ROMAN·ROADS·RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

MILLE·VIAE·DUCUNT·HOMINES·PER·SECULA·ROMAM

ISSN 2752-8235 NEWSLETTER NO.28 WINTER 2024

FROM (NOT) THE EDITOR, DAVE ARMSTRONG

A real smorgesbord of articles on our favourite subject this quarter, our biggest edition by far. The elusive Stanegate continues to generate varying opinions on its routing through the Tyne valley and a comprehensive review of the Batham Gate in Derbyshire have provided substantial content. But don't lightly skip over the informative shorter pieces and the request regarding dual *agger* roads. Also key information about the status and direction of our Association in Other News.

Thank you to all our contributors. Dave

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A LIDAR SUPPORTED REVIEW OF BATHAM GATE, FROM BUXTON TO NAVIO FORT – RR710a

Neil Buckley

Introduction

Batham Gate is probably the best preserved Roman road in Derbyshire. It can still be identified on the ground in one or two locations as it crosses fields on the moors. It is clearly marked on O.S. maps, visible on aerial photography and can now be followed over much of its length using lidar. In 1773 antiquary, John Whitaker, mentioned it as "*a long narrow streak of green upon the heath*" (Whitaker, 1773, 199). See fig.1.

It was first described in detail by Samuel Pegge in 1768 (1784, 933). William Bennett (Bishop of Cloyne) wrote a similar description of it for Magna Brittania v5 (1817, 212). Ivan Margary faithfully recorded the route in 'Roman Roads of Britain' (1973) and gave it the designation RR710a. Margary's description of the road is accurate for most of its length (1973, 360), and although its course from an unidentified origin in Buxton to the top of Fairfield Road is high confidence, it remains conjectural and awaits archaeological evidence for verification. The route through Smalldale (west) near Peak Dale has been badly disturbed by limestone quarrying but some evidence of the damaged agger remains in adjacent fields. At the north eastern end of the road, the route through Smalldale near Bradwell has long been known but visible evidence of it is now sparse



Fig. 1: Smalldale (West) to Cresswellpart Lane, Smalldale (East). "A long narrow streak of green upon the heath". Images - Map data © Google 2020

and the approach up to the fort is also in need of a little refinement. Margary proposed that the road continued north east from *Navio* to connect Buxton with Sheffield and Templeborough, but that section of the route he numbered RR710b and is not covered here. Some of the unresolved sections of RR710a are now easier to decipher with the assistance of lidar imagery. Part 1 of this paper covers the exit from Buxton and the road as far as Hernstone Lane near Peak Forest. Part 2 covers the route from Hernstone Lane through Smalldale near Bradwell on its way to Brough and it presents the case for the 'antiquarian's' approach to *Navio* fort.

Part 1 – Buxton to Hernstone Lane, Peak Forest

The Roman Road convergence point in Buxton

In 1593 the antiquarian William Camden was the first to identify Buxton as a Roman station simply because it was the destination of the Roman road from the fort at Brough-on-Noe (*Navio*). The road had long before then been known locally as Bathamgate (Haverfield, 1905, 222). When he was writing, Camden was not aware of any Roman remains visible at Buxton. It is now accepted that Buxton is on the intersection of at least four Roman military roads. Its Roman name *Aquae Arnemetiae* has been deduced from the Ravenna Cosmology where it appears between *Navio* (Brough-on-Noe) and *Ardotalia* (Melandra Castle at Glossop) and is followed by *Mamucium* (Manchester) (Rivet & Smith, 1979, 208). All three are known to have been connected by direct roads to Buxton and were unquestionably military stations where the first fortifications were later rebuilt in stone. However at Buxton, no evidence has emerged of a military camp or stone built fort that would have been an obvious convergence point for the road system. This may be an indication that a Roman fort or camp was established there but that it was a short lived earthwork.

