

WOLMER FOREST AND A NEW ROMAN ROAD NORTH OF MILLAND.

By G. R. ROLSTON.

IN *Sussex County Magazine*, October 1951, the course of a new Roman road—first noticed by the Archaeological section of the Ordnance Survey—is the subject of a short article by Mr. Margary.

He describes its course from Chichester to the foot of the Milland ridge, and there leaves it near the Sussex boundary. A discussion of its further possible course northwards is the reason for the following account of the country to the north of Milland, and involves a corner of Hampshire known as Wolmer Forest and its environs.

The written history of Wolmer Forest goes back to Saxon days when it was the property of Saxon Kings, and the land about it was held in "allodium", a form of hereditary estate derived from primitive occupation by Saxon thanes.

The Manor of Worldham carried with it the keepership of Alice Holt and Wolmer Forests, and at the date of Domesday Book it was stated to have been held by Alwin, of Edward the Confessor.

Wolmer Forest remains Crown Property and it is now controlled by the Forestry Commissioners who, since it was enclosed by award in 1857, have leased various portions to the Army.

In early years Wolmer Forest was of far greater extent than to-day and included portions of eight parishes: Kingsley, Selborne, Greatham, Liss, Rogate, Trotton, Bramshott and Headley, some of which has been lost either by grant or encroachment.

When Gilbert White wrote in 1788, it was $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles long by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in width and lay as to $\frac{3}{5}$ th of it in the Parish of Selborne. At Domesday Selborne was the property of William I and prior to the Conquest had been owned by Queen Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor.

King John stayed at Worldham in 1203-4, where King John's or Lodge Hill was surrounded by a park, whose ditch was one of the early boundaries of Wolmer Forest. There is another farm nearby ($1\frac{1}{2}$ miles E.), Lode Farm, where there was an open meadow—King's Meadow—of 37 acres divided into 27 portions. In other words, a common meadow where common feeding took place from 9th August to 30th December and could be called Lammas lands.

Edward I visited Selborne in 1276 and 1280, and prior to his visit, in 1260 mention is made of a highway from Selborne towards Blackmoor. Henry VIII was chief ranger of Wolmer and was often at Lode Farm, obtaining the nickname Harry of Lode.

PLATE V.



Survey of Woolmer according to a Perambulation of 1638.

Wolmer Forest was described by Gilbert White as "consisting entirely of sand covered with heath and fern, somewhat diversified with hills and dales, without having one standing tree in the whole extent. In the bottoms where the waters stagnate are many bogs, which formerly abounded with subterraneous trees".

The Forest Commission of 1787 made many plantations of Scots pine in Wolmer Forest, which they described as "a hungry, sandy, barren waste".

The Rev. Godwin in *Green Lanes of Hants and Surrey*, writing of the same area about 1875, says of the land adjacent to the then new Liphook to Greatham highway, "this road lies for the most part over a desolate marsh, formerly one dense forest, the trees of which were destroyed by a terrible incendiary conflagration a few years back, which baffled all the efforts of troops called from Aldershot to arrest it. The flames were not extinguished for weeks, despite trenches".

Canon Capes also writes in his history of Bramshott parish, of the new road (1853) "which spared the local traveller the trials of the previous tracks over the adjacent sandy hills, and made a straight causeway through the low-lying marshy ground".

It is interesting to speculate here on the trials of Queen Anne, who is recorded to have "left the great road at Lippock", and proceeded into Wolmer Forest to see a drive past of 800 deer. The bank whereon she stood, sat, or reclined was thereafter called Queen's Bank and is on a slight hill half-mile E. of Wolmer Pond.

The name "Forest" is not connected in the Wolmer area with trees, which were the pride of its Royal sister, Alice Holt. Wolmer stood on Hythe and Folkestone Beds, while Alice Holt was on Gault. Hence, in the survey of 1635, it was estimated that there was just under £10,000 worth of timber, oak, etc., in the 10 square miles of Alice Holt, while there was but £5 worth of timber in the 17 square miles of Wolmer Forest.

The greensand, gault and chalk areas around Wolmer Forest have been habitation areas since earliest ages.

Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic implements have all been found in the surrounding areas. Scattered round the verges of Wolmer Forest, particularly to the west, may be seen Bronze Age barrows. Of these there are 35, of varying size, recorded in the appendix to White's *Selborne* :—

- 11 on or near Hogmoor, spaced 7—3—1,
- 4 on Whitehill,
- 1 on the S.E. of North Blackmoor ridge,
- 5 in a line at the S. extremity of the Western Blackmoor Ridge close to Wolmer Pond by the High Road,
- 6 close together at the top of the opposite hill on the other side of Wolmer Pond,

- 4 in the Fir plantations, close together, $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile E. from E. end of Wolmer Pond,
 - 3 in the highest part of plantation N.W. of the Greatham—Liphook road, one being apart from the other two,
 - 1 remote from all others on the summit ridge of Weavers Down, close to the entrance of the Southern boundary of Selborne Parish.
- Almost all have been disturbed.

