

# ROMAN ROADS AND FORD PLACE-NAMES IN SHROPSHIRE

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A study was carried out during the summer of 2000 of places in Shropshire whose place-name ended in the element '-ford'. In most cases, the name denotes the crossing of a road or track over a river or stream, though in some cases it refers to a causeway. Since this crossing was the most notable feature of the place and the one from which the settlement took its name, it was decided to visit the sites and determine whether the associated crossing could be found. This was possible in most cases.

The ford place-names, along with the other English place-names, were given at a time when English had become the main language in use in Shropshire – probably in the late seventh and early eighth centuries (Gelling, 1992, 72). Since 'ford' remains in use as a place-name element to the present day, these '-ford' names could have been given at any time since the mid-seventh century, but not earlier. Provided the place-name is topographic, (Telford is an obvious example of a recent ford place-name which is not topographic) then it indicates that the ford from which the settlement was named was in use when the name was given.

During the study, it was noted that almost a third of the ford place-names were either on or associated with Roman roads. Those lying on a Roman road, indicate that this section of the road was still in use at the time when the place received its name – and some times remains in use today. Some of those lying near a Roman road indicate a diversion from the line of the Roman road and this alternative route must have been in use when the ford place-name was given. These examples will be discussed later in the paper, as each of the roads is described.

Many of the Roman roads were built during the first century AD and were positioned, first for the benefit of the Roman army and later to serve the towns and other settlements in use during the Roman period. Others were added to the road network later in the Roman period. Whilst there were fords and bridges where these Roman roads crossed streams and rivers and they probably had names during the Roman period, these names have not survived. The Latin term *vadum* for a ford is not found among the place-names of Shropshire.

In order to comment on the relationship between the ford place-names and the Roman roads, it was necessary to find information about the Roman roads in Shropshire and it quickly became apparent that this information is not readily available. The main aim of this paper is to summarise what is known or conjectured about the Roman roads in Shropshire. Where relevant, the information from the ford place-names is also included. It shows that in spite of the sterling work carried out by Dr Houghton and his associates, much work still remains to be done.

## 1. Watling Street from London to Uriconium (Margary's route 1h)

The stretch of Watling Street from London to Wroxeter was one of the most important Roman roads in England and was known to have remained in use since it was first built. The route was described in detail by Margary (Margary, 1957, 25–27) and was shown on the OS map of Roman Britain. It was shown (Hill, 1981, 138) as one of the four main roads in Anglo-Saxon England and referred to (Stenton, 1936, 3) as one of the four great roads along which 'travellers enjoyed the king's special peace' in the eleventh century. More recently much of it has disappeared beneath the A5 and the modern town of Telford. When Shrewsbury replaced Wroxeter, the road from London was diverted to finish in Shrewsbury. This meant that the last section into Wroxeter fell out of use, but its course has been established (Meeson, 1968 & Houghton, 1978). Details are included in the Shropshire Sites & Monuments Record (SMR) under number 00099 (SA153).

There is evidence of only one ford place-name associated with this section of Watling Street, which runs along high ground. This (Baugh, 1985, 285) referred to a place called 'Staniford' in the thirteenth century, where Watling Street was crossed by a stream flowing north from Hollinswood and forming the western boundary of Snedshill wood. By 1414 this area was known as 'Oakengates' and by 1447, the name 'Staneford' was attached to a settlement further west near the modern Ketley (possibly around SJ 670 110 where the Ketley brook crosses the line of Watling Street). The term *straet-ford* or street-ford is the usual name for a crossing of a Roman road, but the use of a name meaning 'stone-ford' would also be an accurate description.

The Roman site at *Uxacona* lay on this section and was generally agreed to be at Redhill, just east of Telford. There was an early fort or signal station on the high ground here (Webster, 1975, 28 & Webster, 1961–64, 132), but most of it was destroyed by the building of a reservoir. Some additional evidence for the civil settlement has been found in field-walking (Toms, 1976, 6). SMR numbers 05974 & 05986 refer to recent work by the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in this area. Watling Street leaves the county shortly after this and its further course was described in detail by Margary (Margary, 1957, 25–27).

