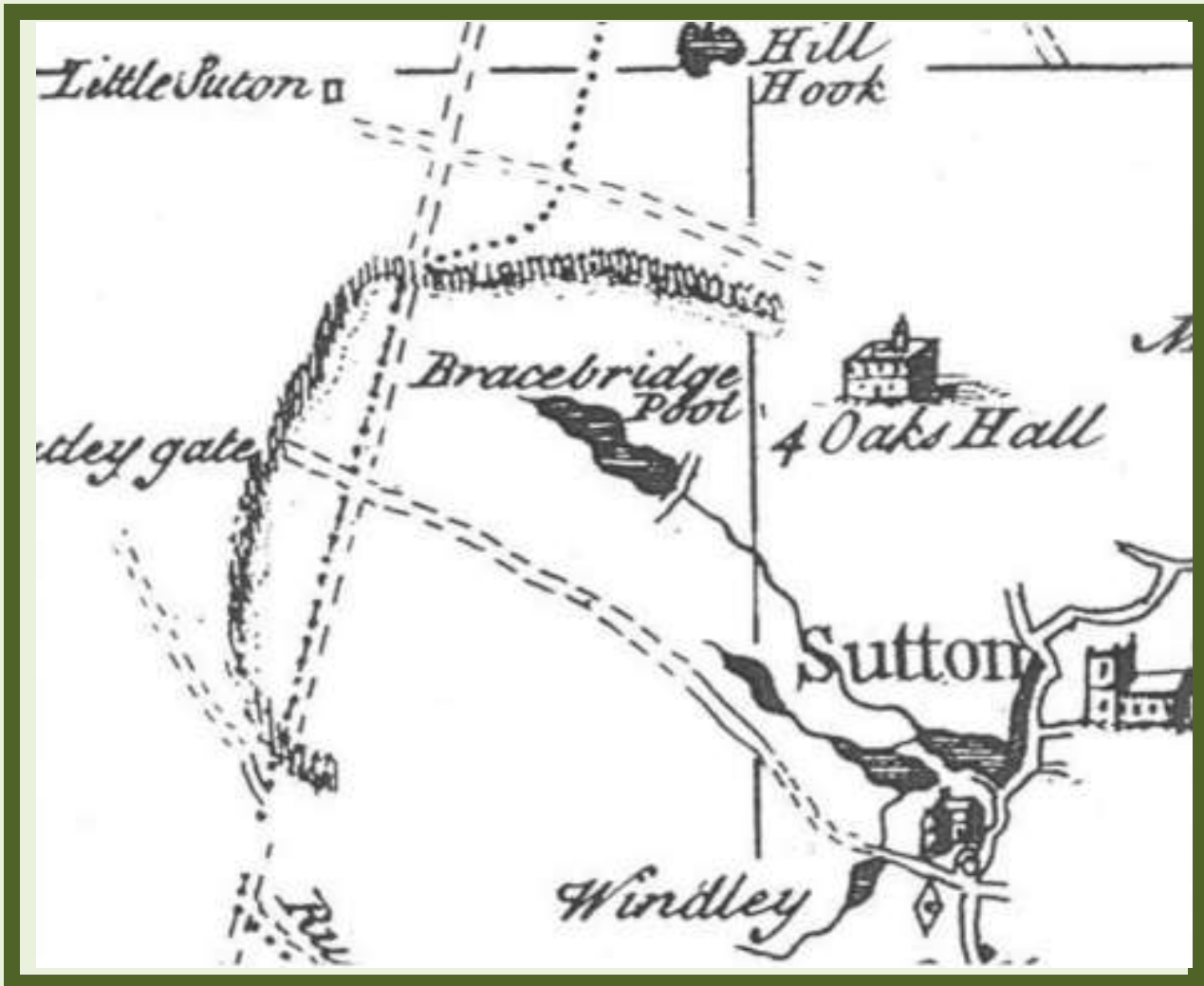


THE FORGOTTEN MEDIEVAL ROAD

by

Keith Hopkinson

(January 2021)



