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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.
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
gaeological 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
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.

Robert Entwistle
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Margary RR81a and a Bustum Burial at Brooklyn House, Norton-on-Derwent, North Yorkshire

by Janet Phillips and Pete Wilson
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Abstract

Excavations close to Roman road Margary RR81a in Norton-on-Derwent provided much information on aspects of the poorly understood 'small town' of Delgovicia. The course of the road was confirmed in an area that came to be used for burials by the mid-3rd century AD. Among these was the bustum-type burial of a soldier, or former soldier, with an assemblage of military equipment. During the late third and fourth centuries the site incorporated substantial stone-built structures fronting onto the Roman road which was the main approach road to the town from the south, from both York (Eboracum) and the River Humber.

Introduction

Excavations in 2015-16 in advance of the redevelopment of the former Brooklyn House Youth Centre located on Langton Road, Norton into a school provided an opportunity to investigate the assumed line of Roman road Margary RR81a (Margary 1973, 421; Robinson 1978, 34, nos 234-36). The work was undertaken by JB Archaeological Services (later JB Archaeology Ltd) on behalf of construction contractors working for North Yorkshire County Council who funded the work.

Roman Norton

Norton is located on the south bank of the River Derwent opposite Malton, its Roman fort and extensive civilian settlement (Fig. 1). Roman Malton, or more probably Roman Malton and Norton together, were known as Delgovicia (Drake 1736: map following p. 36; Creighton 1988, 403; Wilson 2017; 2019), rather than Derventio which was the accepted identification for much of the 19th and 20th centuries (see for example: Rivet and Smith 1979: 333-34). Norton has produced considerable evidence of Roman period occupation, including substantial buildings (Robinson 1978, 34-40; Mitchelson 1964; Wenham and Heywood 1997; Burn et al.
2018), pottery production (Hayes and Whitley 1950; Swan 1984, 109-11; Stephens and Ware 2012) industrial activity, including a goldsmith’s shop (RIB 712), and extensive cemeteries (see Wilson 2006, 43-45 for now slightly dated, summaries).

Previous work at Brooklyn House had tentatively identified Road RR81a (MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd 2002, 7) and prior to the 2015-16 excavations an extensive geophysical survey of the playing fields occupying the southern part of the site was undertaken (Lyall 2014).
Fig. 2. Trench location plan.
To the south of the river a number of Roman roads are known, or suggested to extend to the south and east (Margary 1973: roads RR29, RR81a, RR812, RR813, RR816 – reassessed in RRRA Gazetteer of Roman Roads – see [a website link] - consulted 09.02.2021 ). Langton Road, on the evidence collated by Robinson (1978, 34, nos 234-36) was believed to approximate to the course of Margary road 81a which originates at York. About 3.5 km south of Malton/Norton, Road RR81a is joined by Margary’s RR29 from Brough-on-Humber (Roman Petuaria), the crossing point of the Humber for traffic from Lincoln (Lindum). Thus, Margary RR81a was the major approach to Roman Malton/Norton from the south. Robinson (1978, fig. 2) suggests the existence of a second road, originating at Malton fort that, for most of its length, follows a line east of Langton Road prior to joining Road RR81a south of Brooklyn House. The evidence for Robinson’s second road is limited:

[NGR] ‘79397125 (approx.). The crown of an alleged Roman road, aligned north-west by south-east or north-south, was discovered 3 ft (0.91m) below the surface during the cellar excavations in Mr Williamson’s houses in 1853. Channon’s [?1865-6] plan suggests that the discovery lay north of [Robinson’s Gazetteer] number 273, but the vagueness and inaccuracies on the plan render an exact location impossible, and theories about its objective speculative.’ (Robinson 1978, 36 no 274)

A further road extending towards York was proposed by Francis Drake in his Eboracum (1936, 36-37) and at its south-western end designated Road 800 by Margary (1973,426-27). Should RR800 extend to Malton/Norton it could lie either side of the River Derwent. If it were located to the east of the river the Roads of Roman Britain website (Haken 2018) suggests that Welham Trod, a post-medieval road underlying Malton Golf Course to the east of Road RR81a and aligned on Welham Road north of Park Road (SE 78957125), could represent its line (Fig. 1).

The main areas of excavation in 2015-16 were located to the west of the line of RR81a, but three service trenches (Fig. 2 – A4) in the northern and southern verges of the access road investigated by MAP in 2002 cut across the line of the road, confirming its location some 5m to the east of that proposed in 2002 (Fig. 3).