## 2. Watling Street from Uriconium to Mediolanum (Margary's route 6a)

At Wroxeter, Watling street divided, with one branch heading north towards Chester. This has SMR number 00066 (SA136) and it ran in an almost straight line from Wroxeter to Whitchurch (*Mediolanum*). It was preserved (Margary, 1957, 30–32) under a modern road for a short section from Wroxeter to Norton and then it ran cross-country with the line indicated by field boundaries and footpaths to join a modern road called 'Drury Lane' west of Rodington. It must have crossed the river Tern around SJ 571 115, but all traces of the ford or bridge by which it crossed may have been destroyed by building the railway and later the modern A5(T) as they approached Shrewsbury. Excavations carried out at Duncote Farm (Ellis, 1994, 55) in advance of building the new A5(T) concluded that no traces of the Roman road remained in the area affected by the road building. At the same time, a survey by students from the Ironbridge Institute suggested that the previous line of the river Tern may have been caused by the agger (since destroyed) and this would place the crossing in the area of the old mill pool at Duncote Farm. The road's crossing at SJ 568 168 of a small tributary of the river Roden has been identified (observation of a gas pipeline by W.E. Jenks) and it again joined the line of a modern road at Poynton Grange, south of Little Wytheford. This line was confirmed by excavation (Forrest, 1937, 49) just south of Poynton Green.

The *withig-ford* (*withig* means willow or withy) is a ford place-name associated with the line of a Roman road but not actually on it. The two villages of Great and Little Wytheford lay on either side of the river Roden and the name indicated that they were joined by this ford and took their name from it. The layout of the modern road system implied that travellers from Little Wytheford went south along the Roman road and then turned through a right angle to cross the river Roden at Poynton Green and so to Great Wytheford. The position of the crossing suggested that this section of the Roman road was still in use when the *withig-ford* gave its name to the two villages and hence that the road remained in use as far south as Poynton Green.

The line of the Roman road coincided with that of the modern road north from Poynton Green, through Shawbury and Moreton Corbet. This section was still in use as a modern road and had probably remained in use since Roman times. North of Moreton Corbet, the modern road changed its alignment, but the Roman road was believed to have continued on the same alignment and to have crossed the river Roden near Harcourt Park. Margary accepted this alignment and air-photographs (Webster, 1975, 52 & many later ones referenced in the SMR) showed the crossing of the river Roden near Harcourt Mill. The Roman station of *Rutunium* has to lie somewhere in this vicinity, judging by the distances quoted in the Antonine Itinerary. Harcourt Park has been suggested as one possible location, but no sign of the remains have been found. Another suggestion was that it lay beneath Moreton Corbet.

The later road remained to the west of the river Roden, passing through Besford and crossing the river at Lee Brockhurst. Besford (derived from *Betti's ford*) is situated by the crossing of a tributary of the river Roden, just south of the two farms which today make up the hamlet (Gelling, 1990, 44). It was a Domesday manor under the name of *Betford*, so the ford from which it took its name was on a route in use by 1086 and probably earlier. The modern road ran from Moreton Corbet in an almost straight line and then made a right-angle bend to join the A49(T) near Preston Brockhurst. However there was a track over Besford hill which continued the line of the road and ran directly to Lee Brockhurst, where the A49(T) crossed the river Roden. Here the main road crossed the river through the gap between Lee hills to the north and Besford wood (a wooded hill) to the south and although this does not have a ford place-name, it was probably always a good place to cross the river Roden. It has been suggested (Copley, 1986, 15) that sections of Roman road frequently fell out of use in the Anglo-Saxon period because the collapse of a Roman bridge, due to lack of maintenance, required a diversion

to the nearest ford. This effect was shown in the excavations at Pitchford (see later) and may explain the change in route here. If so, there should have been a Roman bridge near Harcourt Park, and excavations to investigate this would be desirable.

White suggested that the road followed a line from Harcourt Park, through Moston to SJ 560 273 and then changed direction to pass through Holloway Mouth (the gap in the hills around SJ 555 280). Traces of the Roman road found at Moston included two milestones found in 1812. Reference to these was included in the survey of Roman Shropshire by W. Thomson Watkin (Watkin, 1879). He referred to an anonymous booklet on *The Antiquities of Hawkstone* published around 1829, which contained an account, attributed to Revd John Brickdale Blakeway, of the discovery in 1812 of four large stones made while draining Moston Pool and an adjoining morass of 250 acres. This suggested somewhere around SJ 558 275 as the discovery site. He said the soil in the area was peat to a depth of fourteen feet, except for the find spot where there was a bed of gravel on which the stones lay. The stones were reconstructed as two shafts on quadrangular pedestals and enough of the inscription was deciphered to suggest they were Roman milestones. By 1879, the stones had been lost, although it was remembered that they had been removed to Hawkstone. He also stated (Watkin, 1879, 324) that deep drains had been dug in many parts of the moor and several of these had shown traces of a road 9ft wide, close to the spot where the milestones had been found and expressed his belief that the road ran through Holloway Mouth and on to Prees.

