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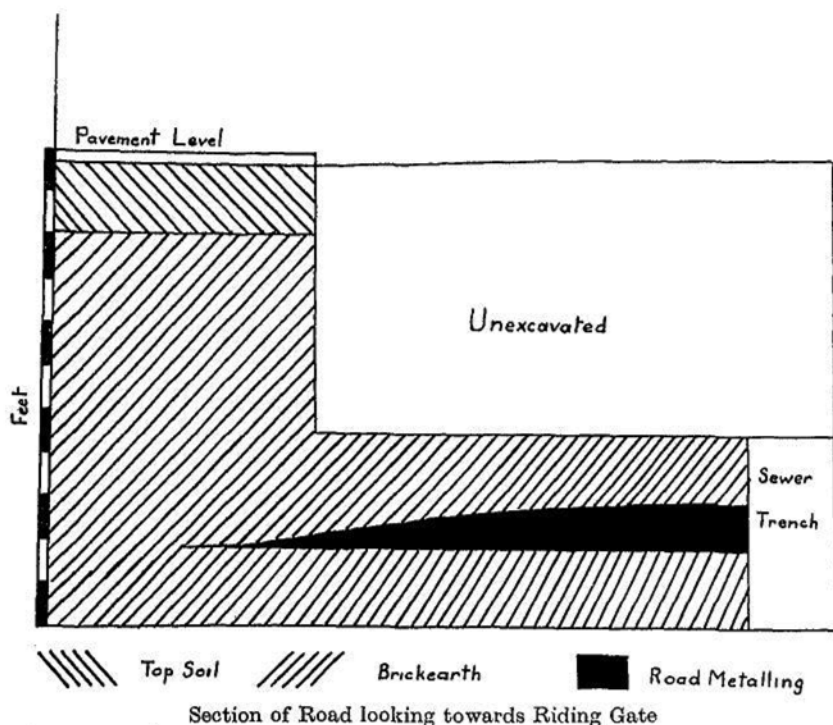
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# THE ROMAN WATLING STREET FROM CANTERBURY TO DOVER

By FRANK JENKINS

THE sketch-map and section refer to a deep trench which was dug in February, 1949, for the purpose of linking up the domestic drains of St. Bede's House with the main sewer under the Old Dover Road, Canterbury. The site is on the SE. side of the road, 215 yards from



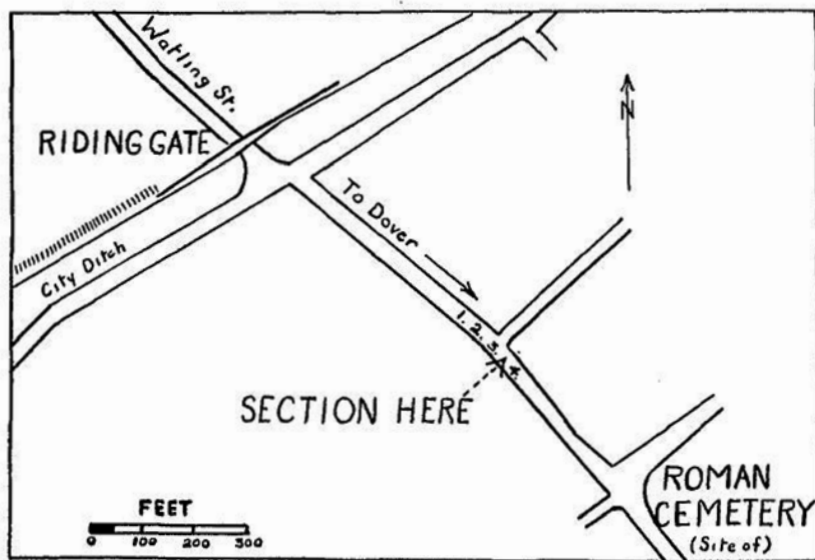
the Riding Gate; and c. 130 yards from the Roman Cemetery at St. Sepulchre's. The excavations were watched with great interest, especially as a tunnel was to be driven under the roadway from the edge of the pavement.

The main feature encountered during this work lay at a depth of 9 ft. below the modern surface (c. 50 ft. O.D.). It was a band of tightly packed gravel containing traces of chalk and a few small flints. A

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width of 10 ft. 6 in. was exposed from a point below the pavement towards the centre of the road where it was cut by the main sewer trench. At this point it was 12 in. thick tailing off to about 2 in. at the edge. It rested on clean yellow brick earth and was sealed by a similar deposit, which out in the open trench came to within 12 in. of the surface. No finds of any period came from these deposits.

These conditions agree with what was found by Pilbrow during the main drainage excavations carried out under his supervision in 1868.<sup>1</sup> At that time he reported the existence of four walls (Nos. 1-4 on map),



The Old Dover Road, Canterbury. Sketch map showing site of 1949 excavations and walls 1, 2, 3, 4 found in 1868

18 in. thick, lying across the Old Dover Road at 9 ft. below the surface, the bases of which were not reached at the 15 ft. level. These were 40 ft. apart and sealed by "loam deposited by water," evidently the clean yellow brick earth noted above. Pilbrow also expressed surprise that walls should be found under what he had previously taken to be a natural deposit. From his measurements it appears that the present excavations were made through the area between two of these walls, (Nos. 3 and 4 on map), and that the surface of the band of gravel lies at more than a foot above their highest point.

In construction it compares with two bands of gravel found in 1945 by Mrs. Audrey Williams on a site in Watling Street, situated 80 yards

<sup>1</sup> Pilbrow, "Excavations at Canterbury, 1868," *Archæologia*, XLIII, 151-64.

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inside the Riding Gate.<sup>1</sup> These were taken to represent the metalling of two roads. Both rested on a build-up of clean yellow brick earth, and that which lay mainly under modern Watling Street was sealed by a similar deposit.

Recently a section of another road was found in the garden at the rear of No. 1, Watling Street, only a few yards inside, and to the NE. of, the Riding Gate.<sup>2</sup> This is not in alignment with the two roads just described, for though it converges on to the Watling Street at the Riding Gate, its course lies in a NE.-SW. direction. Like the others it is constructed of tightly packed gravel and rests on the clean brick earth.

Although the deposits in the Old Dover Road did not yield any datable finds, it would appear that the foregoing evidence precludes any suggestion that the band of gravel at that point is a natural feature and therefore it is taken to be the metalling of one version of a section of Roman Watling Street in alignment with the modern road leading from the Riding Gate to Dover.

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, LX (1947), 87 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Canterbury Excavations, Boyle and Jenkins. (Carried out under auspices of Canterbury Excavations Committee, 1948-49; unpublished.)