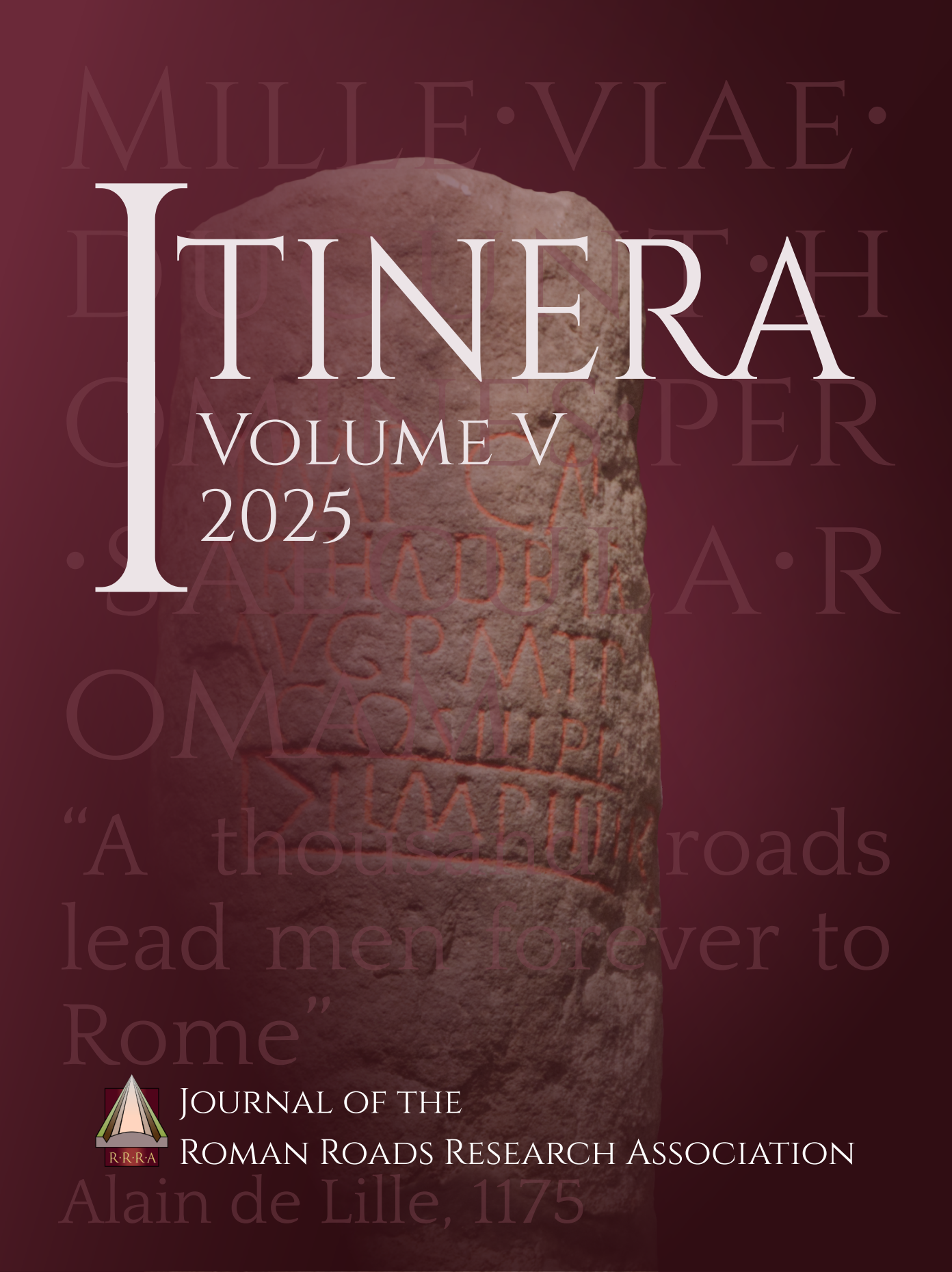


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Volume V

2025

"A thousand roads lead men forever to Rome"

Alain de Lille, 1175

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Editorial

Robert Entwistle



Welcome to the 2025 edition of *Itinera*, Volume V. *Itinera* continues to hold a unique position among academic journals of Roman studies, with roots in both the academic and grassroots communities. We focus upon the study of Roman roads, transport technology and systems of surveying. We welcome reports and contributions from all researchers able to extend knowledge in these areas to professionals and the public alike, through the format of a formal academic paper.

Volume V, if slenderer than the bumper 2024 edition, is typical in its range of papers. Thus, Wayne Kirk extends our knowledge of Roman Northamptonshire in the light of modern findings, through a wide-reaching paper appraising its road network. Mike Luke, well respected for his excavations and publications on Roman Bedfordshire, shows how a developed understanding of the 'small town' of Sandy leads to an improved appreciation of the local roads. The same theme of road networks is explored in a different way by Keith Abbott, who argues that minor roads and trackways are seriously under-represented in our present appreciation of Roman roads.

