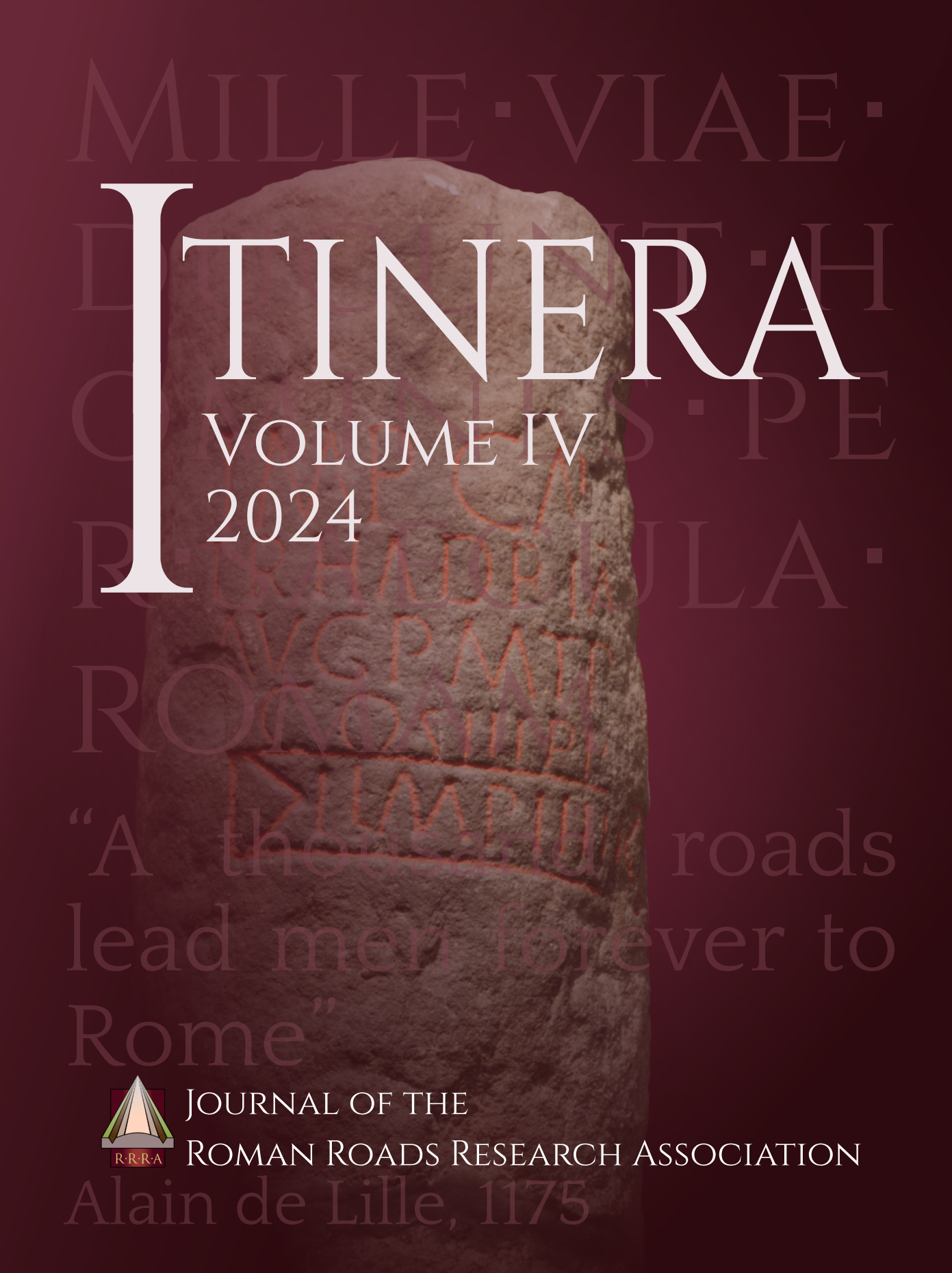


ITINERA

Volume IV
2024

"A thousand roads lead men forever to Rome"

Alain de Lille, 1175

Journal of the
Roman Roads Research Association

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About the Association

by Mike Haken



The late Hugh Toller and I founded the Roman Roads Research Association to provide a focal point for what we thought was a fairly small group of individuals with an interest in the study of Roman roads and connectivity throughout the former Roman province of Britannia. I'm not sure that Hugh, who sadly died in 2016, could have imagined that at the end of April 2024 we would have an international membership totalling 556, a figure that continues to grow. We are a very broad church, ranging from those with just a general interest in the Roman period, through to professional archaeologists from both commercial and academic sectors, not forgetting those those like myself who have had a lifelong passion for the subject (some might say obsession!). The Association welcomes all new members, whatever their background.

The continuing growth in membership may well have been fuelled, at least in part, by some of the things we have achieved. For example, we have just concluded the fourth season of our online lecture series, which we launched in 2021 during the pandemic. As part of our key policy of ensuring that our work is always made as accessible as possible, our talks are open to everyone, are always free of charge, and regularly attract audiences of 200 people or more from across the world. Another excellent programme for our fifth season is being prepared by our Secretary, Dave Armstrong, and details will be released soon. You can catch up with previous seasons on our YouTube channel.