After Moston, the modern A49 follows a winding course north to Prees and it is suggested that the Roman road probably took a straighter route from SJ 554 280 to SJ 557 380. If this were the case, it would not cross the ford at Linford farm (SJ 561 303) (*lin* is flax) as the A49 does. The route from Shrewsbury to Whitchurch was an old one, mentioned by Stenton (Stenton, 1936) as well known and appearing on the fourteenth century Gough map. Various sites in Whitchurch indicate the line of the Roman road through the town and on to Chester (SMR numbers 00566, 05815, 05869, 05905).

### 3. The Longford from Mediolanum to Pennocrucium (Margary's route 19)

The 'Longford' (Margary, 1957, 27–28) ran southeast from Whitchurch to Water Eaton, Staffs (*Pennocrucium*) (SMR number 01029). *Longford* (Gelling, 1990, 181) usually means 'causeway' rather than 'river-crossing' and this term is a good description of a metalled Roman road running across swampy countryside. It separated from route 6a at Heath Cottage (SJ 555 385), about a mile and a half south of Whitchurch and followed a minor road to Twemlows Hall (SJ 570 380) and then across the fields to Bletchley (SJ 620 337). Margary mentioned the line shown by hedgerows near Twemlows Hall and a clear agger near Heath Farm.

From Bletchley through Tern Hill and Shakeford to High Heath (SJ 685 273), it coincided with the A41 trunk road. Shakeford may have been derived from *sceacera-ford* (later *sceacol-ford*), which means 'robbers' ford' (Gelling, 2002). Eyton described the region as a 'haunt of freebooters' and referred to the 'exorbitant fees extracted by the barons of Wem' (Eyton, 1854–60, 23–24).

Just before High Heath, the main road turned further south and the Roman alignment continued to head for *Pennocrucium* and was marked by hedgerows and lanes through Ashfields and Ellerton (SJ 715 260). Beyond Ellerton, the county boundary and a lane mark the line of the Roman road until it crossed the county boundary and the Lonco brook at Whitleyford bridge. The ford obviously referred to the crossing of the Lonco brook, but the name *white-leah* was taken from the nearby Whitley Manor.

### 4. Watling Street from Uriconium to Bravonium (Margary's route 6b)

The other branch of Watling Street headed south from Wroxeter through the Church Stretton gap to Leintwardine (*Bravonium*) and eventually to Usk (SMR numbers 00108 (SA157) & 06496 (SA13156)). This started by crossing the river Severn at Wroxeter, (Morris, 1927, Houghton, 1975 & 1976, Pannett 1976, Pannett & Purfit, 1977, & Bassett, 1990) where the remains of a ford and traces of masonry (originally thought to be bridge foundations but now believed to be the remains of weirs) have been found. After crossing the Severn, the road headed across the fields towards Eaton Mascott hall and veered south to cross the Row brook near Upper Cound. It then returned to its previous alignment and passed through Frodesley and Longnor on its way to Church Stretton.

The crossing of a small stream just beyond Pitchford was achieved by a bridge (SMR number 00290 (SA43)), which has been excavated (Sladden, 1954). When the bridge fell into disuse, the road moved slightly to the west and crossed by a smaller bridge. The tithe map of 1846 showed two crossings at these positions, but no bridges. The modern road left the alignment of the Roman road to pass through Pitchford and then Acton Burnell, before

rejoining the Roman road on its way to Frodesley. Other fords across the road south of Frodesley still exist but do not have ford place-names associated with them.

The name Pitchford is not related to the Roman road, but was derived from a route at right angles to it, the crossing of the Row Brook by the old route from Pitchford to Conover, which passed next to the pitch well by the church.

After Church Stretton, the road passed through Marshbrook (SO 440 900) and Bushmoor (SO 435 877) on its way to Wistanstow (Dyke, 1898) and then crossed the river Onny at Stretford bridge (SO 433 848). From Newington to Shelderton, the line was indicated by a modern road and the route from Shelderton to Leintwardine was clearly indicated. Stretford (*straet-ford*) was the only ford name associated with this stretch of the Watling street and it clearly indicated its position on the Roman road.

### 5. Roman road from Church Stretton to Ariconium (Margary's route 613)

Another Roman road left Watling Street at Marshbrook, just south of Church Stretton, and headed south to Leominster and *Ariconium* (Weston-under-Penyard in Herefordshire) (SMR number 02613 (SA1684)). This route had been traced northwards as far as Ashton in Herefordshire and the remainder of its route was located by Houghton (Houghton, 1961), using field work, air photographs and excavations. The course of the road south of Ludlow was not studied in detail by Dr. Houghton, but some work has since been carried out by Hannaford in his evaluation for the route of the Woofferton by-pass. The general line of the road was through Leominster and west of the river Teme until it reached the crossing place at Ludford. This place-name was derived from the *hlude-ford* and referred to the noise of the river Teme at this point. At the bottom of Old Street, the modern road made a right-angle turn to reach Ludford bridge, but the Roman road continued in a straight line across the ford.