**The Roman Road**

Although the road, as recorded in 2015-16, appears to date to the late 2nd/3rd century it is probable that a road or trackway pre-dating the engineered Roman road influenced the earliest phases of the field system in the area that were identified through geophysical survey and excavation. The ditches of the field system and other features identified in Phase 1 (1st to 3rd century AD) seem to have been in use for a relatively short period of time, in particular those closest to the trackway/Roman road. There was little or no sign of cleaning and maintenance, despite the soft, erodible nature of the natural sand. It is therefore likely that the field system fell out of use or was incorporated into the expanding Roman settlement. During this phase it is probable that the pre-existing trackway became a more formalised route, appearing in the form of an engineered and metalled Roman Road in Phase 2.
The service trenches were narrow varying from 0.5m to 1m in width. They were recorded as part of a single excavation area (Area 4) and for the purposes of this paper have been designated from north to south as 4a-4c, with 4a and 4b located in the northern verge and 4c in the southern verge. Depth restrictions, due to development requirements, meant that not all of the trenches were recorded to natural.

Despite the limited areas investigated, they were adequate to provide a full profile and revealed a metalled, compacted surface at least 7m in width. In Trench 4c the primary deposit relating to the road was an area of heavily compacted orange-yellow sand with occasional small stone inclusions, (425) (Fig. 4). The deposit extended for 6.75m under the road and had a maximum observed thickness of 0.14m, although its full depth was not reached. This deposit appears to have been laid as the foundation for the later layers and demonstrated a clear camber.

Overlying the eastern side of 425 was a firm, red-orange, sand-clay deposit, 443, 2.50m wide and 0.16m thick. 443 appears to expand the footprint of the road, and it has been suggested by Mike Haken (pers. comm. to J. Buglass) that it may have formed a clay shoulder to allow easier movement of hoofed animals. However, no trace of this deposit was found in the two of the three service trenches and it may simply be a further deposit in the overall construction of the road.
In Trench 4a, the main levelling under the road was a firm reddish-brown compacted sand (4001) 0.26m deep that extended for 5.25m beneath the width of the road. However, a deposit recorded under the eastern part of the road, 4005, may represent an additional foundation layer, functionally contemporary with 4001 and also 4000, which overlay the western edge of 4001. As in the southern verge trench these deposits form the base for the road and serve to create its camber (Figs 5, 6).

Interestingly at the lowest point of the trench, and underlying 4003, the earliest excavated road foundation deposit, was a firm, stony deposit recorded as a metalled surface (4015), a 0.25m width of which was visible lying directly on the natural sand (Fig. 5). This deposit was c0.85m below the main surface of the road and may represent evidence of an otherwise unobserved early phase of the road, also possibly evidenced by ditch 3036 (see below).

Layer 424, the 0.20m thick concreted core of the road in Trench 4c produced pottery dating to the 3rd century, suggesting it was a later element of the Roman road system in the Norton area. Overlying 424 were two stone metalling deposits: 422 on the eastern side and 418 over the majority of the road. (Fig. 4)

Stony deposit 422 was lower lying than the main road surface and was located on the eastern edge of the road overlying the clay shoulder, 425. 422 comprised moderately sized stones of up to 0.25m diameter in a 0.12m thick matrix and extended for c1m before encountering deposit 418 which appeared to rise from this point. It is possible the stones forming 422 are the remnant of an earlier phase, or they could have been laid as make-up for the main surface, 418. Unfortunately, the western side of the road was truncated by a later ditch (415) so the construction method there could not be confirmed.

The main stony deposit, 418, extended for 5.20m and formed the majority of the road surface. It comprised of larger stones, up to 0.30m diameter, in a 0.16m thick concreted matrix largely consisting of smaller stones. The deposit was truncated to the west by later ditch 415 and two possible repair patches were noted. To the east the stonework was
Fig. 5. Trench 4b – South facing section.
significantly different, with the last metre containing flatter and squarer stones appearing to form a type of verge or roadside path before dropping to deposit 422 (Fig. 4).

Overlying levelling deposit 4001 in Trenches 4a and 4b was a 0.15m thick spread of concreted cream stony-sand measuring 4.6m wide and forming a shallow domed agger, 4004. The road surface, 456/457/474 in Trench 4a was up to 0.30m thick and took the form of a concreted stony deposit including limestone pieces, fragments of stone roof tile and crushed limestone. Larger pieces of stone, up to 0.30m x 0.14m in size, were evident on the western side of the road, perhaps indicating repair work. However, no clear edge against the main road surface could be identified to confirm that suggestion.

