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## Bovium.

HERE has always existed a tradition among the inhabitants of the Vale of Glamorgan, that the Romans who first visited our island in 55 B.C. and subsequently lived in it for a period of over 400 years, who made the great road that stretches from Caerwent westwards towards distant Carmarthenshire, built a fortified station in the neighbourhood of Cowbridge to which they gave the name of Bovium or Bomium. Opinions indeed differ as to the site of this vanished fortress: there are some who perhaps prejudiced by the similarity of sound fancy Boverton, others Ewenny, and a stalwart band of Cowbridge patriots ascribes the honour to our ancient Borough. The title, in fact, of the journal in which these words are printed is derived from the supposed identity of the names, we are wont to call ourselves Old Bovians when we leave the spot that has been the mother of our studies, and we might well be called upon

if we lived in a more critical atmosphere, to give an account of the grounds on which we connect ourselves with an antiquity so remote.

In a previous article contributed to these pages, we hinted that the identification of Cowbridge\* as Bovium rests on slight authority—and in the strictest sense of the word, this is true: but the same remark applies to all claimants, because there exists no reliable contemporary evidence of the operations of the Romans westward of Caerleon in South Glamorgan. The only authentic contemporary Road Book of Roman Britain is the *Itinerary of Antoninus*. This work which, compiled by several hands, assumed the form in which it at present exists about A.D. 320, gives a list of the roads and stations of the Roman Empire including Britain, and proceeds on the well-known principle that "all roads lead to Rome." Unfortunately the section of this Itinerary which has been presumed to relate to the road through Cowbridge is altogether unreliable. The section is known as "Iter xii", and is preceded by the names of six stations on a road from Finkley (Hants.) to Dorchester (Dorset). Then come the following names *Muriduno* (either Honiton (Devon.) or Carmarthen?) *Leucaro* (Lougher?) m.p.m. xv. *Nido* (Neath?) m.p.m. xv. *Bomio* (Cowbridge?) m.p.m. xv. *Iscaleg*. ii *Augusti* m.p.m. xxvii (Caerleon). It has been supposed that this section has become confused with another—Iter xv. The evidence is therefore highly unsatisfactory, in fact, if it were not a certainty from existing remains that a road was made by the Romans

through South Glamorgan, it would have never been applied to our road at all. Further the distances given are quite unrecognisable. *Bomio* to *Isca* is given as m.p.m. xxvii=20 English miles nearly, or almost six miles short if measured from Cowbridge, while *Nidum* to *Bomio* (m.p.m. xv.)=only 12 English miles. But as there is nothing to warrant us in connecting *Nidum* with Neath, we can make no comparison in this direction. Against this however, must be set the fact that the Romans seem to have used "horizontal miles," and their mile is therefore longer than ours in a hilly country. Still even then the discrepancy is hard to reconcile. The fact that the ancient road went through Ewenny, and again deviates from the modern road through Cornelau and Water Street, does not make the distance any shorter to Neath, and to place *Bomio* at Ewenny renders the distance to *Isca* still more impossible. The suggestion that m.p.m.= "millia plus minus" (miles approximately) and not "millia passuum" does not assist us in any direction. The confident assertions that are often heard as to the "*via Julia*" are due to quite another source. This source is known by the sufficiently alarming title of "The Diaphragmata of Richard of Cirencester"—a sort of Gazetteer of Roman Britain, claiming to be an original compilation from existing records. In this work a journey is described "Ab Aquis per Viam Juliam Menapiam usque" (From Bath by the *via Julia* to S. Davids). Richard reverses the route, makes *Bomio* (which he calls *Bomion*, a name also given to a station between Chester and Wroxeter) 28 m.p.m. from Caerleon ("unde fuit Aaron Martyr") inserts an intermediate station *Tibra Anne* (Cardiff?) and in other respects follows

\* The modern name Cowbridge is possibly due to a mis-translation of the Welsh name Pontfaen (Stonebridge).

Antoninus. He places *Tibra Amnis* 12 m.p.m. from *Bomium* = 9 English miles (against 12, the present measurement from Cowbridge, unless the camp on Ely race-course is meant), but only 8 m.p.m. from Caerleon = 6 English miles! Unfortunately this document has been proved incontrovertibly to be a forgery of Antoninus by some late hand. As an authority then it may be dismissed—especially as it makes the confusion worse. At the same time it has been remarked that it may represent expert *opinion* during a time considerably nearer the Roman period than our own. In other words it consists possibly of shrewd guesses from then existing facts.