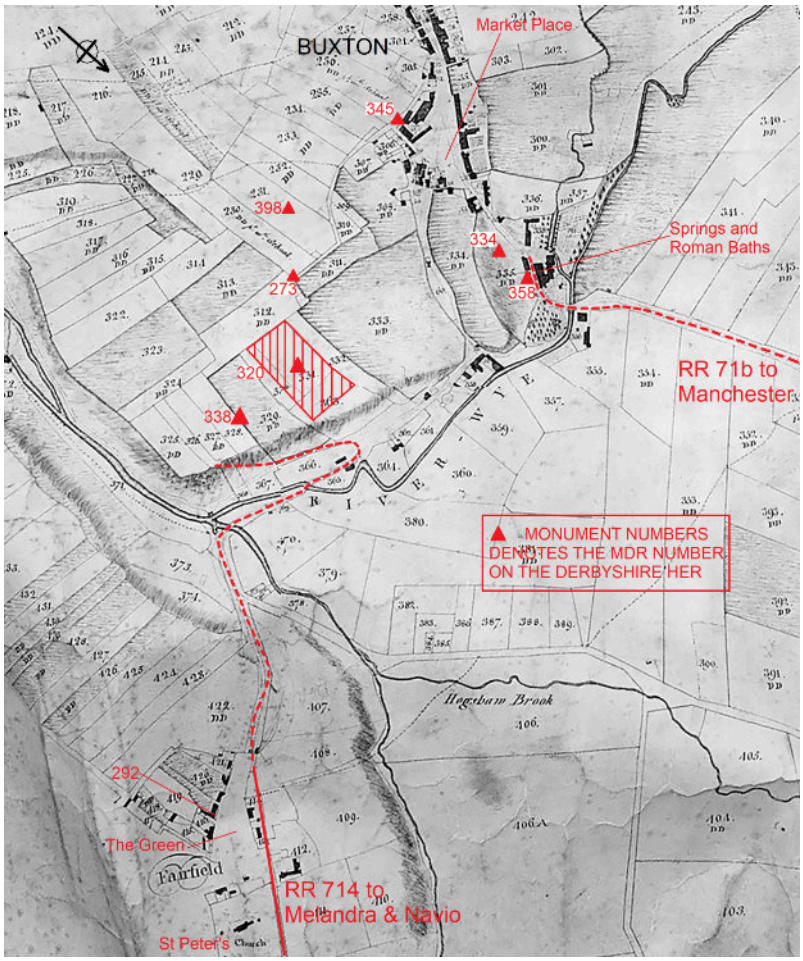


Fig. 2: Roman Archaeology in Buxton plotted on the 1775 Map by G Barker, commissioned by The Duke of Devonshire. Courtesy of Chatsworth House.

Aquae Arnemetiae is the Latin name for 'waters of Arnemetia', possibly referring to springs in a sacred grove dedicated to a Celtic deity, Arnemetiae, who was also mentioned on an altar found at *Navio* (Rivet and Smith, 1979, 254). Fig. 2 illustrates the distribution of Roman archaeological finds in central Buxton plotted on a map depicting the town before the Crescent was built (Barker 1775). The remains of the Roman bathing facilities adjacent to the hot and cold springs have been known of at least since 1572 when Dr John Jones wrote of 'The benefits of the auncient baths of Buckstones' (Leach, 1999, 95). They have been investigated and described by many antiquarians since the early 18th century (Derbyshire HER ref. MDR337) although most of their finds have been lost. However a cache of Roman coins, presumably votive offerings, was found under the floor of one of the baths in 1975. This dispelled any lingering doubts about a Roman presence in the area (Derbyshire HER ref. MDR358). There may also have been Roman buildings on The Slopes (previously known as The Terrace and St Anne's Cliff) overlooking the sacred springs. The remains of a possible building platform were excavated by Hayman Rooke (Rooke, 1788, 137). In an unconvincing report he speculated that it had been a temple, all trace of it is now lost (Derbyshire HER ref. MDR334).

It is usual for Roman towns to have originated as the civilian *vicus* formed outside a fort and the roads to it generally will have converged on one or other of the fort's gates. As there is no archaeological evidence for a fort at Buxton the location of a hypothetical focal point remains the subject of conjecture. The only other spa town in Roman Britain was *Aquae Sulis* (Bath) where the central buildings were a bathing complex fed by hot springs and an adjacent temple zone. As in Buxton, there is no archaeological evidence for a Roman fort at Bath but the settlement was protected by town walls and the roads to it converged on the town gates. At Buxton though, no



Fig. 3: Roman road convergence points? The Roman Baths and possible fort sites in Higher Buxton at Hardwick Mount, the Market Place and Old Town. Contains OS Data © Crown copyright and database right 2024

evidence has emerged so far of a settlement protected by town walls and gates. So it is impossible to be certain where Batham Gate actually terminated although the bathing complex or an undiscovered fort or both, and these remain the most likely points of origin (fig.3). The location of the springs and bathing complex is already well established whereas there are three or more possible locations for a fort.

