

# **The Lost Roads of Meopham – Forty Years On**

## **INTRODUCTION**

As some readers of this booklet will be aware, James Carley was a prominent local historian and prolific writer on all things Meopham-related. I acquired a copy of his 1971 publication ‘The Lost Roads of Meopham’ some years ago, and being both an avid Public Rights of Way enthusiast and an incurable completist, I found the idea of working through the fifty-odd lost roads chronicled by Mr Carley irresistible!

Sadly, Mr Carley (whom I refer to as JC throughout) died in 2010 at the age of 96. I never met him, but we did have a couple of telephone conversations on the possible location of a long-lost Meopham pub (he was most helpful), and I was able to mention my nascent project to him. I think he approved!

I have approached the project with the aim of encouraging walkers and have not attempted to build on JC’s historical context. My contribution is therefore restricted to observing what changes, if any, have taken place in the 40-odd years that have elapsed since JC’s original publication. I have included some pointers on navigation where appropriate, including some footpath reference numbers where these have been provided by Kent County Council. The Council faces quite a challenge in maintaining these signs, but I have noticed a significant improvement over the last couple of years.

For convenience, I have included JC’s original text above my own, so that the two commentaries can be read in conjunction with each other. I have also included most of JC’s original artwork and photographs, and added a few of my own.

My walks extended over a period of some three-and-a-half years. This was far longer than I had originally anticipated. I was already developing serious back problems at the start of the project, which necessitated spinal fusion in 2012. No sooner had I recovered from the excellent surgery carried out at Kings College Hospital, than it became apparent that my eyesight was disappearing at a rate of knots! So it was over to Kings again in June 2013 for the removal of an egg-sized tumour on my pituitary gland that had been compressing my optic nerve.

Again an excellent result from the surgery, but I have uncomfortable memories of walking lost roads 41 and 42 in Stygian gloom during the run-up to the operation – left eye completely useless and right eye vision disappearing fast. This was only possible with the aid of my wife Marion who accompanied me on most of the walks and was a tower of strength during the troubled times. We subsequently re-walked these lost roads, so that I knew what I had missed!

I should mention that halfway through the project, my attention was drawn to the fact that JC had himself published a slightly revised version of his booklet in 2000. I have referred to this a couple of times in the text.

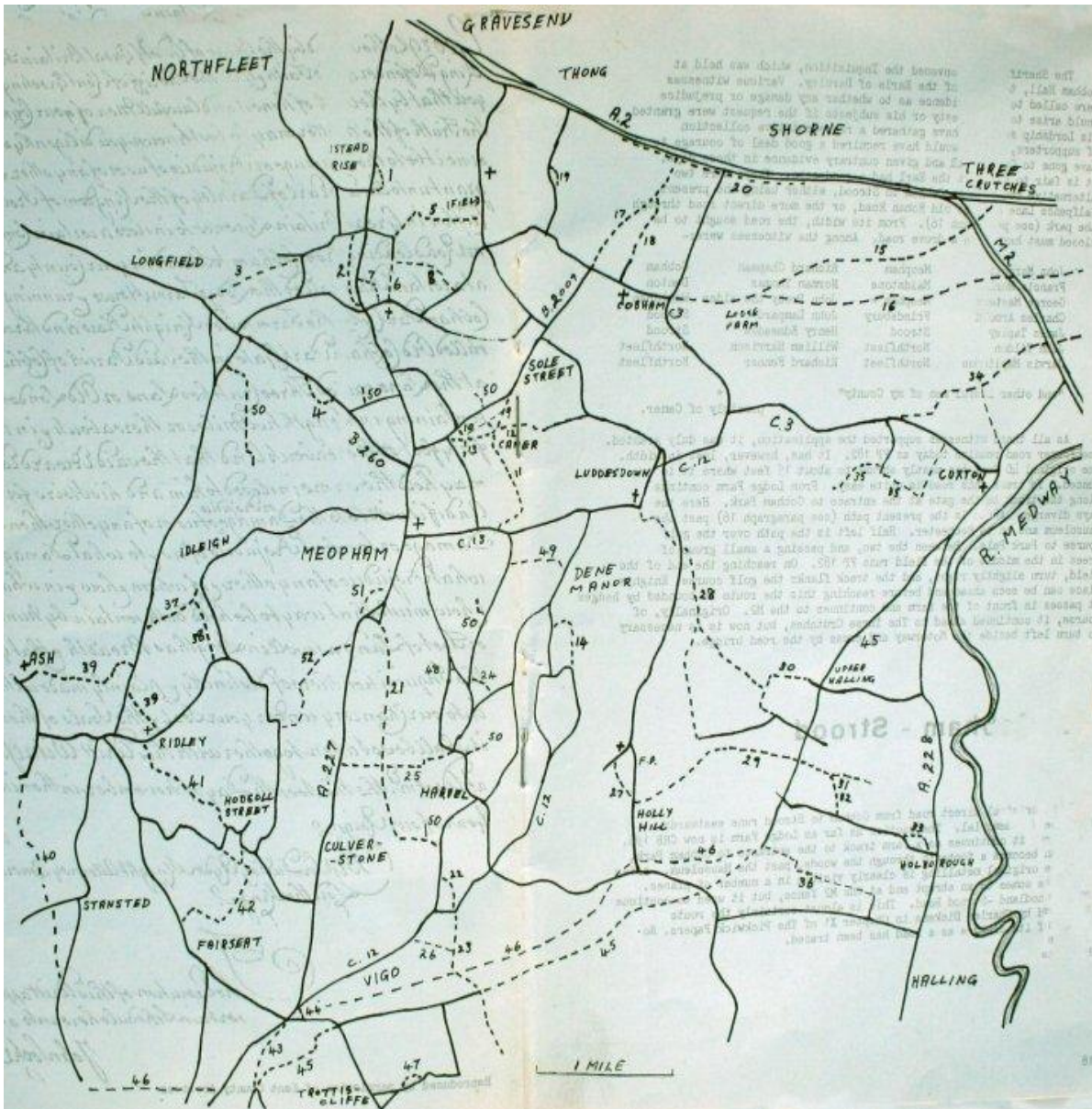
So – read, use and (I hope) enjoy. Any additional information on the lost roads will be much appreciated, and if anyone can explain the thought processes that lead some walkers to place the remains of their picnic in brightly-coloured plastic bags and leave them dangling from the lower branches of the nearest available tree for everyone to admire as they pass, I shall be eternally grateful!

Mick Norman  
Nursery Cottage  
Norwood Lane  
Meopham

January 2014



James Carley's sketch showing the location of the lost roads:



## **1. Huntowdown Wood**

JC: The present A.227, which is the successor to the Gravesend to Wrotham Turnpike Road, constructed under the authority of the Gravesend to Wrotham Turnpike Road Act 1825, runs directly from the brow of the hill just south of Istead Rise southward towards Nash Bank. Before the construction of the Turnpike, however, the old road took a different course. From a point just south of the private road leading to Marlborough Kennels, behind the present wooden fence, it swung to the left. A level section through the wood clearly indicates the line of the former road. A view of this appears below. After passing along the foot of the hill, it curved round to the right, and met end on with what is now Lewis Road, by Dover Castle Cottages. These are the pair of old flint cottages standing high on the bank, on the west side of Wrotham Road. From here traffic turned left for Nash Street. Apart from the slight indication in the shaw, no other trace of the road remains. No authority for its closure has been traced, but reference to a similar section of the road in the following paragraph and also in paragraph 44 suggest that action was probably taken at some time after the construction of the new road.

MN: The wooden fence is still there, but it is dilapidated and half-buried in the undergrowth. It is now very difficult to trace the course of the lost road through the woods, because of fallen trees and lack of use. It looks as if one section of the road may still be in use further to the east of the A227, but the permission of the land owners would be needed for further investigation. It is not possible to pinpoint the spot where the lost road rejoins the present A227. [Jan 2010]

## **2. Nash Bank to Nurstead**

JC: This section of the pre-turnpike road has almost disappeared for the same reasons as those cited in the previous paragraph. Traffic heading south, on reaching the Three wents (T-junction) just to the west of Nash Street, turned right down what is now called Nash Bank, to the small green on the left of the present road, just above the waterworks. Here the main road swung left, and followed the side of the valley, past the woods of Nurstead Court, and gradually reached the higher ground a little to the south of the former Nurstead chalk pit.

The Turnpike Act already mentioned provided for the construction of a new road on the alignment of the present A.227 from the T - junction to a point 161 rods 3 yds 1 foot 8 inches to the south, where it joined the old road. The exactitude of the measurement is commendable. After the new road was in use application was made for the abandonment of the old one from the green to the point where the two roads met. This section was 157 rods, 1 yard 1 foot 8 inches in length.

A special Sessions was held at the Mitre Inn, Chatham on 9th February 1827 to consider the matter, and an order was then signed by Rev. George Davies, MA., and the Rev. Richard Symonds Joynes, DD., Justices of the Peace acting within the North Division of the Lath of Aylesford, for the stopping of the old road. This was within ownership of William Edmeades. This order was duly advertised by Messrs. Southgate and Rich, of King Street, Gravesend, the Solicitors to the Trustees of the Gravesend to Wrotham Turnpike, in the Maidstone Gazette and Kentish Courier of 6th March 1827. To make sure that it was properly publicised, legible copies of the order were affixed to the Church doors of the parish churches of Nurstead and Northfleet previous to 25th February 1827, where they

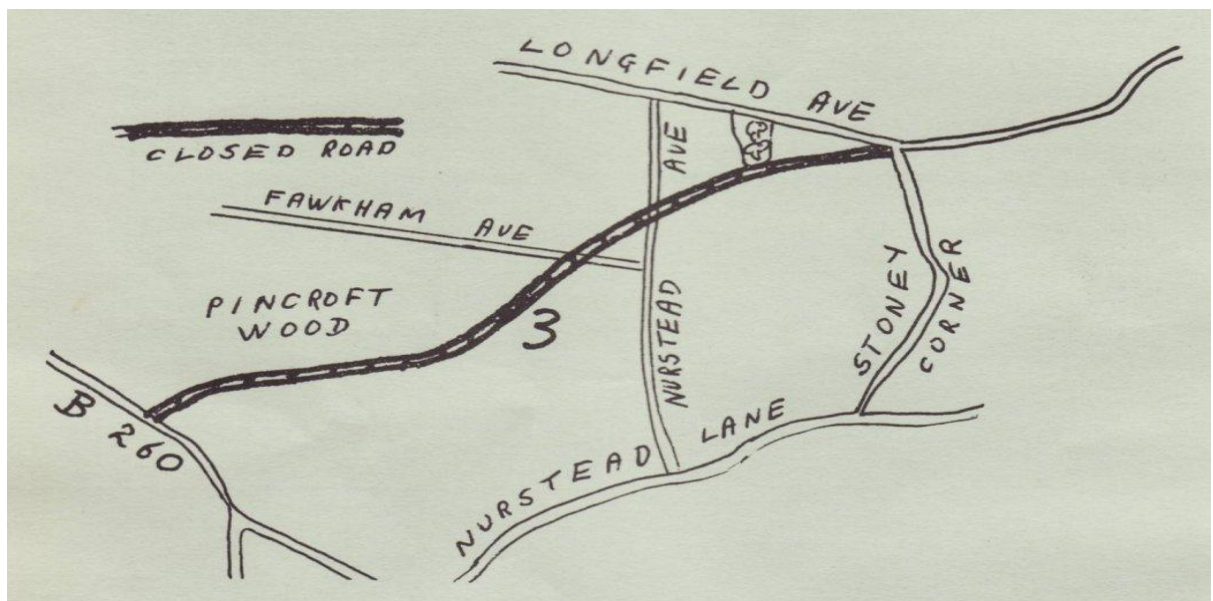
remained until after 11th March, and also at each end of the old road. James Tadman swore his affidavit to this effect. After these formalities, the closure was confirmed at the Quarter Sessions held on 24th April, 1827. The old road was then no doubt levelled, and ploughed as part of the field on each side. Certainly no trace remains today except for the shallow indentation across the green.

Presumably the same procedure was followed for the section of road mentioned in the previous paragraph, but of this no records are held in the County Archives.

MN: No trace of the lost road is apparent at either end, although the informal path that runs parallel to the A227 heading north from Nurstead may follow part of its route. The shallow indentation to which JC refers seems to have disappeared. It was interesting to ‘discover’ Nash Green – this is not easily accessible and despite having lived in Meopham for 20 years I was unaware of its existence. [Jan 2010]

### 3. Stoney Corner – Pincroft

JC: From Nash Bank mentioned in the previous paragraph, the present road climbs up the west side of the valley, and crosses the flat land at the top to Stoney Corner. Here a narrow lane turns sharply left, to Longfield Hill, and the road ahead is a modern creation, not yet made up at the time of writing this book. The original road to Pincroft, and thence to Longfield, took a course slightly to the left of the present road (Longfield Avenue) crossing the line of Nurstead Avenue and Fawkham Avenue to Powlands Shaw. From here it followed the Parish Boundary, to a point a few yards north of the Longfield Road, which it joined along the course of the present private road to Pincroft. It is shown on the first edition of the 1" Ordnance Survey Map, C.1820 and on the 1840 Tithe Map, but no record of its closure is available.