A number of exciting new discoveries have recently been made in Sutton Park and have been published in recent editions of Current Archaeology and British Archaeology magazines. One of the findings not covered in these articles has been the rediscovery of the western part of the old medieval road running from Wyndley to Streetly. This is an abridged article about the road, specifically written for the Sutton Coldfield Golf Club members, but which Keith Hopkinson is pleased to share

The Forgotten Medieval Road

The Roman Road that passes through Sutton Park is well known. It is one of the best preserved Roman Roads in the country. After 2000 years, it remains largely as the Romans left it, including the holes dug by Roman soldiers looking for stone for the road surface.

What is largely unknown, however, is that there is a second ancient road passing through the park. Unlike the Roman Road which goes north south, this one goes east west from Wyndley Pool to Streetly. It is around 900 years old and was the main thoroughfare through the park in medieval times. The road would have had mainly foot and horse traffic for many hundreds of years. However, over the last few hundred years since its use as a deer park ended and Sutton Park came to be used for more commercial and recreational purposes, horse drawn carriages and carts would also have travelled along the road. The medieval road was still being used, and is marked on maps, right up until the 1940s, and is still visible in places today when you look for it.

The line of the medieval road from Wyndley Pool is marked and well preserved, rising up the hill towards Holly Hurst (there is a well preserved hollow way at this point), through Holly Hurst, then down to the tarmac road from Keepers Pool. The line of the medieval road then follows the tarmac road up to the Jamboree Stone. However, the western route of this road through our golf course seems to have been forgotten.

The road joins Sutton Coldfield golf course on the 7th hole, and can be seen running immediately to the right of the mounds built by Mackenzie when he redesigned the course in 1919 (see photo). Indeed, it's clear that Mackenzie positioned the 7th hole as close to the medieval road as he could without blocking it. The road can then be seen as a 'hollow way' cutting leading up to right of the 7th green and to the left of the 8th tees (see photo).

The medieval road then continues up the left hand side of the 8th fairway. It would originally have passed to the left of what is now the 8th green and on up the right hand side of the relief hole before heading towards the 2nd tee. However, in the Victorian period, the road was diverted to make way for a large military camp for the Birmingham Militia. Every summer during the 1880s, the camp was occupied by around 750 soldiers for training. The camp stretched from the woods at the back of the 1st green, past the 2nd and 9th holes all the way down to the 8th green. The outline of at least one of the camp's large military tents can still be seen on the ground. To make room for the camp, the medieval road was diverted across the front of the 8th green towards the tarmac road (there is a well preserved section of the road just here).

The medieval road passes underneath the 2nd tee and then along the path immediately to the right of the first green. The intersection of the Roman Road and the medieval road occurs at this point. The line of the medieval road can then be seen heading diagonally across the 10th fairway and in front of the yellow tee on the 11th. Although it can't be seen, it then crosses just in front of the 18th green. If you scramble through the holly at this point, you will find a gap in the 12th century deer park boundary running along Thornhill Road – you are now at the site of the original Streetly Gate into the park (the current Streetly Gate was only built after the railway opened in 1879 for passengers arriving at Streetly Station, which was opposite the new Gate).

Keith Hopkinson

Sources.

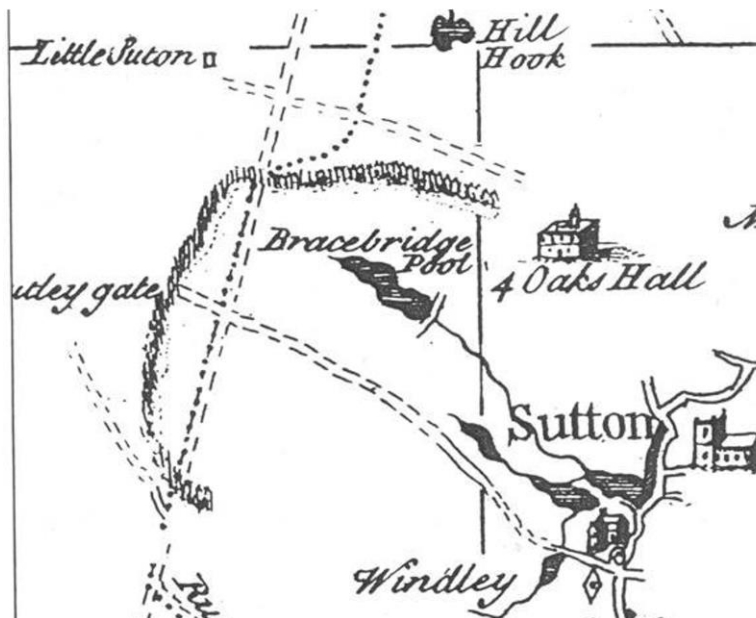
1725 map - William Dugdale, History and Antiquities of Warwickshire (1730)