The high ground at Buxton Old Town SK 0569 7302, has been suggested as one possible fort site (Tristram 1916, 86). This location was also favoured by Margary (1973, 360) but it was mainly based on the favourable vantage point and the nearby junction point of suspected Roman roads High Street and West Street. A road from the north east via Silverlands and South Street may also have connect with Bath Lane at a gate in the 'fort'. So far though, there have been no Roman archaeological finds in the area. Further down the hill, the Market Place is another candidate for a fort location. It could be a Roman road convergence point with High Street representing the route of the Roman road from Derby (RR71a) and Hall Bank the route to Manchester (RR71b). A modified South Street alignment could have been bringing in Batham Gate to the Market Area via Silverlands. But again, very little Roman archaeological evidence has been found in the Market Place to support this theory. The third candidate area for a fort in Higher Buxton is the area previously known as Hardwick Mount including the Silverlands and Holker Roads. It is in this area where most of the archaeological evidence for a Roman settlement in Buxton has been found.

In 1903 when the housing on Holker Road SK 0614 7344 was being built, local archaeologist Micah Salt was alerted to significant quantities of Roman material being disturbed and he was able to carry out a fairly extensive controlled excavation (Turner 1903, 163). Pottery, glass, bronze and iron fragments were found and a large paved area was uncovered but no structural remains were identified. More finds were found in test trenches dug some distance away. The area investigated is marked as a rectangle with hatching, Derbyshire HER ref. MDR320 on Figure 2. Although recent watching briefs during building work in the same area have produced nothing of interest, the Holker Road finds area does appear to extend further eastwards. In about 1890 when the NWLR railway line, serving Higher Buxton Station, was being built, Roman material was reportedly thrown up by the excavations, Derbyshire HER MDR338 refers.

There is also some evidence for a possible Roman road in the Higher Buxton area. The most significant discovery there was in 1856 when a Roman milestone indicating the distance to *Navio* (10 Roman miles) was unearthed in a house garden 'near the end of the back lane' in Silverlands, Derbyshire HER ref. MDR273. The top part of it is missing and it was lying flat when discovered so its original position is not known but the find spot is about 10 modern miles from *Navio* so it may not have been moved very far from its original location. What was believed to be the remains of a paved road was uncovered on South Street in 1937, Derbyshire HER ref. MDR 345. The Hardwick Mount site would have provided a good vantage point overlooking the river Wye crossing points on the Manchester and *Navio*/Melandra roads. Roads going west and south may have left a fort at this location via a South Street alignment, effectively a spur off High Street.

All of the possible fort sites in Higher Buxton would have needed to be linked to the military road to *Navio*, that is Batham Gate. In order to fall into alignment with the remains of the Batham Gate *agger* through Fairfield, it is likely that the road crossed the Higher Buxton plateau and descended St Anne's Cliff to the old crossing point on the River Wye at the junction of Bridge Street and Spring Gardens. The only realistic alternative to this route might have been to follow the route of Terrace Road down to Spring Gardens, but there is no evidence that this was a viable trackway before St Anne's Cliff was quarried and remodelled in the 18th and 19th centuries. There may also have been a road from the Roman Baths that ran along the bottom of St Anne's Cliff and connected directly to Batham Gate where it crossed the river. The ancient River Wye crossing point is hidden under the roundabout at the junction of Spring Gardens and Bridge Street SK 0625 7360. From there the 18th