It is an invidious task to destroy a cherished illusion, but it will thus be seen that the tradition of a "Bovium" is apparently nothing more than an assumption, made by the author of a forged treatise, that *Iter xii.* of Antoninus refers to a road from Caerleon to Carmarthen—an assumption which may or may not be borne out by facts, which but is hardly justified by a critical examination of the document in question. For its distances are quite inconsistent with actual measurements, and the identification of the stations named can in no case be made out. There is an additional difficulty in connection with the problem. The Roman military roads were used by a constant stream of travellers; merchants, officers, magistrates, nobles with their trains of servants, regiments of soldiers were moving to and fro all over the country on the main arteries of communication. For their convenience, inns (*mansiones*) and posting-stations (*mutationes*) were dotted all along the route. In unsettled districts these usually took the form of entrenchments, and

indeed were called "castra." It is impossible therefore to say whether Antoninus mentions regular stations or "mansiones" or "mutationes" in his list. Thus, so far as names go "*Bomium*" might equally well represent any camp on the great road, however insignificant its present position. With this reservation we may proceed to review the claims of Cowbridge to be a Roman station to which we may or may not give the name of Bovium as we please.

Whatever doubts must exist as to the evidence of Antoninus, the road from Cardiff westwards, at all events as far as Margam, with the exception of portions here and there was beyond question perfected if not made by the Romans.\* It was guarded by a continuous line of forts, of which many remain, at Ely, at Caerau, at S. Nicholas (where there is a curious circular British (?) outpost commanding a wide prospect northwards), at Bonvilstone (possibly two here, one certainly Leige Castle and the other possibly at the top of the northern acclivity), at the beginning of the lane leading to Colwinstone House (this is almost certainly Roman, it is almost a perfect square, with the fosse and vallum on the S.E. side still very perfect, and the "porta decumana" pointing S.W.), at the top of the Stormy Down, and on the top of Margam mountain. Whether there was a camp at Ewenny is open to question. It is a most likely spot, but no traces are visible. The tessellated paving, found on the site of the Church is apparently of later date. Had

\* A curious suggestion is made in this connection with regard to the term "Golden Mile," 2 miles on the road to Bridgend. The Celtic word for gold is *oer*. The Romans translated this *aurus* (= golden), a term which has lasted to this day, though the original meaning must have been "cold mile." This is a better suggestion than that made in the *Archæologia Camb.* that the allusion was to the gorse.

it been a station of any importance some remains would certainly have been expected, though the builders of the several castles in the vicinity would have utilised any stores that the Romans left to further their own business.

Mr. Storrie in the *Archæologia Cambrensis* (vol. v. series 5) in a paper describing the Roman villa partly excavated at Llantwit puts the query as to whether Llantwit was Bovium. We are not particularly concerned with answering this question, because, as we have pointed out, we do not believe in Bovium at all, except as a generic term representing a fort or station on the main Roman road. But if the question were asked as to whether Llantwit could be substituted for a traditional fort at Cowbridge we are inclined to disagree. It is beyond a doubt that we have in Llantwit an instance of the effect of the absorptive influence which Roman civilization had in all countries which fell beneath its sway, a Romano-British University settlement of some magnitude. There are even *prima-facie* signs of a Roman road from Porthkerry eastwards to S. Brides westwards, a portion of the highway near Wick being still termed "Heol-lâs," and a spot near S. Brides bearing the name of Pitcot. But the directness and careful fortification of the Cowbridge road, compels the inference that the military way passed through Cowbridge. Llantwit may have been a military station, but the claims of Cowbridge are rather strengthened than weakened thereby.

Apart from other considerations Cowbridge was an ideal site for a Roman "castra stativa." Originally it may have been a mere fort, one of the series mentioned

above, which developed into a permanent station with the gradual pacification of the district owing to its happy situation. Placed at a convenient distance from the regimental headquarters of the Second Legion at Caerleon, yet not pushed too far out into the treacherous Silurian territory. on a level stretch of their great road, with commanding eminences at no great distance to serve as watch towers, in the midst of a wide and sheltered valley, and supplied with an abundance of good water, the Romans must have seized on such a spot with as much readiness as their Norman successors. In fact they had greater incentives to such a selection than the Normans, whose civilization was altogether of a more primitive character.