MN: Most of this lost road seems to have been obliterated. I could find no trace of it at Stoney Corner, nor where it would have crossed Nurstead Avenue and Fawkham Avenue. I then tried walking footpath DN22 from Nurstead Lane to The Oval, which the road would

also have crossed, but this likewise yielded nothing. However, at the southern end, the private road to Pincroft (Lodge) to which JC refers seems now to be used as an informal footpath linking the B260 with the south western section of Pincroft Wood. Pincroft Lodge is now accessed via a private road from the same point. [March 2010]

#### **4. Half Moon Lane**

JC: The original road from Longfield Hill to Meopham made a wide sweep to the right, after passing the group of houses just inside the parish boundary known as Monkreed. This rejoined the present road just to the west of Melliker Green. The road was very narrow, and unsuitable for modern traffic, in spite of modest widening in 1914. Accordingly, in 1928 a new road was cut through from Monkreed to Melliker, but the old one remained as a pleasant walk and ride. Unfortunately it also became a dumping ground for refuse, so that in 1965 application was made for its closure. This was duly granted by the North Aylesford Magistrates under the Highways Act 1959, Section 108 on 3rd September, 1965. Apart from a short section at the western end, the hedges bordering the rest were grubbed up, and the site of the former road became part of the adjoining fields.

MN: The eastern junction with Longfield Road has been obliterated, but the initial stretch of the western section now forms part of a public bridleway (NS307) leading to Shipley Hills. This runs along the bank referred to by JC. The surface of the lost road is still in evidence until the course of the bridleway leads away from the bank after about 50 yards. NB This road appears latterly to have been known as **Stanley Road**<sup>1</sup>. [March 2010]

#### **5. Nash Street – Ifield**

JC: Traffic from Nash Street, which may well have been a relatively more important settlement than it now is, heading for Ifield or Cobham, travelled by the road leading north-east out of the hamlet. This still exists as a metalled bridleway (BR 31) and continues to Ifield Court. In the early nineteenth century, however, it took a different course about a quarter of a mile from Nash Street. At the edge of a wood known as "The Grove" it turned sharply to the right, and ran south-east and then east to meet Ifield Church Road. The line of the old road is now a rather overgrown footpath, but it can easily be followed on foot, or on horseback, it being officially designated as a bridleway, BR 33.

MN: This lost road is still in use as Bridleway BR33. It is no longer overgrown and is evidently very popular with walkers and riders. It becomes very miry during the winter months, as a consequence of which some stretches have been informally bypassed slightly to the north of the original road. [March 2010]

#### **6. Nash Street – Nurstead Church**

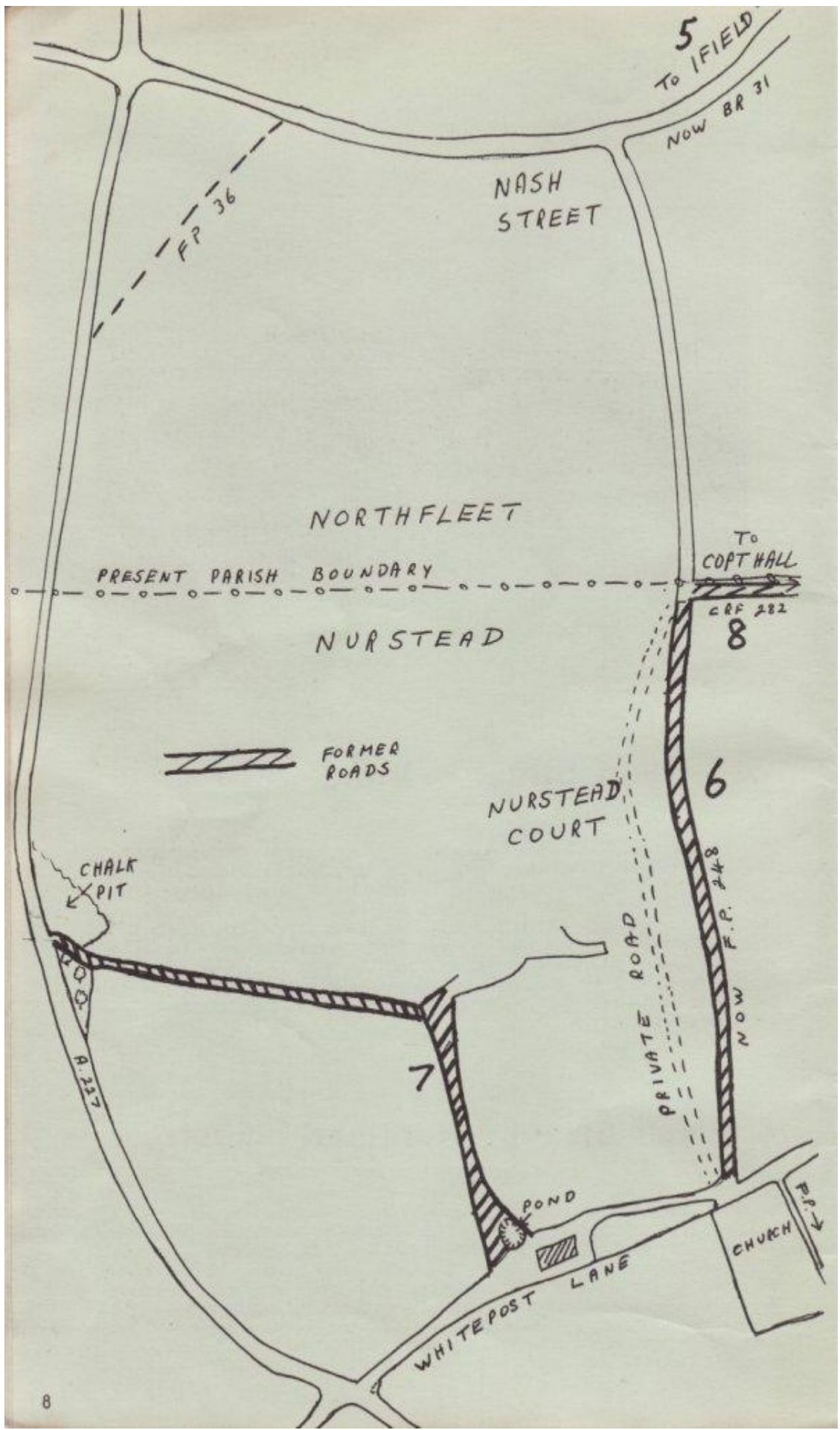
JC: From the centre of Nash Street a metalled road runs south, and soon reaches a gate. Here a private road bears off to the right, serving Nurstead Court. The old public road, now designated as FP 248, runs straight ahead, and from this direction can be seen as a distinct ledge on the slightly sloping field. After passing the front of Nurstead Court, it becomes a slight hollow in the fields, so typical of the former roads of this area, and continues as such to St. Mildred's Church. A view of this

road, looking back from the church is shown below. The road was shown on the 1840 Tithe Map, and no record of its reduction in status has been traced.



MN: The road from Nash Street is still in use but has deteriorated - little evidence of metalling now exists. The ledge and hollow are no longer discernible. JC's photograph (above) appears to have been taken from near the start of footpath NS248 close to St Mildred's Church – the taller of the trees still stands and there is now a hedge to the right. The wicket gate has been replaced by a stile (see below). [Feb 2010]







## **7. Nurstead Chalk Pit**

JC: The Tithe Map also shows the road from Nurstead Chalk Pit eastwards to the grounds of Nurstead Court, and then south to Whitepost Lane, west of the Church. The chalk pit, after having been used as an unofficial refuse tip for a number of years, was covered over a few years ago. The old road can be clearly seen in the accompanying picture as a depression in the ground, running along the edge of the wood. The southern part remains as a private road to Nurstead Court. It should be noted that following the absorption of Nurstead into the parish of Meopham in 1963, there are now two Whitepost Lanes in the parish, the other and better known one running south-east from the A.227 at Culverstone.

MN: There is no trace of the former junction with the A227. The route eastwards from the A227 could be traced along the edge of the woods but this is within the grounds of Nurstead Court and any further investigation would require the permission of the landowners. A large heap of manure appears to be blocking the way, and there may well be other obstructions. The southern part of the lost road is still in use and is clearly marked as a private road. [Feb 2010]

NB The section of White Post Lane that runs from the A227 to Copt Hall Road has been renamed 'Nurstead Church Lane' so there is now less risk of confusion.

## **8. Nash Street – Copt Hall**

JC: Yet another old road from Nash Street started from the gate mentioned in paragraph 5. It runs due east beside Priestfield Shaw, curving slightly south to reach Copt Hall Road (called Cob Hall in the 1840's). This route still remains as CRF 282, and its original condition as a road can be clearly seen, especially at the Nash Street end, where the metalling and flanking hedges exist. The northern hedge in this part forms the boundary between Northfleet and Nurstead.

MN: This is a much-trodden bridleway with clearly defined access at both ends. The hedge is still evident at the Nash Street end but there is little trace of metalling. As was no doubt the case with the lost road, it tends to become miry in the winter months. JC does not mention the public footpath that runs just to the north of the lost road, which is accessible by means of an interlinking path about halfway along. [Feb 2010]

## **9. The Camer Bypass**

The earliest by-pass in the village of Meopham was the construction in 1837/38 of a new road, now the B.2009, to the north of Camer, designed to take the traffic between Meopham and Cobham away from the front of Camer House, then owned by William Smith-Masters. The original road, having left the Gravesend to Wrotham Turnpike Road at Money Hole Corner (now known as Camer Corner) ran to West Lodge, and then continued along the line of the present private road to Camer.

After passing the house, it ran through Camer Street, and then on to the end of the park at what is now East Lodge, just south of Sole Street Station.

After the opening of the new road, the old one became segmented. The western section of Camer House remained as a private access road. This was then blocked off from Camer Street, which was provided with an access road to the new road. The east end of Camer Street was also blocked off, but the line of old road can be clearly seen in the park. Starting from East Lodge, it runs as a depression, not to be confused with the more modern drive to the south of it. At the point where the new perimeter fence crosses the old road, it can be seen continuing to link up with Camer Street.

As part of the protracted proceedings for the closure of the old road, the application was advertised in the West Kent Gazette, and after permission for the new road had been granted, it was visited by two Justices of the Peace for the Hundred of Tollingtrough, George Daniel Clark and James Formby Clark, who after their inspection signified their approval, and so the first Meopham By-pass came into use on 30th June 1838.

MN: The western section of the lost road still serves as the drive for Camer House. The middle section (Camer Street), a delightfully unmolested corner of the parish, can be reached via the access road off Green Lane referred to by JC in para 2 lines 3/4. The Eastern section is still visible as a depression at the edge of the park, by East Lodge. [Feb 2010]



*Camer Street, January 2007*

## 10. Norwood Lane

JC: In connection with the construction of the Camer By-pass, the southern end of the Norwood Lane became redundant, and was closed with the same authority as was the road through Camer itself. Although more than 140 years have elapsed since the closure, the line of the old road can be clearly seen as a depression in the ground. This is illustrated in the picture (below).



MN: The depression is still visible from Green Lane. The tree in the background of the photograph is still there, as was the horse (complete with blanket!) when I passed [Feb 2010]

## 11. Camer – Brimstone

JC: William Smith Masters was busy with several other roads projects at the same time, all clearly designed to give him some privacy. From the centre of Camer another road ran south to Brimstone. It left the old Camer Road at Dog Kennel Orchard, and ran slightly east of south for about half a mile, then turning west to reach Foxendown Road. Across Camer Park its course remains as a rather wide trench, leaving the park through a now locked gate. It then follows a field boundary. Its route is crossed by the present footpath from Meopham Church to Cobham (FP 188) where its course lies along a very narrow field. It joined Foxendown Road down a steep bank, where its position, about 200 yards east of Camer Park Road, can be located by the disused chalk pit, and traces of the old road remain. Its total length was 1473 yards, and it had an average width of 13 feet.