Neil Godfrey, by contrast, addresses a wholly different issue: the relationship between roads and Romano-Celtic temples, with roads providing not only transport and passing clients, but also planned landscapes within which temples stood. My own paper is different again, examining ancient surveying methods through the features of extant surveyed works, classical literary sources, and modern surveying techniques. This methodological paper ends my series of papers on Long-distance Alignments. We are also pleased to have a paper from an independent researcher, Paul Smith – one of our own members – presenting his thesis of a road formed over time, from the Iron-Age into the Roman period and beyond.

In this volume we further welcome two authoritative papers from leading academics in Romania, demonstrating the growing understanding of Roman roads in a part of the empire that has received limited attention in the UK. In understanding the growth of road networks in a territory newly brought within the empire we see the link between conquest and road construction, and reflect on the impact of recent political change upon research.

As always, I warmly celebrate the work of our academic advisors and our willing team of volunteers who carry out many critical functions: proofreading, creating the Index, reporting updates from across the country, and managing distribution of printed copy. *Itinera* would not be possible without the willing labours of these individuals, and above all without the editorial team who manage the life of our journal across the year. The process moves from gathering papers and archaeological updates, through review, selection, editing and typesetting, through to final publication. Dr Mike Bishop – writer, publisher and archaeologist – was a founder member of our editorial team, guiding us through the formative first four years of our existence. His expert advice on publishing and all matters Roman helped steer us through a period when everything was new. His international contacts extended knowledge of our journal to contributors as far away as Spain (and most recently) Romania. *Itinera* owes him a great debt as he moves on to other things this year.

With Mike leaving, we are delighted to have welcomed to our team Professor James Gerrard of the University of Newcastle. James Gerrard brings great academic distinction, strengthening us with his experience and calm judgements. Already he has inspired the initiative of an annual Prize for the best Dissertation reflecting Roman Transport studies. Details of the prize (readily available on request)

have been distributed through SALON and the RRRA Newsletter and will shortly be available on the RRRA website. We hope to see this prize awarded for the first time in 2025.

I take this opportunity of warmly welcoming submissions, projected or actual, for Volume VI of Itinera, from all corners of Britannia and the wider empire. You will find '*Notes for Contributors*' on the RRRA website.

In the meantime, I invite you to enjoy everything within Volume V.

Robert Entwistle

(Hon Editor, *Itinera)*

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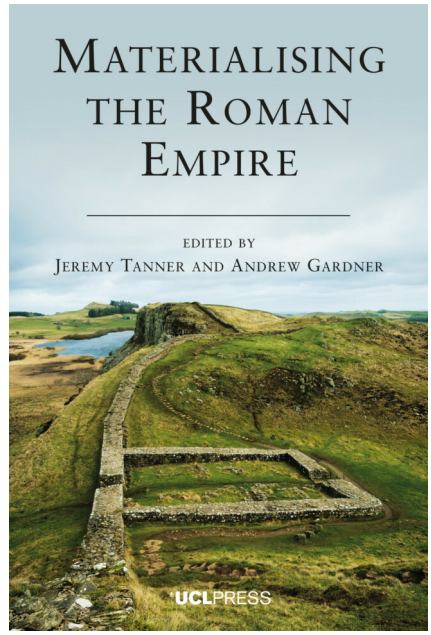
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Book Review

Materialising the Roman Empire.

By Jeremy Tanner and Andrew Gardner (Editors).

UCL Presss. Pp 352. Price £55.00. (Hardcover), £35.00 (Paperback). Open access at <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781800083981>.
ISBN 978 800083998.



This recent edited volume from UCL comprises a short Preface (by the first editor), a longer Introduction (by the second editor) and eleven chapters by individual (mostly British) authors covering a wide range of aspects of the Roman empire, with an explicit aim to consider *'how material culture was integral to the process of imperialism, both as the empire grew, and as it fragmented, and in doing so provide up-to-date overviews of major topics in Roman archaeology.'* (1).

There is much of interest and value here, not least in Gardner's Introduction which traces developments in theoretical approaches to the application of material evidence to the study of the empire. What will be of primary interest to members of the RRRA, however, is Chapter 1, 'Roads and communications', by Ray Laurence (19-44). As with the other chapters there is not the space here for a comprehensive account of the subject (even given the focus of all almost exclusively on the western half of the empire), and Laurence's admitted focus is on 'roads, rather than other forms of pathways that might act as transport routes' (19), while communication by water receives only a passing nod (though it does get some treatment in Andrew Wilson's chapter on 'Trade in the Roman empire'). Some of Laurence's contribution will be familiar from his recent Zoom presentation to the RRRA, and in both there is a distinct concentration on the roads of Italy. More fundamentally, the framework and many of the themes discussed are recognisable from his 1999 book *The roads of Roman Italy*: Mobility and cultural change. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, the present contribution might be seen as an updated summary of aspects of that book.