Coming through Ludlow, Houghton described a line through Old Street and Corve Street and mentioned some 'recent excavations' in this area. The next section was destroyed by the building of the railway, but from Bromfield station (SO 488 765) to Onibury, the road ran to the east of the railway. In Onibury, it took a sharp turn to the right and climbed by a hollow way (SO 458 800) before veering north to pass through New House Farm and Norton to Greenway Cross (SO 460 828) (appearing as a hollow way to the east of the modern road for part of this route). It passed through Upper and Lower Dinchope and probably continued in a straight line to the ford at Strefford (SO 445 855), which crossed the Quinney brook just after its junction with the Byne brook (called the "Strad brook" on Roque's map of 1746). Dr. Houghton equated 'Strefford' with *straet-ford* since it lay on this Roman road – however there was a slight problem since none of the early forms of the name contained a 't', as would be expected if the *straet-ford* derivation were the correct one.

After this, the road continued as a farm lane and an excavation (at SO 446 860) showed a road, eleven foot wide, made of large cobbles set in firm clay. Its course beyond this point may be indicated by a right-of-way which joined the high road south of Felhampton. An excavation by T. Ewart a hundred yards south of Felhampton was said to have shown a well-made stone surface extending beneath the hedge on the west side of the road. North of Felhampton, it followed the 'old Ludlow road' as shown on the tithe map for Acton Scott. This passed through Marsh farm and Marsh wood and an excavation at SO 444 891 found a 'well-made level surface cut out of solid rock'. It then crossed a small valley and ran along the crest of a ridge to join the Watling Street at Marshbrook station. It was said to have been much travelled in the eighteenth century, but other records suggested it was in use even earlier. The place-name 'Strefford' probably dated from the seventh or eighth century and indicated that the ford at least was in use then. This route was described in Leland's Itinerary of circa 1540 and appeared on Robert Morden's map of 1593.

### 6. Roman road from Uriconium to Lavobrinta (Margary's route 64)

This route headed west from Wroxeter to *Lavobrinta* (Forden Gaer) and although the section from Cruckton to Westbury was well known, the exact route at each end was less certain (SMR number 00098 (SA14957)). Margary described a route (Margary, 1957, 75–76) from the Severn crossing by Wroxeter to the north of Berrington and from King Street (where it was represented by a line of hedgerows, footpaths and lanes) past Betton Abbots and Betton Strange to Sutton and then on to Meole Brace by a route not yet determined. Attempts to find the exact route of this section have so far had limited success. A well-preserved agger with side ditches was found (Houghton, 1976, 3) south-west of Lower Brompton farm. A later study considered the alignment from this road section to Sharpstones ridge (SJ 495 094) (Houghton, 1975, 44–46), but the road sections found were more likely to be a medieval road.

Another route (White, forthcoming) left Wroxeter by an entrance in the north-west of the town (SMR numbers 06486 (SA13146) & 08096 (SA17756)). Within the Roman city, the line was clearly shown by cropmarks and it was believed to have crossed the river Tern close to the modern road bridge (SJ 552 093). For the crossing of the river Severn, he suggested a ford on the site of the bridge at Atcham. Beyond this, a straight line to Sharpstones Hill (SJ 489 097) would pass through Chilton Grove, Betton Strange and Betton Alkmere. Some cropmarks and isolated Roman finds lay along this route, but further investigation would be desirable. This was suggested as an early route, before the river crossing at Wroxeter and the development of Watling Street south-west to Leintwardine. The SMR entry (number 00057 (SA129)) recorded a segment of Roman road running south-east from SJ 499 103 at Sutton to SJ 509 094 at Betton Strange, where it may have joined this road.

