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What did the Romans do for us? One thing they certainly did was to lay the foundations for our modern road network, with millions of us driving every day along roads first laid out by Roman surveyors two millennia ago (such as Oxford Street in London, and large parts of the A1, A5 and many others). Unfortunately though, much of the Roman road network is not represented by modern roads, and despite a common assumption that Ivan Margary’s comprehensive gazetteer, *Roman Roads in Britain* (1973) made our understanding of the Roman road network reasonably complete, less than 40% of the network is actually known with any certainty. That false assumption has also frequently led to a lack of attention from the professional archaeological community (with the notable exception of roads in Wales), and for most of the past hundred years the serious study of Roman roads was left to a handful of disparate individuals and small amateur groups, with little or no co-ordination or cooperation between them.

The RRRA was formed in 2015 as a registered charity to bring those disparate individuals together, and to coordinate a nationwide programme of consistent and high quality research, promoting the study of Roman roads and Roman heritage throughout the former Roman province of *Britannia*. Over the last couple of decades, it has often been a race against time to discover and record what we can of the 60% of the Roman road network about which we are still uncertain, since modern agricultural methods and urban development have been steadily removing surviving features from the landscape. Fortunately, new technologies such as LiDAR and geophysical survey have helped enormously and enabled researchers to identify the remains of hundreds of miles of previously unknown Roman roads, along with associated Roman sites, and we continue to work to fill the many gaps. Research is only half the story though, we also have to ensure that the results of our work are readily available. We aim to:

1. bring together all known information on Roman roads in Britain, summarised in a freely accessible online interactive gazetteer, expected to be complete by 2026.

2. identify key sites where important questions remain, and organise fieldwork necessary to answer those questions. 100 Ha of geophysical survey have been completed, with a further 500 Ha already planned, and several future excavations are currently at the planning stage.

3. encourage the involvement of as many people as possible in our activities. We care passionately about community archaeology, and will always encourage local people to get involved in our work, without any charge (unlike some organisations, we will never do this!).

4. organise events to keep people up to date with research including online talks & seminars.

5. ensure that all our published work is Open Access, including our quarterly newsletter and *Itinera* (following a very short initial members only embargo).

Membership is open to everyone, and our three hundred or so members come from a wide variety of backgrounds ranging from those with just a general interest in our Roman heritage to professional archaeologists from both the public and commercial sectors, alongside seasoned Roman roads researchers. Joining the RRRA gives you the knowledge that your modest subscription (just £14 a year for a single adult) is helping to support our important work. You might even get a warm and fuzzy glow.
WHILST IT MAY NO LONGER BE FASHIONABLE FOR ACADEMIC JOURNALS TO CARRY A CHAIRMAN’S MESSAGE OR ANNUAL REVIEW, WE FELT THAT FOR OUR FIRST EVER VOLUME A BRIEF OUTLINE OF OUR ACTIVITIES IN 2020 WAS MORE THAN JUSTIFIED, ESPECIALLY IN THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

THE ROMAN ROADS RESEARCH ASSOCIATION IS A YOUNG ORGANISATION AND WAS LESS THAN FIVE YEARS OLD AT THE BEGINNING OF 2020. OF COURSE, AT THAT TIME WE HAD NO IDEA OF THE CHALLENGES THAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC WOULD PRESENT. FOR OURSELVES, THE IMPACTS WERE FELT MAINLY IN OUR FIELDWORK AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT. OUR PLANS TO REVISIT THE SITE OF OUR HUGELY SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY EXCAVATION ON DERE STREET (RR8a) AND A NEARBY ROMANO-BRITISH SETTLEMENT IN 2019 HAD TO BE SHELVED, AND WE CURRENTLY CANNOT SAY WITH CERTAINTY IF WE WILL REVISIT THE SITE THIS YEAR. THE PANDEMIC ALSO PREVENTED US MOVING FORWARD WITH OUR DEVIL’S CAUSEWAY PROJECT IN NORTHUMBERLAND, EXAMINING POSSIBLE ROMAN MILITARY SITES ALONG THE ROUTE OF THE ROMAN ROAD, AND IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT MUCH FIELDWORK WILL TAKE PLACE THERE UNTIL 2022. SIMILARLY, PLANS TO LAUNCH A MAJOR COMMUNITY BASED GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY ALSO HAD TO BE POSTPONED, AS DID A PLANNED COMMUNITY PROJECT NEAR DONCASTER WHICH WAS TO PROCESS THE FINDS FROM A FIELDWALKING SURVEY CONDUCTED JUST BEFORE THE FIRST LOCKDOWN ON A NEWLY IDENTIFIED ROMAN ROADSIDE SETTLEMENT.

HOWEVER, THE YEAR’S EVENTS WERE FAR FROM BEING ENTIRELY NEGATIVE. DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES, OR EVEN PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THEM, 2020 DID BRING POSITIVE CHANGES AS WELL. IT WAS RIGHT AT THE START OF THE FIRST LOCKDOWN THAT WE TOOK THE DECISION TO LAUNCH ITINERA, AND JUST OVER A YEAR LATER YOU ARE NOW READING OUR FIRST EVER VOLUME. OUR INCREASED SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE RESULTED IN A DOUBLING OF OUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE YEAR, A TREND THAT HAS CONTINUED SINCE, WITH MEMBERSHIP NOW STANDING AT 311 AT THE TIME OF WRITING (EARLY MARCH 2021). Whilst most of our community projects were postponed, our small but highly dedicated team conducting geophysical survey on parts of the road corridor between Doncaster and Aldborough did achieve some excellent results (when the regulations permitted). Turning out in all weathers, even in a blizzard, they surveyed the fort at Roecliffe, confirmed the route of RR720b as it approaches Isurium Brigantium (Aldborough, N. Yorkshire), and discovered an entirely unexpected ‘new’ road near Tadcaster. These are just a few examples of their many achievements, and the reports for all these surveys will be published on our website later this year.

2020 also saw the launch, quietly, of a pilot project in the East Riding. Living Beyond the Town – Petuaria is our contribution to the Petuaria ReVisited project (shortlisted for the 2020 Marsh Award for Community Archaeology) and will conduct a magnetometer survey of the Roman road corridor out of Brough (Roman Petuaria) heading towards York, as far as South Cave. The project aims to give us a clearer idea of how the Roman period landscape developed...
along this road corridor. The survey is being carried out by a group of fourteen local volunteers, who have all received training and support in using our equipment, and it will cover about 300 Ha. It is one of the largest community geophysics projects ever conducted in this country, and if successful it will be replicated elsewhere in Britain.

Without question, the most significant event for us in 2021 is the launch of this first volume of *Itinera*. From the beginning, the Editorial Committee was very conscious of the increasing problems faced by researchers when attempting to access academic papers, even by those with access to university libraries, since so many academic journals these days are held securely behind a publisher’s pay wall. We wanted to ensure that no researcher would ever struggle to obtain a paper published in *Itinera*, and so we took the decision to produce the journal entirely ourselves and without the aid of a publisher. This was far from being a straightforward process, but we have now proved that with a dedicated group of volunteers, inexpensive publishing software and the advice of people with experience in publishing, typesetting and illustration, it can be done. We can only hope that others follow our lead. Crucially, by going down this route we can not only keep the price of the printed version low but are able to make the entire journal open access online, after an initial members-only embargo of one year.