It must never be forgotten that the Romans took over Britain as a business concern. Their chief object in colonizing it was to make it pay. They were here during a period that roughly corresponds to that from Henry VIII to the present day, a considerable slice of history. They did an immense amount of work in turning the natural resources of Britain to their own advantage. "Where the Roman dwells he inhabits" was their motto. Under them Britain became one of the chief granaries of the Empire. The natural resources of the Vale scarcely need demonstration. There are indications that it was interlaced with ancient byways. The existence of lead too, which could be mined easily on the surface, was too valuable a metal to escape the Roman's watchful eye. For all these objects Cowbridge was a perfect centre, and indeed a necessary point to guard the main road which was, as it were, a broad stream with many tributaries.

Furthermore, it is the nearest point on this road to Llantwit, where, as has been said, there is abundant evidence of a peaceful Roman occupation of considerable duration. There are traces of an ancient road above Brynhyfrid at Llanblethian known locally as Heol-Cœtwd which may well have been the link between the two places. The antiquity of this road is undoubted as it forms the parish boundary and runs along the ridge of hills that reaches its highest point at Nash. Before the first half of the second century Glamorgan was a peaceful district of Britannia Secunda, and what made Cowbridge a place of importance before the railway era, would have been a much more powerful influence in Roman times when communication between districts was restricted to narrower channels than it was at a comparatively modern date. For all we know S. Iltud's freshmen, journeying to Llantwit may well have drunk the health of Theodosius out of an Ewenny Samian pint-pot at the sign of Arcturus in this ancient town with a draught of Llanblethian wine.

Of the Roman remains at Cowbridge we have already spoken in a previous article. That they are not more abundant the subsequent history of the town, affords an ample reason. But the coins found are of a finer description than those found elsewhere in the whole county, which are generally poor. Roman stone and brickwork was such admirable material for building—the walls of St. Quintin's Castle may conceal some interesting evidence. There may be more beneath the streets and houses of the town. It is only necessary to observe how much accretion has grown over the original ground level by noticing that many

of the older houses of the town have their ground floors some 12 ins. below the present roadway. Eagle Lane is said to contain paving beneath its muddy surface. Nothing could better obliterate an old town than a new one built upon it.\* The existing earthworks afford a very strong presumption of Roman origin—more especially the Bowling Green. Roman camps in the period of the later empire (and Cowbridge could not have been a station of any importance till late, as the Romans did not effectually reduce South Wales till about 120 A.D.), were always constructed with a shallow ditch, not more than three feet deep, and a rampart not more than 6 feet high, owing probably to an inability to spend so much labour on the work as formerly—This would exactly coincide with the appearance of the Bowling Green, and it must be remembered that it was in the western fosse extending at right angles to this trench that the Roman fibula was found. The Normans finding the space too extensive, made their western wall some 50 yards further in.

We are not bold enough to attempt to reconstruct an original Roman encampment out of the present remains, but if our surmises are at all near the truth, the ancient Forum or market of the camp would be on the site of the present market—a strange coincidence if it could be satisfactorily established. Furthermore, Church Street would correspond to the Via Principalis of the camp. We do not know whether the origin of the old town "Cross" which once stood at the end of Church Street has ever been settled.

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\*Caerwent was fortunate in never having become the site of a more modern town, with the result that extensive remains are being discovered. The same applies to Silchester.

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If it were the base of a Roman monument  
our contentions gain some support.

It is not advantageous to travel far in  
the region of surmise. Perhaps some grand  
discovery may raise conjectures to the  
category of facts. Meanwhile, if we have  
succeeded in realizing difficulties, in stow-  
ing away the old "Via Julia," myth in the  
grave which should have been its resting  
place years ago, and in showing what is  
much more worth showing, the possibilities  
of our ancient origin, we shall have done  
something useful. Whether we live in  
Bovium or not is of small moment. What's  
in a name?

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## The Great White Road.

OF all the Empires that ever rose and fell the greatest benefactor to posterity was that of imperial Rome. To the greater part of the Continent the Romans gave a civilization which never entirely perished, they gave laws, and customs, language and art. But other races visited our islands and swept away the traces of order which the Romans left.

