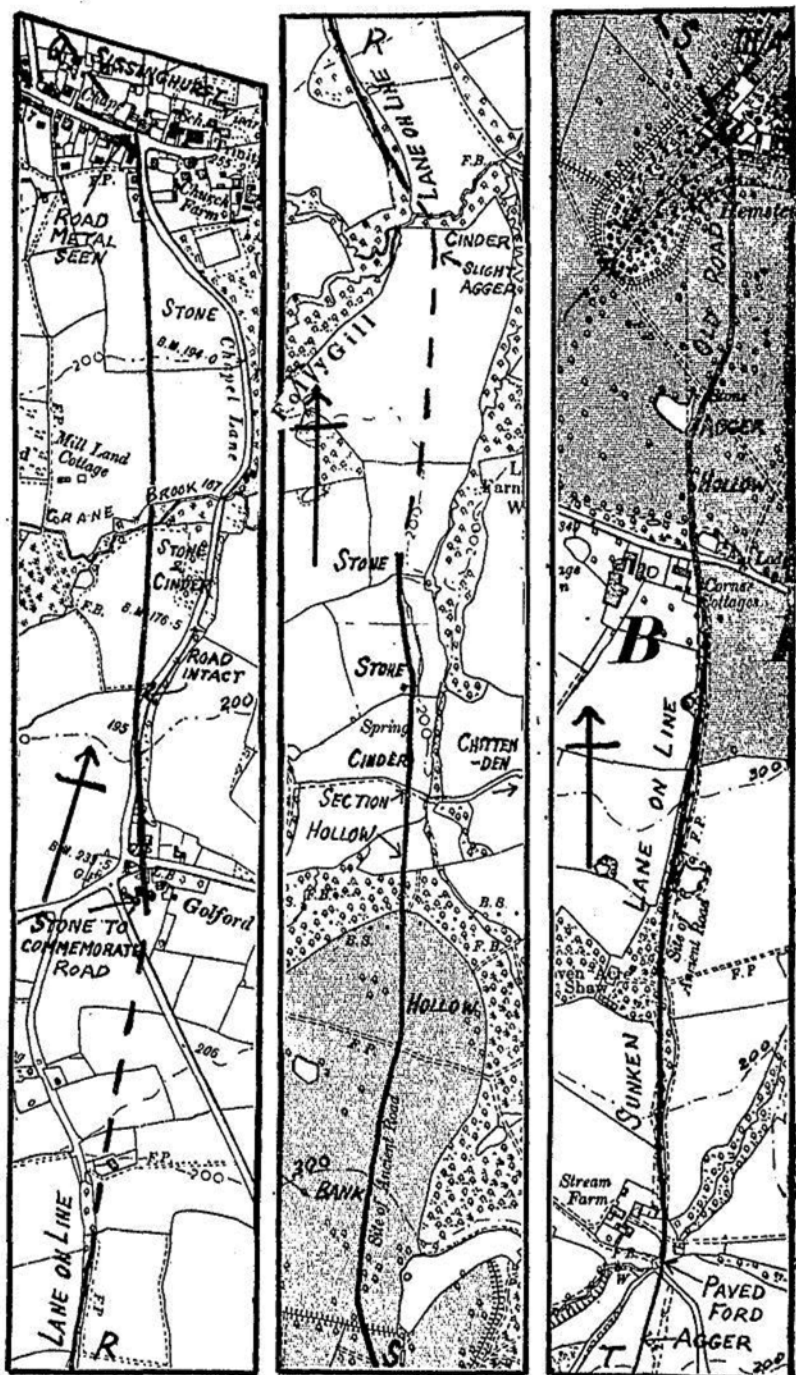
The course next follows a derelict lane southwards, now mostly sunken and becoming a deep water-worn hollow as it approaches Stream Farm. Here a "Paved Ford" is marked upon the recent Ordnance Survey maps, and remains of this can still be seen as large slabs of sandstone lying loose in the bed of the stream and protruding from its north bank where the paving lies intact but overgrown with vegetation. This most interesting relic, shown in Plate II as it appeared when cleared, is possibly unique in the whole of Great Britain, in the opinion of Mr. O. G. S. Crawford, F.S.A., who first observed it and to whom we are indebted for the photograph. It is, however, entirely unprotected at present, and its inclusion in the schedule of Ancient Monuments would appear to be highly desirable.

The road continued up the spine of a spur beyond the stream, traces of the *agger* being visible, crossed the lane west of Iden Green just where this makes two right-angled turns, and followed a hedgerow, first east

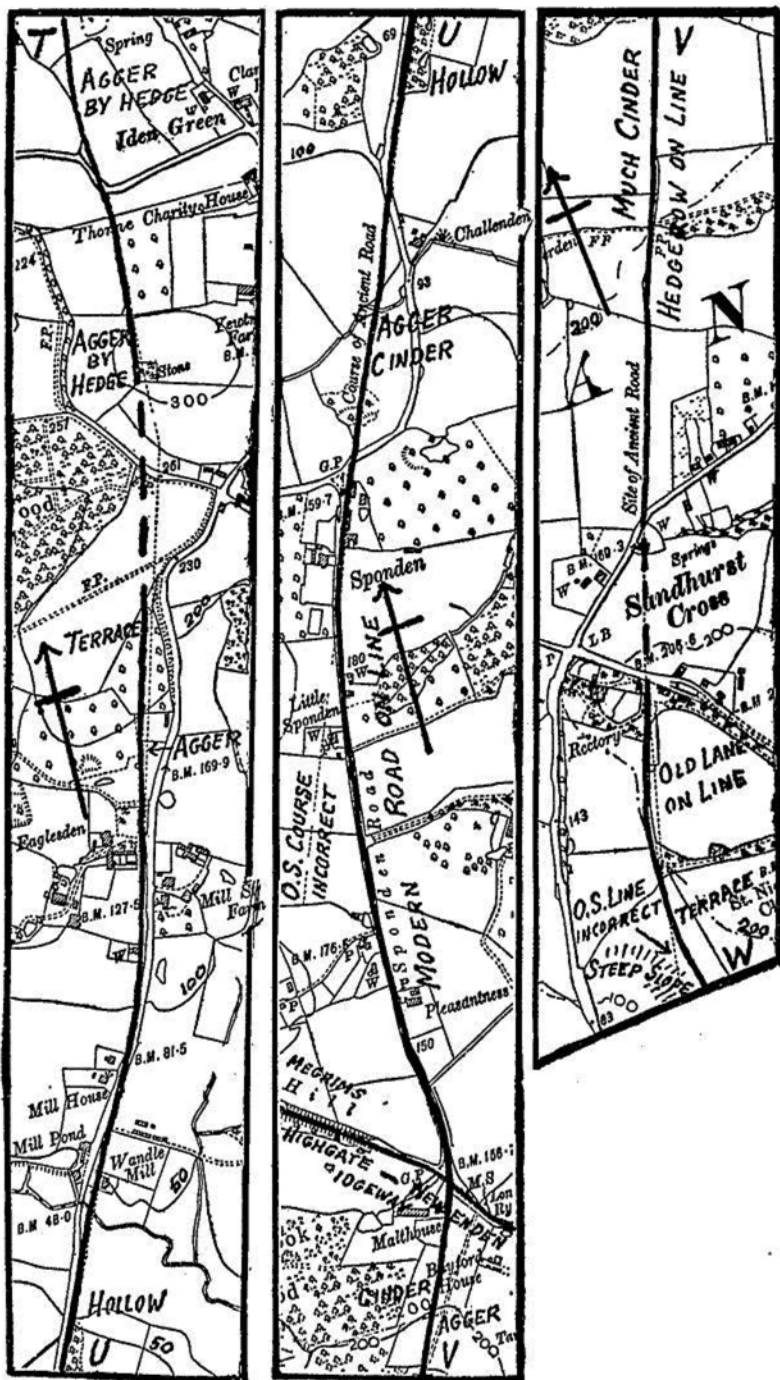
then west of it, to a small fir plantation on the hilltop. A slight turn to the south-west was made at this prominent point. It is next seen just north of Eaglesden, first as a turfed terrace, 33 ft. wide, and then as a damaged *agger*, just west of the present road. Beyond the stream, a hollow east of the road marks the course to near Challenden, where it kept straight on, as shown by remains of an *agger* upon the line, with traces of slag, up the hill to Sponden. Here Sponden Road seems clearly to mark it as far as Megrims Hill, where it crosses the important ridgeway from Newenden by Sandhurst to Highgate and Wadhurst.