Excavations at Sharpstones Hill (Ellis, 1994) (SMR number 00002 (SA83)) showed the line of this road and a later Roman roadside settlement – a site which whose preservation was recommended during the construction of the Park-and-Ride facility at Moele Brace. From Sharpstones Hill (SJ 489 097) the road continued westwards to cross the Rea brook at Washford (SJ 480 099). The name ‘washford’ may be derived from *gewaesc* meaning ‘washing’ and refer to the action of the water over the stones. At Washford it was possible to see the stone of the road in the stream bank and the build-up of alluvial deposits in the water meadow over the following centuries. From Washford, the line of the road was indicated by a track which ran south of Nobold as far as SJ 467 103. The line continued across the fields and was clearly visible on air photographs. At SJ 442 105 it was marked by a footpath and then continued to Greenfields Farm north of Cruckton, where it rejoined the modern road. The junction at Cruckton showed where the later road changed direction to head straight for the centre of Shrewsbury and the Roman road fell out of use. Although, following Margary’s description, the O.S. map showed the line of a road and footpath from Meole Brace to Newton farm as a ‘Roman road’, the route described here seems more likely. Archaeological work in advance of the new A5 by-pass (Ellis, 1994, 70) found traces of the Roman road at Day House Farm (SJ 462 102) and none at the intersections with the more northern route.

Heading west from the junction north of Cruckton, Margary described the Roman road coinciding with the modern Shrewsbury-Westbury road as far as Westbury and there was general agreement on this part of the route. Beyond Westbury, he only considered the upland route which passed through Vennington and Vron Gate to the Long Mountain. It then passed along the top of this ridge and down to Forden Gaer. A second route from Westbury is shown on the O.S. map of Roman Britain (4th ed revised 1994) and this passed through Worthen and south of the Long Mountain, through Marton and on to Forden Gaer. The SMR contained a reference to work by W.G. Putnam in 1969.

The valley route ran along the valley, close to Aylesford brook. Aylesford was derived from *Hathewaldesford* and the name *Heathuweald* was found in records between 686 and 802 and no later. This suggested that the ford name was a very early one and may have referred to a settlement either on or giving access to the Roman road. Aylesford was a settlement in the thirteenth century, but it has since disappeared and the only remaining trace is the name Aylesford bridge. There may have been a seventh century route connecting Westbury and Chirbury, by going along the Roman road and then over the ford to Chirbury.

## 7. Roman road from Uriconium to the Stiperstones

In the description of Condover parish (Gaydon, 1958, 31) it was suggested that ‘a road, running across the north of the parish, from Allfield past Hungerhill and Westley to Exfordsgreen is probably a Roman road and was known as Salter’s Way during the middle ages’. This may have continued past Exfords Green towards Pontesford and then south west to the Stiperstones and the Roman mines there. The course of this road east from Allfield to Wroxeter was uncertain. There were also additional references (Gaydon, 1958, p 6 & p 116) to a Salter’s Way running through Pitchford to Acton Burnell and on to Kenley.

## 8. Three Roman Roads south-east from Uriconium

Bassett’s discussion (Bassett, 1990, 11) of roads in the Wroxeter area mentioned three roads which left the south-east side of the city. His paper related to the landscape in the immediate vicinity of Wroxeter, and made no attempt to consider the destinations of these roads. Since Roman roads were built for the purely practical reason that the authorities wanted to move people or goods from one place to another, a Roman road implies that both ends were places of importance in Roman times. In this study, it is therefore important to consider not merely the course of these roads but also their destination.

(a) The first road ('Road A') (SMR number 06484 (SA13144)) ran from Wroxeter church to Eyton-on-Severn and then past Lower Dryton (SJ 580 059) after which a footpath continued the line along the edge of the racecourse and then the bank of the Severn to join the Cressage road at SJ 595 050. This may have headed for the Roman fort at (SJ 600 050) (Houghton, 1979, 43–44 & Houghton, 1979–1981) and possibly for a crossing of the river Severn near Cressage. Much of the road continued in use to this day while the fort was believed to have been in use for only a short period, so the fort cannot have been its only destination. The line of the 'Severn Way' footpath preserved this route.

(b) The second one ('Road B') followed the line of the modern B4380 south of Eaton Constantine and possibly on through Buildwas and the Ironbridge Gorge. This may have joined the road from Greensforge (Margary's route 192). Again it has continued in use until the present day and so must have remained important.

(c) The most northerly of the three ('Road G') (SMR number 06485 (SA13145)) left the walls of *Uriconium* at SJ 570 087 and ran in a straight line, indicated by field boundaries, tracks and modern roads, south of Beslow and north of Charlton Hill until it passed through Rushton (SJ 605 082) and reached the Wrekin by Rose Cottage (SJ 617 079). Its route after this was uncertain, but may have passed over the col between Little Hill and the Wrekin to reach to Roman site at Little Wenlock (White, forthcoming). This road conformed to the road system within the city of *Uriconium* and was therefore believed to be later than the legionary fortress and probably in existence by the mid-second century.