The reasons adduced for the closure of this road were:-

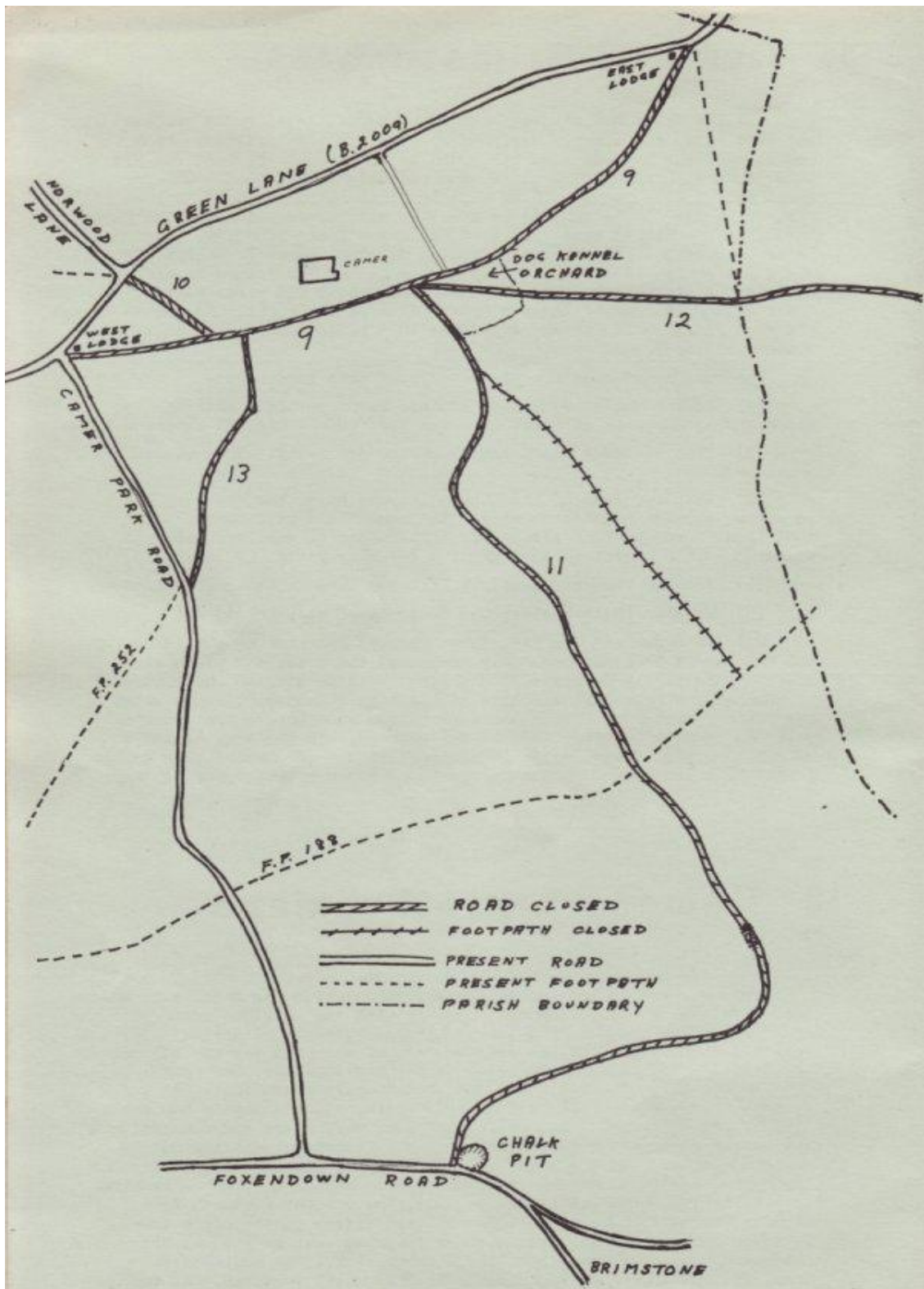
- (1) That a 3 feet wide footpath had been provided, although the accompanying map does not make it clear just where this was supposed to be.
- (2) That it had a steep and dangerous declivity. This was at the south end.
- (3) That for some of its length it was below the level of the adjoining ground, and became miry. The same could have been said of most local roads at that time. For this reason it was impassable in winter, and had therefore been disused for many years.
- (4) Another road ran nearly parallel. This is Camer Park Road.
- (5) William Smith-Masters was desirous of stopping it up!

William Brown and the Rev. James Formby, Justices of the Peace for the Hundred of Tollingtrough duly inspected the road, and plans were drawn by the parish Surveyor of Highways, William Mungeam the younger, of Meopham. Thomas Taylor Collis of Birling, a Surveyor, represented the Highway Authority. When the application came before the Quarter Sessions on 17th October, 1837 it was granted, and the road ceased to be public right of way. Although not part of the subject of this work, it may be noted that a public footpath, as shown on the Camer Map was closed at the same time.

MN: Very little trace of this lost road is now visible to the public. At the northern end, there is a slight depression in the parkland along which the road might have run, but the gate at the boundary of Camer Park is no longer to be seen. The probable course of the road can also be observed from footpath NS173, but no further investigation was possible as the footpath crosses private land. Likewise, the southern end of the lost road cannot be identified with any certainty, although there is a parking bay in Foxendown Road that might indicate its location. So, 170 years on, William Smith-Masters can safely be said to have achieved his objective!  
[Jun 2010]

## **12. Camer – Little Buckland**

JC: This was yet another closure application which was dealt with at the same time and by the personnel who dealt with the previous road, with the addition of Richard Cheesman the younger, as Surveyor of Highways for the parish of Luddesdown, as the eastern part of the road lay in that parish. The road started at the same point as the previous one, Dog Kennel Orchard just to the east of Camer House, and ran roughly south east. It was described as a cart track used as a footpath, almost exactly the words used in the 1952 review of public rights of way, where the expression CRF appears, to designate a cart road used as a footpath. William Smith-Masters claimed that the track was used only by himself, his family and employees, and that no members of the public had used it for some time. An alternative route was available, i.e. the present footpath from Meopham Church to Cobham, FP 188. To what extent other people were deterred from using the route was not reported, but he got his order, and this road too was closed from 17th October, 1837. The route of the cart track within Camer Park was clearly visible until recently, but was obliterated when Strood Rural District Council took over the Park.



MN: Dog Kennel Orchard seems to have disappeared. Camer Park is of course very popular with our canine friends, but neither kennel nor orchard appears to have survived. So it is difficult to pinpoint the western end of this lost road, and as JC says, the route through the

park has been obliterated. The eastern end is located at the point where the Wealdway turns sharply to the left shortly after leaving Green Lane. A gate has been provided giving access to Camer Park at this point, but again there is no trace of the lost road. [Mar 2010]

### **13. Camer – Parsonage Field**

JC: This was the fourth road closed at the behest of William Smith-Masters and took effect at the same time. The road ran from a point on the old Camer Road to the west of Camer House in a southerly direction for a distance of 368 yards and was an average of 14 feet wide. It was replaced by a new road, 20 feet wide which is the northern part of the present Camer Park Road. The old and the new roads joined at a point where FP 252 from Meopham Church reaches Camer Park Road. The 6" Ordnance Survey maps as a footpath. The southern end of it is still visible as a depression in the field, and the northern part including some trees and the angle mentioned below, can be easily traced in Camer Park.

The reasons for the change were given as:-

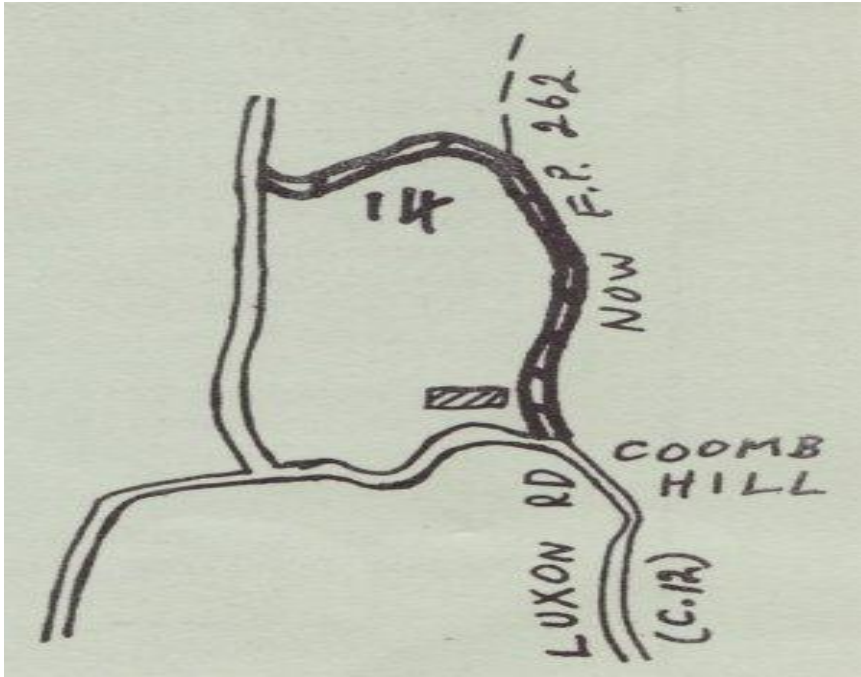
- (1) The new road would be more commodious than the old one.
- (2) The old road was narrow, and had a sharp angle
- (3) The old road was at a lower level than the adjoining ground.
- (4) It was enclosed by high trees, whereas the new one would be open.
- (5) The old road became wet and miry

MN: It is very difficult to trace the course of this lost road now, although some ancient trees remain along the northern section of the route described by JC. At the edge of Camer Park there is a sign reminding walkers that the land to the south, ie beyond the fence, is private – possibly a clue to the line of the lost road. [Feb 2010]

### **14. Coomb Hill**

JC: From the attractive farmhouse now known as Coomb Hill, but earlier called Buckland Farm, a track leads north. This becomes a footpath and continues to Dene Manor. Originally the road turned left in about 500 yards, and ran west to join the present road which runs north from Ham Farm Road (now called Leywood Road) to Dene Lane. The course of the old road can still be traced, although it is now largely overgrown. A view of the western end is used as the frontispiece.

Mr. Leslie Willis, of Coomb Hill, can remember this route being used up to the first world war by Mr. Martin Mitchener in his carriage as a short cut to Meopham, in spite of it having been the subject of a closure order on 5th December 1870. The Rochester District Highway Board meeting on 18th October in that year decided that this particular road was one of several unnecessary for public use, and that it should cease to be a Highway which the parish of Meopham was liable to repair. This did not, of course, preclude its use by the land-owner, or other people with his permission. It is of great interest that the short length of road across the frontage of Coomb Hill which now takes the place of the original road, was not constructed until quite recent years.



*Coombe Hill Farm, September 2009*

MN: The first part of the path described by JC is still there and remains a designated public footpath. The starting point is located to the right of Coombe Hill Farm, a stunningly picturesque location (see previous page). We walked the length of this path as far as Dean Lane, returning by means of Strawberry Hill, without finding any trace of the east/west section of the lost road. Interestingly, this section is marked on the current (2009) OS Explorer Map and any further information would be gratefully received. A peaceful and enjoyable walk, but fairly strenuous. [Nov 2012]

## 15. Cobham – Three Crutches

JC: A road from Lodge Farm, Cobham, by way of Knights Place, to the Three Crutches to Strood was the subject of "An Inquisition" on 3rd January, 1745. This may well be the earliest recorded Public Enquiry into the closure of a right of way in this part of the County, and for this reason is reported at some length. An application had been made to the Crown by the then Earl of Darnley, for the closure of the road to vehicular traffic (although preserving the pedestrian rights). This request was referred to the Sheriff of Kent, Mr. John Cooke of Cranbrook. The [original] document may be inspected in the County Archives at County Hall, Maidstone. The text is set out below, preserving the original spelling.