Since 2018, we have conducted over 200 Ha of geophysical survey with our own gradiometer cart, accurately identifying the course of many roads and examining Roman period sites along them. Our most recent survey, assisted by a group of local volunteers from Southwell (SCAG), was near East Stoke (*Ad Pontem*) in Nottinghamshire. This confirmed the location of the junction of RR59(x) from Ancaster with the Fosse Way, making the existence of RR59(x) now beyond dispute. We always welcome suggestions for other potential survey sites, no matter where in the country they might be.

Above all, however, our greatest achievement is *Itinera*, the only journal in the world dedicated to the study of Roman roads and transportation infrastructure. Published entirely in house by our large team of volunteers, we are proud that our standards are as high as most academic publishing houses. Indeed, As Rob Entwistle points out in the following Editorial, it is a measure of our growing credibility that *Britannia*, a journal of the Roman Society, guides authors of reports on Roman roads that would have previously been published in *Britannia* towards *Itinera* instead.

Looking forwards, the wealth of new research and discoveries that have been reported by *Itinera* have, if nothing else, highlighted the urgent need for an accurate map that reflects the true state of knowledge of the Roman road network in Britain, and the sites it served, since the national maps that do exist are either decades out of date or simply inaccurate and misleading. To rectify this situation we will soon be recruiting volunteers to assist with a nationwide project which aims to accurately redraw the map. In line with our Open Access policy, the results will all be made freely available.

Finally, I am sure that our enthusiastic membership will enable us to continue to expand and develop our activities, ensuring that the next decade is even more productive than our first decade has been.

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Editorial

Robert Entwistle



The late Hugh Toller, co-founder of the RRRA with Mike Haken, was sadly lost to Roman road research when the Association was only a year old. Earlier I had become aware of his work through his part in identifying the long-sought line of the Lune valley Roman road out of Lancaster, my native town. Identifying it through Lidar and on foot, he followed its route up and over Lancaster Ridge towards Caton and the southern flank of the Lune valley.

It is therefore a pleasure to see David Ratledge's contribution to this volume of *Itinera*, a memorial to Hugh's work in the Exeter region, developed in the light of further studies. It is appropriate that this same volume contains a significant paper by Mike Haken identifying *viae vicinales* in the north-east Midlands which perhaps should no longer be regarded as somehow 'lesser' or 'minor'.

Itinera has a record of examining different aspects of Roman road studies, not necessarily restricted to our corner of the Roman empire. The 2024 volume sees a new contribution from the Spanish archaeologist and presenter, Isaac Moreno Gallo: the first publication in English of his work analysing road construction methods and transport development. His trenchant views provide a counterbalance to other accounts, reminding us that the evidence of the trowel is always subject to interpretation.

A new departure for this volume is the incorporation of a 'Focus' section with multiple papers exploring a single theme. The subject is the Devil's Causeway – a road which branches off Dere Street just north of Hadrian's Wall to head (via Learchild fort) determinedly towards modern-day Berwick and the mouth of the Tweed – where no Roman site is known. This theme originated in a 2023 conference held in Berwick-upon-Tweed and coordinated by Dr Lindsay Allason-Jones and the Border Archaeology Society with support from the RRRA, exploring the riddle of the road. Expert presentations have been developed into these papers. We would be happy to repeat, in future volumes, similar suites of papers focused upon a single theme or aspect: suggestions for themes and contributors would be welcomed by the Editor.

As always, this volume treats different geographical parts of Britannia, ranging from the south-west (Exeter) to the north-east (Berwick). Paul Booth explores aspects of the Roman road network in the Oxford area, Mike Holmes considers issues around the River Glynde in East Sussex, and Nigel Rothwell examines the possibilities for a Thames crossing linking St Albans and Silchester.

In a full volume, however, we regret the lack of papers on Wales and Scotland, even though these countries are represented in our annual round-up across Britain. Potential contributors suggesting interesting papers on these areas of would find us warmly receptive. *Itinera* continues to welcome every submission from contributors established or new, and if necessary, will endeavour to advise authors where further work is needed for key improvements. A short proposal to the Editor of what is intended, before making a full submission, is often helpful.

Editorial

We take pride in a professional standard of production maintained entirely through the work of volunteers: our editorial board (Mike Haken, Dave Armstrong, Mike Bishop and Paul Booth, all of whom contribute endless hours to the production of each volume); our academic advisor (Pete Wilson); our index compiler (Chester Forster); and postmaster (Chris Webb). Without the dedicated work of the whole team Roman studies would be the poorer.

We are greatly heartened by the respected position that *Itinera* has achieved in the short period of its existence. The long-established journal, Britannia, acknowledges this in specifying that submissions on Roman roads for their annual update section should be limited to brief summaries of the main points of interest if accounts are also published in *Itinera*, with our journal cited for those fuller reports.