## 9. Roman road from Greensforge (Margary's route 192)

Margary (Margary, 1957, 29–30) stated that the section from Droitwich to Greensforge was 'well marked by roads and old lanes, with parish and county boundaries'. The continuation north west from Greensforge was marked on the O.S. map past the War Stone and up Castle Hill and stopped at Wolmore Farm, the final section running along the county boundary.

Near Wolmore Farm (SO 822 947), the county boundary turned through an angle and then ran straight to Hillend (SO 810 950) and a continuation of this line along a track would join the B4176 at Upper Ludstone. Shortly after this, the B4176 crossed the Stratford Brook and this name suggested a crossing of a Roman road. After this the B4176 ran in a number of straight segments as far as SJ 731 020 just east of Sutton Maddock and it was likely that the Roman road followed some or all of this route. Beyond this its route was uncertain, but it might have continued to Wroxeter as a continuation of road 8b in the previous section. The line of the county boundary and the place-name Stratford suggest a continuation of this Roman road which had not previously been noted, although there was a vague reference to a Roman road over a Stratford Brook near 'The Walls' at Chesterton (Watkin, 1879, 359).

## 10. Roman road from Greensforge to Lavobrinta and Caer Sws

Another road (SMR number 04076 (SA 2667)) from Greensforge, across the river Severn at Bridgnorth, along Corve dale and then westwards into Wales was researched by Houghton (Houghton, 1957). The route heading west from Greensforge entered Shropshire just east of Whitecross (SJ 814 911) and followed the modern road to Broughton. Here the modern road bent but the Roman one probably continued in a straight line. At SO 797 924, excavation showed the construction of the road. After this the alignment changed slightly and headed towards Roughton. It followed a modern road south of Sandford and Cheyknell at far as SO 770 934 and then as farm tracks directly to Roughton. From Roughton, a modern right-of-way passed south of Swancote farm on line for the river crossing at Bridgnorth, where modern development made it impossible to determine the exact route of the Roman road.

If Houghton was correct in suggesting a Roman road crossing the river Severn at Bridgnorth, then it seems likely that it crossed the river Severn by a bridge. A bridge was built for the crossing at *Uriconium*, much higher up river and the Severn at this point would have been more of an obstacle not less. The earliest written references (Gelling, 1990, 55–59) are to *Cwatbrycg* in 895, and a burh built by Aethelflaed at *Brycge* as well a record in the Mercian annals of 912 to a fortress at *Bricge*. This indicates that there was a bridge here in the ninth century, but it could have been much earlier and built for the Roman road. *Cwatbrycg* means 'bridge in the region of Cwat' and since the area covered by this region is unknown, it is not possible to say whether the reference in 895 referred to Quatt or Bridgnorth. However the line of the road researched by Dr Houghton pointed towards a position close to the later bridge at Bridgnorth.

Houghton suggested the line of the main road from the centre of Bridgnorth to Morville was probably also that of the Roman road. The Roman road crossed the Mor brook at the Ash bridge and headed through Aston Eyre to Monkhoppton, where a Roman fort (Webster, 1975, 30) was believed to have been situated. Through

Aston Eyre, the Roman road followed a footpath north of the modern road where traces of the road and its agger were observed. It rejoined the modern B4368 just beyond Aston Eyre and followed it as far as SO 582 919, near Little Oxenbold. Here a 'deserted green and overgrown lane' branched off and remained on the south bank of the river Corve. He noted that this was the main coach road on the Ordnance Survey map of 1833. This was partly modern road and partly track and an excavation was carried out at SO 537 884 where it crossed the Trow brook near Beambridge. At Beambridge, it crossed the river Corve and rejoined the B4368. It followed this line through Munslow and Diddlebury and crossed the north-south Roman road at Greenway Cross. At SO 440 830, it left the line of the B4386 and headed directly for Halford. Halford is derived from *halh-ford* which means 'ford associated with a nook or pocket' and in this case it probably referred to land within the loop of a meander. This section of the river Onny flowed past Craven Arms in a series of meanders, now straightened out but still clearly visible as lines of rushes across the hay meadows next to the river.

The Roman road followed a 'right of way through the vicarage garden, along a hedgerow and finally by a short stretch of hollow way' to join the modern road. After crossing the river Onny, it passed through Newington and, as the Long Lane, 'commenced the ascent into the hills'. Houghton discussed the route from Newington, through Basford to the Red House farm at SO 365 861 and showed that the Roman and modern road were close but did not follow exactly the same routes. The derivation of Basford is uncertain because no early forms survive. It appeared on Robert Morden's map of 1593 and as 'Basford Gate' in Ogilby's route of 1675 from Ludlow to Montgomery, but no earlier references have been found.