The course is now clearly marked by a footpath and hedgerows, with much iron slag from the metalling, all the way to Sandhurst Cross, where as a derelict lane it forms the eastern boundary of the rectory garden. This lane emerges on the hillside to the south as a fine turfed terrace, 18 ft. wide, curving slightly to the east round the steep hillside towards Old Place. Hedgerows mark the probable course from here down to the Kent Brook, at the Sussex boundary, and up to Court Lodge, Bodiam, making past the Castle site to Bodiam Bridge, where the Rother, then an estuary, must have been crossed either by a causeway or by ferry. A straight alignment of hedgerows and roads leads onwards through Staple Cross to Cripp's Corner, but the probable route beyond this point is by a series of roads along the available ridges, through Sedlescombe, Westfield and Ore. From Cripp's Corner the route passes close to several ironworking sites of proved Roman use.

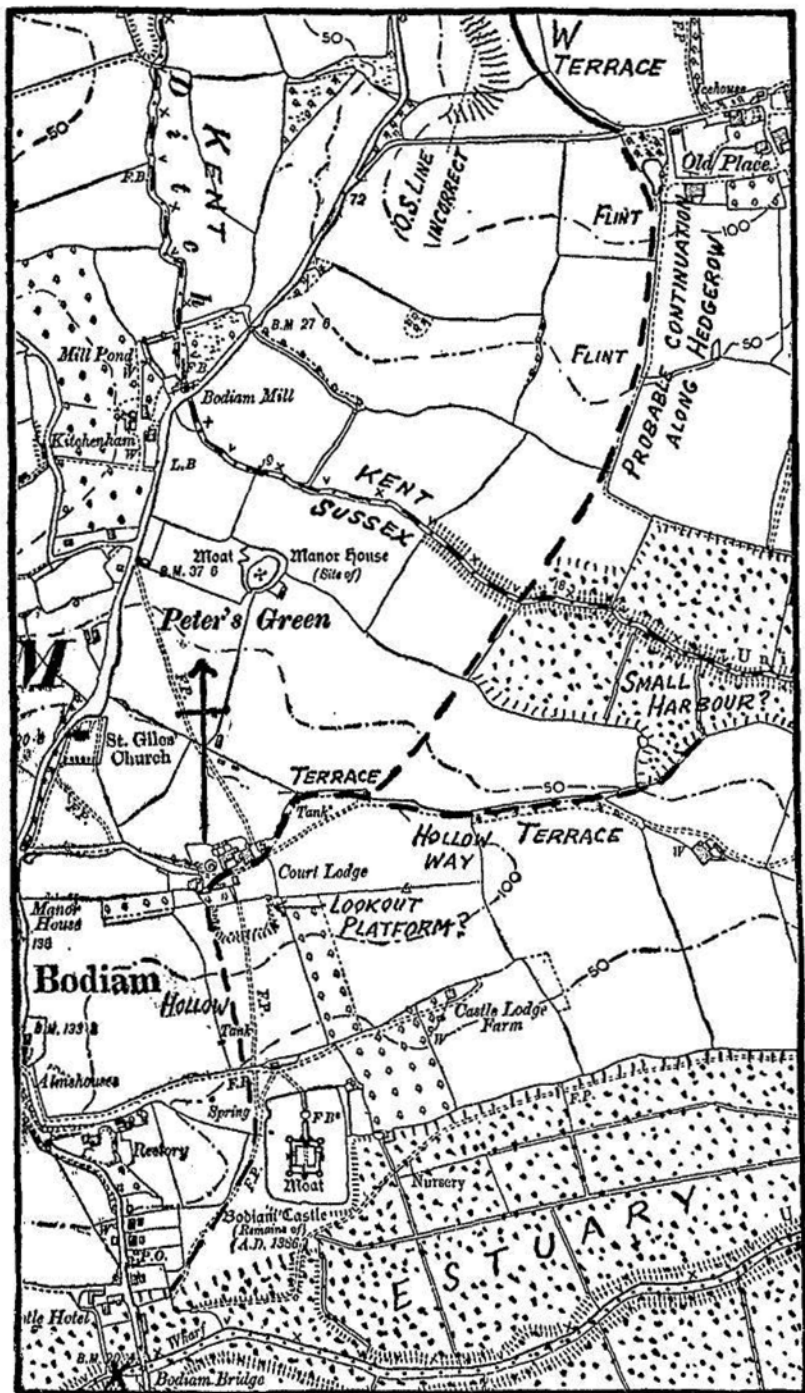
It will be convenient at this point to consider the courses of Routes I and III as shown by the Ordnance Survey. From the earliest editions of the 6-inch maps the Survey has shown Route I between Hemsted and Sandhurst, and Route III from Hemsted to Kingsnorth, under the somewhat unusual legend "Track (or Site) of Ancient Road." Since there was, apparently, no archaeological literature to guide them here, it seems probable that the surveyors' information was derived from local residents. This would have been recorded in the Object Name Books of the Survey, now, alas! lost to us for ever by the bombing of their Southampton offices. The evidence of the maps suggests that the informants knew the neighbourhoods of Benenden and High Halden well but were unreliable elsewhere. In fairness to the Survey it should be remembered that their surveyors were not archaeologists, but yet endeavoured to include such information on the maps. Their method here was evidently to include certain portions which were definitely known, and most probably shown to them on the ground, and then to attempt to join these by idealized straight alignments. This was particularly unfortunate here, for, as we have seen, the roads are not accurately straight for long owing to difficulties of ground. Moreover, the surveyors had a most undesirable habit of extending alignments for some distance beyond the known evidence, to end "in the air," and this led them seriously astray at several points. A particularly



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glaring example of this occurs to the south of Sandhurst rectory, where they extended the line of the derelict lane as a straight line pointing towards Bodiam; this line actually runs across a quite impossible slope upon a steep hillside, and, moreover, completely ignores a visible terraceway curving round the hillside which is the obvious continuation of the road. Again, north of Sandhurst, they extended the alignment through Sponden too far, thus ignoring the obvious continuation along Sponden Road which fits in well with the known length towards Sandhurst, whereas the two alignments as marked upon Kent Sheet 78 SE. are obviously incompatible with one another.

But their worst and most misleading effort was at Kingsnorth on Route III, where they extended the alignment for 1,500 yards east of Stubb Cross, a purely imaginary length which has misled everyone as to the real continuation of the road towards Canterbury. In this case, too, there was, as we shall see, abundant evidence of the metalling along an obvious line of hedgerows a little to the west of their line, the road is known to local farmers, and, most curious of all, it is the only section of these roads for which there *was* literary reference available, Hasted giving a very intelligible description of the route in his *History of Kent*.¹ Again, it is evident that no one really conversant with the course of Route III on the ground, through Tenterden, St. Michael's and Parkgate, especially in Dawbourne Wood, near Breeches Pond and across the deep gill at Bishopsdale, could regard the Survey's line as anything but imaginary or idealized. From all this it is clear that we shall be justified in considering the Ordnance Survey's routes as no more than an early and honest, if clumsy, attempt at recording local information of very unequal value.