We continue to promote a strong community-based approach, and 2021 will see the launch of two further community geophysics projects examining sites along the course of Roman roads, one in Nottinghamshire and the other in North Yorkshire. Another potential project is being discussed in Cambridgeshire. We are very well aware of an apparent bias towards projects in Yorkshire; this is an unintentional but inevitable consequence of the Association being founded in Yorkshire. However, we are extremely keen to undertake fieldwork elsewhere in Britain, especially geophysical survey, and welcome any suggestions for areas of future research. In time, we hope that we can meet many more of our members face to face, whether that be by our planned zoom series of chats and lectures, or back out in the field when circumstances allow.

Despite the uncertainties of the coming months, thanks to the enthusiasm and participation of our membership, the long-term outlook for the RRRA is extremely bright. In the meantime, we hope all our readers remain safe and well in these challenging times.

Mike Haken
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The first Editorial of a new annual journal is a significant moment. Launching *Itinera* marks a step forward for the RRRA, focusing light on an aspect of Roman archaeology that has not previously enjoyed its own published academic outlet. That such a development is possible, demonstrates the current health and breadth of an area of Roman studies that will always be associated with the expert labour of Ivan Margary in the middle years of the twentieth century.

*Itinera* is, from conception, a journal intended to bridge the gap between academic researchers and that large band of enthusiasts – the backbone of so many local societies and our own RRRA membership – who wish both to stay informed about, and contribute to, developments in the field. Thus *Itinera*’s content will include quality work by capable independent researchers alongside significant papers from established academics. To ensure maintenance of standards, all papers are peer assessed.

*Itinera* has been established to offer a point of reference for all those doing work which can develop and broaden understanding of Roman roads and land communications. It is an aspect often touched upon in wider archaeological investigations (see for example Janet Phillips and Pete Wilson’s paper in the current volume) but in the past such isolated findings have not always been treated with due emphasis and made readily available for a better understanding of the road network as a whole. *Itinera* will allow Roman road studies to make their proper contribution to understanding Roman society, technological practice, communications, and military and economic development. The journal will inform academics about the current state of knowledge while also making it available to local individuals and societies, allowing future work to be targeted for maximum efficacy. Thus this journal is published both in digital form for maximum reach (free to RRRA members), and in paper form for permanent academic reference and record.

Our content, as may be judged from this first volume, is wide-ranging. The first paper, from David Ratledge, shows how an experienced and skilled practitioner is able to exploit modern technology (in this case LiDAR) to expose and clarify routes that were previously imprecisely defined. Other papers demonstrate the findings of specific excavations, examine the artefactual and archaeological evidence for Roman transport, explore issues of planning and surveying, and speculate about the extent of local road networks. A major contribution from Bill Trow represents the culmination of many years work in testing some of Selkirk’s conclusions regarding the existence of a ‘Proto Dere Street’. A roundup of the year (interpreted broadly for this first volume) keeps track of investigative work relating to Roman roads around the country.
The starting point of Roman road studies has long been Ivan Margary’s classic study, ‘Roman Roads in Britain’. A major challenge for the present day is how to build constructively upon this work in the 21st century, allowing recent findings, seldom pulled together, to be readily referenced by the archaeological community. Two important papers in this volume, from Mike Haken and Dave Armstrong, examine ways in which the RRRA supports identification, classification and nomenclature of new discoveries, building upon Margary’s work and ensuring that it remains fit for purpose in the twenty-first century.

A new journal is not launched without the labour of a dedicated band. Our editorial committee has met regularly on-line throughout this year of pandemic to resolve the many issues that have arisen. It has established ground rules; invited, gathered, reviewed, and selected material; communicated with authors; edited text and images; created and used templates; entered materials into publishing software; stitched together the journal itself; and finally sent the completed journal for printing and circulation.

Mike Haken, the RRRA Chairman, has been unsparing of his time and expertise, actively involved at every stage. Dave Armstrong, indefatigable as the man at the centre, has pulled together the materials into the form of a journal, always positive and perceptive, no labour too challenging. Mike Bishop has given generously of his archaeological knowledge and crucial publishing experience; Chester Forster has brought his experience from other archaeological journals both to head up our band of local correspondents and to manage the indexing of this volume; and John Poulter has been a valued consultant. Paul Bidwell and Pete Wilson, among several others, have acted as readers and referees, their immense knowledge and expertise allowing us to maintain a solid academic basis to this venture.

Nevertheless, it is the authors to whom a journal is ultimately indebted for its success: we thank all our contributors for making Itinera’s first volume possible. We trust that others will be inspired to maintain and develop this journal, taking note of our mid-November deadline for 2022 copy. Similarly we welcome offers of help for our next volume in terms of reading, reviewing, managing images or digital typesetting.

We look forward to receiving ideas for relevant and authoritative papers, whether from inside or outside the UK.

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BANNAVENTA: GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY AND THE ROMAN ROAD NETWORK

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ABSTRACT

The study of road networks is essential in formulating an informed account of Roman roadside settlement and their influence in the surrounding locality. Roads and trackways afford an interesting range of opportunities for evaluating the archaeological data available. Focus upon identification, alignment, methods of construction and place within the wider road framework are fundamentally useful avenues of research but roads can also help to proffer deeper analytical insights into the broader social, economic and political narrative of the actual roadside settlement themselves. An apposite example of this can be observed at the site of the Roman posting station of Bannaventa (Whilton Lodge, Northants). The settlement lies on Watling Street, the modern A5, as it traverses the watershed of the River Nene in central Northamptonshire. The site is mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary where it is listed under three different route listings (Iters II, VI and VIII) (Roucoux 1984, 6).

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Bannaventa is of particular interest for a variety of interrelated archaeological reasons. Watling Street constitutes one of the most significant arterial transport routes in Roman Britain and the main access point into the Midlands. Detailed cognisance of any one of the chief settlements associated with the road would greatly assist our comprehension of it and refine the characterisation of this type of settlement. The posting station is one of the few accessible instances available for enquiry on the scale necessary to achieve these outcomes. The relationship between carriageway, posting station and the local road network offers an opportunity to clarify the purpose and function not only of the site itself but also the nature of the link with the locality. Finally, analyses of the roads and their networks allow aspects of the settlement to be evaluated in the light of current archaeological agendas and research paradigms¹.
The posting station at *Bannaventa* is regarded as part of a planned scheme of road construction, centrally organised or not, that systematically placed communities at fairly regular intervals along the major routeways of the province. This facilitated the *Cursus Publicus* (Imperial Postal Service) in the maintenance of empire, administrative control and imperial prestige. Furthermore, the siting of these settlements reflected the constraints of daily travel and commerce between one settlement and another. Watling Street itself had the weighty role of connecting the south-east to the north-west of the province; joining together the disparate regions of *Britannia* and the principal Roman cities of *Londinium* and *Viroconium Cornoviorum* (Wroxeter). The roadside settlements demonstrated a concerted effort to provide Romanising focal points which could function as commercial, transport, communication and cultural hubs for the local districts.