One great inheritance, however, they bequeathed to us, so useful, and so enduring that neither the barbarism of succeeding ages, nor the vandalism of modern days has obliterated it. Two thousand years ago the Romans realized, though perhaps from rather a different stand point than our own, that the greatest civilizer of the world is he who can abridge distance and make travel easy. They covered Britain with a network of grand highways, letting light into darkness, and transforming peoples who were distant strangers, into neighbours and friends. The Romans were even greater as peacemakers than as winners of battles; they conquered first, but they consolidated afterwards.

The great roads it is true had primarily a military object, to connect fortress with fortress and give easy and rapid passage to the march of baggage trains and columns of troops. But the work which the Romans did to hold Britain under a firm yoke, lived after they were dead and gone, to be the means of peaceful progress, and to serve

the twentieth century even more usefully than the first. What engineers these Romans were! Take your stand on Stalling Down, on the crest of the Roman road, and gaze at the long white line rising and falling over hill and valley with irresistible directness, till it fades away in the far distance, a concrete picture, of that inflexible determination, that knew no obstacles, that practical thoroughness that understood every detail, that carefully planned method that subjugated the world like some vast and resistless machine.

This road, made so many ages in the past, the road on which the legio ii Augusta marched from Caerleon to chastise the unruliness of the restive Dimetae, is still the road on which the Cowbridge boy rides his bicycle, and regards as the best road in the district for that purpose. When the engineers at the beginning of the century, after roads had been left to go to ruin for well nigh 1,600 years, began to rebuild the highways of the kingdom they could rarely better the line traced out by their Roman predecessors, and even the railways often follow them side by side from one end of England to the other. Look at a map of Roman Britain with the roads marked and you will be surprised at its similarity to the map in Bradshaw.

The Romans made road construction an art. The solidity of their work has defied the destructive influences of ages, and the grass which oftens covers the raised ridge or camber of their causeways even now often betrays the underlying stone pavement by its brown colouring in times of drought.

The course of the Roman roads in South Wales is particularly hard to trace. This is to some extent due to the perishable nature of the soft limestone, partly also to

the obliteration which civilization suffered at the hands of pirates and marauders, and the fact that the fertile Vale was the coveted prize of so many warlike competitors. But the difficulty is greatly increased owing to the absence of reliable records. The stock authority for the Roman roads is the Itinerary of Antonine, a complete gazetteer of the entire Imperial road system, but unfortunately when it gets to Caerleon (*l'ca legionis secundae Augusta*), the chief military station for South Wales, it becomes hopelessly confused owing to the alterations of copyists, and its distances and names cannot be made to square with the facts.\* The Itinerary, however, shows that the road crossed the Severn from Sea Mills to Sulbrook where there is a Roman camp, close to the pumping station for the Severn Tunnel (here again the railway followed the road), passing thence to the Roman station of Venta Silurum, (Caerwent) and thence to Caerleon.

From Caerleon onwards we are thrown back almost entirely on existing remains and on the names of places which recall the fact of Roman occupation. The road undoubtedly passed through Bassaleg (which Prof. Rhys suggests might have been once Basilica) for traces of the 'ridge' still remain, and then went on by the Newport-Cardiff road to S. Meilons. It probably missed Cardiff, though there was certainly a fortress at the Taff mouth, on the site of Cardiff Castle—went through Llandaff, and joined the road to Cowbridge, near Ely bridge; at Caerau (Castra) there is a Roman camp. The "Tumble" is a new road; the old Roman road went up over the summit of the hill behind the cottages, joining the present road again at the top and thence

\* See "Roman Roads in Great Britain,"  
T. Codrington. S.P.C.K., 1903.



