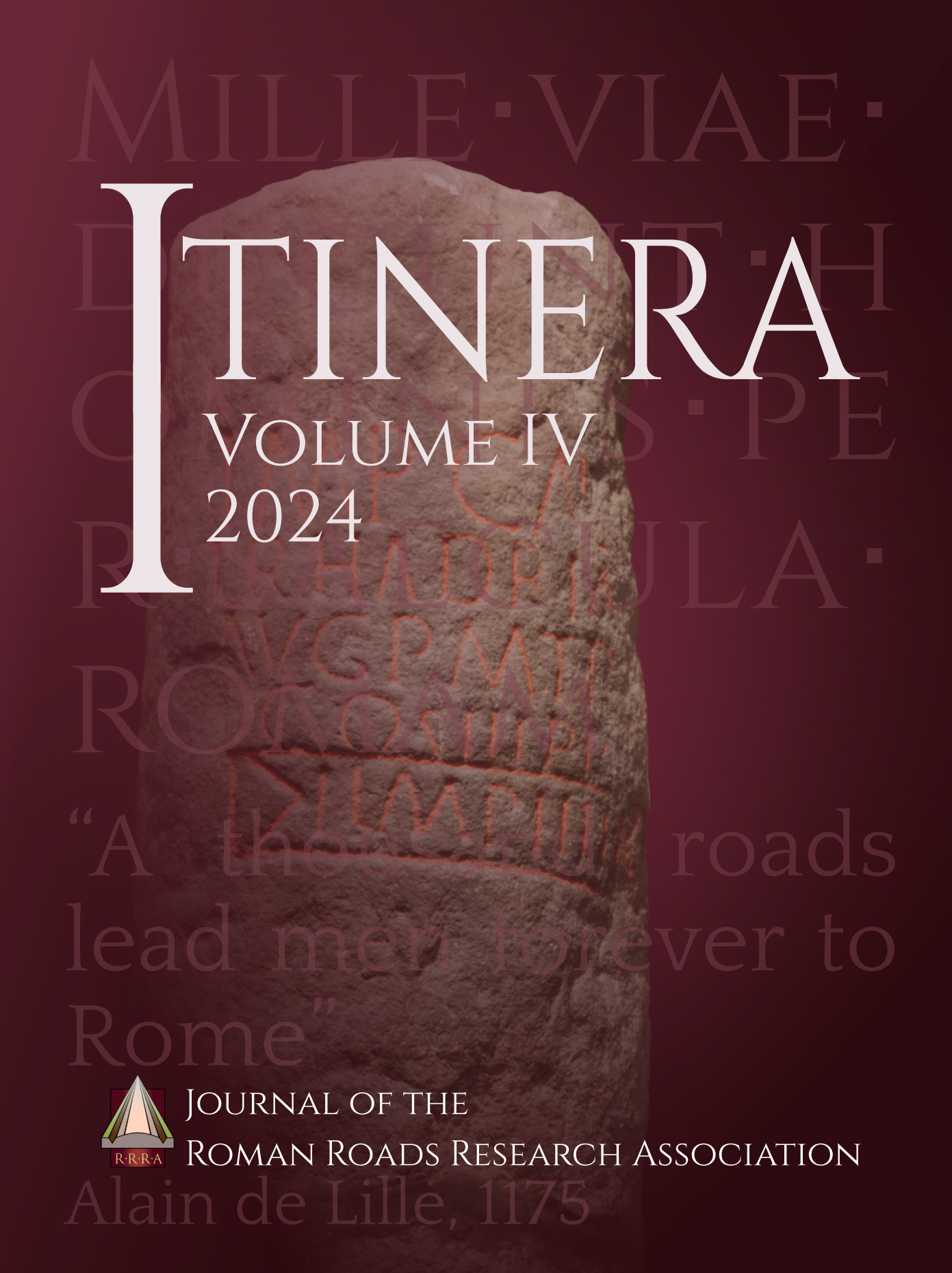


ITINERA

Volume IV
2024

"A thousand roads lead men forever to Rome"

Alain de Lille, 1175

Journal of the
Roman Roads Research Association

ITINERA

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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

(Hon Editor, *Itinera)*

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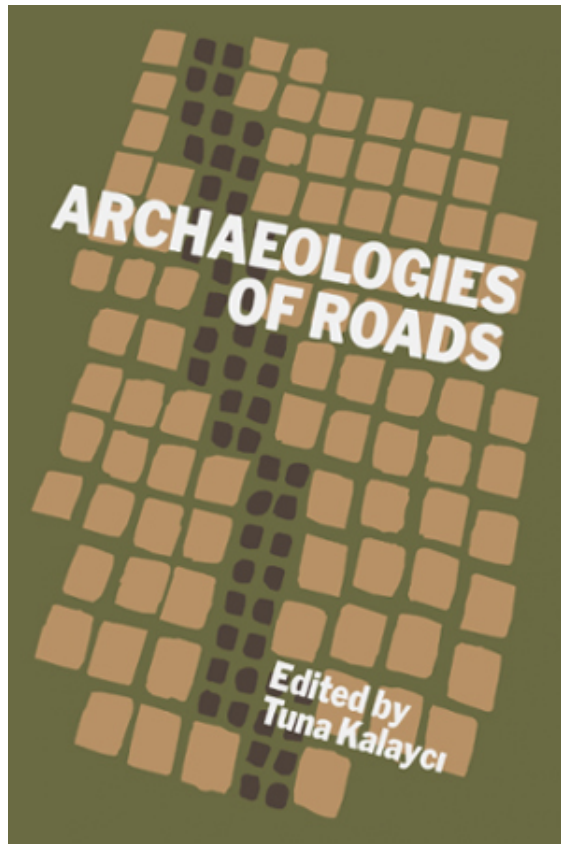
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Book Review

Archaeologies of Roads.