*Bannaventa* is situated equidistant between neighbouring communities on Watling Street, namely *Lactodorum* (Towcester) to the south and *Tripontium* (Cave’s Inn) on the corresponding northern side. Perhaps not immediately obvious, *Bannaventa* also occupies an advantageous and geographically favourable position in respect of east/west communication and commercial traffic routes. The site was a significant one that bridges...
the rich agricultural areas of the Cotswold and the Severn Valley with the coastal expanse of the Fens and the ports of East Anglia via the Northamptonshire highlands and the Upper Nene Valley (Fig. 1).

The site is known to be surrounded by defensive ditches supported by a stone wall with the defended area forming an irregular quadrilateral shape with extensive cemeteries on the southern and possibly western side of the Posting Station. The subject of a rescue excavation (1970-71) of the north-eastern quadrant of the Posting Station, the settlement stands on the spine of a raised promontory (110 -120m OD) overlying glacial sands and gravels (Dix and Taylor 1988, 299-339). Bannaventa is known to be the location of the intersection of Margary’s RR1f Watling Street, the alignment of which runs from Towcester to High Cross, and the westward terminus of route RR17, the Norton to Northampton (Duston) Roman roads (Margary, I.D 1967, 184-5). Little is known for certain about the intersection between these two significant routeways or indeed much about their connection and effect upon the layout and development of the settlement itself. Current interpretation primarily rests on aerial photographic analysis which indicates the junction between Watling Street and the road towards Duston lies within the defended core of the Late Roman posting station. Interpretation of the aerial photographs also shows other roads and trackways are evident at the site, both within and outside the defended area. The road plan within the settlement appears to be irregular and consistent with other small towns of the Roman period associated with the Nene Valley that have been more thoroughly examined ² (Taylor, J 2002).

The points raised in this article are based mainly on the findings derived from a series of geophysical surveys undertaken by the Community Landscape Archaeology Survey Project (CLASP), a community-based archaeological charity in central Northamptonshire ³. For the most part the findings affirmed the conclusions previously postulated about the road network, initially by Margary, and later authenticated through the analysis of aerial photographs showing the basic road network servicing the site (RCHM, 1981). Astonishingly the surveys also demonstrated that the basic assumptions made about the character of Bannaventa are in need of some revision.

The archaeological impetus for CLASP to undertake the geophysical survey at Bannaventa centred on the importance of the site with regard to the overall settlement distribution pattern in the area and the nature of its role within the neighbouring locality. The posting station lies in a belt of landscape which has been the subject of an ongoing large-scale investigation of Roman settlement associated with the watershed of the River Nene for the last two decades (Young, S 2010). CLASP’s study area is a triangular tract of countryside covering approximately 146 sq. kilometres between the major Roman centres of Towcester, Whilton Lodge and Duston, near Northampton, resulting in an integrated survey characterising many of the Roman settlements within the locality.

The discoveries made encouraged the charity to embark upon an extensive archaeological survey of Bannaventa building on the methodological approach previously developed. Geophysical survey, in combination with selective fieldwalking and metal detecting surveys, was used to obtain the most exhaustive, non-intrusive level of detail possible about the surviving archaeological remains. The geophysical survey utilising magnetometry was the most enlightening technique used initially and was intended primarily to establish the
layout and extent of the settlement. Once this was achieved it also helped expedite an examination of the character of the site assemblages retrieved in associated surveys. These three surveys are also likely to be a useful tool in determining the chronological basis for the site and the road network.

The fieldwork utilised for this article was undertaken initially by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2007 and continued by CLASP volunteers over a period of seven years between 2011 and 2017. On the technical side the entire geophysical survey was conducted using a Bartington gradiometer type 601, dual flux gate gradiometer, with the 601 data logger set to make four readings per metre (Sample interval of 0.25m). The zigzag traverse method of survey was used with 1m wide traverses on an approximate North South line across the fields based mainly on 30x30m grid squares. The sensitivity of the machine was set to detect and record variation in the order of 0.1 nanoTesla. The data was processed using Snuffler Version 1.3 and filtered to reduce geomagnetic striping (ZMT) and operator error due to ground irregularities.

**DISCOVERIES & OVERALL FINDINGS**

In total the area explored during the geophysical survey of the site covered in excess of 320 hectares centred around the Whilton Lodge to Norton crossroads. This included both the site of the acknowledged Roman posting station at its core and the expanse of the neighbouring attendant hinterland (Young and Kay 2017, 2018, 2019). The range of anomalies observed during the geophysical survey provides the supporting evidence for the assertions made here in relation to the roads. The scale and clarity of the data enables the creation of a relatively clear picture of the layout, character and significant development phases of the settlement through the Roman period. Those anomalies also permit a comprehensive examination of known and some new roads comprising the *Bannaventa* network. They highlight the individual alignments and some typological features and relationships between the roads associated with the site and its environs as well as demonstrating the extent of the extra mural activity to the north and south of the settlement (Fig. 2).

Previous excavation of the site focused on the existence of the Posting Station but the main discoveries discerned from the field survey indicate that the late 3rd/4th century AD walled Posting station lies within a larger banked and ditched enclosing circuit. The scale of this implies the existence of an underlying small town twice the size of the area associated with the posting station. Incidentally, this explains the conundrum of the extra defensive ditch on the western side of the posting station which confused earlier interpretations of the overall defensive layout (Young and Kay 2017, 2018, 2019). *Bannaventa* has more than one major phase or manifestation as a settlement making it far more complex and larger in extent than previously presumed.

The site appears to be comparable in scale, size and shape to two neighbouring Roman small towns found along Watling Street to the south at *Lactodorum* (Towcester) and *Magiovinium* (Fenny Stratford) (Brown & Alexander 1982; Burnham & Wacher 1990; Woodfield 1995;
Walford 2014). The smaller defended compound of the posting station encloses an area of approximately five hectares, lying within the south-western corner of an encircling larger banked and ditched enclosure which forms the boundary of the Roman small town and covers an area of about eleven hectares. The posting station has gateways to the north, south, south-east and east whilst the small town bank and ditch are punctuated by another two gateways on the northern and south-eastern approaches (Figs. 3a & b).

Evidence derived from previous and current fieldwork includes pottery and coins indicating an origin in the very Late Iron Age or the Early Conquest Period for the initial habitation of the site. However, the nature of that occupation is extremely difficult to interpret with the
information available. The strategic position of the roadside settlement has led in the past to the presumption of a military influence on the early development of the site. However, there is no real archaeological evidence to support this proposition either from CLASP’s geophysical survey or the material assemblages collected from other field work at the site (Cooper 2006).