passing on to the foot of Three Ash Hill. Here was certainly another camp, Leige Castle (Castrum Legionis?) on the rising ground towards Llantrythid. The Roman way then goes up the old road, to the top, when it again follows the present road to Stalling Down. It then of course went up the grass track to the clump of trees, and here one would have certainly expected to find a camp, it being a particularly commanding spot, but no traces are apparent, and lack of water may have deterred the Romans. The objection is often made that the road from this point is not straight enough to be Roman, but this is no argument because the Romans never aimed at unnecessary obstacles, and often rounded a slight acclivity provided that the general direction was straight. Their main object from a military standpoint was always to keep on high ground to lessen the chances of a surprise. Moreover modern encroachments often give the road a winding course which it did not have originally. Straightness of line was probably maintained by smoke signals from hill to hill. The road makes a knuckle bend through Cowbridge. Cowbridge was walled sometime about the end of the 11th century, by the Normans, tradition asserts under Fitz Hamon. There is, however, clear evidence that it was a Roman station of some importance, and that the Normans fortified a pre-existing Roman camp, obliterating to a great extent the work of their predecessors. Coins of Trajan, Antoninus, Claudius, and Constantine have been found during various excavations in the town, and a Roman fibula in a remarkable state of preservation was found by Mr. William James, of Cowbridge, in the course of some work done in an old cellar. Furthermore it would appear that the Romans built more or less extensively and may have

even surrounded their station with a wall or at any rate strengthened the *vallum* with stone, as remains of stone work cemented with Roman concrete were discovered in the excavations done on the site of the present Town Hall, and Roman bricks have been found, with indications of brick making.

The School Garden and the Churchyard has the appearance of being the S.W. corner of the *vallum*, being raised considerably above the Poplars field, and the Old Hall Garden contains a continuation of it. The path way at the foot of the school wall is still known as Waen-y-gaer (meadow by the camp), and the field adjoining is sometimes called the Council 'Twt.' 'Twt' is a word constantly (though not exclusively) found in connection with Roman works, and denotes a place of look out. Elsewhere the *vallum* seems to have disappeared. The foss is probably to be traced along the outside of the Old Hall Garden, along the strip of garden in the occupation of Mr. D. Evans, and there is documentary evidence to prove that it was full of water in the 16th century, and also that at this spot ground extending to 29 yards from the wall was the property of the town, obviously pointing to an ancient *pomerium*, which may, however, have been of mediæval origin.\*

A foss is also traceable passing across the main road under Mr. William James's house towards the club cricket field, towards Broadboard (broad foss). This is quite a 100 yards from the town wall, so that the Roman works must have extended further West than the Norman town. It was in this foss that the fibula was found. Tradition loves to connect the town with Bomium, (not *Bovium*) of the Itinerary, but for this it is to be feared there is little authority.

\*The 'Bowling Green,' which is probably part of the old foss, is also the property of the Corporation.

Leaving Cowbridge the Roman way passed along the modern road to Brocastle, and thence to Ewenny where tessellated pavement has been found, leaving the new road to Bridgend to the right. From Ewenny it seems to have passed along the site of the present succession of lanes to a point beyond Laleston, then following the present road over Stormy Down, from where the white streak on Stalling Down is plainly visible in a straight line, twelve miles away. The new road goes to the right to Pyle, but the Roman track follows a lane towards Kenfig, under the name of Heol-las (greenway a favorite designation of a Roman way in Wales), passing afterwards by Water Street to Margam, where all traces vanish. It is supposed that it went up over Margam mountain to join the Roman highway known as Sarn Helen, which runs up the Neath Valley. The sands of Margam and Port Talbot were probably dangerous at the time, and the road at the foot of the beech clad hills would be a source of peril to an army on the march. So much then for our main Roman artery in Glamorgan, most of it pretty plain sailing.

But some years ago a complete Roman villa was unearthed at Llantwit Major, and a considerable quantity of relics obtained, and housed in the Cardiff Museum. Now Llantwit is a good five miles from the main Roman road and the question arises, was there another road near the sea? The *via Julia maritima* rests on no authority, but there are not wanting indications that some road did exist, and as a number of other Roman relics have been found at Llantwit it is certain it must have existed.

At Porthkerry, which is surely Porchester in a hybrid Welsh dress, on the western

end of the bay, are traces of massive square earthworks of probably Roman origin, known as the 'Bulwarks.'