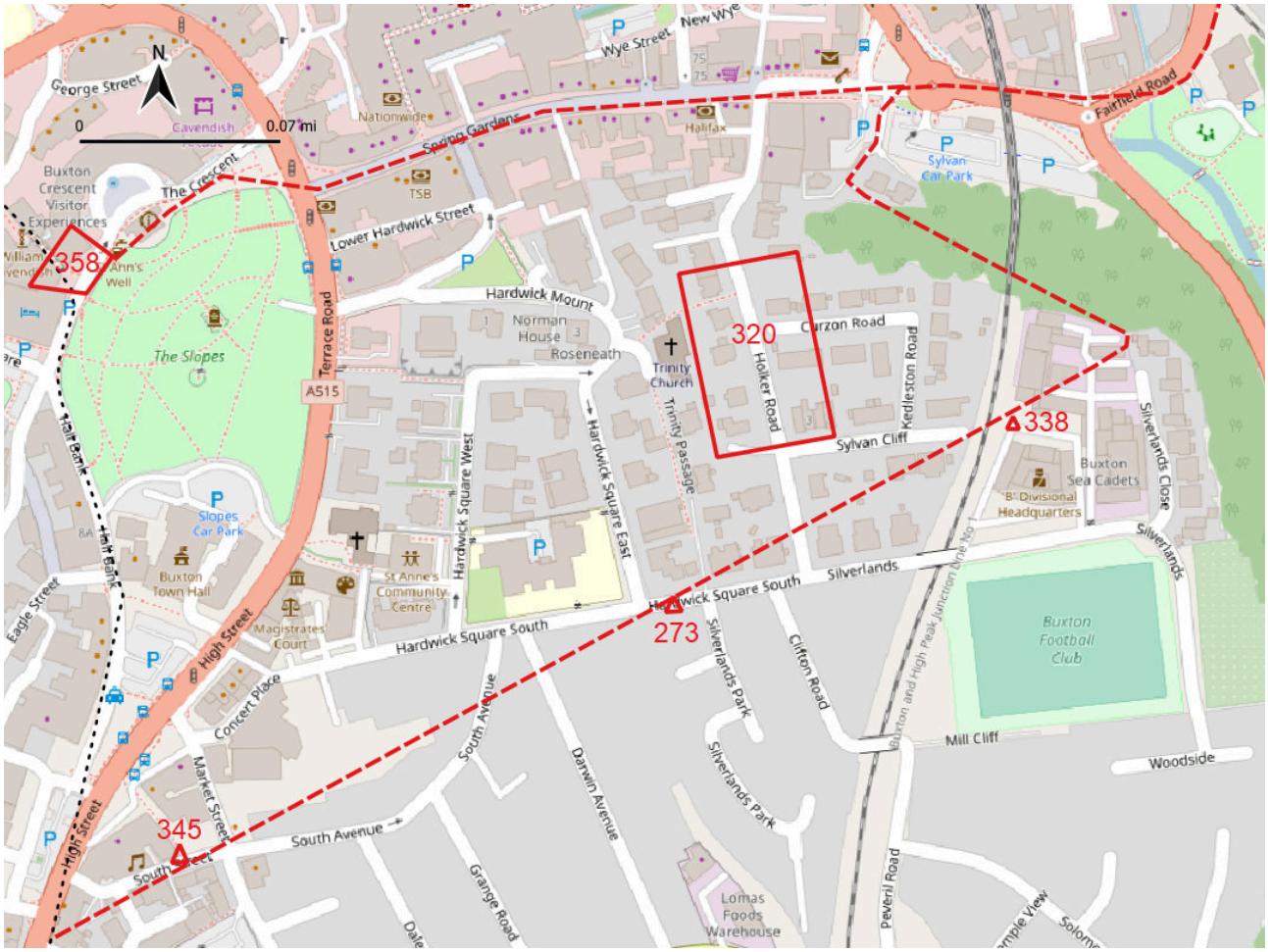


Fig. 4: Conjectural roads to the eastern river crossing point. Map data © OpenStreetMap Contributors 2020, made available here under the Open Database License (ODbL) v1.0p

century road followed the northern river bank (Barker map 1775) to another crossing point on Hogshaw Brook at SK 0637 7360. Although there is no verification evidence for it, a Roman road zig zagging from Hogshaw Brook up the hill to Fairfield was most likely to have been the predecessor of the modern Fairfield Road and therefore a part of Batham Gate (fig. 4).