A range of geophysical anomalies observed in the north-western quadrant of the posting station suggest a large enclosed space containing a discreet building separated from the ubiquitous street frontage buildings found elsewhere in the posting station walled area. The geophysical anomalies for these features are aligned with Watling Street on the eastern side.
and the walled defensive circuit on the north and west sides. Their existence implies the location of a *mansio* (Imperial hostel) or *mutatio* (staging post) within an enclosure strategically positioned next to the north gate. The lack of evidence for a bath house complex sufficient to service the former, and usually associated with them, may imply the presence of the latter.

A further and intriguing discovery was an extensive area of geophysical anomalies south of both the walled area and the adjoining extra mural zone immediately outside the southern gate of the posting station. The analysis of these indicates the existence of a satellite suburb detached from the inhabited focal point of the site. It is separated from the extra mural
development by the floodplain of a tributary brook of the river Nene that flows to the west and south of Bannaventa. The suburb is aligned along a Watling Street frontage on the eastern side of the road and appears to be a fragment of a much larger expanse of residential or possibly industrial habitation extending to the west side of the Watling Street frontage (Webster, G 1975).

In the case of Bannaventa, distributions of datable pottery and coin assemblages suggest a chronological origin of the small town in either the late 1st century or early to mid-2nd century and a late 3rd to 4th century AD for the posting station itself. This brings to the fore the question of what was being attempted in the construction of small towns at their inception. The regularity of placement and the distance of placement hint strongly at the needs of the Cursus Publicus, an idea strongly attached to modern interpretations of these sites. It could also be hypothesised that these settlements were perceived to have dual functions as communication hubs and as cultural expressions of Romanisation within the new province.

Interestingly the lack of evidence for a range of architecturally sophisticated civic buildings other than a possible mansio or mutatio, and the irregular street plan suggest a less pronounced adoption of public life, perhaps pointing to a more culturally hybrid evolution in town planning which permitted the level of change in the late Roman period.

THE ROAD NETWORK

Clearly demonstrated in the interpretation of the geophysical survey’s anomalies recorded for the site are the unmistakable alignments of the two major roads of Watling Street (RR1f) and the road to Duston (RR17). In addition, there are the carriageways identified from aerial photographic coverage of the site to the south-west and the north-east. However, the geophysical survey has also revealed previously unknown roads and enhanced the interpretational possibilities of the road network in general. The new roads are more apparent within the interior of the enclosed areas of the posting station and small town as opposed to outside in the immediate hinterland although this is not exclusively so. The geophysics allows speculation on the impact of and rationale for the road network, signposting typological aspects of their construction and enabling these issues to be engaged with in a logical and more informed manner. Existing aerial photographic analysis of the road network servicing Bannaventa has already indicated the main alignment of Watling Street in relation to the approaches to and passage through the posting station phase of the site (RCHM, 1981). It also established the existence and the general orientation of the Duston (RR17) Road in relation to Bannaventa as well as indicating the presence of two other significant carriageways on the west side of Watling Street to the south-west, and the north-west of the site. (Taylor 2002) (Fig. 4).

Subsequently the CLASP geophysical survey was not only able to substantiate these findings but also confirm that Bannaventa was a considerably larger communication hub than hitherto thought with a potentially more far-reaching influence within its locality. Combining previously proposed alignments and newly discovered evidence proves the site
was serviced by a multifaceted network of roads reflecting a diverse range of rationales governing their construction and role. They also exhibit a variety of forms from national arterial routeways like Watling Street, to regionally important carriageways like the Duston Road (linking the watershed of the Upper Nene via the Lower Nene to the east coast), to the prosaic backyard lanes of the small town and posting station interior or the associated extra mural areas that enabled access to street front properties.

Unfortunately, no physical evidence such as a raised agger is visible anywhere in the area explored by the geophysical survey although surviving examples, in the neighbouring vicinity, some distance to the south of the posting station have been recorded and investigated near Brockhall and Heyford Grange, Stowe Hill (Margary, I.D 1973, 22, 184). During methodical fieldwalking undertaken by CLASP, examination of the plough horizon along the road alignment on the west side of the A5 both inside and outside the posting station and on the southern suburb, verified the main carriageway had a metalled surface constructed of hard-packed and graded gravel. Apart from this, the only other discernible surface feature was a stone and estuarine bunter pebble foundation observed after ploughing in the low-lying area beside the brook on marshy ground between the southern extra mural area and suburb. This is where a Roman culvert channelling the brook under the road is believed to have existed.

Taking a typological perspective, three definably archetypal road layouts are evident amongst the anomalies observed from the geophysical fieldwork. These probably reflect the relative status and importance of the roads themselves and their place within the road

Fig. 4, Bannaventa Roman Road Network.
network hierarchy. Interestingly, the vast majority of substantial carriageways at Bannaventa have drainage ditches immediately adjacent to the roadway on both sides without any wider road corridor markings. The main arterial routeway of Watling Street however, before entering and exiting the core of Bannaventa, has edging strips defined by shallow ditches to either side of the traffic lane denoting the width of the road corridor. This is particularly apparent in the width of the thoroughfare as it changes within the gateways to reflect the boundaries of the Watling Street frontage once inside either version of Bannaventa. Smaller subsidiary road and trackways adjacent to the main throughfare are less defined and for the most part devoid of regular drainage ditches.

The CLASP geophysical survey findings highlight the fact that the relationship between Watling Street and Bannaventa is not just bound to the story of the posting station portion of the site. The narrative is by no means as straightforward as it once looked and is much more complex and difficult to disentangle, the ability to analyse suffering from more restricted survey coverage in crucial sections of the small town. A fresh discovery which demands consideration is the fact that Bannaventa had two major identities. The earliest is connected to the layout of a substantial small town precinct and its interior network of roads, and the other to the subsequent late Roman posting station and its dedicated road infrastructure. Essentially, one site has two phases with mixed or separate road networks which are not necessarily mutually inclusive or individually self-explanatory.

A description, in detail, of the individual road alignment and network is now required. The interpretation of the geophysical anomalies is not always easy but does supply confirmation of the presence of acknowledged routeways, and clarity to the precise location and placement of their alignments. In addition, the analysis of the geophysical survey has enhanced our understanding of the irregular layout of the interior road system for the posting station and to a lesser extent that of the underlying small town which is obscured by later phases of development.

**Watling Street (Margary RR1f) Alignment**

Geophysical survey of Bannaventa and its immediate hinterland revealed the survival of substantial stretches of the main Watling Street alignment. These remains were spread over a distance of about 1.5km and are clearly visible in the processed data both within the walled area and on the approaches to the gates of the posting station. The external throughfare from both the southerly and northerly direction comprised two distinct component parts: the central carriageway and a flanking border zone defined in the geophysical interpretation as shallow edging ditches. The edging ditches probably mark out the limit of the road zone from the actual highway.