1881 drawing – unknown

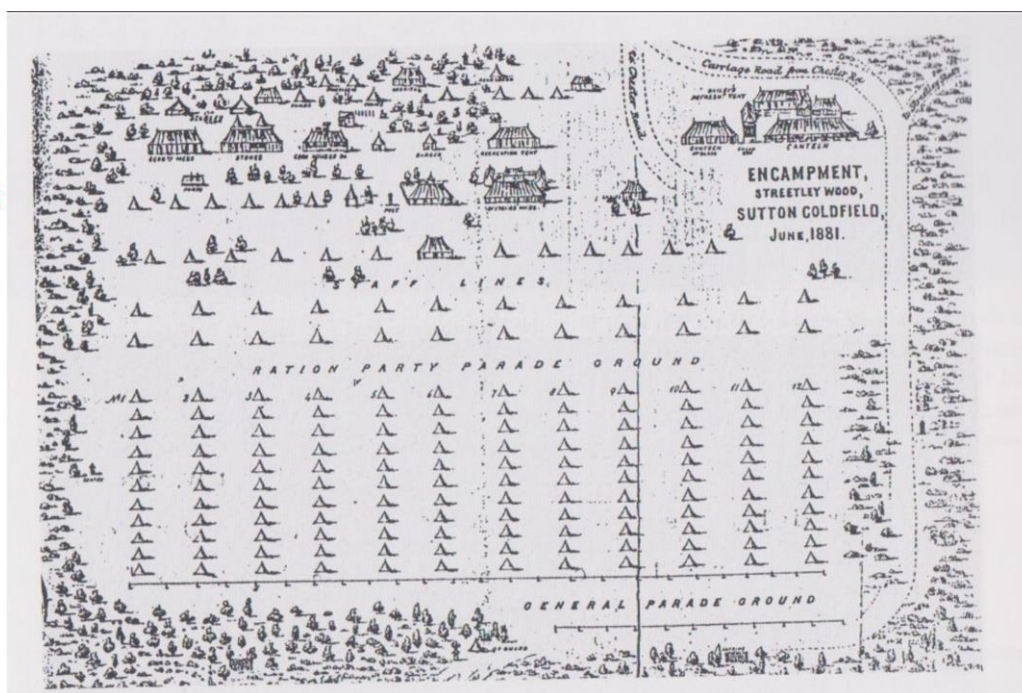
Photographs – Keith Hopkinson

19th and 20th century maps – Ordnance Survey

1725 – the earliest map of Sutton Park, showing the Roman Road running north south, and the medieval road running west from Sutton to Streetly Gate