The name Coldknap applied to the eastern headland is suggestive of Roman associations, denoting a shelter of some kind. That Porthkerry Bay formed a most convenient harbour is obvious, and may have been used as such by the Romans. A point on the road above is known still as Portway, and a disused grass track coming up from the direction of the railway to this point may mark the Roman road. It is highly probable that a trackway passed round the coast from Llandaff to Ewenny following more or less the line of the present Barry railway. This may have been a pre-Roman route, but utilized by the Romans. For military reasons they found it necessary to construct the main road, but access to the sea was valuable and the older road well worth preserving. It is flattering to the worthy inhabitants of Llantwit, that some wealthy Roman who perhaps with sadness left the luxuries of Rome with a commission in his pocket as commandant in turbulent Siluria, found Llantwit so healthful a spot that he built himself a villa there and discovered an Eden where he thought to find a desert. From Porthkerry to Llantwit an old road may be traced. A disused track nearly opposite Aberthaw station probably marks the river crossing. On the west bank a track begins which passes through West Aberthaw. By the Manor House at Gilestone an old road goes fairly straight ending up in a trackway to a British camp at Summerhouse Point. The grass has covered the southern end of this track but it was apparently used comparatively recently. Thence a lane leads straight to Boverton and which was almost certainly

*not* Bomium as no Roman remains appear to have been found there. The road then may have followed the modern route to Llantwit, and thence past the Roman villa towards Ewenny, most probably, on the assumption that the road was pre-Roman, via Wick and Southerndown Road Station, as there are several British camps and *tumuli* on the way. But except where data of some tangible sort are available surmises of this kind are not valuable. It always seems a likely idea that the smiling fertility of South Glamorgan, as opposed to the cold and inclement hills, may have tempted the Romans (as it does the present dwellers in the coal valleys), to penetrate extensively into the Vale, and that several roads in the district may represent tracks by which they sought access to spots at a distance from the main highway. There are, moreover, considerations which lead us to still wider conjectures. At Penllin Castle there exist remains which are said, though we are not aware of the authority, to be of Phœnician origin. This would indicate that the ancients were aware of the existence of lead ore in the district, and it is very probable that if the Phœnicians knew, the Romans knew it also. Consequently the Llantwit-Pentre-Meyrick road may have been used by the Romans. But we are not aware that any ancient mining operations have been traced, and mere conjecture in these matters is dangerous.

Nearly two thousand years ago the Romans quitted our shores. They have left little behind them in Glamorgan to remind us they were here, save the Great White Road that runs past our doors.

Shall we leave as much that is lasting and beneficial to posterity when we go?

## Cowbridge By-ways.

SOUTH Glamorgan, where so many broad acres lie under pasturage, abounds in these cross country paths by means of which the rambler may, if he be so minded, leave the frequented high road and lose himself in green and leafy ways among flowers and ferns and natures "populous solitude." It is in such that the Cowbridge poet, if there be one, wanders, chewing the cud of idyllic fancy, and it is said that many a fervid oration which has thrilled the hearts of the Borough Fathers and nerved them to do great deeds, has been rehearsed amidst these by-ways to the oaks and rills, or unresponsive cows. It is clear then that from a purely materialistic point of view the field path should be regarded with some feeling of gratitude by the community.

*Sic fortis Etruria crevit.*

The farmer, and the landowner, however, does not always take so kindly to it. In the old days he sowed the adjacent fields with spring guns and man traps, he still sometimes threatens trespassers with the law's utmost rigour or spreads tar in those alluring spots which invite siesta, or bids you beware the fury of a bull, whose plaintive low at milking time, alas! betrays its mild and inoffensive sex. But the obnoxious path which disturbs the privacy of his field, and lets dogs in amongst his cattle still remains—He has our sympathy too, the sympathy of the walrus for the oyster he was digesting.

The fact of the matter is that from an archaeological point of view there is a great deal to be learnt from a public footpath, or disused lane. Instead of being as is often supposed (and sometimes no doubt is the

case) a mere infringement of the rights of property, it is often an interesting survival of a more ambitious design, perhaps a roadway which in past and lawless ages has fallen into decay, and been swallowed up in estates or ploughed out of sight. The process is going on every day even now. Anyone who knows his country side can recall plenty of public paths over which the plough is continually driven, and which only re-appear because they are trampled down again by way farers. In the case of the Great Roman roads this ruthless annexation of public rights has been less common because in the first place they served a real and urgent public need, and in the second place they were, in at least four cases, made the subject of special legislation which protected them. But even these fine national institutions have not been safe, and often vanish in privately owned lands. For instance at Ewenny the Roman road seems to have been suddenly pushed aside by the Abbey estate, a result which is not surprising when it is remembered that Ewenny Abbey was a Norman foundation. When main roads suffered, by-ways underwent a proportionately greater obliteration, surviving only in short stretches here and there as local convenience dictated, or vanishing altogether in Great Norman *démesnes*, or degenerating into a mere footpath with a right of public way. It must be borne in mind that when we find a trackway which we are justified in regarding as a genuinely ancient one, our theories may legitimately reach very far back into the mists of time, for up to comparatively recent times, dating from the departure of the Romans from Britain, road making in this country was a very desultory affair, and Professor Thorold Rogers asserts that in 1702 all the used

roads had probably been made in very remote times, and that for over a hundred years previous to that date absolutely no new ones had been constructed at all except near London.