**GEORGE THE SECOND BY THE GRACE OF GOD OF GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE AND IRELAND KING DEFENDOR OF THE FAITH ETC., TO THE SHERIFF OF KENT GREETING. WE COMMAND YOU THAT BY THE OATH OF HONEST AND LAWFUL MEN OF YOUR COUNTY BY WHOM THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER MAY BE BEST KNOWN, YOU DILIGENTLY ENQUIRE WHETHER OR NOT IT BE TO THE DAMAGE OR PREJUDICE OF US OR OF ANY OTHER IF WE SHOULD GRANT UNTO EDWARD, EARL OF DARNLEY OF THE KINGDOM OF IRELAND LORD CLIFTON IN GREAT BRITAIN LYCENSE TO INCLOSE A CERTAIN COMMON HIGHWAY OR ROAD LEADING FROM COBHAM TO STROOD IN YOUR COUNTY AND BEGINNING AT A CERTAIN PLACE CALLED THE LODGE FARM HOUSE AND RUNNING THROUGH COBHAM PARK AND BY THE FARM CALLED KNIGHTS PLACE AND THROUGH THE GATE CALLED OLD COBHAM PARK GATE IN THE SAID PARISH OF COBHAM AND ENDING AT THE LANE CALLED THREE CRUTCHES LANE ON OLD LONDON ROAD CONTAINING IN LENGTH TWO MILES OR THEREABOUTS AND IN BREADTH FORTY FEET OR THEREABOUTS AND THAT THE SAID EDWARD EARL OF DARNLEY MAY HOLD THE SAME INCLOSED TO HIM AND HIS HEIRS FOR EVER AND IF IT WILL BE TO THE DAMAGE OR PREJUDICE OF US OR OF ANY OTHER THEN TO WHAT DAMAGE OR TO WHAT PREJUDICE OF ANY OTHER AND OF WHOM SHOW IN WHAT MANNER AND HOW MUCH THAT WAY TO BE HELD DOTH CONTAIN BY NUMBER OF PERCHES OF FOOT OF LAND AS WELL IN LENGTH AS BREADTH AND THAT YOU RETURN THE INQUISITION THEREOF DISTINCTLY AND PLAINLY MADE WITHOUT DELAY INTO OUR CHANCERY UNDER YOUR SEAL AND THE SEALS OF THOSE BY WHOM IT SHALL BE SO TAKEN TOGETHER WITH THIS WRITT.**

**WITNESS OURSELF AT WESTMINSTER THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF NOVEMBER IN THE NINETEENTH YEAR OF OUR REIGN.**

**JONES. BY SIR DUDLEY RYDER, KNIGHT, ATTORNEY GENERAL TO OUR LORD THE KING.**

**THE EXECUTION OF THIS WRITT APPEARS IN A CERTAIN SCHEDULE HEREUNTO ANNEXT.**



The Sheriff duly convened the Inquisition, which was held at Cobham Hall, the seat of the Earls of Darnley. Various witnesses were called to give evidence as to whether any damage or prejudice would arise to his Majesty or his subjects if the request were granted. His Lordship seems to have gathered a representative collection of supporters, but it would have required a good deal of courage to have gone to Cobham Hall and given contrary evidence in those days. It is fair to say that the Earl had a good case. There were two alternative routes from Cobham to Strood, either using the present Halfpence Lane and the old Roman Road, or the more direct road through the park (see paragraph 16). From its width, the road sought to be closed must have been a drove road. Among the witnesses were:-

John Margotts	Meopham	Richard Chapman	Cobham
Francis Muriol	Maidstone	Norman Thomas	Denton
George Masters	Meopham *	John Proby the elder	Wouldham
Charles Arnold	Frindsbury	John Lampard	Strood
James Tapley	Strood	Henry Edmeades	Strood
John Tildon	Northfleet	William Harrison	Northfleet
Jarvis Maplidson	Northfleet	Richard Fenner	Northfleet

"and other lawful men of my County"

\* possibly of Camer

As all these witnesses supported the application, it was duly granted. The former road remains today as FP 182. It has, however, lost in width. The original 40 feet has mostly shrunk to about 15 feet where it is fenced. To trace this road is quite easy. From Lodge Farm continue along the track to the gate at the entrance to Cobham Park. Here the ways diverge. Ahead is the present path (see paragraph 16) past the Mausoleum and on to Rochester. Half left is the path over the golf course to Park Pale. Between the two, and passing a small group of trees in the middle of the field runs FP 182. On reaching the end of the field, turn slightly right, and the track flanks the golf course. Knights Place can be seen ahead and before reaching this the route is bounded by hedges. It passes in front of the farm and continues to the M2. Originally, of course, it continued ahead to The Three Crutches, but now it is necessary to turn left beside the Motorway and cross by the road bridge.

MN: An easy and pleasant walk, marred only by the gradual crescendo of traffic noise as the M2 is approached. The route is very clearly marked across the golf course. A wooded section then follows, which looks as if it is prone to becoming miry in winter. The route past Knight's Place is again clearly marked, with horses and dogs much in evidence, but now seems to have been diverted slightly further away from the farm. Shortly after crossing the Eurostar railway by means of a footbridge, the path has been diverted to the left towards the

road bridge mentioned by JC. I did not investigate the section of the lost road north of the M2 as it has no doubt been buried under the Knight's Place housing estate. However, it is possible to link up with the walk described in the next section by ignoring the diversion to the left and continuing along the (metalled) road straight ahead and turning right alongside the M2. [May 2013]

## **16. Cobham – Strood**

JC: The original direct road from Cobham to Strood runs eastwards from the War Memorial. The section as far as Lodge Farm is now CRB 196. From here, it continues as a farm track to the entrance to Cobham Park, and then becomes a footpath through the woods, past the Mausoleum. After this the original metalling is clearly visible in a number of places. The route comes to an abrupt end at the M2 fence, but it used to continue to the Snodland-Strood Road. This is almost certainly the route described by Charles Dickens in Chapter XI of *The Pickwick Papers*. No record of its closure as a road has been traced.

MN: A most enjoyable walk through the ancient woodland of Cobham Park. The section from Cobham War Memorial to Lodge Farm has been re-surfaced in recent years, making life easier for the handful of residents along this stretch. From Lodge Farm, there is a gradual ascent until the mausoleum is reached. Both the mausoleum and the road surface are in better shape than they have been in recent years, the latter perhaps because four-wheel drive vehicles and car thieves/arsonists are no longer able to access this area. However, it does seem a pity that it has been necessary to erect such an intrusive metal fence around the mausoleum perimeter (see page 19). After the mausoleum, the route enters the Ranscombe Farm Reserve and again the road surface is well maintained. Bluebells were much in evidence – a delight to the senses.

The Eurostar line is crossed via a footbridge and the recently widened M2 soon looms ahead. I ventured through the graffiti-laden underpass, but no further as by now the route has veered off its original course, and there seemed little point in investigating further as the area is now part of the Knight's Place housing estate. However, it is worth mentioning that the OS Explorer map<sup>ii</sup> shows a section of footpath from TQ 724686 to 729687 that supports JC's assertion that the lost road continued as far as the Snodland-Strood road. [May 2013]



*Cobham Mausoleum, December 2013*

## **17. Scotland Lane**

JC: The modern road B.2009 from Meopham to Cobham makes a T-junction to the west of the village by the 17th century house Owletts, now owned by the National Trust. Continuing ahead is an old road to Thong, a hamlet just north of the A.2. This is now reduced to the status of a bridleway, but it was part of the original road network of the area. A section of it runs in a shallow cutting through the woods as it nears the A.2. The improvement of that road to motorway standards caused the construction of a bridge to carry the old road over the new. According to several writers it is or was known locally as Pilgrim Lane, no doubt from its connection with Watling Street, the Pilgrim Road from London to Canterbury. No documents relating to its closure as a road have been located.

MN: This lost road is now designated a Byway, and has been much improved in recent years, with new surfacing over the southern section. Along with Brick House Lane (18) it forms part of the network of footpaths linking Jeskyns, Ashenbank Wood, Shorne Woods and Cobham Park, so it has regained its former prominence to some extent. The northern stretch now crosses the Eurostar railway as well as the recently widened A2. [Sep 2010]

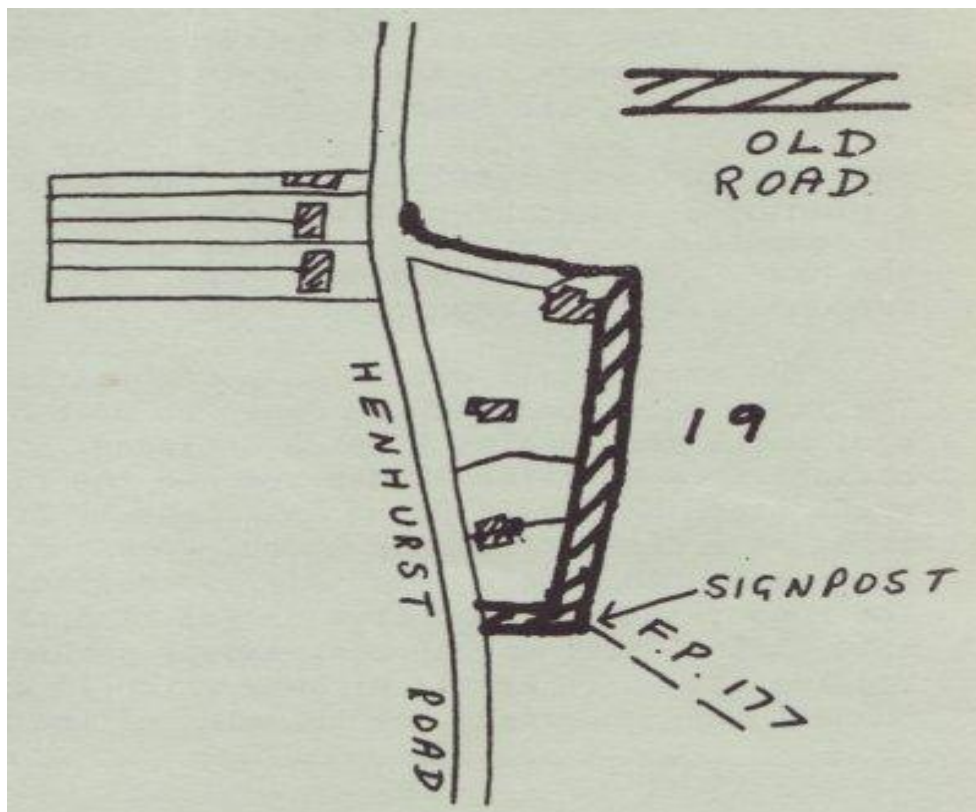
## 18. Brick House Lane

JC: This is the name given on the 1840 Tithe Map of a branch road from Scotland Lane but the northern part is now most difficult to trace. It is officially designated as a CRF on the Definitive Map, and is proposed (Spring 1971) to be redesignated as a By-Way, which will make it open for any traffic that can use the route provided. This may have the effect of up-grading the status of this ancient route. The Southern part of the road leads to the hamlet of Battle Street, just to the north-west of Cobham itself, and thence into the village.

MN: See section 17 above. JC's prediction was spot on – the lost road is now classified as a Byway and is now a well-maintained and well-walked path. [Sep 2010]

## 19. Henhurst

JC: Henhurst is a small hamlet in the parish of Cobham, comprising about eight dwellings, some on each side of the present road. This was straightened in 1913 and prior to then it ran behind the cottages on the east side of the road. By an order of the Magistrates in January, 1965 the old road was stopped up, but a point of interest is that the signpost marking the beginning of a public footpath to Cobham is still (1971) sited, not on the present road, but several yards to the east, where the old road ran. The course of the old road is clearly seen by the continuation of the bank on the east side of Henhurst Road, and it now forms the access to some modern cottages.



MN: The signpost has been re-sited in a more appropriate position and little trace of the bank remains. However, it would seem that the course of the lost road is still visible, running behind the gardens of the houses shown on JC's map. The exact spot where the lost road met the present road at the northern end cannot now be pinpointed – did it run along what is now the driveway to the northernmost house (Forge Cottage), as suggested by JC's map? [Sep 2010]

## 20. The Roman Road

JC: The old Roman Watling Street has largely been overlaid by the modern dual carriageway A.2. Short sections of the pre-motor age road do remain, from a point just east of the Tollgate Garage through to Singlewell, and further east, from the vicinity of the Thong Bridge to the golf course. The latter section and a stretch to the west of it, was the subject of an interesting application for the apportionment of the cost of repairs in 1888. Application was made to the Petty Sessions on 29th April, 1888, probably by Cobham Parish. Evidence was given before George Ganning and George Smith by Richard Fenner, the surveyor of highways for the parish of Cobham. He apparently proved to their satisfaction that the highway was very inconvenient due to lack of repair. From the lack of any witness from Shorne Parish it seems likely that Cobham felt aggrieved at the previous position. After the evidence, and under the authority of "An Act for the more effectually repairing of such parts of the Highways of this Kingdom as are to be repaired by two parishes" passed in the 34th year of the reign of George III, an order was made that the road from Henhurst Dale to a point just west of the present Cobham-Shorne overbridge was to be repaired by the parish of Cobham, and the road to the east of that point to the Shorne boundary by the parish of Shorne.

Henhurst Dale was the name given to the valley near the present Little Chef Cafe.

MN: Very little of this section of Watling Street now remains. The past 40 years have seen the widening of the A2, and the coming of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. There is a shortish stretch of the lost road to the west of the Thong Lane bridge, but this is not pleasant walking. There is a small piggery along the way and the pigs seemed pleased to see me. There is a curious dichotomy here – the pigs are hugely affected by human activity in the form of the A2 traffic noise and pollution, but, feeding arrangements apart, they actually have very little contact with humans. But I digress – this is supposed to be about rambling, not rambling on...

The section between Thong Lane bridge and Halfpence Lane has now been buried beneath new workings, with the exception of a very short stretch next to a sign denoting the location of high voltage cable. This was enough to deter me from further investigation.