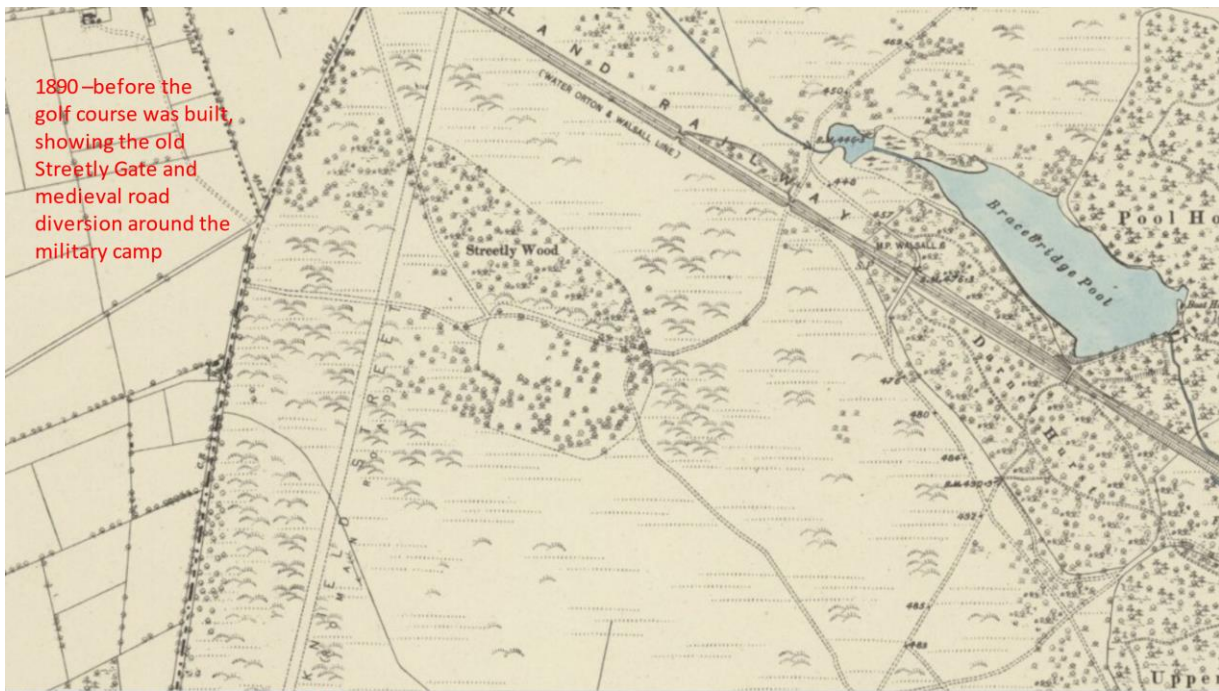
1881 – The military camp in Streetly Wood also showing the diverted medieval road. The 8th green is on what was the General Parade Ground. The 2nd hole is where the large tents are on the top left of the drawing



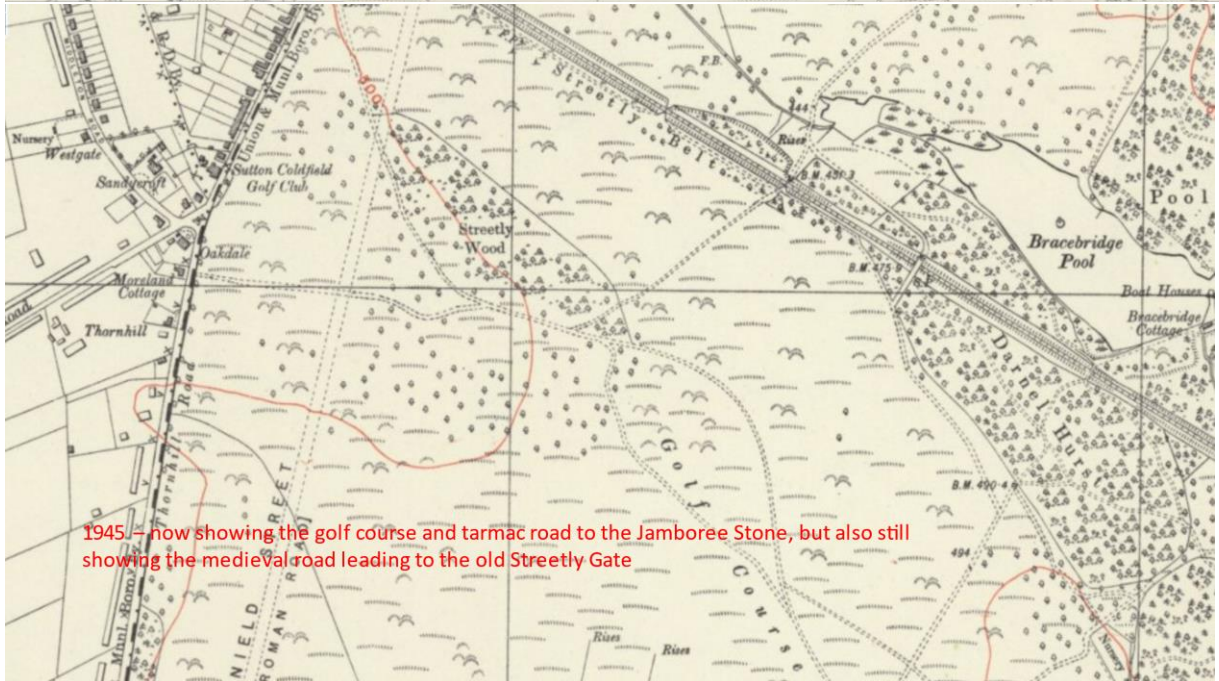
The medieval road running along the right hand side of the 7th fairway