An important part of our role, alongside publicising research, is (through the RRRA) the regulation and classification of new discoveries, as Margary's original system of nomenclature strains to adapt to an expanding known road network. This volume therefore contains a list of newly attributed numbers and a proposal from Mike Haken on the classification of non-standard Roman roads.

This year we have taken the decision to slightly reduce the font size to bring *Itinera* more into line with other similar journals and to control printing costs. Even so, readers will find that 2024 marks a bumper issue: the largest volume we have yet produced.

We trust that RRRA members and all readers will enjoy and profit from this 2024 volume of *Itinera*.

Robert Entwistle

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A proposal for numbering non-standard Roman roads in Britain

by Mike Haken
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Earlier in this volume is a paper, *Viae Vicinales in the North-east Midlands* (Haken 2024), detailing the results of a recent study which aimed to identify the legal classifications of roads, being mainly either *viae publicae* or *viae vicinales*. Traditionally, a Roman road in Britain has always been defined by its morphology, being setting out in straight lines and utilising a raised agger and flanking ditches. One unexpected result of the study was the identification of a group of roads which formed an important part of the regional road network in the Roman period, but which do not conform to the standard morphology usually associated with Roman roads. These roads are sinuous and not set out in a series of straight lengths. The one feature they appear to share with 'typical' Roman construction is the use of a raised causeway, but other than that little is known of their construction since none have ever been subject to archaeological excavation.

Most of these roads are ridgeways and have been previously recognised as potentially of the Roman period but have been disregarded by many writers and scholars simply because they do not confirm to the accepted morphology of a Roman road. Three (i.e. Middle Street, Pottergate & Sewstern Lane) were included by O.G.S. Crawford as elements of his version of the supposed long-distance trackway, the Jurassic Way (1954, 81-5, fig. 8), as did his colleague C.W. Phillips two decades earlier (1933, 148). Their reputation as early roads has suffered as a result, the Jurassic Way as a long distance route being debunked by Christopher Taylor, at least in Northamptonshire (1979, 33-6). When considered individually however, the evidence for their use in the Roman period is extremely strong.

This small group of roads in the North-East Midlands are almost certainly all *viae vicinales*, having the primary function of linking together two or more nucleated or agglomerated settlements together. It seems clear that whilst they have morphological differences from other *viae vicinales* built in typical Roman fashion, and possibly a slightly different function, they are no less important than the *viae vicinales* of more 'typical' Roman construction.

It is also clear that at least some of these roads (in particular High Street and Sewstern Lane) were constructed during the Roman period, since their purpose is clearly to link Roman period settlement. That said, the possibility that some may be earlier cannot be entirely ruled out, since each one connects at least one settlement with known late Iron Age origins, suggesting the possibility that there may be a degree of cultural continuity in the techniques utilised for their planning and construction. It is also worth noting that in some cases the roads seem to skirt around a settlement rather than running directly to it, possibly suggesting that the settlement came first.

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Clearly, these roads cannot be regarded as being the same as other 'Roman roads' and therefore numbering them in exactly the same way would be potentially misleading, especially as some may date from the late Iron Age. Despite the differences, these roads were a vital part of the transport network of the Roman period, and just as important as many other 'typical' Roman roads; High Street, linking the Roman small towns of Horncastle and Caistor with the Humber estuary, is perhaps the best example of that. Not numbering these roads and omitting them from mapping (as the current Ordnance Survey Roman Britain map does) would be just as misleading as numbering them like all other roads. It is therefore proposed that the simplest solution to the problem is to maintain the RRRA's established protocol for awarding new Margary numbers, numbering these roads as if they were conventional Roman roads (Armstrong 2021) whilst applying a different prefix. Where a conventional road would have the prefix RR (for Roman road), these sinuous *viae vicinales* would have the prefix RBW (for Romano-British way). Using this model, High Street retains the number awarded by Margary and becomes RBW270. In the case of Middle Street (part of the fictional Jurassic Way), which runs parallel to Ermine Street, it follows Margary's method for roughly parallel roads and adopts the number of the main road but with a double suffix, so is numbered RBW2dd(x).

Under this proposal, to qualify for an RBW number a road must satisfy all the following criteria.

1. The evidence supporting at least one segment must be enough to justify a status of 'known'. This does not have the same requirements as the protocol suggested for use by the RRRA for 'typical' Roman roads (Haken 2021, 297), however it must be a demonstrable road.
2. The road must be generally sinuous or winding, and not be set out in straight lengths. Straight lengths may be permitted only if they are clearly the result of post-medieval alterations, usually as a result of Enclosures Acts.
3. The road must be shown to terminate at a Romano-British nucleated or agglomerated settlement bigger than 3.5Ha in area, excluding farmsteads and villas.

At this stage, this is a proposal, although it has been used in the aforementioned paper earlier in this volume. Whether or not similar roads can be identified elsewhere in Britain is yet to be demonstrated. Should that happen, it is always possible that in other regions the morphology may display further variations however the same basic principles should still apply. Having the protocol already in place will allow us to number a sinuous *via vicinalis* just as we would any other road.

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