The section to the west of Halfpence Lane has completely disappeared. I walked both sides of the railway track just to make sure, returning along footpath NS 179. This is a pleasant walk, with less traffic noise than might be expected, and passes one of the lakes within the grounds of Cobham, where fishing is available for those with a permit. [May 2011]

## **21. The Birling Road**

JC: The road which starts at the south-east corner of Meopham Green, by the house known as Pitfield, and which is now marked "Unsuitable for Motors" was originally the road to Birling, but the provision of other "better and more commodious" roads in the 19th century led to an application to the Justices of the Peace on 5th January, 1871, for it to be declared a highway which the parish of Meopham was no longer liable to repair. By this time in accordance with legal requirements the matter had been considered by the Board for the repair of highways in the Rochester District of the County of Kent, and the road, following the Board's decision to apply for the declaration, had been duly inspected by James Hulkes and Thomas Henry Baker, two Justices of the Peace. On their certificates of the due compliance with legal requirements, a plan of the said highway was prepared and verified by John Samuel Evenden, "a competent surveyor" of Meopham, and the justices compared the road with the plan. The order was duly made, and the parish of Meopham relieved of its responsibility for repair.

The route still exists as a combination of footpaths and bridle paths. The first part from Meopham Green is probably much as it was a hundred years ago, but after passing Steeles Cottages, it becomes a footpath flanked by hedges. By the time it has reached the floor of the valley it is just a grass track as far as Heron Hill Lane. After this it is again used by vehicles as a means of access to the week-end chalets which now occupy a lot of the surrounding woods, and this use continues as far as Plumrush Farm, where the road joins the road from Harvel to Sparrowhaugh. It is of interest to note that to this day no-one, except perhaps some of the adjoining landowners, repairs that part of the highway which is used by vehicles, but the Parish Council does undertake the trimming of the hedges on the footpath section.

MN: Sadly the right-hand section of the 'Unsuitable for Motors' sign is no longer to be seen – one hopes that this was by accident rather than design. Otherwise, the lost road is pretty much as described by JC. It is for the most part well maintained – particularly the stretch north of Heron Hill Lane where a new surface has recently been laid – but less so at the southern (Ridge Lane) end. Many of the week-end chalets have been replaced by much grander erections and this piecemeal development continues apace. Mercifully the rottweilers were safely constrained when we passed. [Apr 2010]

## **22. To Sparrowhaugh**

JC: A little way to the south of the junction of the previous road with the road from Harvel to Sparrowhaugh is another road, a further part of the old Birling Road. This was also closed as a repairable highway on 5th January, 1871, under similar legal powers. It leaves the Sparrowhaugh road on the left hand side, and runs for 462 yards to the Five Wents. At that time it had a width of 9 feet. Its present designation is a CRF, but it would be difficult now to drive a cart along it.

MN: Still well defined, as befits its former status, this was a pleasant walk if miry in places. It appears to be popular with motorcyclists, which does not improve the situation. [Nov 2012]

### 23. Commority Road

JC: The route continues as Commority Road from the previous road, south from the present road from Harvel to Vigo, and runs beside the caravan site, where it was tarmacked during the war-time occupation of the area. It soon becomes an earth track again, and continues as such to the bottom of the escarpment, where it joins the Pilgrims Way at Little Commority. On the way down it crosses the route the ancient Trackway, (see paragraph 46) but no trace of this remains visible. No official closure of this section has been traced.

MN: The northernmost section is now a metalled road serving the western area of Vigo village. The path continues southwards at the point where the metalled road curves round to the right. At the top of the escarpment the North Downs Way feeds in from the right – is this a reinstatement of the ancient Trackway to which JC refers at section 46? The path then begins a steep descent and although steps have been inserted to assist with some very miry stretches, these also aid the passage of 4x4 vehicles which are apparently permitted to use this section of the North Downs Way (a national long-distance **footpath!**) according to the sign at the junction with Pilgrims Way at the bottom of the hill. [Nov 2012]

### 24. Chandlers Road

JC: This is another of the roads declared to be "highways no longer repairable by the inhabitants of Meopham" on 5th January, 1871. It runs from Priestwood (then called Priesthood) to a junction with Chandlers Hill, and at that time was described as being 240 yards long and 9 feet wide. J.S. Evenden was the Surveyor who drew the necessary plans, and the members representing the local parishes at the meeting of the Highway Board were

Meopham	J. Ashdown
Luddesdown	W. H. Eley
Nurstead	J. F. Edmeades
Ifield	J. Wood
Cobham	F. Stevens

MN: Now a well-used byway and walkable without difficulty. Walkers beginning from Chandlers Hill should take care to follow the path round to the right and not be misled by a sign marking the start of a footpath leading northwards to Wood Hill Farm and beyond. [Jan 2013]

### 25. Heron Hill Lane

JC: At the same meeting of the Highways Board, action was taken to reduce Heron Hill Road, which runs eastwards from the A.227 at Ridley Turning to Harvel, to the same status of a non-repairable road. It has a length, according to the order, of 1412 yards, and an average width of 10' 6". It has always remained open for local traffic, but has a notice at the eastern end warning that it is "Unsuitable for Motors". The old thatched cottage there, now called Rabbits Corner, was then

known as Goodwin's Cottage. The road was probably of some importance formerly for traffic to and from the mill which used to stand just to the south of it. Millsole Shaw is a reminder of this.

After 100 years as an undesignated and largely un-cared for highway, it is proposed to be categorised as a By-Way in the 1971 Review.

MN: This lost road is now classified as a Byway as per the 1971 proposal. The 'unsuitable for motors' sign has disappeared and the road now seems navigable for the most part, apart from the middle section where a four-wheel drive vehicle would be required. Fortunately there is no shortage of these in Meopham. A pleasant walk, strenuous during the stretch heading westwards towards the A227. [Apr 2010]

## **26. Fowlers Stone**

JC: From Fowlers Stone Cottages on the Harvel Road, a road formerly ran east to join Commority Road. Part of it formed the boundary between the parishes of Meopham and Trottscliffe, but following the construction of Vigo Village, the area to the south of the old road was transferred to Meopham. In recent years the route had been reduced to the status of a footpath. The beginning of its end came in 1966, following an application to the Minister of Transport for the closure of several paths in the area to facilitate the building of the new Vigo Village. After a public inquiry, the then Minister, Mrs. Barbara Castle, made an order entitled "The Stopping up of Highways (County of Kent) (No.10) Order 1966". This did not come into force until certain alternative highways, mainly footpaths, were provided to the reasonable satisfaction of the County Council. The builders duly applied to the County Council and on 23rd May, 1968, a certificate of compliance was given. So came the legal end of this old road, most of which is now covered by estate development. Building work in progress on the line of the road is shown on the accompanying photograph. It ran from the centre foreground past the tall trees, and the chimneys of the Fowlers Stone Cottages can just be seen in the centre.

MN: It seems that all traces of the old road (and the cottages) have disappeared underneath Vigo village. If anyone knows otherwise I shall be delighted to hear from them! [Nov 2012]

## **27. Holly Hill**

JC: The road running northwards from Holly Hill Lodge dwindles to a bridle road and footpath soon after passing the farm at Holly Hill, and as a footpath drops steeply into the valley to join Wrangling Lane between Dowde Church and Great Buckland. There was formerly a cart road from Holly Hill running to the west on the edge of Dowde's wood, and then dropping down on a more gentle gradient to emerge onto Wrangling Lane almost opposite the Church. This can still be traced as a track just inside Dowde's Wood, starting at the point where the footpaths divide.

MN: At the Holly Hill end, what looks to be the track of the lost road can still be seen for a short distance, although strategically placed tree trunks inhibit progress. The track soon peters out and no further investigation was possible. We likewise failed to find any trace of the lost road at the Do(w)de end, although there is a metal gate approximately at the spot referred to by JC. Both gate and logs appear to have done their job in ensuring that this route



is no longer usable, although it might be possible to trace the route at a time when fresh vegetation is less abundant! JC does not mention any closure order so I assume that he was unable to trace one. [May 2013]

## **28. Luddesdown – Halling**

JC: From a point just to the north of Luddesdown Church a road formerly ran over to Upper Halling. The course of it is still preserved by a series of footpaths and bridle paths. After climbing to the top of Cutter Ridge, it turns to the south-east, and becomes a sunken road, now largely overgrown, and the present path runs along the north-east side of it. On reaching Buckland Road it formed a five-went junction with Cutter Ridge Road, and continued up the hill on the far side, now a Bridle Path. This traverses the woods for over a mile, with little or no evidence of its former status until it reaches Pitfield Bank. Here it again attains the form of a sunken road, and descends the escarpment, continuing to join the present road into Upper Halling.

MN: This was a pleasant walk, but not without its pitfalls. JC's map is not particularly helpful here, but the route he describes can be followed thus. After the long ascent from Luddesdown (not for the faint-hearted but now mercifully barred to four-wheel drive vehicles) it is necessary to locate the start of footpath RS212. I could not do this with any certainty, owing to a lack of signage, but it is supposed to begin immediately after the clearing on the left, marked as Hatch Hill on some maps. Walk through the woods in a south-easterly direction and join the wide track after about 50 yards. Signage is good from then on, but care should be taken to avoid the numerous non-PRoW tracks that criss-cross the route. Head straight across another clearing, where the North Downs Way crosses the lost road, then take care to avoid the footpath signed to the left, which as far as I can tell does not appear on any map! The steep descent at Pitfield Bank leads to a 'T' junction with footpath RS213, and Upper Halling can be reached by turning left at this point. I could not detect any trace of the sunken sections as described by JC and assume that this is a consequence of the 42 years that have passed since his narrative. [May 2013]

## **29. Mount Ephraim**

About 250 yards south of the present Upper Halling crossroads, was another, at Clements Farm. The road on the east was Lord's Cross Lane, dealt with in paragraph 32. That on the west started immediately south of Clement's Farm, and the 50 yards of it that remain are shown in the picture on this page. It used to form the boundary between the parishes of Halling and Snodland, and its course can therefore be traced on the map. On the ground, however, there are two large but now disused chalk pits. Beyond the westernmost one the line of the old road can still be traced as a sunken road climbing the escarpment. To view this it is necessary to start at Lad's Farm, and take the track (CRF 48) up to the corner of the quarry. The old road is again lost where it emerges from the woods at the top of Mount Ephraim, into what is now a ploughed field. After about 100 yards it was on the line of the present footpath, to a boundary stone at the corner of the field. From here one branch ran north to the western end of Chapel Lane, and the other turned left and ran south-west through Hanging-hill Wood. It can be seen in places clearly cut as a ledge on the side of the hill, and in others as a road through the woods. The final section at Holly Hill is fenced.

No date of closure has been traced, but it is known that the pit was being worked in the 1890's. The land south of the Pilgrims Way was taken for quarrying in 1839, so that about 1875 seems a reasonable guess.

MN: I had to admit defeat with this one. JC had a difficult enough job in 1971 and as only odd stretches of the lost road remained at that time, it seems reasonable to assume that even less would be visible today. If anyone can enlighten me further I shall be delighted!

### **30. Pitfield Bank**

JC: From the Luddesdown to Halling Road described in paragraph 28, another road leads down to Upper Halling Court. Branching off the main road at the top of Pitfield Bank, it still descends steadily through the woods, and reaches the foot of the escarpment at Upper Halling Court. It can be walked on foot throughout its entire length, although in places trees have fallen across it. The upper part of the road is sunken below the surrounding ground, indicating much use in the past. Lower down it ran on a ledge cut into the hill side. The lowest part is now FP 214 in Strood RDC.

MN: The walk remains as described, complete with fallen trees! Starting from Upper Halling, the ascent was hard work, but there is a viewing point where a breather may be taken. The view is marred only by the distant chimneys. [Feb 2013]

### **31. Lord's Cross Lane**

JC: This road features twice in the road history of Halling and Snodland. The first occasion is in 1823. On 15th December of that year Thomas Augustus Douce and the Rev. John Bosanquet Polhill, Justices of the Peace, granted at a special Sessions, held at West Malling, an order for the diversion of 435 yards of Lord's Cross Lane. The new road was to pass through the lands owned by Thomas Poynder the elder, William Hobson and Thomas Poynder the younger, all described as Lime Manufacturers. From this it may fairly be assumed that the diversion was to enable quarrying to take place, although this is not mentioned in any of the documents. The section stopped up ran roughly east-west, and the replacement road, as will be seen on the map, from north-east to south-west. The usual affidavit of posting notices on the Church doors of Halling and Snodland, as well as on the affected parts of the road, was filed.

The new road was almost certainly not built as shown on the map accompanying the application, since it features in another application, in 1839, dealt with in the following paragraph.