Visible entrenchments, British or Roman, are mentioned by Sewell in a letter of 1777 in White's *Selborne*. Overlooking Wolmer Pond on the Blackmoor ridge S.W. of the 5 tumuli, there are a series of parallel trenches, 6 or 7 in number, of some depth; running nearly north and south from the top of the ridge down to the present high road.

In Selborne there is a considerable tumulus or hillock known as Kite's hill, which was presented in the Courts year by year as not ploughed.

Of later Celtic inhabitants the river names are memories: Wey, Oxney, Isington; while numerous village names testify to the settlement of later Saxons, along the river valleys.

Of the Romans, there are so far two chief discoveries:—

1. A vast pottery site, in the Goose Green enclosure of Alice Holt Forest, just to the North: which Forest was, as previously stated, held in parallel with Wolmer Forest.
2. Two immense hoards of Roman coins, first in 1740, 1741 and 1774, at Wolmer Pond of date 180 A.D., and second in 1873 in the grounds of Blackmoor House of date 296 A.D.

This latter find has been related to an unsuccessful insurrection by Allectus.

In the country to the North and West nearby, signs of several villas or farms have been found, but till recently nothing Roman has been recorded to the East or South, for a number of miles.

However, in 1951, some pieces of pottery, New Forest type, were found near Passfield, at Hurnlands, E. of Wolmer Forest, while a trench was being dug. These pieces of pottery date about 280 and are now in Haslemere Museum.

In 1950, as previously stated, an air photograph showed a "mansio" or marching camp, astride the road from Milland to Iping. From this, as yet, only a few sherds of pottery have been recovered from molehills.

Under the earlier church at Milland several Roman urns, recorded by the Sussex Archaeological Society, have been found in 1885.

In the autumn of 1953, on the top of Dunner Hill in the garden of Mr. Paul, a new well was dug. During these operations Roman

pottery was found at a depth of 2 feet resting on a hard surface, and three feet further down some coarse pottery (? Hallstatt).*

As earlier stated, this piece of Roman road from Chichester to Milland has already been described, and runs in three fairly straight sections with a slight deviation westward, to cross Linch Hill, and, with a slight deviation eastward, to cross Dunner Hill.

From the foot of Milland Hill northward there is a steep escarpment mounted at the present day by a graded road, modern in construction, through a soil full of springs.

In earlier days there were two other used roads and one hypothetical. Of the two first, Route one turns West by an easy grade to the hilltop 600 yards, and then on past the entrance to Milland Church and to Chapel Common. Route two turns North-East by a ford over a stream and probably, originally, up through the garden (though now round it) of Milland House to the E. end of that house, and by the existing lane to the top of the hill, and so on to the highroad just E. of Ripsley House drive.

Lastly, from the Volunteer Inn a hedge line runs gently uphill to Maysleith Farm, north-westwards, and then by a sunk track to the lane at the top of (1) and so on to Chapel Common.

Of these three routes, the third gives the easiest gradient, and the first and third debouch on to Chapel Common, from which a track, continued in the direction of Langley House, would appear likely.

Route two may be continued along the boundary of Ripsley Farm, N.N.E. I have talked to Mr. Earwicker, a one-time Liphook Councillor, who told me that he has driven a cart up Route two on a hard road past Ripsley Farm, over what is now the railway line and so on past the head of Foley (Forest Mere) Pond.

Thence, his track went on to Boundary Cottage in Weavers Bottom, and up the slope to Sweetbriar Cottage on the shoulder of Weavers Down. This section was by a now sunk way, just to the West of a used cartway, and follows the old boundary of Wolmer Forest—the fen path to Conford, and continues down the slope again partly by sunk ways to near the Deer's Hut Inn. Crossing the Longmoor road, the way used by him went up into Holm Hills, and descended then to Conford, leaving the school on the East, and passing a small cottage on the left.

To go back now to Routes one and two, where they jointly reach Chapel Common, there is a sunk track leading from the Church gate N.W. through a copse to the highroad, and which continues the same N.W. direction across the common. This may be picked up at various places while crossing Chapel Common, and crosses the railway at about Langley Bridge. After which, this route carries on by a good, still used, track up the slope to the plateau just above Rackswell in Longmoor Bottom.

* Ordnance Survey Archaeological Branch have stated this to be Neolithic.

Rackswell is one of the points on the Wolmer Forest boundary.