A conjectural military road crossing the Higher Buxton plateau, in nominal alignment with South Street and the find spot of the Roman milestone on Silverlands, can be extrapolated to the St Anne's Cliff edge in proximity with the top of an old inclined trackway that descended to the river through Sylvan Park woods. When excavated (Trench G on fig. 5), the remains of the terraced path at the top of the Cliff did not appear to be of Roman construction (Barnatt, 1987, 23) but as the track was plotted on an 1800 plan of Buxton (Tristram, 1916, 92) this suggests that it was not just a feature created as part of the 19th century Sylvan Park landscaping.

The incline can be seen on the 1878 OS map (fig. 5) and apparently at the top of the Cliff it turned into the fields before fading into a field boundary. On the 1842 OS 1st Series map (fig. 6), what would appear to be the same track continues along the field boundary and then turns west towards Silverlands, almost in line with it. However on the 1775 map (Fig 2) there in no sign of it. This could be just an agricultural track or an old pack horse route taking the 'back lane' into Buxton Market Place, but it may also have Roman origins.



Fig. 5: OS Six Inch Map surveyed in 1878 showing Trench G at the top of the inclined pathway down St Anne's Cliff below Hardwick Mount. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. Image re-use licence CC-BY (NLS).



Fig. 6: 1842 OS 1st Series Sheet 81, map of Buxton. The Sylvan Woods incline appears to (almost) connect to Silverlands Lane. Licence (CC BY-SA 4.0) by GBHGIS/ University of Plymouth

Buxton to Fairfield (0.7 mile)

What little evidence there is then, suggests that Batham Gate made its way either along the river bank from the baths complex or from a camp or settlement on the Higher Buxton plateau taking an inclined decent of St Anne's Cliff to a crossing point on the River Wye. Both of these roads would have been aiming for a ford or bridge at or near the Bridge Street junction with Spring Gardens. Barker's map of 1775 clearly shows that the road crossed the river at that point and then followed the north bank to a crossing over Hogshaw Brook. Once over Hogshaw Brook a Roman road is likely to have zig-zagged up the hill, nominally following the 1775 track of Fairfield Road, see fig. 2. Despite the housing development on each side of Fairfield Road since 1775, it is noticeable that apart from carriageway widening, the road's configuration is much the same now as it was then. At the top of the hill the final change of direction to the west at SK 0653 7393 puts it on the alignment of St Peter's Road. Property boundaries show that the Roman road ran behind the first few house plots that appear to be encroachments on to The Green. But the Roman road emerges from behind them on to the St Peter's Road alignment that runs past the church and is rigidly maintained in the direction of Dove Holes (fig. 3). In about 1878 part of a Roman milestone and some paved road were allegedly found in the garden of Alma Cottage, 147 Fairfield Road, Derbyshire HER ref. MDR 292. This would be about 80m off the likely alignment along St Peter's Road, see fig. 2. No supporting evidence of the find has been found.

Fairfield to Thomthorn (1.1 mile)

Having taken up the Roman alignment at St Peter's Church in Fairfield, the course of the *agger* remains can be followed on lidar in the direction of Dove Holes. At the end of St Peter's Road it continues in the same direction following the western boundary of Fairfield Common. The line then crosses an unnamed bridle road leading to Brook House Farm and passes beneath Brook House where another Roman milestone was allegedly discovered, Derbyshire HER ref. MDR 215. In the next field the *agger* runs alongside the field boundary on the left side and continues to SK 071 756 near Thornhead Farm, Tomthorn. At this point there is a clear fork in the Roman road as the original *agger* continues on its alignment towards Dove Holes while another turns off towards Peak Dale taking up the alignment of the modern Batham Gate Road. In 1959/60 the suspected length of *agger* from Fairfield to Tomthorn was investigated by members of the Buxton and Melandra 'Field Groups'. Their intention was to prove that it was the remains a Roman road to Melandra through Dove Holes. They cut nine trenches across it between Nuns Farm and the Batham Gate fork (see Fig 5) and although their archaeological excavation techniques were rudimentary and recording and reporting skills were weak, substantial remains of a 'causway' were found in all of the digs; (Bellhouse, 1975). Although much of the construction material had been robbed out, all the sections revealed sufficient remains to confirm the presence of Roman road construction techniques.