MN: According to Snodland Historical Society<sup>iii</sup>, the diverted stretch of this road actually runs to the north of the original route, rather than as described by JC. It became known in the twentieth century as the Ticker Path (named after the machine pump at Upper Halling). The original route has of course disappeared as a result of quarrying. The Ticker Path and the remaining stretch of Lord's Cross Lane form a public footpath leading from Upper Halling (Meadow Crescent/Barn Meadow) to the A228 – this is a pleasant walk with spectacular views across the Medway valley. [Feb 2013]

### **32. Cats Brains**

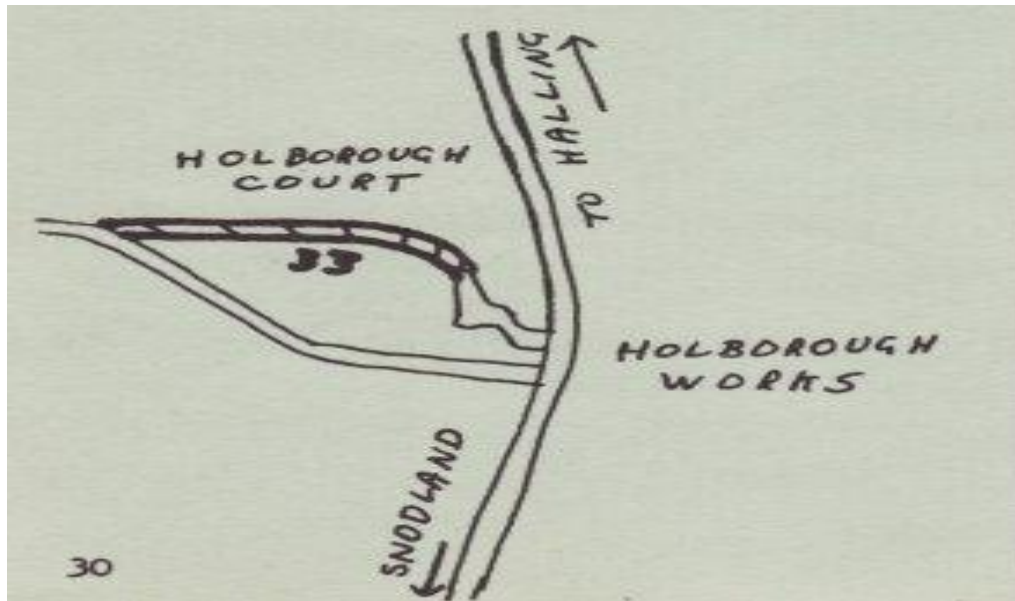
JC: As mentioned in paragraph 31 a road used to run from Ladd's Lane at map reference 69356305 north and then west to a point of the Pilgrims Way at map reference 689636, at that time in the parishes of Halling and Snodland. The whole of the former road is now in the parish of Snodland. The northern part of the road has disappeared into chalk workings. The southern part has been absorbed into the field system, and no trace of it remains. Application was made to close the road on the grounds that Ladd's Lane and the Pilgrims Way led to precisely the same places, and the old road was therefore an unnecessary burden for the parishes to bear. Interesting names seemed to be the order of the day. The southern part of the road ran through a field called Cats Brains, and the two Justices who in accordance with Statute, viewed the road were Maximilian Dudley Digges Dabson and John Alfred Wigan. Vestry meetings were called for 27th September, 1839, at 12 noon for Snodland and 2 p.m. for Halling. It seems possible that by reason of the timing (such meetings being more usually called for the evening) there was little opportunity for the locals to attend and object. However that may have been, the application was confirmed by Quarter Sessions at Maidstone on 7th April, 1840.

MN: As JC notes, no trace of this lost road remains. It has disappeared completely as a result of quarrying and ploughing. However I am puzzled by JC's map (page 3), which indicates that the road connected with Lord's Cross Lane - his notes suggest that it ran from Ladd's Lane to Pilgrim's Way. [Feb 2013]

### **33. Holborough Court**

JC: In September, 1882, Mr. William Henry Roberts, the then owner of Holborough Court, made application to the Malling Highways Board for the diversion of a length of road 360 yards long, and about 18 feet wide, from a point just north of the flour mills (map reference 704628) past Holborough Court and then west to a point on the present road (map reference 70016287). The new road which was provided in replacement runs from the Halling-Cuxton road (A.229) at Holborough and the section provided is 611 yards long. Its original width was 30 feet. No reason for the change is recorded, but no doubt privacy had something to do with it, especially as several footpaths were also involved. It is interesting to note that Mr. Roberts 'was desirous of making a new footpath...'. Not many landowners would be prepared to go on record in these terms today.

The proposal was agreed by the Highway Board on 25th September, 1882, and submitted to a Vestry Meeting, convened on 30th September and held on 5th October. Clearly no time was lost, nor any allowed for any seriously organised opposition! After approval by the Vestry, the application was submitted to Quarter Sessions on 4th January, 1883, and approved.



MN: This lost road ran through what is now private land and no further investigation was possible. Holborough Court was demolished in 1930, following a cement company's acquisition of the land. [Feb 2013]

### 34. Bush – Cuxton

JC: On the Bush Road, Cuxton, about 300 yards to the east of Lower Bush, a hamlet formerly called Lower Birch, FP 203 now climbs the hill, heading east, and crosses the railway by a brick bridge. This is the course of an old road to Strood. It is shown on maps as late as 1856, when the East Kent Railway Co. deposited its Bill for the construction of the line. From the position of the bridge, it turned north and crossed the valley, a thick hedge indicating its course. The present footpath runs more to the east. It then ran through the wood, turning to the east and following the line of the present footpath south of Ranscombe to the west end of Merrals Shaw. It then followed a course on the north side of the shaw to the end of what is now Sycamore Road, and thence to a junction with the Cuxton to Rochester road at a bend in the road, which has in recent years been by-passed.

A branch of this road ran from the west corner of Merrals Shaw southwest across the present field to the point where FP 204 enters Longhoes Wood, and then by the present line of that footpath to the Cuxton road, also, it is interesting to note, at a point which has been by-passed.

MN: The greater part of this lost road still exists and is now designated part of the North Downs Way. Much of it is within the Ranscombe Farm Reserve – see Medway Council's website for more information<sup>iv</sup>. After the railway bridge, there is a row of trees and bushes to the left – this may be part of the thick hedge to which JC refers, marking the original course of the road. Continuing with the climb, the weary may appreciate the seat that has been provided a little further on. Enjoy the view! The surfacing is good throughout, particularly when the path forks south-west at Merrals Shaw. This section is metalled and now appears to

be used as the main entrance to Ranscombe Farm. The path has been diverted just before its junction with Cuxton Road to link with the Farm Reserve car park.

The section to the northeast is rather less attractive. Backtracking to Merralls Shaw, the path leads across an open field and crosses the Eurostar railway and M2 by means of, successively, underpass, bridge, underpass and bridge. This area is evidently popular with some of the younger residents of Strood, as witnessed by the extensive graffiti with which the underpass walls have been adorned, along with the inevitable broken glass. It also seems popular with dogs – presumably unaccompanied... After the second bridge the path has been diverted alongside the M2 slip road, eventually emerging in Rushdean Road, a continuation of Sycamore Road. We spotted a trace of what may be the original course of the lost road at a point just to the north-west of Bootham Close. [May 2013]

### **35. Upper Bush**

JC: From the attractive hamlet of High Birch, now known as Upper Bush, a public road ran to the east, until it joined the road running south from Court Lodge Farm to Dean Farm, which was itself shown on the Tithe Map of the parish as a public Road. The east - west section of road is still a public right of way as FP 201 and much of its metalling can be still seen as far as the Dean Farm road. This latter has lost its status as a public right of way. Running westwards from High Birch was another Road, also shown on the Tithe Map of 1840 as a public road, as far as Longbottom Wood. As with the roads mentioned in paragraph 50 this probably existed to provide access to back lands in ownership different from those nearer the village road.

MN: Sadly, Court Lodge Farm has recently become a housing estate, although the main farm building and an adjoining cottage have been spared the bulldozer. The route south from Warren Road towards Dean Farm is an easy walk along a metalled surface for much of its length. Although, as JC says, it is not a public right of way, there are signs suggesting that the land owners do tolerate walkers, so long as they keep to the roadway. The footpath leading westwards towards Upper Bush is picked up at a crossroads and is well signposted. We observed no trace of metalling beneath the winter mud. The footpath eventually joins the North Downs Way just before the photogenic hamlet of Upper Bush is reached.



*High Birch, Upper Bush, November 2013*

We managed to find and walk the remaining section of road to which JC refers, by taking the small section of public road running west through Upper Bush, picking up the public footpath and continuing straight on instead of forking right towards Warren Road. The area is probably private land, although not signposted to that effect. It appears to be used for shooting and for these reasons I cannot recommend this section of the walk, pleasant though it was. [Jan 2013]

### **36. Whitedyke Road**

JC: From a point on the Pilgrims Way about a quarter mile south of Lad's Farm, Whitedyke Road runs roughly east to Snodland. From the Pilgrims Way it is now a pleasant grass track between hedges, and it continues as such for over  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile to Snodland Cemetery, from which point it is now a tarmac road except for that part which has slid into a water filled quarry. Running westward from its junction with Pilgrims Way the present footpath has some appearance that it too was once a road, and it may well have formed a through route from Holly Hill to Snodland.

MN: This is now classified as a byway. There was a sign by the cemetery indicating that it is a 'no through route' but we were not deterred by this and there was no sign of any obstruction along the way. The mud was more of a problem, along with the traffic noise

from the M20. Heavy going at times, but probably pleasant enough in the summer. [Jan 2013]

### **37. High Road, Idleigh**

JC: Idleigh (spelled "Idley" until at least 1898) is a hamlet between Meopham and Ash and even today is little known. (A visitor to Meopham, asking the way, is reputed to have been told "Idleigh". That's in the Mediterranean, isn't it?) Access to it from Meopham is by way of Shipley Hills Lane, which continues to New Street Road. From here an overgrown track, between hedges, continues gradually down the hill to join a road in the valley to the east of New Ash Green. The track, shown on the 1840 Tithe Map as "High Road", has dwindled to a mere footpath, FP 305 in Dartford RDC.

MN: This footpath has recently been cleared and kissing gates installed. The hedging has been grubbed up, making the exact course of the lost road difficult to follow in places. The signage is not always strictly accurate. Starting from the northern (Idleigh) end, keep to the left of the field and follow the signs. About two-thirds of the way along the path, head across the field to its southwest corner, where the path exits onto the valley road. [Mar 2010]

### **38. New Street**

JC: Branching off the Idleigh to Ash High Road mentioned in the previous paragraph was another, heading south. This ran roughly parallel with New Street Road, and joined Rectory Road, Ridley about 200 yards west of its junction with New Street Road. It is today a pleasant footpath (No. 307) and shows no sign at all of its origin as a road. No evidence of closure as a vehicular road has been traced in the County Archives.

MN: This was a difficult walk. Access was obstructed at both ends, the path was overgrown and the adjacent field had recently been ploughed. As a consequence of some or all of these factors, in places the path has been informally bypassed slightly to the north of its original course. [Mar 2010]

### **39. Ridley – Ash**

JC: From St. Peter's Church, Ridley, an old road runs northwest beside Ridley Wood down to the bottom of the valley, where it joins the present road. About a quarter mile to the north the track there forks left, and skirts the edge of White Ash Wood to Ash Church. The first part of this route is now reduced to footpath status, No. 233 Dartford, and the rest is at present an undesignated byroad, which in fact is used only by local farm traffic and walkers.

MN: The whole of the lost road is now designated as a footpath (SD233), and little or no evidence remains of its former use. This is a very pleasant area, where time appears to have stood still, particularly at the northern end of the walk, by Ridley church. [Mar 2010]



*Opposite Ridley Church – Bowdler’s Well and the Ridley Angel, November 2013*

#### **40. Wise’s Lane**

JC: To the south of Ash, where the modern road turns to the west, the old road to Stansted continues ahead. Known as Wise's Lane, it runs for over 1½ miles through Stansted village to Stansted Lodge Farm. The whole of the route is now designated as a CRB but the surface would make it a difficult project to traverse it with a cart. An order prohibiting motor traffic is in force.

MN: A most pleasant walk, the last one to be completed. Most of the path is tree-lined on both sides, and characterised by a marked depression in the land, no doubt caused by years of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. For the most part it has retained its width, and traces of metalling may be observed. Starting from Ash, turn left onto the first modern road, then right onto MR 208 after a short distance. The path then crosses Plaxdale Green Road and resumes as MR 209. [Aug 2013]



## 41. Hodsoll Street

JC: Just to the west of Ridley Church is Pilgrims Corner, and from here a coach road ran to Hodsoll Street, a distance of just over one mile. The route has in parts been reduced to a footpath across arable fields, although at each end it remains as a metalled though muddy, road between hedges. It was never-the-less a vehicular right of way until 1970. On 28th April, 1970 an application was made by Kent County Council to the Dartford Magistrates for an order extinguishing vehicular rights of way. This followed an earlier application which would have extinguished all rights of way, and which was vigorously opposed by various bodies including the Meopham and District Footpaths Group. At the hearing in April 1970 evidence was given by Mr. John Porter. An objection had been lodged by Mr. G.C. Lievesley of Yew Cottage, Hartley Green on the Grounds that the road was necessary. The parish council of Ash-cum-Ridley and the Dartford Rural District Council, had both come down in favour of the extinguishment of vehicular rights, and the order was duly made, and gazetted in the London Gazette of 13th March, 1970.