Around Cowbridge there are many of these paths and lanes. Often they seem merely to be a mean of access to fields at a distance from a road. Moreover there are many considerations to be made before venturing to ascribe to them an ancient origin. The country has undergone great changes, and houses and farms have vanished which many of these paths served. In this category must probably be placed the path which leads from the Darren farm to Llanfrynach Church. There is a local belief that this was the ancient road to Llantwit. Some say it was paved. But there is absolutely no indication that either supposition is true. The grass gives no sign of underlying stone, and it is, to say the least, a remarkably foolish way of getting to Llantwit, unless you propose to make the journey via Cochin-China. Further, it lies in a narrow valley, and early peoples always selected high ground of which there is plenty close by. Lastly, it is almost certain that this valley contained formerly a considerable stream of which a vestige still remains at Llanfrynach Church. The path was probably a means of reaching Llanfrynach. An ancient road which probably led to Llantwit is to be found by following the Llanmihangel road as far as the Kennels, and there turning to the left as far as the streamlet. Thence a deserted, but perfectly well defined track leads over the hills. Reaching a lane the path ends, but a parish boundary continues in the same direction for about a mile, when the track re-appears and eventually reaches the

Od Nant near Fisher's Bridge and Boverton, a place which, as being situated on a river may have been an earlier settlement than Llantwit. The route is not very straight and does not look like Roman work. If not it must be older, for it would be superfluous after the Romans made their road, as they must have done, though there is no evidence as far as we are aware to indicate what it was. It is at least worth suggesting that the above track left the neighbourhood of Cowbridge by the field path over *Correx* (a strange and unexplained name), crossing the Broadway, and going along Love lane. Where the lane debouches into the fields it seems to pass through an irregular and almost obliterated camp. Thence across the marshy ground to the Llanmihangel lane by Brynhyfrid it is not traceable.

Another practically unused, but unnecessarily pretentious road is that leading from Penllin to Newton. At the same time it can scarcely be extremely old as this part of the country must have been submerged, or at least in a very marshy condition in ancient times. Its decay probably indicates the disappearance of an objective in comparatively recent times.

The most interesting Cowbridge by-way is *Hoel-Coetwd*. This undoubtedly ancient roadway cuts the Llanmihangel lane at right angles, near Brynhyfrid. It follows a parish boundary along the watershed as far as Moorshead Farm. It is well known that parish boundaries often indicate antiquity when running along a road, and the main Roman roads link sections of them for great distances. Cowbridge street for instance is such a boundary. But alas! for the past glories of *Hoel-Coetwd* it now begins with a duck

pond! We were once inclined to think that this was the ancient road to Llantwit, but on mature consideration this seems less likely on account of its direction, which is roughly E. and W. The parish boundary continues straight on in an easterly direction as far as the river valley near Slade Farm. Now, though no direct proof is available, a careful examination of the map induces a strong suspicion that the Romans made the present Llantwit Road, leaving their main road, however, at Pentre-Meyrick, or near it, the portion as far as Nash being of later date. Was *Heol-Coetwd* then one of the many roads which the Monasteries made in their palmy days, and was it intended to join up Cowbridge, at one time the most important town in the county, with Nash Monastery? If so it must once have been the route followed by persons journeying from Cowbridge to Llantwit in the Middle Ages though not originally constructed for the purpose. The decay of Llantwit subsequent to the Roman evacuation of Britain would have caused other links of communication to have fallen into disuse, and the monks of Nash found it convenient to make a direct road to Cowbridge.