II. MAIDSTONE—KINGSNORTH—LYMPNE.

From the junction point in the orchard at Amber Green a slight *agger* can be seen running east from the parish boundary stone to the garden of the cottage at the corner of the Four Wents—Amber Green road. Just beyond Amberfield a hedgerow follows the line for 240 yards to Almerly Cottages, and again for 380 yards farther to the Chart Sutton—Norton Forstal road, the ridge showing faintly in the field to the south of the hedgerow as it nears the road, for it is diverging from the hedge there. All this land is under intensive orchard cultivation, and it is not surprising that few traces remain.

We now approach the steep escarpment of the greensand ridge at Sutton Valence, and the last portion of a lane which joins the main road north of the church may represent part of the course, for there are indications just east of the road there, opposite the new Council School, of an old terrace leading on eastwards behind the houses. Another Roman walled cemetery containing about a hundred burials was found

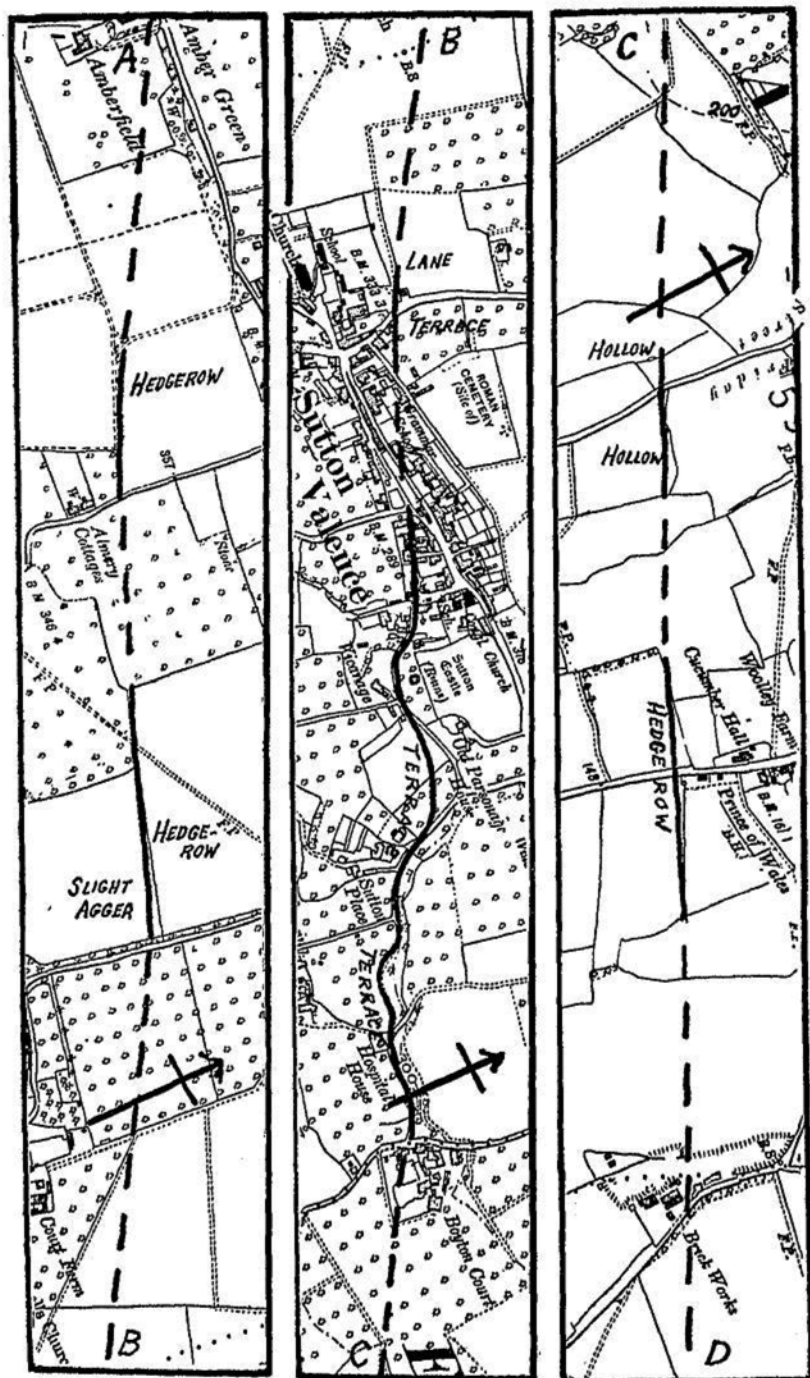
only 170 yards north of the course there,¹ in the grounds of the new College buildings, just above the first descent on the escarpment, a suitably prominent spot for such a site.

From the centre of the village the course next follows the lower road past Sutton Vicarage, Sutton Castle and Sutton Place to Boyton Court. This is an underhill terrace of ancient origin, following the main alignment closely, though, naturally, it winds somewhat along the hillside. The Castle keep, a square stone tower, stands conspicuously on a spur immediately above and adjacent to the road which, obviously, provides the reason for its presence at this point in Sutton, for it is not a position that would otherwise be of any particular importance there.