The whole of the route can be followed on foot with no difficulty, given assistance of a 2½" or 6" Ordnance Map, apart from some overgrowth in the summer.

MN: This lost road actually starts about 300 yards to the west of Ridley church. It is designated Public Bridleway 243 and is still wide enough to remind walkers of its former designation. Traces of metalling still remain. To follow the path along JC's route it is necessary to negotiate two 'T' junctions – take a right turn at the first then a left turn at the second. This complication may not be apparent on some OS maps. The path then runs through a farm (at one point there was a sign warning us of the presence of a bull\* in the field, thus placing us on the horns of a dilemma, but mercifully not on those of said bull, which was not in evidence at the time of our walk). The path ends alongside 'Leaders', exiting onto the modern road near Hodsoll Street. [Aug 2013]

\* The practice of placing a bull in a field crossed by a public right of way is usually illegal, according to Medway Council's website<sup>v</sup>.

## 42. Honeypot Lane

JC: Leaving Hodsoll Street, two branches of Honeypot Lane lead to the south, joining up at a point about a quarter of a mile to the west of Goose Farm. The track, although originally metalled, is now very muddy and is seldom used by vehicles. Its designation is a CRF. After passing along the edge of the woods, it turns northwest, and then west to the modern Horns Lodge Road. The last section is bordered by a hedge on only the south side. No order closing it to vehicular traffic has been traced.

MN: This lost road remains as described by JC. Starting from Hodsoll Street, the western branch is designated Byway SD 280. Do not be put off by the metal gate across the path – it is not locked – but the absence of signs through the industrial units is not helpful. Turn left immediately after passing through the gate. At this point the path meets the eastern branch, which is signed as a Byway leading to Pettings Court Farm and Industrial Units and has been surfaced for road traffic.

Pass through another metal gate, and look out for a stile immediately on the right. This part of the route is designated SD 255 and was miry when we first walked it, even in June. Some much-appreciated reparation work had been carried out by the time we re-walked the route in August (see Introduction), but winter walkers should still be prepared for the worst! The route then branches off to the right (MR 204) just before a kissing gate, and then left (MR 205) shortly before its conclusion rather closer to the road junction than JC's map suggests. [Aug 2013]

### **43. Hognore Lane**

JC: Prior to the construction of the Gravesend to Wrotham Turnpike Road in 1827, traffic for Wrotham, on reaching the Vigo Crossroads continued straight ahead down Hognore Lane, the narrow track to the left of the present main road, to reach the Pilgrims Way at the foot of the escarpment, about a mile north of Wrotham. After the new road was commissioned, the lane ceased to be used except for purely local purposes, but is still in use as a footpath and Bridleway, and provides an attractive and popular walk.

MN: Still an attractive and popular walk, although not for the faint-hearted, especially if starting from the Southern end. The route is very steep in places and must have been extremely heavy going for traffic, particularly in winter, prior to the construction of the turnpike road. Two entrance gateways to Trosley Towers may be observed to the east of the lane. The first is set into a wall that formed the kitchen garden belonging to the estate; the second (the more ornate of the two) was one of the main entrances, located at the end of a drive leading from the South Lodge on the present-day road (see photo below). [Apr 2010]



#### 44. Short Hill

JC: Another 'casualty' of the Gravesend to Wrotham Turnpike Road was Short Hill, described as being in the parishes of Stansted and Trottiscliffe. No map is filed in the County Archives, but from its description as running from the Turnpike Road to Trottiscliffe Hill, it is almost certainly the bridle path from North Lodge now known as Savepenny Lane, and shown as BR 302 on the 1971 Footpaths map. A point which seems to have escaped notice is that this road was in three parishes since the boundary between Meopham and Stansted runs along it for about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of its length.

On 12th December, 1827, at a Petty Sessions held at the "Swan" West Malling, an order was made by Thomas Augustus Douce and Demetrius Grevis James, Justices of the Peace "for stopping up a certain useless and unnecessary road in Stansted and Trottiscliffe known as Short Hill, a length of 250 yards". The order was advertised in the Maidstone Journal of 18th and 25th December, 1827 and 1st January 1828. It is interesting to note that Christmas Day did not stop publication of newspapers in those days. This order was duly lodged for confirmation at the Quarter Sessions held at Maidstone on 17th January, 1828, where it was duly confirmed.

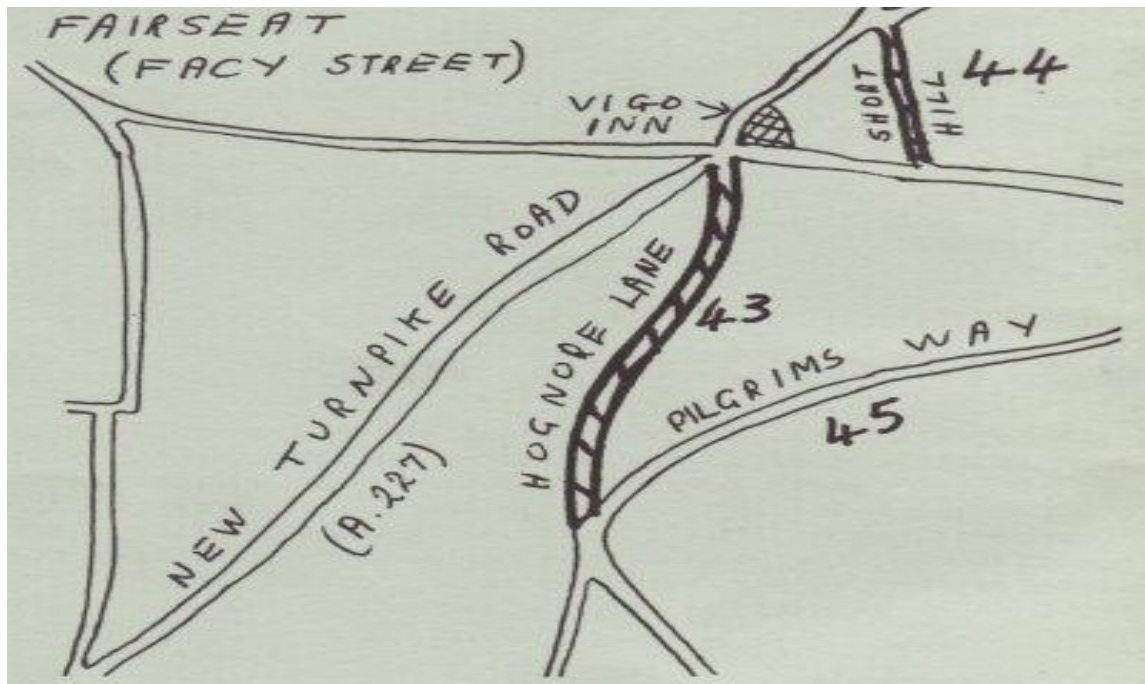
The issue of 18th December also carried what would now be called a financial prospectus. The Trustees of the Gravesend to Wrotham Turnpike invited the receipt of loans up to a total of £1,200 to help defray the cost of the road. Tenders had to be lodged (sealed) with their solicitors, Messrs Southgate and Rich, of King Street, Gravesend not later than 12 noon on 19th December, and had to state the amount offered and the rate of interest required. The loan would be secured on the toll revenues of the road. The tenders were due to be considered by the Trustees at their meeting on 19th December, at the Falcon Inn, Gravesend, their usual meeting place, and in fact the place mentioned in their Act of Parliament as the venue of their first meeting.

MN: A well-walked footpath providing a view of the rear of the fifteenth-century *Vigo* Public House, a former coaching inn and, more recently, a staging post for thirsty walkers on the North Downs Way and the Pilgrims Way, which run contiguously at this point. Sad to say, the pub, which for many years featured as a leading outlet for real ale in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide, is closed and up for sale as I write. A rescuer would be extremely welcome! [Apr 2010]

Post script. To the delight of most of the local population, rescuers have arrived in the form of Andy and Val who took over the licence at the end of 2010 and have revitalised this ancient inn, with the accent on live music and Kent-brewed beers such as Goacher's of Maidstone and Old Dairy from Rolvenden. [May 2011]

#### 45. The Pilgrims' Way

JC: This traditional route from Winchester to Canterbury passes through the southern part of the area surveyed in this Book, in the parishes of Trottiscliffe, Birling, Snodland and Halling. It varies in character between a tarmac road, a very rideable bridle path, and a pure footpath. Much has been written about it already, and little or nothing new can usefully be added in this work.



MN: Ancient route from Winchester to Canterbury, or an invention of Victorian cartographers? The latter seems more likely, as the official history of the Ordnance Survey now acknowledges. Whatever the truth of the matter, this is a pleasant and well-walked stretch; sadly it also seems to be used extensively by four-wheel drive vehicles.

#### 46. The Trackway

JC: Much more ancient than the Pilgrim's Way, and lying at the top of the escarpment, is the line of the old trackway, Crete Way, considered by some authorities to be the original Pilgrim's Way. No trace of it can be seen on the ground but in places it forms parish boundaries.

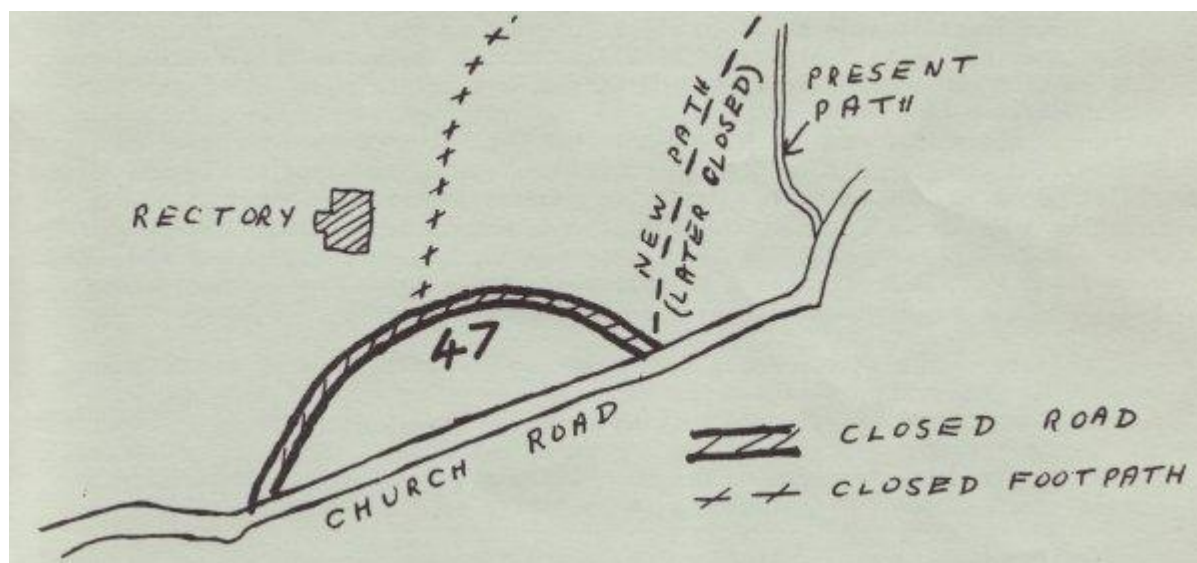
MN: I have not attempted to trace the course of this lost road, since much of it crosses private land. Although JC asserts that 'no trace of it can be seen on the ground', I am not sure that this is the case. Certainly the point where it leaves – or left – Pilgrims' Way south of Ladd's Farm seems clear enough, but it is evident that the land owners do not encourage further exploration. The question is: if this route is as old as JC suggests, why was it not given public right of way status?

#### 47. Trottscliffe Rectory

JC: In 1866 application was made to the Malling Highway Board for an order to divert the road in front of Trosley Rectory, as well as an associated footpath. The landowner in question was Charles William Shepherd "of Trottscliffe or Trosley". The Board approved the application in principle, and by order dated 27th January, 1866 ordered the Churchwardens to assemble the inhabitants to submit to them the application by Mr. Shepherd to divert the road and footpath. This was duly done, and the Vestry made an order on 3rd February, 1866 to Malling Highway Board asking for two Justices of the Peace to view the new Highway. This suggests that the new road had already been constructed in anticipation of the granting of the order. It was built over land owned by the Rector

of Trottiscliffe, Rev. Edward John Shepherd, possibly a relative, and he received the sum of one shilling for it.