At Red House, the Roman road changed alignment and became 'Stank Lane' as it passed over Oakley Mynd and on to Bishops Castle. West of Bishops Castle it headed straight for Moat Hill and became a deeply sunken lane. At the top of Moat Hill it changed direction to head due west along the line of the Kerry ridgeway. At Bishops Moat, it forked and one branch headed north-west to Forden Gaer, while the other continued west. At the crossing of Offa's Dyke at SO 258 896, three trenches were dug (Houghton, 1957) and they showed that the road had been blocked by the dyke and the route diverted to pass through a small entrance to the south of the Roman road. Beyond this at Pantglas, the road forked again, with one branch heading westwards to Caer Sws while the other continued south-west along the line of the Kerry ridgeway.

### 11. Roman road from Shelderton to Onibury

Houghton (Houghton, 1961, 186) also mentioned another Roman road along this ridgeway from Shelderton on Watling Street West by way of Shelderton Rock, Green Lane and Whittytreet to Onibury. He said 'Traces of the old ford across the Onny can easily be seen and the deserted track from the left bank passes up to where the level crossing now lies over the old road.'

### 12. Possible Roman roads through Wall Town

The remaining roads are more problematical. In discussing the period in the first century AD when Shropshire was assumed to be a frontier zone under the control of the Roman army, Dr. Webster (Webster, 1975, 30 & 54) referred to a fort (Roman name not known) at Stretford bridge and postulated another road running from *Salinae* (Droitwich) to this fort (passing through the fort at Wall Town). In addition, he commented that 'one might also speculate on the need for a road south from Uriconium to communicate with the fort at Wall Town, which at present stands in total isolation'. Evidence for either of these routes has yet to be found, but a crossing of the river Severn at Cressage may have connected with a road to Wall Town.

### 13. The "Devil's Causeway" near Cardington

Webster mentioned (Webster, 1975, 54) 'a paved road known as the Devil's Causeway could have joined Watling Street at Acton Burnell', and referred to the Roman bridge by Acton Burnell as 'thought necessary for avoiding steep gradients in a route used by carts heavily laden with stone'. This road was thought to run from the quarry by Broome in Cardington, through Causeway wood to Watling Street. Other evidence for a Roman road heading south through Cardington and Rushbury seems to rely on the place-name 'Roman bank' and the mention of a *straet* in the charter boundary for *Plesc*. *Plesc* was identified in 1957 (Finberg, 1957) as Plaish in Cardington, but a more recent interpretation (Gelling, 2001, 125) of the same charter boundary suggests an area close to Church Aston near Wellington. Some evidence of Roman occupation was said (Baugh, 1998, 55) to have been found near Rushbury church.