The chapter is divided into several short sections, many reflecting aspects of the earlier work and some with a strong Italian focus. By no means all the points that appeared particularly striking to this reader are necessarily new ones – some important ones are based primarily on well-known documentary sources, but even here new interpretative angles can be developed (e.g. 33, in relation to *beneficiarii*). Either way, Laurence's starting point is a restatement of the emphasis on the distinctive role of the road system as a fundamental feature of the empire: '*... it is land transport that characterises the Roman Empire and creates a materiality that is distinctive.*' (19).

The strongly Italian-focused section 'The origins of Roman long-distance and local roads' contains an observation of considerable potential significance in relation to 'local roads', which 'have been found in late twentieth and early twenty-first century development economics to be more effective in creating sustainable agriculture' (21), a point repeated at (40), where it is suggested that '*these local initiatives, rather than the major roads associated with the Roman emperors*' will need to be examined as evidence for roads bringing economic benefit (presumably for the most part in enabling the ready movement of agricultural produce from producers to markets). Legal definitions of broad road types are fairly clear – '*public roads were seen to have very definite end points ... local roads may trail off at a point that was not defined*' (25). While the construction of principal routes was essentially a state matter, responsibility for construction, and presumably maintenance, of other roads lay (in an Italian context) with local 'cities' (23-4) - and therefore by analogy with *civitas* authorities in provinces like Britain.

This point may raise questions of what were considered to be local roads (*viae vicinales*) in locations far from the developed legal framework established for Italy. It also again prompts questions of resourcing – to what extent did the system whereby *viae vicinales* '*were paid for by the local towns or villages arrangement and were maintained by the work of landowners or possessors of the land*' (25) work in a province like Britain? The political importance of maintenance of the major roads is reemphasised at the end of the chapter (40), and leads to the final 'Conclusion', consistent with Laurence's original position, that '*the material well-being of the roads [was] ... a metaphor for the well-being of the state*' – a statement that might perhaps have been followed with the single word - 'Discuss'.

Before reaching that point, however, there are sections on 'The technology of Roman roads', where we find the observation that '*what is perhaps more impressive [than the scale of some structures] is the diffusion of bridge technology across the Roman Empire ....*' (27) – a good point perhaps too easily taken for granted. Further sections concern in various ways the importance of roads in what might loosely be termed an official or administrative sphere - 'Boundaries and taxation' and 'Space and territory' are both based primarily on legal and epigraphic sources. Under the latter heading comes the interesting point that a transport route itself potentially '*defines the area of authority*' – i.e. can be used as the basis for description of a territory. Laurence uses the examples of *Umbria*, based on Strabo, and Arabia in the east, defined on the basis of Trajan's 'new' *Via Nova* (in fact overlying an earlier route) (31) – the message being put across through inscriptions on milestones and specific coin issues. In 'The state and the road' Laurence is emphatic that the definition of the *Cursus Publicus* as a 'postal system' is '*one of the greatest misconceptions in the modern literature*' (32). He draws on relatively recent work relating to *stationes* and *beneficiarii* to underline the role of the *Cursus* in providing facilities specifically for persons travelling on official business (33). The following section, 'Marking the beginning of the road', concerned with commemorative arches, might have passed without comment but for a paragraph on Richborough (37-8), here summarised as '*dated by coins to the late Flavian period, but completed under Trajan*'. A late Flavian date has become the consensus view (e.g. recently, Hingley 2022, 163-4), although a Trajanic or even early Hadrianic date has been considered possible (Coombe et al. 2015, 72). Most recently, however, re-examination of the finds and stratigraphic evidence suggests an Antonine date (Smither 2022), with (speculatively) the completion of the Antonine Wall as a context for the construction of the arch. If correct this does not necessarily affect the significance of the monument as marking the *Fines Britanniae* and/or the beginning/end of a journey in Laurence's terms, but it does shift its emphasis from being a relatively early marker of the establishment ('completion' – *'Britannia perdomita*') of Roman power in Britain to one linked with a more mature stage in the development of the province

In short, while very concise (owing to the constraints imposed by the editors of the volume) this is a useful summary of many aspects of the roads of the Roman empire, going well beyond their purely physical characteristics and chronology to explore significance and meaning and their impact in shaping the character of empire. Many of the themes set out in Laurence's 1999 book are carried forward, and some quite new ideas introduced. Finally, the References at the end of the chapter provide a useful resource: of c 105 references just over half postdate the appearance of the 1999 book.

Paul Booth
(Oxford Archaeology)

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