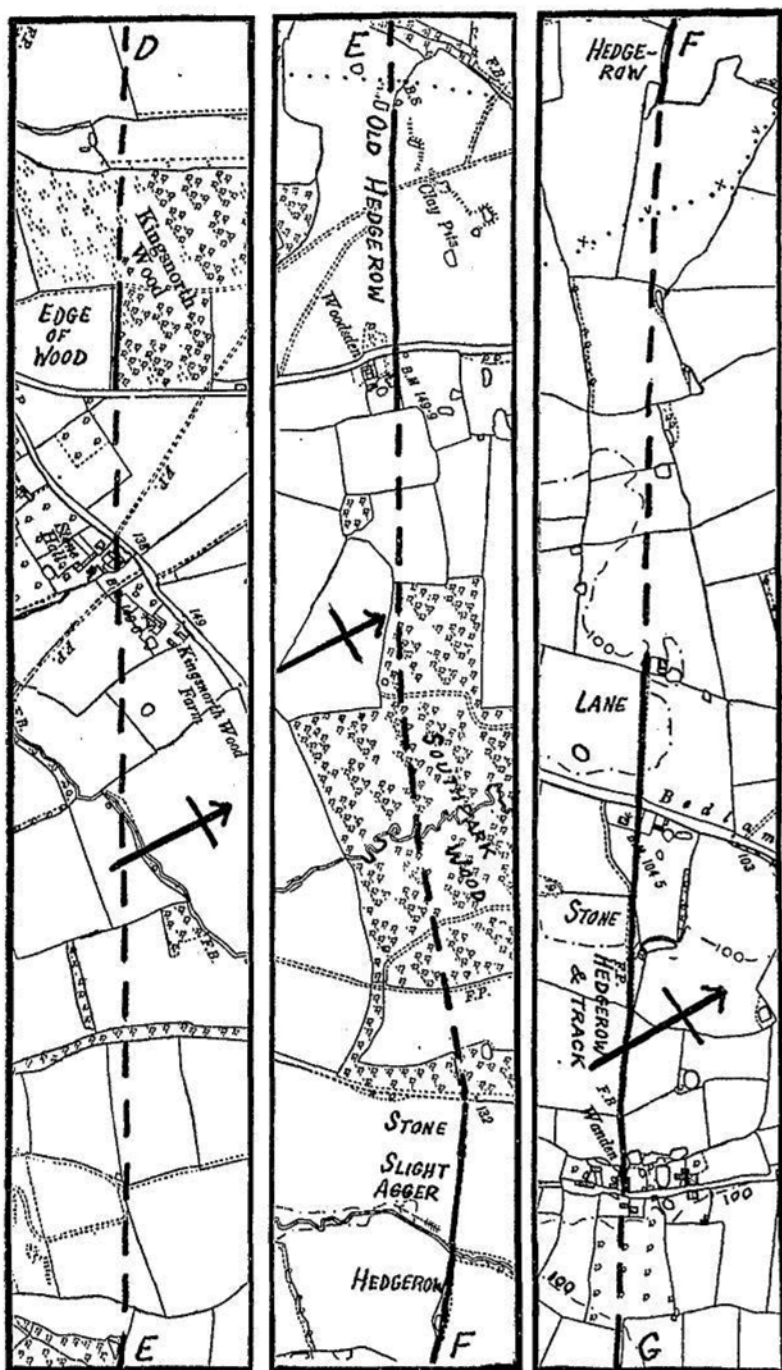
At Boyton Court there are no further visible traces, but the rest of the descent along the general alignment was easily practicable, and upon approaching the lane that comes down from East Sutton, called Friday Street, traces of a hollow, and then, across the lane, a length of hedgerow with a hollow beside it mark the course. It is again marked by hedgerows 130 yards south of the Prince of Wales Inn farther east, but after this there is nothing for some $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, although the south side of Kingsnorth Wood lies upon the alignment, and some hedgerows west and east of Woodsden, near Southernden, probably mark it. East of Southpark Wood, Southernden, there are traces of a slight ridge, with local stone, although we have now got on to a stoneless clay country, leading down to a stream beyond which it is continued by a line of hedgerows across Bedlam Lane and through Wanden until, near The Wilderness, it meets a straight track leading east through Frith Wood. The track is quite a featureless woodland ride now heavily covered with wartime rubble, but it leads into a road running past Frith Farm towards Pluckley which, in turn, connects with a long line of hedgerows that does appear to have some significance. At the east end of the Frith Farm road, where it forks at The Pinnock, a hollow can be seen north of the present road leading more directly towards the commencement of the hedge line at The Pinnock, and this is then continuous for a mile to a point near some cottages with the curious name of Stone Abbage. The line curves slightly, apparently to suit the ground, but there is a definite appearance of a slight *agger* along it, with traces of stone, although the soil there is notably stoneless.

About 440 yards east of Stone Abbage the lane to Dowle Street carries on the line for a short distance and then leaves it again, but a hedgerow with considerable stone in it continues in the same direction, passing 190 yards to the south of the old farmhouse at Dowle Street. Beyond the lane leading south to Snoadhill a hedgerow with traces of an *agger* and scattered flint leads directly to March Wood and, beyond, to the beginning of the large Hoad's Wood. This wood and Etchden Wood cover the next $\frac{3}{4}$ mile over which there appears to be no trace,

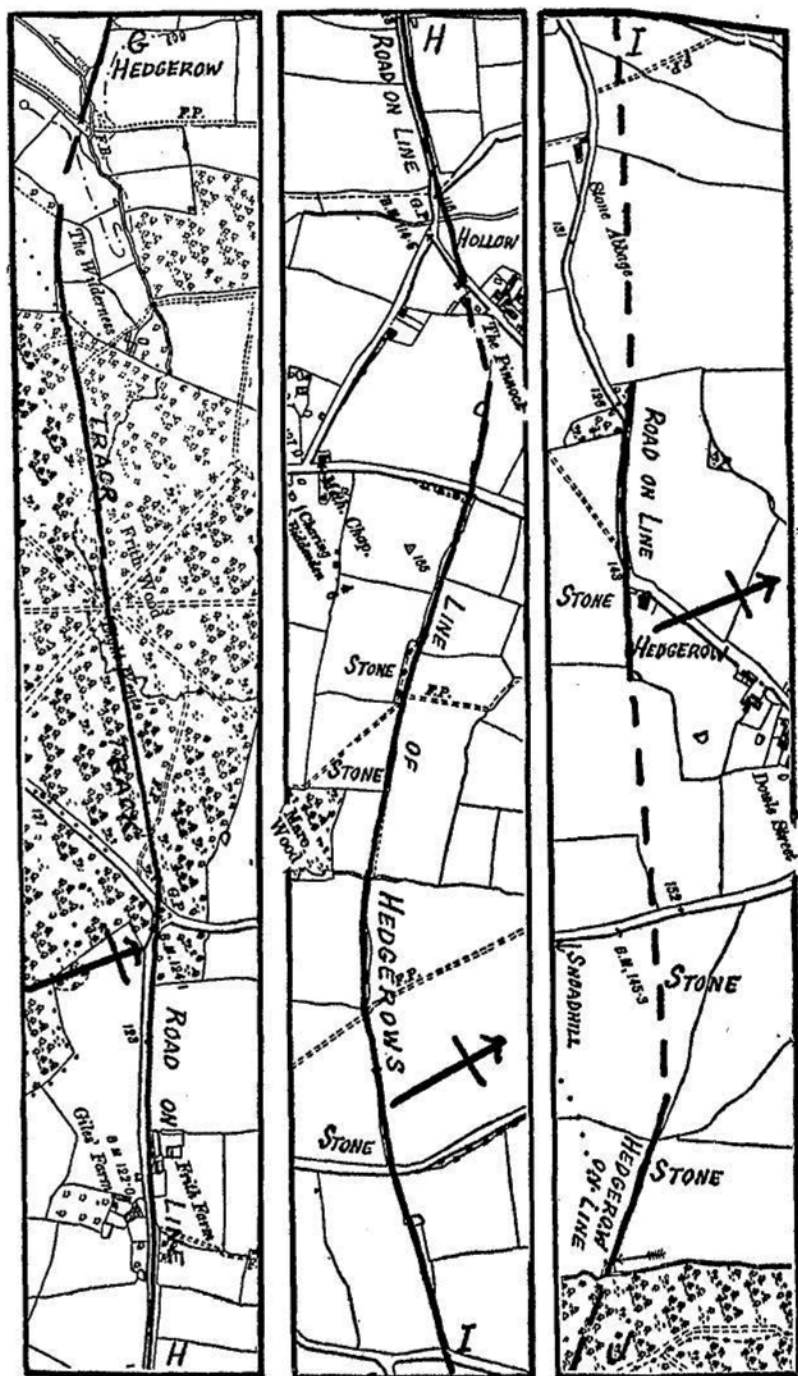
¹ *Arch. Cant.*, X, 166 and XV, 88.