Observation of the geophysical evidence for the course of Watling Street as it passes through Bannaventa indicates a duality of the route through the settlement. The chronological development and relationship between the two alignments is difficult to understand and interpret as well as being marred to some degree by the restricted survey coverage on the more northerly divergent route. The placement of one carriageway is closely associated
with the established southerly orientation relating to the Posting Station whilst the other route appears to be a more northerly deviation from the original Roman alignment in order to service the social and commercial requirements of the occupation, possibly pre or contemporary with the small town boundaries. Whether both routes were part of an integrated system or were differentiated expressions of the transport infrastructure cannot as yet be securely determined. It also raises potential questions about the developmental sequence of the major structural phases of Bannaventa.

The author’s view is that the southern route implied that this main carriageway was originally separated from the inhabited core of the settlement but that the eventual construction of the banked and ditched enclosure for the small town incorporated the main thoroughfare into a larger civic entity. This was followed by the construction of the defended enclosure around the posting station in the late Roman period centred on the main alignment of Watling Street. The presence of border ditches defining the roadway within the small town boundary also supports the idea that the general Watling Street alignment already existed before the construction of the enclosing bank and ditch of the town. It also explains the integration of the third defensive ditch to the west of the posting station which would be superfluous had the development sequence been reversed. A further point to consider is that if the creation of defensive ditches for the posting station was pre small town, the enlargement of the small town would be unusual for this period of ‘urban’ development within the province. Of course, further fieldwork might suggest a different evolutionary process for the site but the new evidence is available to be used to help shape the aims and objectives of future research agendas.

The main carriageway of Watling Street through the posting station maintains a width of approximately 10m and only outside the walled area does it expand to an overall width of roughly 20m to include the border edging zone delineated by the shallow ditches. The ditches defining the alignment of the road evident from the geophysical survey are a shallow type of ditch approximately 1m wide, probably only intended to mark out a road zone for the highway. These are placed well back from the carriageway whose alignment lies centrally between them, leaving a flat space on each side roughly equal to the width of the road agger surface. The road width measurements are consistent with those recorded for other comparably important arterial routeways investigated elsewhere in Roman Britain. Indirect supporting evidence for interpreting a narrower central carriageway is supplied by the width of the road inside the defended area of the posting station where the delineating shallow ditches disappear and the carriageway border is no longer present. Here the main alignment of Watling Street keeps to the carriageway width, which in turn is defined by the property frontages on either side (Figs. 5a & b).

A study of the two principal Watling Street road alignments through Bannaventa highlights the issues and challenges of formulating a cogent understanding of the evidence. The posting station’s Watling Street alignment is highly visible and traverses the site in a direct line between its related south and north gates, although the interface with the north entranceway is obscured by the carriageway of the modern A5. It doesn’t deviate at all from the overall placement of the road as it approaches and leaves the walled settlement, allowing a clear interpretation to be made. On the other hand, the data from the more
northerly route of Watling Street through the small town raises serious questions of interpretation. In particular the northern element of the carriageway outside the north-eastern small town gate has the same 20m width highway with the shallow ditch borders and the reduction of the central carriageway width inside the gate. The roadway continues to be visible and traceable for a further 60m into the settlement, reflecting that witnessed in the posting station. However, as noted previously the problem is the absence of geophysical data between this and the area adjacent to the south-eastern gate. This northern alignment also involved the construct of a curving detour to access the small town gates bypassing the posting station precinct. The road approaching the south-east gate of the small town

![Fig. 5a, Watling Street posting station and south-west road geophysical survey.](image)
diverges from the main Watling street up to possibly 650m away, although this cannot be verified because of the modern alignment of the A5. To the north of the settlement the road re-joins the main carriage over 400m away from the settlement. This indicates as previously noted that the focus of Bannaventa initially did not lie directly on the Watling Street alignment but originally lay a little further to the east of the road in the pre and post-conquest period configuration. This may further imply that the foundation of the small town predated the establishment of Watling Street or indeed that the direct connection between these two was not intended as part of the initial construction plan for this important roadway with its probable purely military considerations.
However, both alignments, as is evident in the geophysics, could be interpreted as being the main Watling Street highway for either manifestation of the settlement. Firstly, it is important to note that the roads are spatially independent, running in parallel alignments separated by 130m, each road appearing to service different areas of the site. One bisects the north-eastern half of the small town, the other the posting station (Figs. 6a & b). Additionally, these main carriageway alignments, although appearing to share the same constructional characteristics, service a different array of gateways. These thoroughfares, signified by the geophysical anomalies traversing Bannaventa, might best be construed as representing different stages or rationales of the Watling Street carriageway during the
Roman period. Although a logical interpretation, the incomplete nature of the layout and the lack of detailed chronological information available leaves this open to question.

On the northern approach to the small town however, during the construction of a temporary road between the A5 and the London to Birmingham railway line for bridge repairs in the field directly to the north of the small town, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken. Three pits and a ditch were excavated cutting into the natural gravels beneath the topsoil. The geophysical survey confirmed the ditch did intersect with the highway alignment detected during the survey of this area. The ditch, aligned in a north/south axis, appears to coincide with the line of the most easterly delineating shallow ditch
bordering the small town’s Watling Street alignment as the Roman road began the final approach towards the north gate (Prentice 1999).

These two highway alignments may share exactly the same configuration and could be interpreted as being different alignments of Watling Street but their resonance lies in the way they individually dominate the interiors of the two different kinds of settlement. One roadway may well be an early empire alignment servicing the small town whilst the other facilitated the posting station of the late empire. The one emphasises the relative automatous nature of the small town from Watling Street whilst the other underlines the link between the two. These highlight changing rationales and priorities for the re-alignment of Watling Street at Bannaventa during the Roman period which may well have been as a consequence of shifting political and social dictate either at local or provincial level, concerning the role and function of Bannaventa.

There are additional factors to consider. The stretch of Watling Street running directly through the posting station which divides the site into two unequal halves is not really aligned with the defensive ditches enclosing it, with the internal space deeper on the east side of the carriageway than it was on the western side. This intramural disproportion probably reflects the spatial layout of the earlier small town where the preponderance of the settlement lay to the east of Watling Street, and may also point to a desire to integrate the existing south western portion of the small town bank and ditch into the new defensive arrangement. Moreover, the placement of the south-eastern gateway for the posting station also appears to be inconsistent with the overall layout of the late defended area in relation to Watling Street. However, looking at the geophysical anomalies for the quarter, the alignment and presumed continued use of the Duston road throughout the period dictated the position of the small town gate and thereby the subsequent location of the posting station entrance as well.

The small town orientation of the Watling Street carriageway is quite probably the earliest alignment of the two road configurations. However, its transit across the site does not lend itself to easy interpretation and this is hampered even more by the approach of the Duston Road alignment at the south-eastern entrance to the small town and its junction with the curved divergent alignment from Watling Street. Most likely this is the actual western terminus for the Duston road, perhaps indicating an early date for the construction of the gateway.