In Trench 4c possible repair patches were identified in both exposed areas of the final road surface, 417 and 445. These could represent repair work or be the result of wheel ruts, however they may also represent an attempt to redefine the road at a later date following its truncation on the western side.

Two possible repair patches, 458 and 459, were recorded in Trench 4a suggesting some longevity of use for the surface. 458 was a 0.05m thick and 0.75m long elongated strip of stonework overlying the main metalled surface 457 on the western edge of the road. 459 (Fig. 3) was located to the east of 458 and was a 0.50m wide strip of limestone, which also overlay 457.
A 0.06m thick dark grey-brown, silt-clay-sand, 4009 (Trench 4b – Fig. 5) and 409 (Trench 4c – Fig. 4) was identified overlying the road surface. It is possible these deposits represent build-up over the surface prior to the road going out of use. Deposit 409 produced pottery spot-dated to the late 4th to early 5th centuries, which suggests the road may have remained in use into, if not beyond, the late Roman period. However, intrusive Reduced Greenware pottery dating from early 14th to 15th centuries and Redware from the 16th to 17th centuries, were also recovered from 409. This later pottery is most likely to be intrusive and result from the significant disturbance from modern services in the area. However, it could also possibly suggest continuing use of the road into the medieval period, although this is unproven.

A possible roadside ditch, 420, unfortunately visible only in plan in the base of Trench 4c, was identified 6.50m to the east of the road in the southernmost trench. 420 was 1.30m wide and the surface of its fill, 421, produced pottery dating to the 3rd century. This feature was not identified in the northern verge due to depth differences and later deposits masking earlier features (Fig. 3).

**A Bustum Burial**

East of the road in Trench 4b a cremation burial was found (plan = inset to Fig. 3). It took the form of a *bustum*, a type of *in situ* cremation where the burnt remains are swept into an underlying pit and often, but not always associated with the Roman-period army. In the case of the Brooklyn House example, most of the burnt bone was placed in a large calcite-gritted jar (Fig. 8), although burnt material was found in and around the oval pit suggesting that the burial may have been recognisable as, or marked by a small mound. In addition to the jar the burial included a complete local grey ware beaker and parts of two other pots. The grave goods allowed Dr Hilary Cool to conclude that the burial was that of a soldier, or former soldier who was accompanied onto the pyre by his military belt, baldric, military dagger

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**Fig. 7. Trench 4a – South-facing section.**
with its scabbard, an enamelled plate brooch indicating that he was wearing a cloak and hobnails from his shoes. Bone objects, identified by Dr Stephen Greep, included inlay from a small box or casket and parts of a scroll holder. Osteological analysis by Katie Keefe and Malin Holst suggested the individual was mature (36+ years) and while sex of the individual could not be demonstrated the assumption that the individual was male is reasonable. While burials are known from both the Brooklyn House site and surrounding area, including from sites at Grove Bungalow, The Ridings and Lal Quila/98 Langton Road (Fig. 1) there is no evidence of any representing a specifically military cemetery. Therefore the Brooklyn House bustum burial may, most likely, represent a former soldier buried in keeping with military tradition, but probably by members of his family or community, rather than a serving soldier buried by his comrades.

The Brooklyn House site also produced evidence of a mausoleum and further burials as well as substantial stone-built, or stone-founded, buildings set at right-angles to RR81a.

CONCLUSION
The Brooklyn House excavations have served to confirm the line of Road RR81a and given the dating evidence that the road, as recorded, was possibly a late addition to the Roman-period road network in the area. If that is correct, it may strengthen the case for Road RR800 representing the original York to Malton road. However, given the hints of an earlier phase, or phases for RR81a, that case is at present ‘not proven’. That said, given that road RR29, another major north-south route, connects with RR81a, it is perhaps more likely that there were earlier phases of RR81a, but their existence is yet to be convincingly demonstrated.

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The full report on the project is now available: J. Phillips and P. Wilson *Life, Death and Rubbish Disposal in Roman Norton, North Yorkshire*. Excavations at Brooklyn House, 2015-16 (2020), Archaeopress Roman Archaeology 77. ISBN 978-1-78969-838-1, ISBN 978-1-78969-839-8bavi (e-Pdf), is published by Archaeopress and is available direct from the publishers. Price £48 (hardcopy). SPECIAL OFFER – £36.00 until 31/12/2021. Postage and packaging is charged at 10% (of the total order) for deliveries to the U.K. and 15% for the rest of the world. To order at the offer price via the website, add the promotional code BROOKLYNHOUSE (no space) before checking out. Website: [www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)