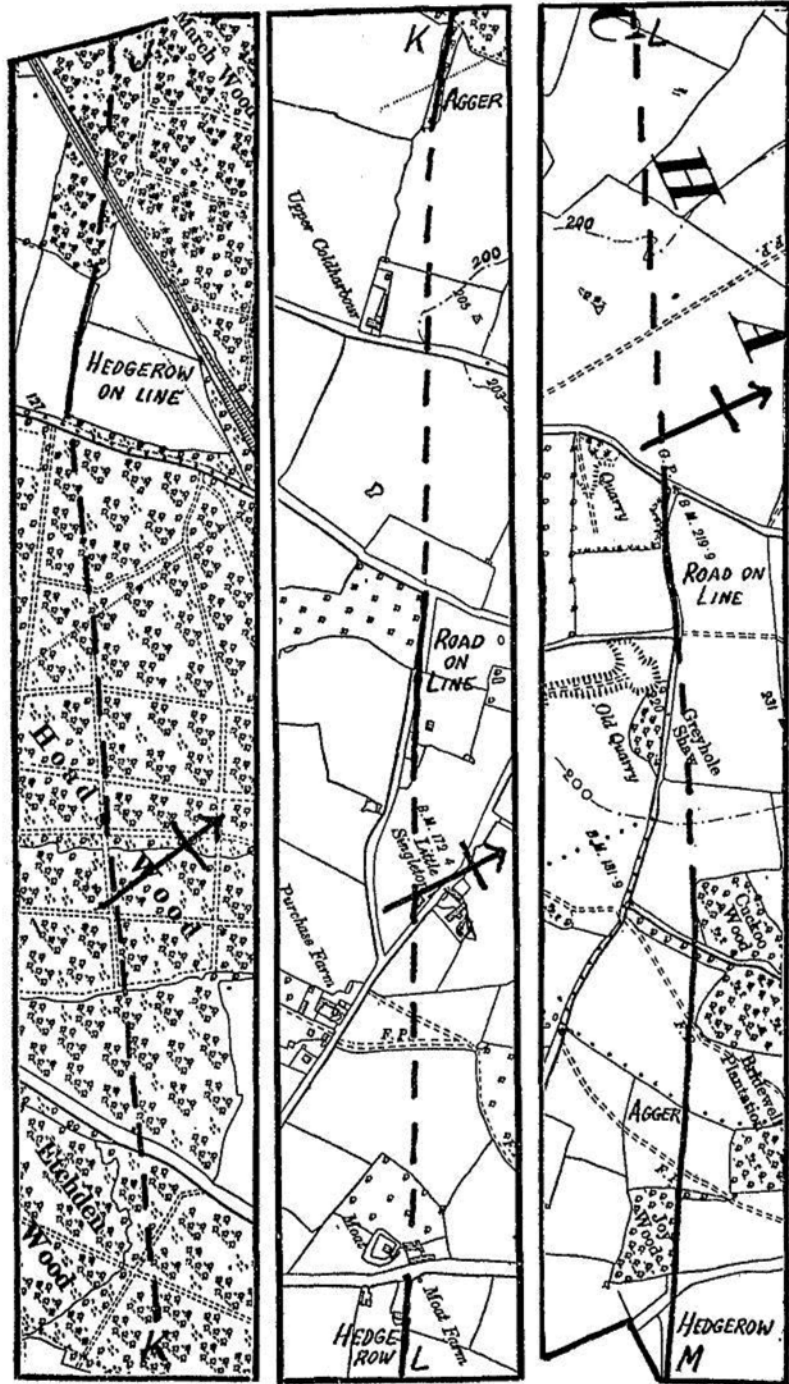
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for the visibility in Hoad's Wood is fairly good. At the far side of Etchden Wood, however, a large bank, 27 ft. wide with a broad hollow along its north side, extends towards Upper Coldharbour Farm for 170 yards. As it now stands, this bank may well be an artificial rabbit-warren of medieval origin, but it must be admitted that, if so, it is a remarkable coincidence that it should happen to come exactly upon the true alignment of the road. Moreover, it is continued much more faintly into Etchden Wood, and it seems on the whole more probable that the original *agger* remained sufficiently distinct at the edge of Etchden Wood to have suggested its conversion to a rabbit-warren by widening it with additional material from the hollow on the north side.

Nothing is to be seen past Upper Coldharbour until a short piece of lane comes upon the line for 230 yards, and a very slight ridge can be seen across the fields direct from Little Singleton to Moat Farm, Great Chart. Beyond this there is nothing for a mile, until at Cuckoo Wood traces of an old hedgeline and then a line of hedgerows from the north side of Joy Wood to Stanhope School, near Ashford, seem to mark the course.

This brings the road along the south side of Stanhope School gardens, where much stone can be seen, to the cross roads near Ellingham and Westhawk Farms which is the point of junction with Route III from Hemsted and Tenterden. At Ellingham Farm there is a slight curve at a crossing of a branch of the East Stour, and then the commencement of the drive to Park Farm, Kingsnorth, represents the course, although, farther on, this passes to the north of both the present farm and its adjacent earlier moated site. Then there is no trace for 1,100 yards across some low-lying ground to Bilham Farm, where the well-known portion of the route begins, first as the farm road and then as the high road to Aldington, Lympne and Hythe. It seems very probable that it was this wet area near Bilham Farm which caused the road to go out of use west of this point.

The evidence here adduced for the "lost" portion of Route II west of Kingsnorth is admittedly slight, though it is just what one may expect in such cases. The strongest points in favour of the existence of the road are: (1) the coincidence of the alignments from Maidstone south-east and from Kingsnorth north-west both meeting with the Staplehurst alignment at Amber Green, (2) the position of the Roman cemetery at Sutton Valence, just where the route reaches the crest of the ridge, (3) the position of Sutton Castle beside the road as it climbs the escarpment, and (4) the traces of stone and flint near Dowle Street and elsewhere, at places where these are not normally found.

III. HEMSTED—TENTERDEN—ASHFORD—CANTERBURY.

At first glance it now seems strange that the south-easterly road from Kent to the Sussex ironworking district should have been directed

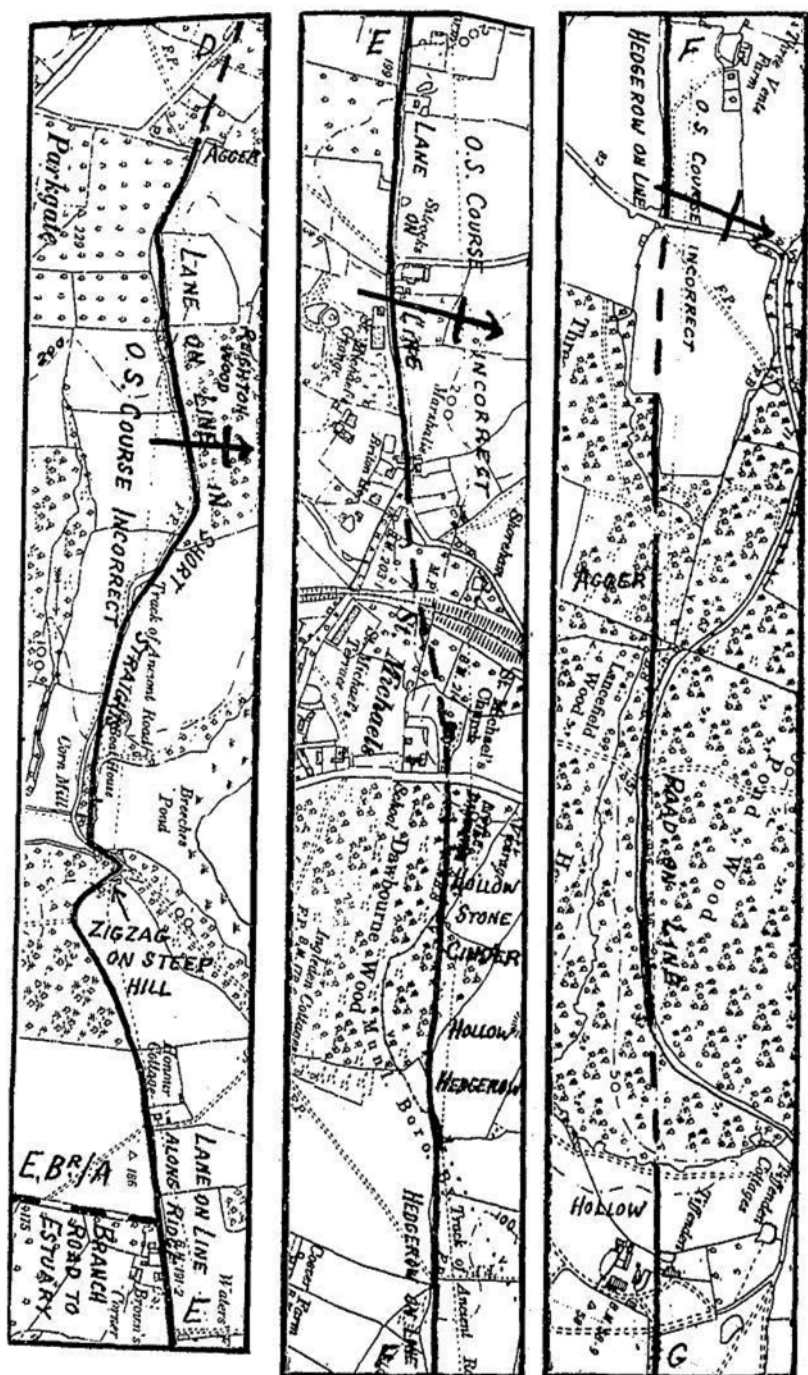
so far inland as to join Route I at Hemsted, 15 miles to the north of Hastings. Actually, however, there was a very sound reason for this, as it was at that time the most southerly route available that would not have involved ferrying across tidal estuaries. To what extent the area of Romney Marsh was by then emerging from the sea is a matter of controversy, but it does at least seem clear that the Rother, under its old name of Limen, then flowed eastwards along the old coastline as a large tidal estuary to an outlet near Lympne, and that until a much later date there were long arms of tidal water running in behind the Isle of Oxney on each side of Tenterden. It was to avoid these that the road was sited so far inland.