**DUSTON ROAD (MARGARY RR17)**

The geophysical anomalies demonstrated the road’s existence and confirm the general alignment as it approached Bannaventa from the direction of Roman Duston. On reaching the settlement the road utilises both the south-eastern gate of the posting station and the corresponding gateway of the banked and ditched small town boundary to enter the site. The small town boundary lies on the same orientation as the posting station but 45m further to the east. It was probably the original destination for the terminus of the Duston road,
judging by the confluence of carriageways outside the gateway although obviously the road continued into the heart of both phases of *Bannaventa*.

The road is visible in the geophysical survey for a length of nearly 300m from the interior of the posting station to where it is truncated by the main Birmingham to London railway. The carriageway is about 8m wide, although the alignment looks much eroded and decayed, and appears to be bordered by the standard configuration of two significant drainage ditches edging the side of the road. Again, the ditches were probably about 2m wide and sufficiently large to drain water off the surface camber of the roadway.
There is a junction between the Duston road and the carriageway linking the south-eastern small town gate with the main Watling Street alignment coming from the south. The curved road alignment converges on the Duston Road through the extra mural area and they amalgamate outside the gate. This junction demonstrates the importance attached to the gateway in the initial configuration of the roads in this area of the site. The alignment and termini here also explain the failure of the Duston road to connect directly with the main alignment advancing from Towcester that passes through the posting station 200m to the west (Figs. 7a & b).
Unfortunately, although the geophysical survey is instructive about the alignment, form and rationale of the road, nothing is known about the surface of the carriageway or the general construction techniques used to make the highway. This aspect of the road will only be revealed by excavation in the future of an archaeological section across the thoroughfare. Nevertheless, the Duston road is a typical example of most of the longer distance carriageways forming the backbone of the road network around Bannaventa. It was wide enough for two-way transport with the capacity to connect the site to its larger neighbouring communities and to support the transport and commercial requirements of the regional markets further afield.

**NORTH WESTERN ROADWAY**

The final long-distance destination for this road is problematic but the alignment and direction of travel demonstrate it serviced the adjoining Roman settlement to the north-west at Thrupp Grounds which lies in excess of 500m to the west of the Long Buckby crossroads. Analysis of the geophysical anomalies associated with the road corroborates the aerial photographic evidence. The physical attributes of the roadway indicate that it is similar in purpose and status to both the Duston and south-western road alignments and reflects the same rationale that they exemplify.

At the eastern terminus the orientation of the roadway relates to the north gate of the posting station with the alignment approaching at an oddly oblique angle to the entrance gateway. Intriguingly this alignment, if projected straight forward, corresponds neatly with the south eastern entrances of both phases and the advent of the Duston road (RR17), possibly indicating a construction rationale related more to the larger small town rather than the posting station. This is further supported by the fact that the alignment geophysics shows the carriageway is partially over lain by the defensive ditches of the north gate of the posting station. It may suggest a greater emphasis on east/west traffic than north/south. An approximately 8m wide carriageway is bordered by drainage ditches on either side of the road similar in dimension to those investigated on the other significant routes. The configuration further to the west is obscured somewhat in places by a secondary alignment or recutting of the roadway at some stage in its history which make it seem much wider than it actually was. The road is visible in the geophysical survey across two continuous stretches for a length of nearly 435m (Figs. 8a & b).

The western end of the road alignment at Thrupp is also very complicated to analyse, especially as the Roman settlement lies beneath, and to some extent is obscured by, the remains of a deserted medieval village. Roman pottery, coins and individual ditches of the period have been discovered during excavation but the character of the settlement remains vague. However, two issues have emerged from excavation in the area that have potential in deciphering the background context of the north-western road. A series of small shaft furnaces or bloomery hearths, probably Roman in date, were observed at the western extremity of the site. These were connected to a trackway which traverses the medieval settlement. The orientation of this road aligns well with the projected carriageway of the north-western Roman roadway as it traverses the intervening interval between the
settlements. On excavation, the road at Thrupp was observed to have a metalled stone surface and a similar width to the main Roman highway. Speculation based on these findings suggests a function of the roadway was to service a satellite industrial settlement focused on iron production. It also potentially highlights the longevity of elements of the Roman road network during subsequent periods of activity in the vicinity of Bannaventa after large scale occupation ceased to exist in the Post Roman period.

Fig. 8a, Bannaventa Posting Station NW Roadway Alignment Geophysics.
A terminus for a routeway to the south west of Bannaventa lies at a junction with Watling Street approximately 65m south of the southern gate of the posting station in the adjoining extra mural area. This alignment can be followed for 140m and most likely extended beyond
the brook in the direction of the village of Norton and then Daventry. The carriageway possibly has some connection locally with the Roman temple or villa complex located within the Iron Age hillfort of Borough Hill but certainly serviced the rural villas and settlement in the landscape through which it passed. (Figs. 5a & b).

The roadway is a substantial one flanked by the ubiquitous drainage ditches on either side bordering the carriageway which is approximately 8m in width. Strategically less important than Watling Street, this highway could be interpreted as fulfilling a similar role and function as the Duston roadway although here the thoroughfare is the main communication route to the south-west. Interestingly, although there is no indication of the road to the north of its junction with Watling Street, the overall trajectory and alignment if projected forward, matches that of the incoming carriageway from Duston. It may indicate an older, much longer inter-linked pre-Roman alignment of communication to the south of Bannaventa as seen with the north-west roadway.

This south-western road terminus cuts a right-angle swathe through the property frontages of the extra mural settlement which is aligned along Watling Street outside the south gate. It appears to be part of the original layout of the extra mural area whose origins must be dated no later than the mid to late 2nd century AD.

**Southern Suburb Roadway**

Other fascinating evidence is the newly identified road attached to a discreet and extensive southern suburb which has its western terminus at a junction with Watling Street 500m to the south of the south gate of the posting station. It points to the presence of at least one non-centric road in the local network that serviced peripheral elements of the site. This road skirts and defines the eastern edge of the suburb and appears to facilitate a significant routeway into the surrounding hinterland, rather than from the focal point of the posting station for the late Roman period. This substantial highway, aligned towards the south-east, leads directly into the villa rich landscape already studied by CLASP to the south-west of Northampton which would not necessarily have been accessible from the wider transport network enclosed by the Duston/Watling Street axis.

The western terminus of this road begins at a junction with Watling Street on the rising ground on the far side of the brook to the south of the posting station extra mural area. Geophysical survey has revealed about 170m of the alignment and a carriageway width of roughly 8m. The road is flanked by a pair of drainage ditches similar to those verified on the Duston and south-western carriageway. This road delineates the boundary of the southern suburb on the eastern side of the occupied area. However, the orientation of the property boundaries indicates that Watling Street itself provided the main frontage for the houses, tenements and workshops forming the suburb on its eastern flank. This heavily implies a corresponding range of buildings awaiting detection on the opposite flank of Watling Street in the field to the west. The area in question is currently pasture but inspection revealed the site contains significant and extensive earth works (Figs. 9a & b).
It is interesting that this southern suburb roadway originates and terminates here and not at either the posting station or the small town. The roadway exhibits the same typological features of construction as other key communication routes within the Bannaventa network and maybe fulfils a similar role for the local and regional network. The question of whether this was an original or a later addition to the road network is open to debate.