Edited by Tuna Kalayci.

Grand Forks: Digital Press at University of North Dakota, 2023, Pp 439, Price £16.41.
ISBN-13: 979-8989191284.



From the cuneiform itineraries of Mesopotamian camel trains 4000 years ago to the skeletons of exhausted camels littering the steep tracks of Egypt's Eastern Desert and the Afghan cameleers who competed for trade along Australia's Birdsville track in the early 19th Century, camels are the surprise stars of *Archaeologies of Roads*. We might be forgiven for thinking that these extraordinary animals are the key to unlocking the mysteries of travel throughout human history and they are certainly a fascinating part of the story, but if the 15 essays collected here show anything, it's that the range of variables needed to model movement in the past is formidable and perhaps ultimately unrecoverable.

The introduction begins by arguing for the exceptionalism of roads as artefacts that are unrivalled for their 'substance, transcendence, and immanence' and for the fact that they can be 'both ancient and modern *at the same time*'. We also hear that the 'road is not only a container for an action, but also the action itself.' These observations promise much from the volume, and it is left to the diverse range of papers that follow to tell us why these things matter and are anything more than truisms. More immediately useful is the reiteration of nine comparative variables for classifying roads in an historical and archaeological context that might be profitably applied to thinking about Roman roads: '1. Amount of construction / over what time; 2. Technology of movement; 3. Characteristics of terrain; 4. Points/ places of access (terminal points, resources, facilities, shrines); 5. Ownership/ access/ stewardship; 6. Functions; 7. Form/ network organization; 8. Scale; 9. Meaning.'

There is plenty of interest here on roads both as physical objects and symbols, but mostly as tangible evidence for human movement in the past for war, trade, colonisation, pilgrimage and exploration. How researchers model movement emerges as the strongest and most interesting theme, although we also get papers on roads as infrastructure, as digital objects, as metaphors and much else, as well as some straightforward proving of the line.

The last of these is found in a paper on a section of the Roman road from Guadix in Granada to Cartagena in Murcia, Spain. The authors set out to clarify the role and significance of the road, but mostly just share the familiar evidence – aerial and Lidar – for the course of the Western end of the route. An *in situ* anepigraphic milestone marks the course of the road and has been used as a boundary marker since at least the nineteenth century. Sixteen more forthcoming milestones feature prominently in another Roman-themed paper that is less about what we can learn about the roads, but what epigraphy along them can teach us about the ill-fated Valerian and his successors in the Eastern provinces of the Empire. Milestones were also largely responsible for our knowledge of the course of the *Via Nova Traiana* in the ancient Roman province of *Arabia Petraea* according to the authors of a paper on the road and the defensive system of the *Strata Diocletiana*. They endeavour to use modern remote imaging data to provide a detailed description of the road, and their findings should be of interest to anyone wanting to know more about the fortifications of the *Limes Arabicus* and what they might reveal about Roman policy in the period between Pompey the Great and the death of Diocletian.

There are brief references to Roman roads as the fastest routes in both of the two standout essays: the first on the ancient tracks and hollow ways of Mesopotamia, in which the authors amass an extraordinary array of evidence to model past human movement including Cold War spy photography, ethnographic interviews, cuneiform itineraries and terracotta models of wheeled vehicles. There is no hiding the fact that, while their efforts are far from futile, the journeys generated are a platonic ideal. As the authors concede, modelling how we journey to work today would have to factor in twenty-first century coffee culture among many other elusive variables. The second paper that caught my eye, on least-cost path modelling of journeys across Egypt's Eastern desert, leads to similar conclusions. Despite valiant efforts to calculate the gradients that camels can contend with, when tested against travellers' accounts of real journeys, the models fall short because they cannot account for such common contingencies as travellers getting lost at night or having camels die on them. The discussion of methodology in both these papers is fascinating.

The last essay in the volume is as much interested in today's travellers as in their ancient predecessors, especially in tourist encounters with memory and meaning along Australia's famous Birdsville Track and the complexities faced by the heritage community in constructing an authentic route where Aboriginal and European cultures meet. The conclusion to the piece, and to the volume as a whole, might be summed up in the opening paragraph: 'Roads form part of the physical and cultural landscape. They are constructed as much in the imagination – through journeys and representations – as by material fabric and engineering, and they embody multiple layers of history, meaning, and symbolism.'

Review by Christopher Hadley (author of 'The Road')