The road leaves Route I just by the mansion of Hemsted, proceeding through the park close to the east drive; it crosses the Sissinghurst—Benenden road 80 yards south of the turning to Goddard's Green, and is visible as a slight *agger* under the trees just before leaving the park. There also seems to be a trace of it, as a hollow, just east of the new school buildings on the east drive. It appears as an *agger* with traces of slag metalling along the south side of the narrow shaw beside the Goddard's Green road, and comes up to the Green through an orchard, where it shows as a distinct hollow. The modern road then seems to lie upon it past Eaton and Redhouse Farms, for the highway is distinctly raised there and, moreover, the next clear traces, through Uppergate Wood, where it is a large *agger*, 36 ft. wide, in places heavily metalled with slag, lead directly from the modern road at Redhouse.

The course of the road is here directed in a series of short straights along an east—west ridge. This involves a slightly more southerly trend past Cleveland Farm, which lies some 320 yards north of the road, the course being quite definitely marked by a hedgerow with remains of the *agger* and slag metalling. Next, the Ordnance Survey shows it turning north-east straight across a little valley and up to Bexhill Farm. Traces of the *agger* are visible near the stream crossing, and near Bexhill Farm, where it again turns almost due east, a line of hedgerows marks its course to Bishopsdale.

These turns might be due to a desire to keep along the ridges as much as possible, nevertheless the southward bulge here from the general line seems unnecessarily pronounced, and a possible explanation is provided by a line of hedgerows traceable south-eastwards for about a mile towards Tenterden. Traces of an earth *agger* and numerous pits appear along this line and it seems quite likely that this may have been a branch road leading to the head of what would then have been an estuary running inland to a point just north of Rolvenden Station. The bends near Bexhill Farm would then be due to the road having forked there.

East of Bishopsdale the slag metalling is traceable, about 60 yards north of the Ordnance Survey line which here, as elsewhere, is evidently



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somewhat idealized. A steep gill in Flight Wood must have been directly crossed by a bridge, east of which the slag metalling in the wood is well preserved. Beyond, at Parkgate, the lane leading past Breeches Pond and Brown's Corner to St. Michael's, Tenterden, clearly represents its course; the lane runs in very straight short lengths designed to fit the somewhat difficult ground near the Pond, which the map line fails to do, especially near Reighton Wood. It is very probable that the bay of the Pond is based upon the line of the old *agger*, as so often happens. The zig-zag ascent at its eastern end is most likely the original route, too.

At Brown's Corner it is possible that the straight lane leading south to Chennell Park, and showing as an old hollow way in the park there, was another branch connection to the estuary, giving access from the north-east.

From Brown's Corner eastwards the modern road runs very straight along a ridge and there seems no reason to doubt that it represents the course, the Ordnance Survey line to the north being unsupported, and at St. Michael's, where the roads diverge north and south of it, there is a distinct hollow leading on a little way towards the church, which stands on the line. Through Dawbourne Wood, to the east, the course is plainly traceable, first as a hollow in the grounds of "Little Dawbourne," then as the remains of an *agger* heavily metalled with iron slag in places. Beyond the wood it runs very close to a hedgerow past Three Vents Farm and into Lancefield Wood, where some traces of the *agger* remain. A lane then follows the line for 500 yards, and upon leaving the woods it is marked by a hollow up to the farm of Tiffenden, and then by a hedgerow with a slight *agger* along it to Trottingale Wood, and similarly on approaching Brook Wood, through which the *agger* is also faintly visible.

Beyond, at Plurenden, the modern road comes close beside the line for 400 yards, and the *agger* is faintly visible in the fields both to the south-west of Plurenden and opposite Plurenden Cottages; also the north edge of Nine Acre Wood, near Great Engeham, lies upon the line. The *agger* can again be faintly seen, together with scattered metalling, in the field north-east of the crossroads there, which lie exactly upon it.

From Brown's Corner, through St. Michael's, to this point the road follows very closely a single alignment, but it now turns very slightly more to the east, at a point 520 yards beyond Great Engeham crossroads, in order to avoid a stream near Whitepost Wood. The point provides an interesting confirmation of the ancient origin of the road, because, though the intention of the engineers to avoid the stream is obvious, the line of the road does in fact cut across the most extreme bend there by about 60 yards. Since the construction of the road the stream has evidently shifted its course to this extent, and as it is a small and very sluggish one we may assume that such a change would take a

long time. A similar case, upon a larger scale, was noted upon the London—Lewes Roman road at Wellingham, north of Lewes, where a bend of the River Ouse cuts it.¹

Beyond Great Engeham the road is visible as a slight hollow in the field between Mayshaves Farm and Little Ruck Wood, then it is marked by the scattered flint and slag metalling all along the line past Harlaken-den, in Whitepost Wood (near the north-east side) and up to the lane north of Little Criol Farm. East of Criol Farm a line of hedgerows with traces of an *agger* marks its course for 860 yards past Snailwood, and the *agger* is very clear, with traces of pebble metalling, across the last field to Stubb Cross Wood, where for 150 yards the modern road takes up the line. A farmer here has found a foundation of large stone slabs underlying the road south-west of the Wood.

At Stubb Cross the road turns more to the north again, making direct for Ashford; its course is plainly marked by a long line of hedgerows with abundant traces of the metalling along its western side to Court Lodge Farm, an old moated site, and again through Westhawk Farm beyond, along or near a hedgerow marking the Kingsnorth—Willesborough parish boundary. The last part of this, forming the approach road to Westhawk from the north, lies upon a distinct *agger*, running up to the crossroads at Stanhope School where it meets Route II.

