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If you’re interested in Roman roads or would like to know more contact us via our web site http://romanroads.org/ or by mail to one of the below;

Mike Haken (Chairman)  
Dave Armstrong (Membership Sec. & Newsletter Editor)  
Rob Entwistle (Itinera Editor)  
Rebecca L. Ellis (Finds Officer & Social Media)
ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION

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 millenia 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.
From the Chairman

Mike Haken

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
Chairman
mike@romanroads.org
EDITORIAL

ROBERT ENTWISTLE

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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ABSTRACT

In 2016 and 2018 archaeological evaluation was carried out by Touchstone Archaeology Ltd. at a shop on the Roman Road, London (Tower Hamlets) in advance of a residential development. In 2016 a test pit to the front (south) of the shop uncovered a metalled surface which, following further investigation in 2018, was deemed to be the northern edge of the Roman road from London to Colchester (Margary RR3a), usually held to be part of two routes recorded in the British section of the Antonine Itinerary (Iters V & IX). Sections of the road were uncovered in several trenches towards the front (south of the shop). The southern edge had been found and documented in some detail during excavations at Lefevre Road (Mills, 1984). Recovered Pottery was dated to between 43 CE and 270 CE.

HISTORY OF THE SITE

In the post-medieval period, the site was located in a rural setting on the eastern outskirts of London, west of the River Lea and just west-south-west of the ‘Ford’, the ancient and at that time most downstream crossing of the River Lea. Excavation has established that in the Roman period the R. Lea was crossed by a bridge (Stephenson 2008), and presumably only became a ford after the Roman bridge had collapsed.

Two roads approached the ford from the west and it is not clear which was the earlier. The first (Margary RR20) was in effect a northern by pass around Londinium (although it may have been part of an early Roman Road that ran from Colchester to Silchester), which, very roughly represented today by Old Ford Road, then cutting across modern London where it is known to run south of Clerkenwell Road and Theobalds Road before joining Oxford Street.

The second road approaching Old Ford from the west (Margary RR3a) came from Londinium itself, its course being followed be Aldgate and part of Whitechapel Road, before again being lost in modern east London. The modern Roman Road (which is mainly not Roman) converges with it for about a quarter of a mile as it approaches Old Ford, where it is assumed the first road joins it before continuing east to Chelmsford (Caesaromagus) and thence on to Colchester (Camelodunum).
The road from Old Ford to London (Margary RR3a) will have supplied the Roman city with agricultural products and pottery, some of it coming down the R Lea. Its importance is attested by its use in two routes between London and Chelmsford (and onwards to Colchester) recorded in the Antonine Itinerary, a collection of routes or journeys across the Roman Empire, probably brought together for Caracalla in the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD (Van Berchem 1937). The two routes (Iters V & IX), are of different lengths with Iter IX punctuated by Durolitum, a settlement or posting station, at the midpoint between Londinium and Caesaromagus. This has resulted in considerable debate about the possible location of Durolitum and the course of the roads used for Iter IX, (Haken, 2017a & b) but it is generally agreed that both utilised the same road from London at least as far as Stratford, crossing the River Lea via the bridge at Old Ford.

The road between London and Old Ford remained in use during the early medieval period, and it later bestowed the name of Stratforde meaning ‘paved way to a Ford’ on the local area east of the ford. However, in 1110 CE Queen Matilda (the wife of Henry I) received a soaking when attempting to cross the ford, and subsequently ordered that a new bridge be built almost a mile downstream at what became known as Bow Bridge, with a new road approaching it, now the Mile End Road (Lysons 1795). The population of Old Ford gradually moved to Bow, and eventually the Roman road between London and Old Ford went out of use.
By the C17th ‘Old Ford’ was the site of a windmill and a cluster of houses set around Old Ford Road, which was still a main route into London. The evaluation site, however, was located on the northern edge of a footpath known as the ‘Path to Bethnal Green’ that seems to have preserved part of the general course of the Roman road. (fig. 2). A later map by John Rocque in 1761 and the Ordnance Survey field books of 1799 both note the ‘Footpath’. By 1807, in a Map of the Sewers, the site is located on an east-west footpath to London, which is known as ‘The Drift Way’, a broad route used for the driving of sheep and cattle, and probably on the approximate course of the Roman road RR3a.

The Metropolitan Board of works was set up in 1855 for the upkeep of the roads and to provide a sewer system and it was around this time that a new road was constructed on the line of RR3a for about a quarter of a mile from Old Ford, before the two lines diverge at about TQ36718338. Confusingly, the whole new road was then named Roman Road, as it still is today. By 1873 the road was flanked with sporadic buildings stretching out from London, but the settlement did not quite reach the area of the site, which continued in the rural vein of farming and market gardening.

As one of the main routes into London, housing, trade and manufacturing developed along the road in the form of large factories (for example the Bryant and May Match Factory), small houses that traded from their front rooms and market traders. The market came under threat twice from closure or diversion but with the inauguration of the Old Ford and Bow Traders & Shopkeepers Union it survived. Due to its historic significance and special character as a traditional east end market, it was considered to have regional significance and was designated a conservation area in 1989.

**ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE AREA**

The site lies within an Archaeological Priority Area (DL035910), which relates specifically to the Roman Road and its archaeological resource. Evidence for a Roman bridge over the River Lea was uncovered at Crown Wharf Ironworks, and whilst dating by dendrochronology was...
inconclusive, C14 results are consistent with a 1st century date (Stephenson 2008, 50). Excavations have revealed a settlement dating from the 2nd to the 4th centuries and numerous evaluations and excavations within the immediate vicinity of the Roman Road confirm both the presence of the ancient road and a roadside settlement. Sarcophagi and coffins have been uncovered at Armagh Road, Lefevre Walk and Parnell Road. Quarrying for the construction of the road and evidence of a substantial Roman building (HER: 082337) ditches and fence lines relating to field boundaries and finds of pottery, tile, coin, bone etc. have been found nearby at Armagh and Parnell Road (Sheldon, 1971 & 1972), (Taylor-Wilson, 1996).

A metalled surface was discovered in previous archaeological evaluations to the east of the site and interpreted as the London to Colchester Roman Road, the original road dated to c50CE (Mills, 1984). The road (HER: MLO68141, MLO11263), measured at least 15m in width overall (becoming sometimes wider in later phases), with a raised central ‘agger’ constructed of brick earth and rammed gravel and with pebbled auxiliary tracks and ditches to both the north and south sides. The tracks showed no signs of rutting, compared with significant rutting of the central carriageway, leading Mills to conclude that they were intended for livestock and/or pedestrians (Mills 1984, 26). There was evidence of several phases of development, including repairs and resurfacing, with mid-1st century pottery noted in deposits of the first phase. The north trackway, and later the south, were both raised in later phases, and at some point, possibly in the late 2nd or early 3rd century, the north trackway was abandoned and the road transformed into a dual carriageway. The road is generally described as a metalled surface constructed of a base deposit of brick earth with layers of sand and gravel and flint above, sealed beneath a deposit of loamy soil (this correlates with the stratigraphy found at the evaluation site).

The Evaluation

The archaeological work was undertaken in three phases, between 2016 – 2018.

**Phase I** (2016) consisted of the hand excavation of three structural survey test pits. Trench 3 (1.0m x 1.0m), located towards the front (south) of the shop revealed a solid metalled structural feature, at a depth of 0.30m below the foundation of the existing building, sealed by a loamy soil. The location and construction of the feature suggested that it was a section of the London to Colchester Roman Road. The road was constructed of several compacted layers of flint fragments, pebbles, gravel and sand. A sondage confirmed the depth to be 0.38m overlaying natural brick earth. No finds were recovered.

**Phase II** (2018) consisted of the hand excavation of nine structural foundation test pits, six of which contained evidence of the Roman road encountered in Phase I. The depth of the top of the road deposits ranged from about 50cm at the front of the shop (south) to 1m towards the centre/north of the shop, suggesting a camber or sloping edge. A small quantity of pottery was recovered dating from c43 – 270 CE, most of which fell into the 2nd Century to the first half of the 3rd Century range and included Amphora, Black-burnished ware, Colchester *mortarium*, North Kent shell-tempered ware, and Thameside greyware from...
domestic vessels such as jars and cooking pots and an early Roman *tegula* tile. The findings were generally consistent with those found in previous excavations at Lefevre Road and Parnell Road.

**Phase III (2018)** consisted of the monitoring of the hand excavation of eleven pad-stone and underpinning trenches, confirming the extent of the Roman road which appears to agree with the alignment detailed in an evaluation at Lefevre Walk (Mills, 1984).
The evidence suggests that the metalled feature found in Phase I is the northern extent of the Roman Road that ran east west at an angle across the front and southern part of the shop. Although no definitive edge was encountered, the road petered out towards the centre of the shop, where a deposit interpreted as road wash was recorded. Pottery recovered from the evaluation gave a date from 43 CE to 270 CE which agrees with the 50 CE date of the road construction.

All the findings are consistent with the many previous evaluations and excavations carried out nearby, and there can be no doubt that the road structure uncovered is the London to Colchester road (Margary RR3a), a major highway with auxiliary trackways for livestock or pedestrian traffic. The coverage of clean loamy soil suggests that the road went out of use, confirming the evidence from post-medieval maps, however the route, within a rural setting, was still prevalent for the movement of livestock in the post medieval period.

Other than the road and the small assemblage of Roman pottery, finds were reserved to one fragment of roof tile c1275 CE onwards; one broken clay pipe bowl and stem fragment (form 21) c1680 -1710 CE, probably associated with the post medieval brick well and stone animal trough found to the rear (north) of the shop.
The construction of the shallow post-medieval foundations had not impacted on the road feature, however early modern alterations to the building, including the rear north extension and the installation of a basement had caused significant disturbance. A mitigation strategy by the structural engineers reduced the impact of the new alterations considerably and the road feature was left largely intact.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to Mike Haken for his generosity of time, enthusiasm, knowledge and skilled editing which transformed a fairly mundane report into something far more accessible and befitting of this publication. His attention to recent research has corrected any outdated research material that existed at the time of the evaluation and any errors that remain are entirely my own responsibility.

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