One of the difficulties of a due N.S. road is the type of country between Rackswell and Conford, which in the old perambulations from 1171 onwards is described as traversed by the Fenpath.

Continuing over Longmoor, this route passes near a very large barrow, crowned by fir trees.

The further course, according to an old forester, was to the R.E. H.Q. at Longmoor, thence to Charley Knott's house at Whitehill, and on to Headley Park, which is no distance from Goose Green. This route passes Wolmer Pond, the Blackmoor coin site, and the site of Roman weapon finds : with Roman villa sites at Blackmoor, Sleaford, Wyck, Binstead.

As to the Eastern route (2) : from Conford a route could have crossed the Common N. to near Passfield Oak, and on to Rudeherne or Passfield Farm and thence on to Headley village, after which there is difficult country broken by the Wey River.

However, it is interesting to note, even on the 1171 Wolmer bounds, one bridge after Conford, Bradbridge, and Wasbridge, by 1300.

Again, in 1356, Kingsley tithing were called to repair the bridge at Sleaford, which was so ruinous as to impede the passage of carriages.

There is no evidence yet of any route directly North from either side of Ripsley Farm over Weavers Down, and so through Wolmer Forest to Linchborough at Hollywater.

There is still much work to be done to clear the problem, and I add a few names and extracts from deeds. An extent of the Headley estate mentions a boundary from the corner of Oldlands, along the moor (Broxhead Common) southwards, "and so along a ditch leading up beyond Borden Lodge, so far as the Lord can lay his line three times and throw his horn, and so from there down the Ditch eastwards to the Lindford River".

In Wolmer Forest there was a forester at Borden Lodge and another at Linchborough.

On the S. Wolmer boundary runs the Fenne Path and on the Tithe map, this is called 'Shepherds' Way'. Between Conford and Bradbridge, which is before Lindford, and was the name of the bridge spanning the river on the road between Hollywater Green and Whitehill, there is a place called Schutteles in 1300.

In Headley we have Grevat Lane, Wassellane and Erthpyttlane ; also, on a deed of 1230 in Passfield we find Rudeherne, the Frith, Burifield and Hurlands, where Roman pottery was found.

Other interesting names are Ole Thorn (1300), La Henne or Hunne (1262), Oakhanger bridge (1262), La Folle (Foley) (1280), Berghern (1300), Tonford Water (1450) (the name of the stream which flowed under the later Oakhanger Bridge which was afterwards called Tonbridge), Runneberry Hill (1600).

Grovers Tree was an oak at Deadwater, under which forest courts were held.

At the S.W. corner, after Rackswell, in 1300 and 1635 a boundary of Wolmer is mentioned, "*Altam Viam de Wolvemere ad Midhurst*". This last is at least suggestive and for the present we must defer decision. On a map of Wolmer Forest of 1787, based on the 1635 boundaries this *Altam Viam* or highway is shown as running N.W. and S.E. from below Wolmer Pond to Langley Farm and thence to the top of Milland Hill.

This confirms the statement by the old forester (earlier referred to) of a good roadway to Longmoor Camp.

At a point near the junction of the railway line to Longmoor with this roadway there was in 1635 a branch northwards off this alignment which would have followed the course of the present railway line crossing the present E.-W. Greatham to Liphook highroad and past a barrow on its course up the slope to the North. This course would have continued on to Queen Bank and so to Round Hill.

APPENDIX.

FOREST PERAMBULATIONS.

1171.	1300.	1635.
From Ethlake	From Ethlake, as far as Berghern down river to Ethgatts and by the great road to Blackmore, thence by the road to Thelebridge and down by Ryde-water.	From Echlake to Boreherne and so by a little brook to Echlake aforesaid and so by the great way to Blackmore and by the road to Thelebridge and so down by the Redwater.
By		
Roowater.		
To	To	To
Kipping House and so forth to Long Path	Tupynggs House and so to Long Ford	House of Cupping and so to Long Ford
and to	and thence to the high road leading from Wolmer to Midhurst and so by that same way to Buckerswell or Rakeswell	and thence into Longmoor Bottom to Buckerswell or Racks-well and so to the highway which leadeth from Wolmer to Midhurst.
Rakeswell		
and so by the		
Longmeare		
into		
Rake and so forth by path called	and thence in the	and thence in the New Path alias Fen Path to Oldthorne
Fennepath	Fenpath	
to	to Olethorn and so by the same fen Path to	and so by the same New Path to Quernford. and so going by the water down
Conford	Conford and thence by that water as far as	
and so by that	Schutteles and so by that water to Bradebrigg	to Bradbridge
Fennewater into Bradbridge		
and so into		and so to
Wasford		Lindford Bridge and by the water to Broxhead Bridge and by the water to Huntingford Bridge.
and so to Huntersford		etc.
etc.	etc.	

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