The part of the road just described is clearly mentioned in Hasted's *History of Kent*² where under Kingsnorth he writes:

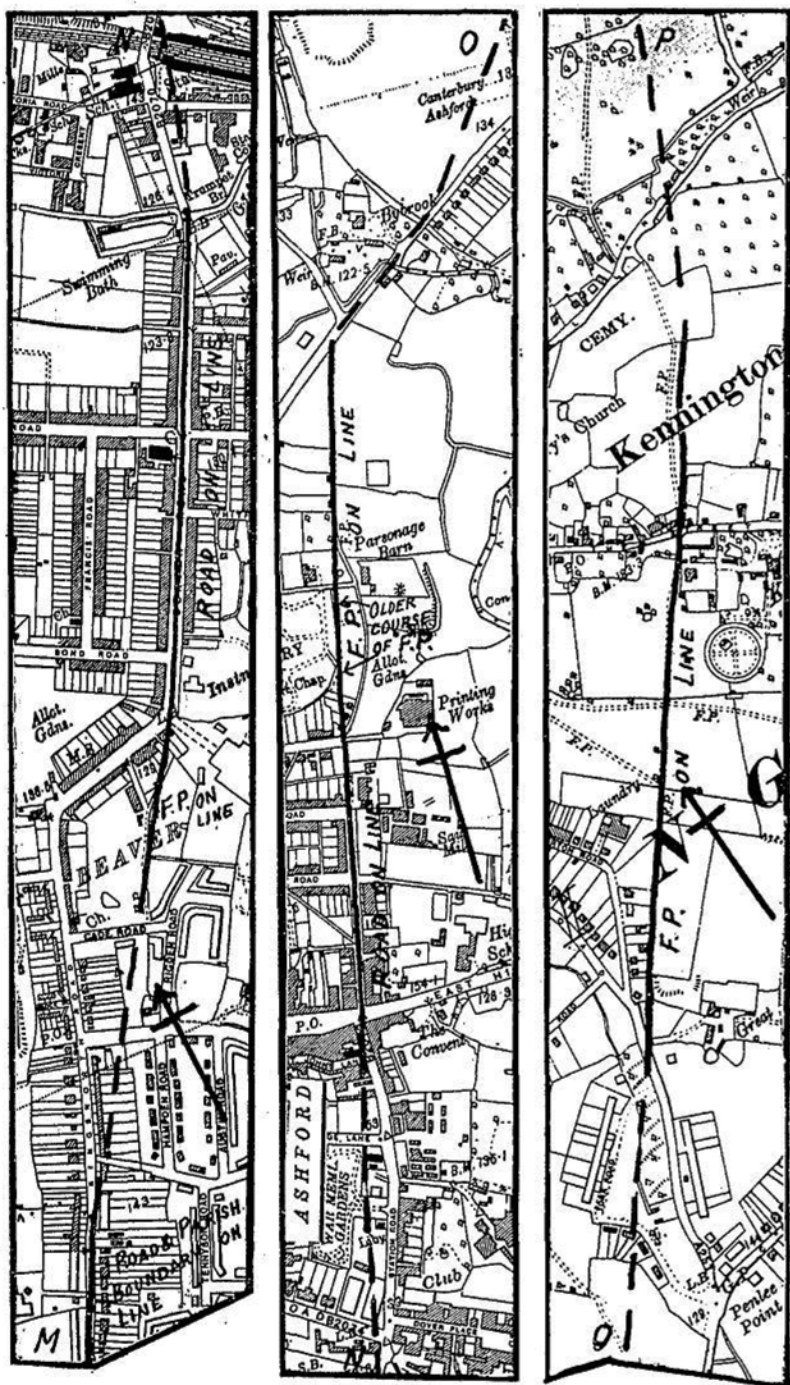
" . . . close to the western boundary of the parish is the manor-house of West Halks, which has been a large antient building, most probably of some consequence in former times, as there appears to have been a causeway once from it, wide enough for a carriage, which led through the court-lodge farm towards Shadoxhurst, Woodchurch, and so on to Halden, remains of which are often turned up in ploughing the grounds."

In view of this evidence and the fact that the road is well known to local farmers, it is surprising that the Ordnance Survey should have been baffled as to its correct course. They continued the alignment from Snailwood *straight on* beyond Stubb Cross, pointing towards Dennard's Farm at Kingsnorth Pound and ending "in the air" some 1,130 yards short of Route II. This line is featureless, whereas the remains of metalling are so striking along the obvious line of hedgerows a little to the west.

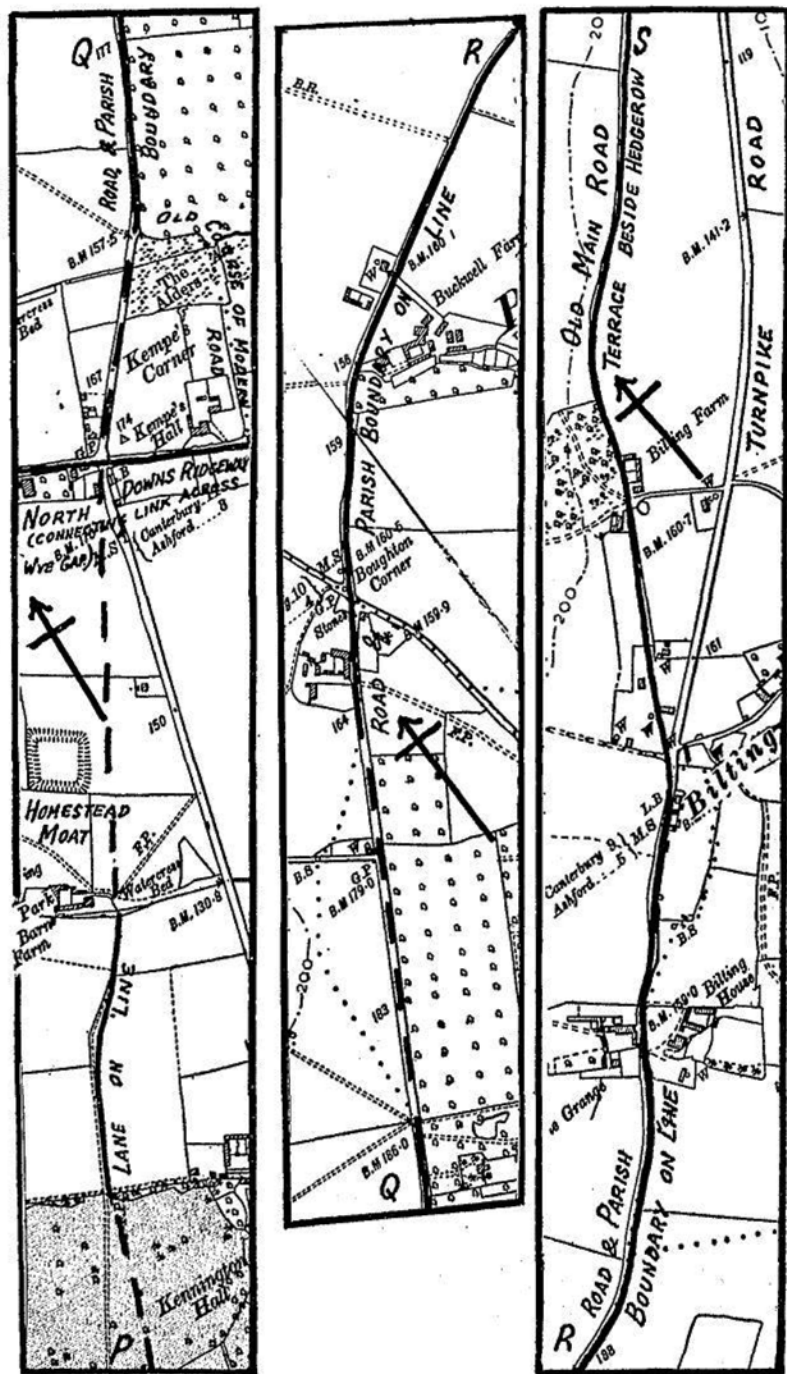
The reason for the northward bend at Stubb Cross was actually to regain the main Ashford—Tenterden alignment that had been left at Great Engeham to avoid the stream near Whitepost Wood, and thus

¹ *S.A.C.*, LXXIV, 28.