#### 14. Other possible Roman roads

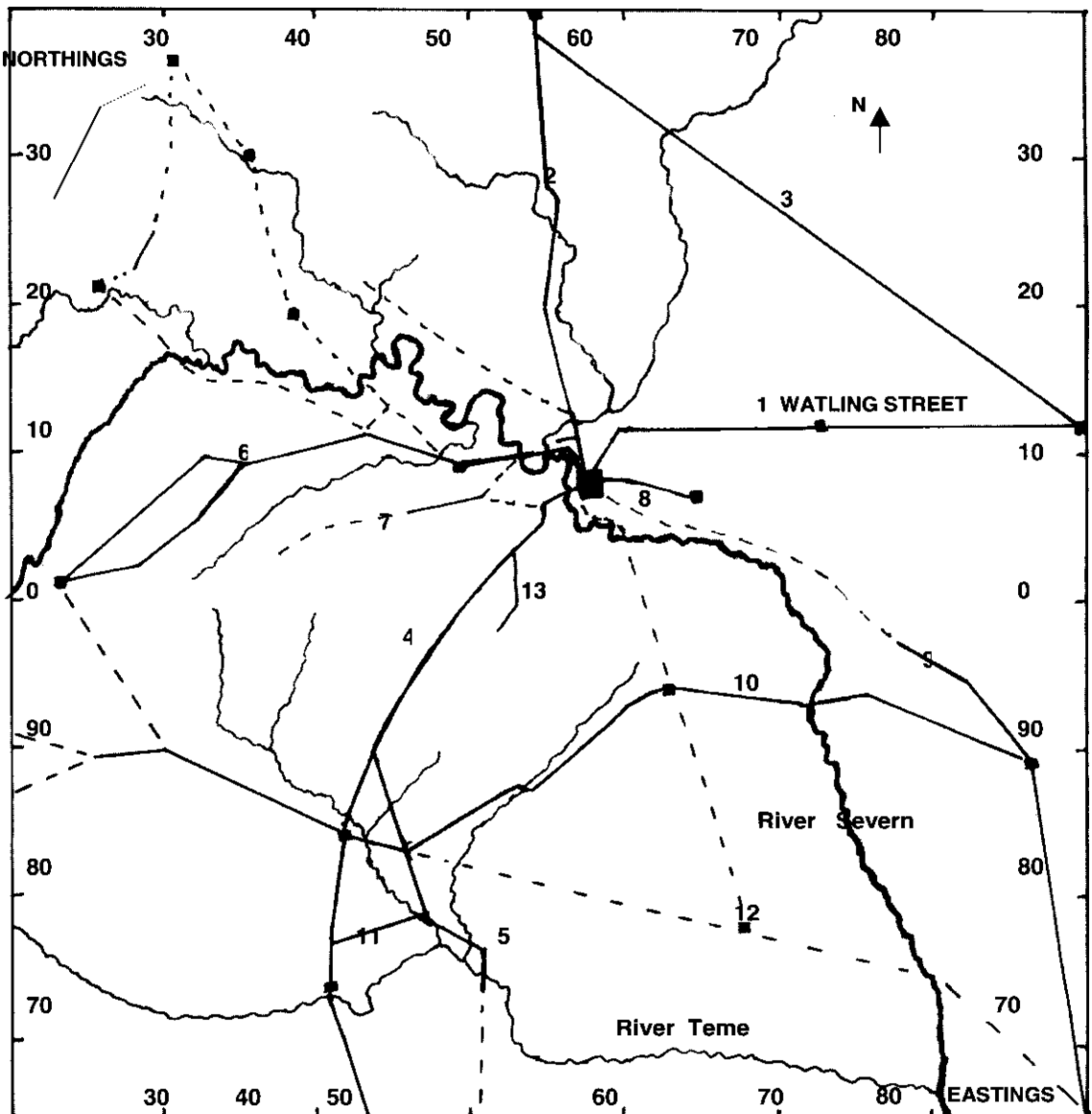
The report of the Roman roads committee (Forrest, 1937) suggested some additional routes, including a road from Moele Brace, through Cophorne, Ford, Alberbury and on to the mines at Llanymynech. Little evidence was cited to support this route, but some route to and from these mines must have existed since limestone from Llanymynech was used at Wroxeter (Barker 1990).

The SMR included (number 08003 (SA 16497)) a proposed section of road north of Llanymynech SJ 286 228 near Crickheath to SJ 293 250 at Morton. This may be the road 'north from Llanymynech' suggested by the Roman roads committee (Forrest, 1937).

The SMR (number 00095 (SA14955)) included details of a possible Roman road running from Duncote Farm towards the crossing of the river Severn at Robertsford. The section recorded coincided with a footpath from Frogmore (SJ 554 116) to meet the Berwick – Uffington road at SJ 536 119. There is little evidence to support this and roads heading for Shrewsbury are more likely to be post-Roman.

Another entry in the SMR (08001 (SA16390)) suggested a possible Roman road along the line of the A458(T) from SJ 447 135 near Oxon to SJ 416 132 near Ford. The main evidence seemed to be the OS maps between 1882 and 1927.

White pointed out that the vexillation fortress at Rhyn Park (SJ 30 37) would have needed some connecting routes and suggested one leaving Margary's route 64 at Washford. Having crossed the Rea Brook at Washford (SJ 480 099) it may have headed north-west, meeting the line of the modern A5 at SJ 444 140. This would pass



MAP OF ROMAN ROADS IN SHROPSHIRE.



close to the Roman sites at Nesscliff (SJ 385 195) and Whittington (351 303) to reach the site at Rhyn Park. Another section of Roman road described in the SMR (number 00895 (SA13406)) ran from SJ 233 296 to SJ 256 327 would, if continued, reach the site at Rhyn Park from the south-west.

White also suggested another route across to Baschurch. Margary's route 6a from Uriconium to Mediolanum crossed the river Tern near the site at Duncote (SJ 575 117) and he suggested that this route left Margary's route 6a at this crossing (SJ 570 117). It may have passed through Upton Magna and Uffington, and followed the modern road line from SJ 522 148 to Little Wollascot (SJ 478 178) from Leaton (SJ 472 180) to Walford and Baschurch.

Finally there was a dearth of Roman roads in the north of the county and it seemed likely that there were some route connecting *Mediolanum* with places to the west of it, but no suggestions for their routes have been made.

These roads have been plotted onto the map of the county, which shows all the Roman roads in the county as well as a number of the rivers.

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