Recent fieldwalking and metal detecting surveys have produced an assemblage distribution favouring late Roman pottery and coin which suggests an escalation of activity in this area particularly in the late 3rd and 4th century AD at a time when the posting station is supplanting the small town and significantly reducing in size the core of the settlement.

Fig. 9a, Bannaventa Southern Extra Mural & Suburb Geophysics.
Traditionally the revision to smaller, more heavily defended major settlements is interpreted as a sign of decline and economic decay believed to be endemic in the later empire. Interestingly the evidence from the suburb points more to a relocation of population and a renaissance in activity outside the old small town and posting station area very late in the Roman period.

Fig. 9b, *Bannaventa Southern Extra Mural & Suburb Areas Geophysics with road interpretation.*
Few perceptive comments can be made for the walled area concerning the internal road layout of Bannaventa for any stage of its history. It can be seen, however, that the road plan
was irregular and devoid of any archaeological evidence to support an overarching systematic road layout that epitomises centralised regulated control. The geophysical survey has endorsed the existence of an irregular layout across the intramural components of the site and demonstrated the haphazard and possibly piecemeal development of the road arrangement. The influences and pressures on the road layout can be detected in the geophysical data for the intramural sections of the overall site. Foremost amongst these are the external pressures exerted by the alignments of the trunk roads approaching Bannaventa which dictate the position of the gates, and the apparent lack of civic buildings dominating the internal space which allow a more haphazard layout. This becomes even clearer in analysing the intramural areas immediately adjacent to the small town and posting station gateways and on the approach routes through the extra mural areas where the geophysical survey provides good coverage. Predictably, this is less palpable in the eastern section of the small town where the inability to conduct a geophysical survey means the road layout remains hidden. Most insights are gleaned from within the confines of the posting station along the Watling Street frontage alignment, in the north eastern district of the same walled area and in the eastern section of the extra mural neighbourhood to the south of Bannaventa.

The posting station Watling Street alignment is very much the predominate road within the settlement, something akin to a modern High Street around which other activity associated with the site revolved. The road is heavily lined by buildings and property boundaries, presumably servicing residential or commercial structures on both sides of the carriageway. These appear to be interspersed with randomly placed alleyways and larger lanes set at right angles to the main carriageway, whose function was to act as communication conduits between the high street and the farthest reaches of the site. An example of this can be seen in the built environment of the north-eastern quadrant of the posting station. Extreme disturbance by topsoiling in 1970 and the consequent destruction of much of the archaeological stratification of the sector, did not however obliterate everything. Enough survived of a series of features which had penetrated deeper into the natural geology to allow the geophysical survey to record a fragmentary trace of the road layout, structural activity and property boundaries associated with the area (Figs. 10a & b).

Importantly, the anomalies observed confirmed the overall alignment of the north-eastern angle of the defensive circuit sectioned in the 1970 rescue excavation. The geophysical survey revealing the existence of a previously unknown postern gateway and road leading to and exiting from the defences on the eastern side of the posting station. The road was lined by buildings along its frontages and elements of extended property boundaries can be seen fanning out from the street front on either side. A prime function of the road would have been to connect the East gate of the posting station with the major Watling Street alignment 125m due west, and to service the houses and workshops that lay along it. Approximately 50m of road are observable within the gateway and 20m outside the gate. The scale of the road, whose carriage width was no bigger than 5m, suggests the road represented a minor thoroughfare more deeply aligned to meeting intramural demands than those of the external road network. The external alignment of the road and its connection to the internal network of the small town outside the gate is open to question.
Investigation of the geophysical anomalies linked to the road network in the extra mural area to the south of Bannaventa imply a similar densely packed frontage of buildings and property boundaries along the main carriageway with an attached network of side streets. Surprisingly, there are indications of regularity in the road layout here, particularly in the eastern side of the extra mural area around the connection between the curved diversion of Watling Street and the road linking it to the south-west gate. It is possible that the small
town and the extra mural area to the south were laid out as part of a regulated scheme very early on, but this had fallen into disuse by the time of the conversion to a defended posting station. This needs further archaeological investigation. Unfortunately, the modern A5 road alignment to the north of the site is so closely aligned with the modern Watling Street carriageway, obliterating property frontages, that it is impossible to detect any evidence for this there, other than the property boundaries at the furthest distance from the road.

**DISCUSSION POINTS**

It should be remembered that the quality of the geophysical anomalies observed in the interior of both key phases of *Bannaventa* is varied, fluctuating from the extremely degraded road features witnessed in the north eastern quadrant of the posting station to the clear alignments of Watling Street and the extramural areas (Dix, B and Taylor, S 1988). In general, analysis of the anomalies contained in the geophysical survey confirm the interpretation of aerial photographic coverage attributed to the site. However, the fieldwork goes beyond this, demonstrating in greater cartographic detail, the hierarchical pattern and construction typology of the roads upon which the theoretical narrative of *Bannaventa* can be built.

The identification of elements, during the geophysical survey, of an earlier field system underlying the small town, supported by fieldwalking and metal detecting assemblages, show occupation commenced in the Late Iron Age/Pre-Conquest transition period. This is a timeline replicated in the wider integrated landscape survey in much of the neighbouring rural settlement (Young, S 2010). This early focus would have been separate from the probable conquest period military alignment of Watling street. The small town was probably founded in one of two key periods either the late first or early to mid-second century AD. The bank and ditch enclosed an enlarged settlement including the Watling Street army alignment. The geophysical survey however showed no evidence of a military foundation or influence in the layout of the settlement. However, its strategic importance suggests that the road alignment must have been determined and laid out by the army at a very early date either in the conquest or immediate post conquest period. In fact, the only suggested army related material retrieval from fieldwork at *Bannaventa* were two bronze sestertii of Claudius. The provincial distribution of these is believed to be connected exclusively to the military elsewhere in Britain (Dr. M. Curteis pers. comm.). The final significant stage was the construction of the posting station walled area within the small town focussed on the main Watling Street alignment. This may account for the asymmetrical plan of the posting station which sits awkwardly alongside Watling Street in a one third two third split either side of the carriageway, and helps to explain the form of the later defences enclosing the core and the change of focus from the wider settlement (Cooper 2006). Extramural ribbon development begins in the small town phase but intensifies during the posting station phase, as does the development of the southern suburb.

The similarity of scale and size of *Bannaventa* to other, known small towns associated with Watling Street, especially as seen at *Lactodurum* and *Magiovinium*, suggests that these
roadside settlements were originally promoted as part of a planned attempt to introduce and maintain Romanised market hubs and administrative centres within local native cultures and settlement patterns. These two settlements also have their antecedents in the Late Iron Age/ Conquest period transition as is the case with Bannaventa itself. This underscores and highlights a potential centralised process at work in the early provincial development of the region, an approach which is echoed again at Bannaventa with the posting station phase where the site is constrained within a smaller walled area.