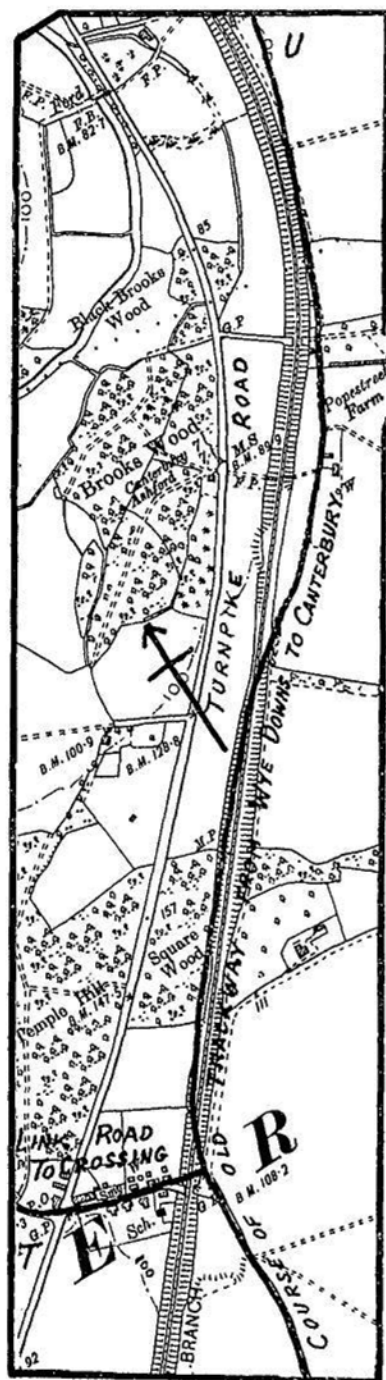
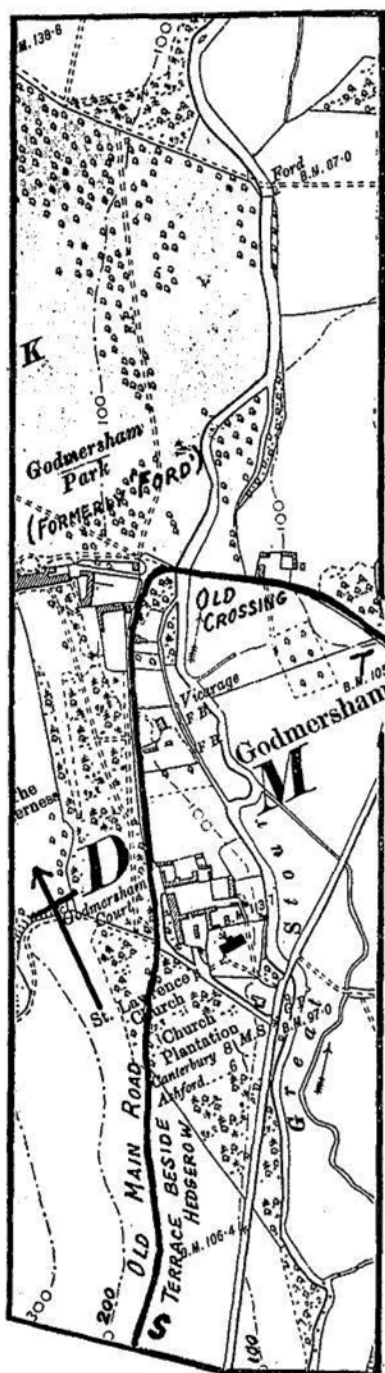
² Second edition (1798), VII, 584.



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the layout of the road is seen to be quite a reasonable one, designed to avoid low ground on the west.

Had the road really taken the Ordnance Survey line it is improbable that it would have extended beyond Route II, for it would have been facing the widest and wettest part of the flat Stour valley towards Wye. On the other hand, a road intended solely to connect with Route II for easterly traffic would surely have branched off from it more to the east than does Route III. One is led thus to the almost certain conclusion that Route III was so placed because it was designed to cross Route II and to give direct access, upon dry ground, through the Wye Gap to Canterbury. There is some evidence that it did so.

From the crossing of Route II at Stanhope School the road to Ashford, at first a parish boundary, continues the general direction of the *agger* at Westhawk, and where in the suburb of Beaver it makes an elbow, the line is occupied by a footpath. The route skirts the edge of the marshy Stour valley to the east, and is high and dry except where it has to cross a branch of the river at Trumpet Bridge, near Ashford Station. Beyond the station quite a striking line of roads and footpaths carries on the route, by Station Road, Wellesley Road and the path past the east side of the cemetery (formerly even straighter than now), still skirting the low ground to the east, direct to the point at Bybrook, on the Canterbury Road, where another branch of the Stour has to be crossed. The directness of this line of roads is the more striking because it lies across the main traffic lines of Ashford which now run from west to east.

At Bybrook a turn to the north-east was made, upon an alignment from Ashford to Godmersham Downs designed to follow the west side of the Wye Gap and keeping away from the low ground. This route has the further advantage that considerable beds of gravel here overlie the wide belt of gault clay which has to be traversed. The line is marked by a long succession of footpaths, with traces of an old road visible in places, right through Kennington and the Hall park beyond to Park Barn Farm, near Kempe's Corner, where the modern road with, in places, a parish boundary, takes up the line.

Kempe's Corner is a crossways of some importance, for here the North Downs Ridgeway crosses our route in making across the Wye Gap to Wye Downs and the coast. There may thus be some significance in the curious right-angled divergence, still shown by the parish boundary here, which the Canterbury road formerly underwent at this point, as though some enclosure might once have existed at the crossroads.

Parish boundaries follow the Canterbury road for most of the way on to Bilting, the slightly curving course of it being apparently to avoid low ground near Buckwell Farm. Then the older road, now abandoned, is clearly traceable through Bilting Farm and along the shoulder of

Godmersham Downs as a wide terrace, very direct in its course, coming down gradually, until it is close beside the river at the main entrance to Godmersham Park. The old road through the park to Chilham was very winding beyond this point, and it seems probable that the aligned road had ended here. The old name "Ford" for Godmersham Park clearly indicates a crossing of some importance. Only 600 yards away on the other bank lies an old trackway that has come up from Wye Downs and leads on very directly over Julliberrie Downs and Chartham Downs to Canterbury, a route that would certainly have been in use in Roman times, although of earlier origin. It would, however, have been difficult to connect this trackway at Wye direct to Route II and the south-west, owing to the wide marshy area separating it from Kingsnorth. A route west of the Stour upon the drier ground was required for this, and that is just what our Route III does, Godmersham being the most convenient point for the river crossing and the connection of the road and trackway. Thus we see that this route, formerly of doubtful significance, was actually an important member of the Canterbury network of radial roads, connecting it with the Sussex ironworking district.