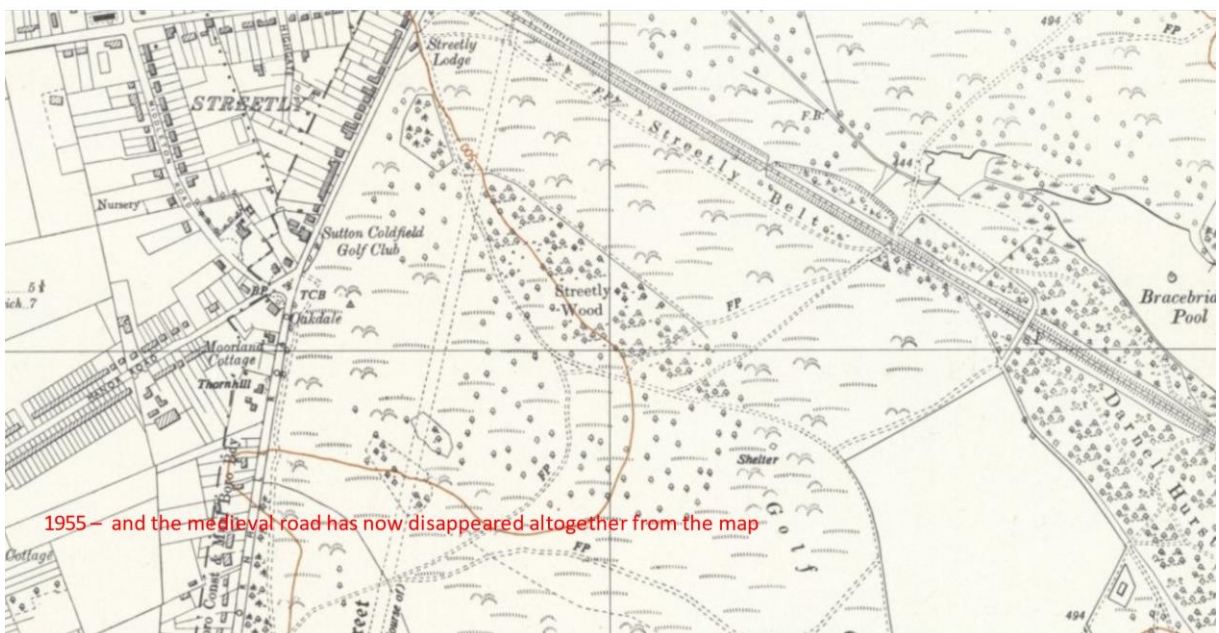
The medieval road running up the slope towards the right hand side of the 7th green



1890—before the golf course was built, showing the old Streetly Gate and medieval road diversion around the military camp



1945—now showing the golf course and tarmac road to the Jamboree Stone, but also still showing the medieval road leading to the old Streetly Gate



1955— and the medieval road has now disappeared altogether from the map