The above suggestion appears the safest but the subject opens up interesting matter for speculation as to what might have been. If the monks made the route why were they so careful to keep on the top of the hill? Does this road date from a still earlier period when the unsettled state of the country rendered it imperative to cling to high ground to avoid the risks of surprise by an enemy? Westwards it points towards Wick, the highest spot in the county to the South, a village whose name and position equally suggest antiquity. Is it possible that *Heol-Catwd*

marks the solitary remaining section of a Pre-Roman track connecting the three commanding eminences S. Hilary, Nash and Wick; or have we here a more or less continuous thoroughfare through South Wales, which the Romans found when they came, and partly incorporated with their great road leaving it near S. Hilary and meeting it again near S. Brides. The numerous stone implements found at Merthyr Mawr, and the cromlechs at S. Nicholas lie in this line and suggest that the district was formerly the abode of a considerable pre-Roman population. That such tracks existed before the Romans came is proved by the winding up-land road which stretches from Norfolk along the Chiltern ridge to the North of Berkshire known as the Icknield Way, believed by almost all experts to be a British road of the greatest antiquity. Further in Caesar B.G. V. 19. occurs the passage *Cassivelaunus. . . . omnibus viis semisque essedarios ex silvis emittebat*, which seems to indicate that the Britons were makers of well defined roads and tends to disprove the old theory that the Romans originated means of communication in our island. At the same time authorities (without, however, any adequate grounds), seem indisposed to regard the Silures as sufficiently progressive to have carried out such work. This is a direct and unmerited slur on the genius of the Welsh nation. Moreover it is practically certain that the Phoenicians came to South Wales long before the Romans for purposes of trade and it is difficult to see how goods could have been conveyed any distance through the country to their marts without some kind of transit facilities. It is most probable that the Romans availed themselves largely of such tracks, amplifying, improving, and divert-

ing them. Many of these suggested British tracks seem to have led to the sea or to the banks of navigable rivers, as might be expected from the nature of the case.

The above suggestion is based on grounds too conjectural to be more than a fanciful theory. But it is interesting to observe in connection with it that if any pre-Roman track existed across the County from E. to W. it is at Cowbridge or close to Cowbridge that it was forced to pass the river, which in ancient times must have been navigable as far as the town at least, and swelled out into marshes or lakes on both sides of it northwards over Penlline Moors, and southward over Flemingston Moors, while the steep valley would have made fording very unsafe by Llandough.

There is no trace of a continuous road between Nash and Wick. From Wick onwards there is an old but distinct grass track leading straight to the Ford of the Ogmore, practically disused now but evidently once an important road. It leaves Wick by a strange, bramble-choked pathway known as *Heol-fain* (The narrow? or the paved? way). This is a by-way which as far as we are aware has not received the attention it deserves. The impression conveyed is that it is not Roman, but if it is, it points strongly to the conjecture that the Romans centuriated the area surrounding the village, because another road, which is almost certainly Roman, runs parallel with it under the name of *Heol-las*. There is an absolute absence of any trace of Roman remains at Wick which is against any such view, though no serious investigations have ever been made. We have seen a section of the by-way cut through, close to a ruined stone tower, and standing at the highest

point of the route, but there was no sign of paving. Possibly excavations further from the main road would reveal something of interest, and should be made. If the track is not Roman, the conclusion that it is pre-Roman seems almost to follow necessarily; for the above-mentioned Roman road which passes through drier land renders it superfluous, both having almost the same objective. To the South *Heol-fain* points to Monknash, (situated on *Heol-lás*), where there was a monastery. To the North it is apparently continued by a broad grassy lane known as Rackland Road where there is an ancient "Wishing Well," still a matter of local superstition. This again is taken up beyond Old Castle upon Alun by another almost disused road which leads to the Downs beyond S. Brides and thence by a path to the Ogmore Ford.

Before leaving this subject it might be as well to mention that there is a local idea at Cowbridge that the field path leading from Penlline Castle through the Park, past Llwynhelig Farm, along the back of the town, and then up the hill opposite the Intermediate School is an old line of road made before the present one. This is, of course, not impossible, and if so, it must have been inaugurated before Roman times, because there can be little doubt that the Roman road lies on the Parish Boundary which follows the street. Perhaps the path represents a means which the Ancient Britons used of reaching the river, the ancient port of Cowbridge, and Phoenicians bargained, for Llangan and S. Hilary lead under Mount Pleasant. It is a matter in which fancy may wander not unprofitably. But such suggestions can never be more than conjecture and where there are no facts of any kind to go upon a mere field

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path is a misleading element. Even Sir Richard Owen required his bone before he could erect his prehistoric skeleton.

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