The Posting Station design is perhaps a key site in understanding the development of succeeding sites on the northward journey along Watling Street which are not thought to be military but appear to have been constructed to emphasise the Annona (Taxation in kind) and Cursus Publicus, aspects of occupation in the troubling times of the late 3rd century AD. The late posting station defensive perimeter appears to have strong affinities with the fortified enclosures located further to the north along Watling Street at Tripontium (Caves Inn), Manduessedum (Mancetter), Letocetum (Wall), Pennorucium (Penkridge) but probably not with Vxacona (Red Hill) which is often associated with them. The military or civilian purpose of all these is open to debate (Webster 1974; Gould 1999). Late Roman Bannaventa may therefore be part of this scheme and help explain the rationale behind the development of these sites. At least it appears to explain the more defensive role model adopted by the succeeding stations along Watling Street to the north that signify change in social and political realities during the late empire. In this case, the small town reflects changing social and political agendas for the early empire, while the posting station meets the political requirements of the later empire.

The alignment and position of the roads has impacted on the morphology of Bannaventa with the placement of properties and the density of the built environment in the different areas of the settlement reflecting this influence. Those parts nearer to the more important roadways are more heavily and densely occupied whilst those on the periphery in the back street areas remain open and less crowded. The irregular pattern underpins an organic development for the small town and a more planned and centrally controlled process for the posting station.

A degree of speculation is unavoidable in understanding the structural configuration of the entrance ways in general, due to the paucity of reliable evidence, but the position of two gateways in the small town has been fixed and are visible. The position of four more posting station gates is also evident. Indeed, there is a certain level of correspondence between both sets of gateway locations because they facilitate the passage of the same main carriageways. Most of the roads cater to the alignments of either the arterial routeway or the major trunk roads linking Bannaventa to neighbouring important settlements. Only the small north-eastern quadrant postern gate appears to be more securely adapted to meet the demands of intramural traffic. The pronounced topographic descent on the side of the western defences and the continuous line of ditches for both small town and posting station account for the lack of a gate on this side. Proper dating of all the entranceways awaits future archaeological exploration but it would seem reasonable to expect that the gates of the small town bank and ditched circumference are contemporary. The two gateways on the main alignment of Watling Street relate to the posting station phase but may well have had bastions added to
them at a late stage, unlike the small town boundary where such features are not obviously present, but this can only be viewed as speculation at this time. The number and position of the gateways also demonstrates that Bannaventa was the hub of an intensive, concentrated and active road network equipped to meet the transport and communication demands for the area at all levels of need. Future fieldwork at Bannaventa will need to focus on the excavation of road sections to understand construction methods utilised and the extent to which there was a uniformity of approach to building and maintaining the road network.

The layout of two carriageways of Watling Street through Bannaventa implies a duality in the general alignment which would have been designed to meet the needs of the settlement at different times. The more northerly alignment reflects a requirement to service the gateways associated with the banked and ditched boundary of the small town whilst the road through the posting station mirrors the political constraints of the late empire. This reflects the Empire’s shift from the citizen ethos of the early empire, based on an open and expansive, commercially robust cultural and civic market place, towards a significantly smaller, heavily defended, centralised and inward looking administrative and tax gathering nucleus. This later, centralised control, securing the state the necessary resources for the maintenance of empire, was at the cost of creating a tension in society, epitomised by rising civil strife and the outbreak of social unrest as witnessed in the peasant rebellions known as the Bagaudae revolts in the late 3rd century AD in Gaul. It brings into question who the defences of the posting stations were meant to protect against: the barbarian hordes, enemies of the state or the local population.

Traditionally the decline of smaller towns on the continent has been thought to begin with problems of the third century AD resulting from a general economic malaise, invasion and agricultural decline (Rust, T.C 2006). In Roman Britain, this is thought to be illustrated by the revision to smaller, more heavily defended enclosures in the later empire. Interestingly, this endemic decline however, is not the case at Bannaventa where the geophysical anomalies, fieldwalking and coin assemblages retrieved from the site of the southern suburb demonstrate the existence of a flourishing and expanding occupation in the late 3rd to fourth century AD, pointing more to a relocation of population and a renaissance in activity outside the posting station. This makes it difficult to understand the reason for reducing the size of the small town into a smaller defended area. Protection of the local population doesn’t appear to be the highest priority whereas maintaining the cursus publicus and administrative and taxation system does seem to become more emphasised. Rostovtzeff’s comments on the burdens of annona collection particularly from the late 3rd century AD onwards are very relevant here (Rostovtzeff 1971).

The presence of the southern suburb to the south of the extra mural area also reflects an underlying ribbon development with associated activity corresponding roughly to a 2km frontage of Watling Street. The road network at Bannaventa relates to the local landscape as much as it does to the wider regional and provincial requirements. The geophysical survey evidence establishes that the road network in this locality is part of an integrated scheme designed to meet the social demands of those occupying the local landscape, connecting and serving the immediate hinterland of the posting station across the water shed of the River Nene. This confirms it as an integral part of the infrastructure for uniting the neighbouring
major focal centres to the north, east and south and the wider provincial routeway. It also demonstrates that posting stations such as Bannaventa were much more than stopping places and more important than previously thought, being somewhat of an interesting experiment in Romanisation.

CONCLUSION

The fieldwork at Bannaventa has shown that trying to comprehend the relationship between a roadside settlement and its road network is of great importance in developing an understanding of the story of a site and its role in the Roman landscape. Geophysics survey can provide a contextual view to help build a better understanding of the mechanism of acculturation upon which viable explanations of the social and political hegemony of Rome can be constructed. It gives insights into the issues of chronology, changing strategic concerns, the status and impact of roadside settlements on rural landscape, the influence of the road network on the site’s morphology, the organic or planned nature of the settlement, and finally, an understanding of space inside these settlements from the main alignment frontages to the peripheral plots.

The story of Bannaventa and its road network is far from complete and the next step will be to publish an integrated study which encompasses not only the geophysical evidence but also the fieldwalking, metal detecting and excavation data. This will provide a deeper and more complete site interpretation. In conclusion Bannaventa is an important site, not only in its own right as an example of roadside settlement on Watling Street, but also as a model for understanding other similar sites and building research paradigms. The fieldwork undertaken has also proven the value of an integrated approach which includes the study of the road network as integral to understanding the whole settlement. This can be achieved successfully by the use of Geophysical survey which has given us new insights to compliment the contributions of aerial photography, fieldwalking and metal detection.

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END NOTES

1 A point at the outset which is probably worth making when investigating a roadside settlements road network is that terms such as small town and posting station are to a degree open ended and the subject to long held judgemental presumptions. Here these terms are used as generic vehicles through which information, insights and hypothesis can be transmitted rather than as discussion points in their own right.

2 For example, the road systems associated with the Roman Small towns of Ashton, Irchester and Titchmarsh

3 Community Landscape Archaeological Survey Project

4 Young. Forthcoming

5 Young. Forthcoming

6 Young. Forthcoming

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