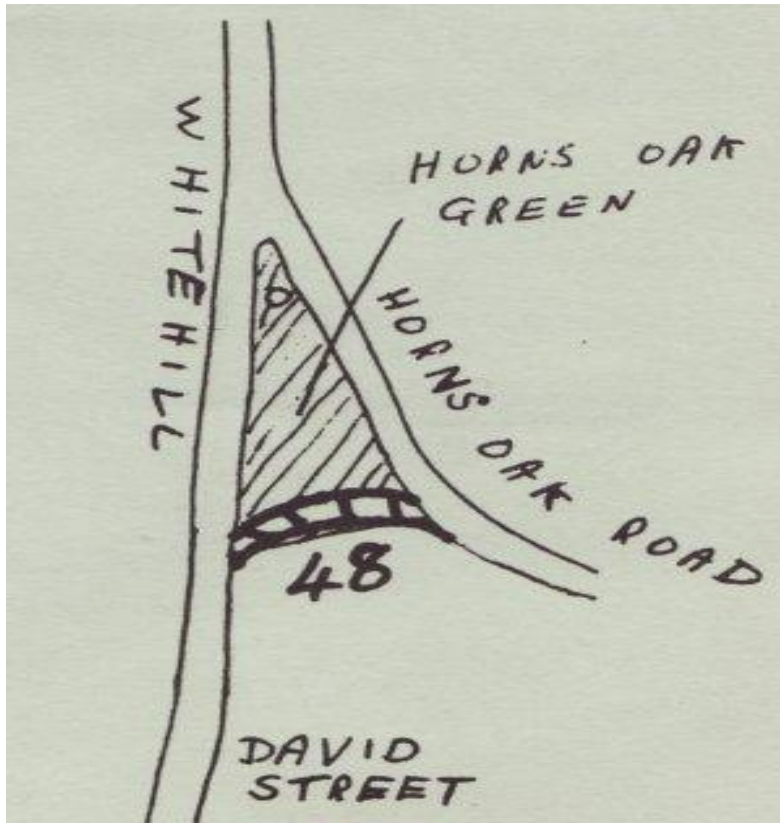
The application was advertised in the Maidstone Journal of 19th and 26th February and 5th and 12th March 1866 by John Cook, who swore an affidavit that he had done so, and that the newspaper circulated in the area. He also mentioned in his affidavit that he had posted legible notices at the ends of each highway to be closed. The request for closure duly came to the Sessions, and was granted. The old road, which curved in front of the Rectory, was 269½ yards long, and the new straight section is 253 yards long, and 20 feet wide. The associated footpath has subsequently been moved yet again.



MN: No trace of the lost road is apparent, although there is a five-bar gate around 50 yards to the west of the footpath leading onto Church Lane (not Road). This may indicate the position of the eastern end of the diversion, and the short-lived 'new' path shown on JC's map. Similarly the entrance to 'Bramble Park' may indicate the site of the western end of the diversion. [June 2013]

#### 48. Horns Oak

JC: At the junction of White Hill and Horns Oak Road is a narrow tongue of land, known as Horns Oak Green. At the south end of this a footpath links these two roads, but on the 1840 Tithe Map this is clearly shown as a road, linking David Street with 'Priesthood'. The gradient must have been severe, but the acute angle at which these two roads join precludes any easy turning from one to the other. The approximate length of this road is 5 yards.



MN: The joker in Mr Carley's pack? We walked the long way round, by road, in view of the steep gradient of this 5-yard stretch of lost road, and because a tree now obstructs the course of the road. This seems likely to have been alongside the line of the barbed-wire fencing at the edge of the green, but no trace of the lost road was apparent. [Feb 2013]

#### 49. "The Road to Dean"

JC: This road, shown on the 1840 Tithe Map, has perhaps deteriorated least of any, as it still is for most of its length used by motor vehicles belonging to the few residents whose properties border it. It has little or no metalling; but from Brimstone to Mill Bank is regularly used. The rest, down the hill to Dene Lane is used only by horse riders and pedestrians. It appears on the map as CRF 286. Its reasonable antiquity is proved by an entry of the Camer Estate map of 1758, where it is shown as "The road to Dean".

MN: This appears to have been unofficially designated 'Brimstone Lane', if the signs at the western approach are anything to go by. Personally I prefer the rather more rustic-sounding original. The lost road remains as described by JC, with good access and appears very popular with walkers. [Jan 2013]

#### 50. Cul de sac Roads

JC: The Meopham Tithe Map of 1840 shows several roads in various parts of the parish, which at first sight appear to have led to no particular feature, although from the colouring on the map it

seems certain that they were definitely in use as roads, and not merely footpaths. On closer examination it can be seen that they provided access to back lands not otherwise accessible from the through roads of the locality. This can be seen on the accompanying map of the road near Nutfield Farm, where the road leads into a field separated from the Priest-wood Road by another field.

MN: JC refers to six cul-de-sac roads ranging over a wide area. For clarity I have subdivided this section and provided separate commentaries:

#### **(a) Off Ridge Lane**

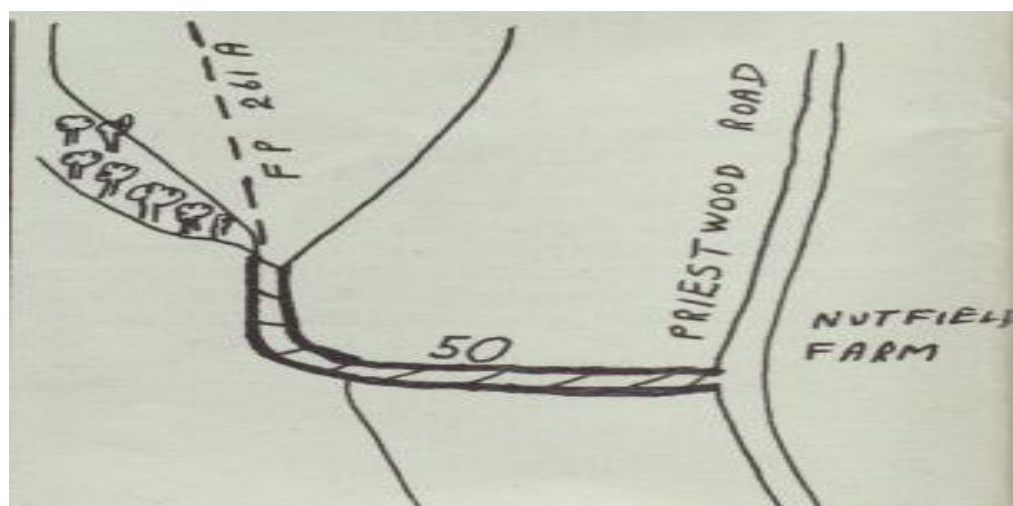
JC: These roads include about 10 chains of what is now FP 270, northwards from Ridge Lane,...

MN: Now a well-maintained footpath at the foot of the gardens of some of the developments in Ridge Lane. It initially runs along a driveway serving two bungalows just off Ridge Lane, and soon becomes a conventional footpath. There are traces of metalling where the driveway meets the footpath. [Apr 2010]

#### **(b) From Nutfield Farm**

JC: ...and about 9 chains of FP 261A, running eastwards from Nutfield Farm. This section can still clearly be identified as a former road, although it is very overgrown in places, and one of the bordering hedges has been grubbed in part.

MN: JC's summary map (page 3) has this lost road a little further north than its actual location. An easy walk, but miry in places. Well, if you must go walking in January... The end of the 'lost road' section of the path is probably located at the second stile. [Jan 2013]



#### **(c) Off Melliker Lane**

JC: A third road ran north from Melliker Lane towards what is now Orchard Avenue, and its site can be seen in the field beside "Homeacre". It ran between fields owned in 1810 by George Smith, to

provide access to other fields then owned by a Mr. French and a Mrs. Alchin. An exquisite map of Melliker Farm dated 1810 (Reference U 1127 P 12) is kept in the County Archives and shows this very clearly. Footpath access to this road from a point further east along Melliker Lane was also available, and the map even shows the stiles.

MN: Barnett's 1970 map<sup>i</sup> shows a narrow 'no through road' off Melliker Lane at this point. It is referred to as 'Mouses Lane' in JC's 2000 update. The land to which it provided access is currently uncultivated and no trace of the lost road can be discerned. There is a gate adjacent to Home Acre that may confirm the position of its junction with Melliker Lane, and another gate further eastwards that probably denotes the site of the start of the footpath to which JC refers. [Jan 2013]

#### **(d) From Camer**

JC: Another such road ran north from Camer to Blundells Shaw on the boundary between Meopham and Nurstead. The northern end joins onto FP 192, and it may possibly have formerly extended into Nurstead, although no trace of it appears on the map for that parish.

MN: JC refers to this as 'Eastlands Lane' in the 2000 update. The lost road appears to have run just to the west of what was probably an enclosure for livestock, opposite Camer Street. This is a fairly substantial brick construction that has lain derelict for many years. The course of the road is clear only for 20-30 yards. JC indicates a double bend in the road, but Barnett's map<sup>i</sup> shows a course running almost due north, passing to the right of Blundells Shaw, and connecting with footpath NS192. [Jan 2010]

#### **(e) From Harvel Green**

JC: A similar road, but still a public right of way, is CRF 289, running from Harvel Green. It runs between hedges from the east corner of the Green for just over a quarter of a mile to Cockadams Shaw.

MN: The hedges have disappeared, and so had the path the day we chose for this walk! Rather than attempt to cross the newly ploughed field we walked alongside the hedge to the right of the field, followed it round to the left and found a stile with no difficulty, putting us back on the route of the lost road. [Jan 2013]

#### **(f) Off Manor Road**

JC: By far the longest of the local cul-de-sac roads crossed a parish boundary. It started in Longfield, as a turning off Manor Road opposite Longfield Hill Farm. After running east for about a quarter of a mile, it turned south and continued for just over half a mile, finally ending in a field not very far north of Shipley Hills Road.

MN: I could not locate Longfield Hill Farm, but there is a turning off Manor Road opposite Manor Farm. It is clearly marked 'private', so no further investigation was attempted. [Feb 2011]



However, in recent years Farmer French has been kind enough to allow walkers participating in the annual Meopham Christian Aid walk [<http://www.cadswalk.co.uk/>] to cross his land. The walk usually includes the first section of the lost road, just prior to the junction with Manor Road. [May 2013]

## **51. One that never was?**

JC: C.H. Golding-Bird, in his history of Meopham, states that prior to the construction of the Gravesend-Wrotham Turnpike, all through traffic had to turn down the road to Lomer Farm (opposite Meopham Village Hall), and then turn south, regaining the line of the present road after passing behind the windmill. A careful study of the Tithe Map, and of the map attached to the Turnpike Act of 1825 shows no such road, although the present A.227 was clearly shown. No powers were taken to construct what would have been a new road in the vicinity of Meopham Green. The first edition of the Ordnance Survey map for the area does show a road or track across the fields of Lomer Farm somewhat to the north of Cricketers Drive, and then turning west, to come to an end in the farm lands. This must have been a private access road which has long since disappeared, and it does not appear on the Tithe Map. The present farmer, Mr. William Andrews, says that he has never found any traces of such a road when ploughing the fields that it crossed, and has certainly never found traces of the road referred to by Golding-Bird. The only map available in the Archives which shows such a road is that prepared by Mudge in 1801, and this is on a scale of 1" to a mile, so that extreme accuracy is not possible.

MN: Both ends of the road to Lomer Farm are clearly marked as private and although we did amble along the footpath that leads from the western gate to the A227, there was no trace of a road as described by Golding-Bird. This is hardly surprising in view of JC's comments and the 40 years that have elapsed since! [Jul 2010]

## **52. Ifield Road**

JC: Just south of Meopham Green, on the west side of the A.227, is the beginning of Ifield Road. It is marked as "Unsuitable for Motors". It runs south west to the Hamlet of New Street, and on the pre-war ordnance maps was shown as a third class road. No closure order has been made in respect of it, and its deterioration appears to have come about by natural causes, and the lack of tarmac except at the east end. After the first quarter mile or so, it is now a pleasant foot - and bridle-path, used otherwise only by farm traffic.

MN: This is now officially classified as a Byway, following a successful campaign by Meopham & District Footpaths Group. Otherwise it remains pretty much as described by JC. A most pleasant walk with some very contented-looking pigs basking in the sun at Broomfield Farm near the A227. [Jul 2010]

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<sup>i</sup> Barnett's Rural District Map, GI Barnett and Son Ltd, Barking, c1970

<sup>ii</sup> OS Explorer Map 163, ISBN 978-0-319-24057-1, 2009

<sup>iii</sup> Snodland Historical Society Newsletter April 2000 [<http://www.snodlandhistory.org.uk/shsnews/Apr2000.pdf> accessed 26 January 2013]

<sup>iv</sup> [<http://www.medway.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/countrysidesites/ranscombefarmreserve.aspx>] accessed 13 May 2013

<sup>v</sup> [<http://www.medway.gov.uk/transportandstreets/publicrightsofway/publicrightsofwayquestions.aspx>] accessed 15 August 2013