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The Roman Road On Durdham Down

by A. T. Martin
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THE ROMAN ROAD ON DURDHAM DOWN.

By ALFRED TRICE MARTIN, F.S.A.

THE course of this road is shown on the maps of the Ordnance Survey, where, however, it is wrongly and without any reason called the *Via Julia*.

It ran from the corner of the Down opposite the Convalescent Home, through the site of the Reservoir, across the Stoke Road, in a north-westerly direction, to Durdham Lodge.

The Reservoir and a quarry, now filled up, are responsible for the obliteration of a considerable portion of its course, and the only place where it can now be clearly seen is west of the Stoke Road where it approaches Durdham Lodge. Here there may be seen a well-defined *dorsum*, with traces of a ditch on either side. In order to definitely settle the character of these remains, we obtained, last year, the permission to dig, and excavations were accordingly made under the direction of Mr. Hudd, Professor Lloyd Morgan, Mr. Pritchard, and myself.

I have now the honour to describe the results obtained by our work. We began by opening the crown of the road near the edge of the old quarry.

Here, immediately under the turf, or some three inches below the surface, we found a continuous layer of rough, big stones, of somewhat varying size, the actual measurements of a fairly representative stone being 10 in. by 8 in. by 7 in.

These stones were firmly bedded, with occasional smaller stones set up on end between them on a layer some six inches deep of reddish-looking earth. Under this reddish soil again was about a foot of sandy earth with fragments of limestone embedded in it.

This sandy-looking material was examined by Professor Lloyd Morgan, who pronounced it to be calcareous, and said that it might well have been formed from the natural weathering of a limestone *in situ*, but that it had not the appearance of a product of the weathering of the carboniferous limestone. As this sand is, however, not met with in the ditch, and is only found in the roadway, it seems reasonable to infer that its presence is due to the preparation by crushing and levelling of the surface of the rock, in order to secure a level bed for the roadway.

An examination of the stones of the upper layer showed that they came from different horizons in mountain limestone, separated perhaps by 1,000 feet. Here there was, therefore, clear proof that many came from a distance. They were all naturally rounded, which showed that they came from the surface.

Our next step was to open a hole some distance from the road in order to compare the results. This was done some twenty-two paces to the south of the road, and the natural bed rock, with a superficially shattered surface, was found five inches below the surface of the turf.

Having thus obtained fairly conclusive evidence as to the artificial nature of the mound or ridge forming the road, we then proceeded to take a section of the road at a different place.

This was done sixty-eight yards north-west of the thorn-tree, on the edge of the old quarry. Reference to this section will show that the level of the ditch on the south side is now 1 ft. 2 in. below the crown of the road, while the ditch on the north side is some seven inches deeper.

It must be noted here that the ditches have suffered considerably by the hand of time, and that it would be difficult to determine now with accuracy their original width. Having taken our section of the surface, we decided to open the road again in this place, and began by digging at the crown of the road, at the picket marked 3 in the Section.

Here we found big stones bedded as before, with perhaps



-  *Turf and soil.*
-  *Paving of road.*
-  *Reddish layer*
-  *Sand (calcareous).*
-  *Rock.*

THE ROMAN ROAD ON DURDH

OWN BRISTOL: SECTION.

a rather greater number of small stones set on edge for packing. Some of the stones showed doubtful signs of wear. Among them were some pieces of millstone grit, which must have come from a distance of at least half-a-mile.

One of these pieces measured 11 in. by 8 in. by 5 in., and there were other stones upwards of twelve inches long.

Our next opening was made in the south ditch at No. 2 picket. Here we found the natural rock one foot below the surface of the turf. Between the turf and the solid rock there was only soil and the natural breakage of the rock. If this depth is compared with that of the rock in the hole sunk twenty-two paces south of the road, it will be seen that the ditch was originally deeper, and has got, as one would expect, partly filled up.

The big stones were found not to extend more than ten feet from the centre of the road. If the width of the road is to be estimated by this, the road would have been some twenty feet wide; but though the stones get distinctly smaller, foreign stones and millstone grit were found some two feet further. In any case the width of the road would not have been more than twenty-five feet.

One more opening was made forty-eight feet nearer to Durdham Lodge, also in the crown of the road. Here exactly the same results were obtained, except that some of the stones were bigger than any we had yet found, one being fourteen inches square.

It seems, then, abundantly clear that this road was Roman. To definitely trace out its further course, to ascertain whether it ran, as we suppose, to Sea Mills on the one side and to Bitton on the other, is beyond the scope of this paper. But there are clearly places where supposed traces of it may be examined by digging, and it is most important that this should be done in order to compare the results with those we have obtained on the Downs.