The lidar image (fig. 7) clearly shows the course of the *agger* from Nun Farm to the Batham Gate fork at Tomthorn. It also appears to show the outline, centred on SK 073 749, of a Roman camp at Barms Farm golf range on Fairfield Common (fig.8). If this was a camp perhaps it was in support of road building.

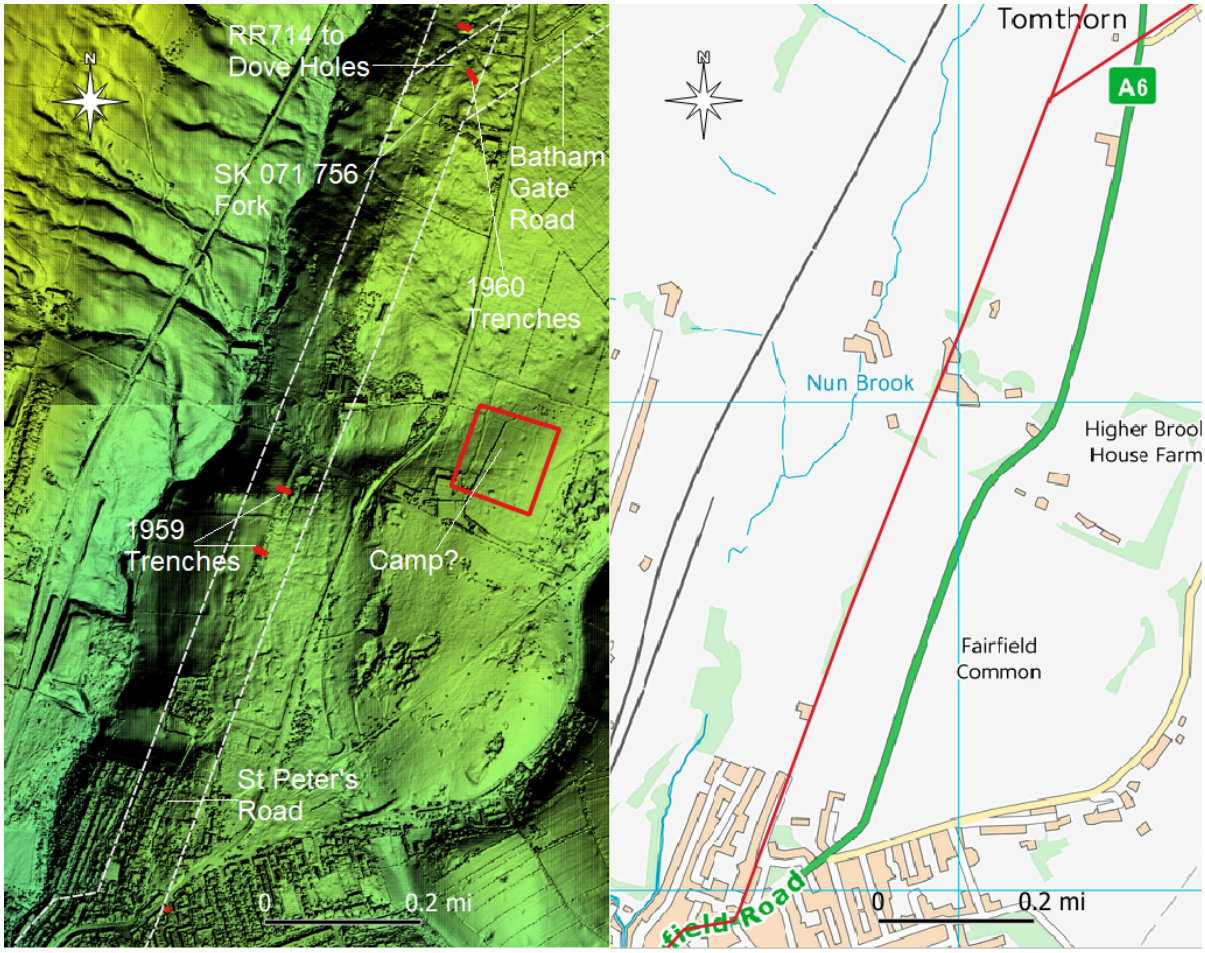


Fig. 7: Fairfield to Tomthorn. Batham Gate forks right off the Melandra road. Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2024, all rights reserved. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2024

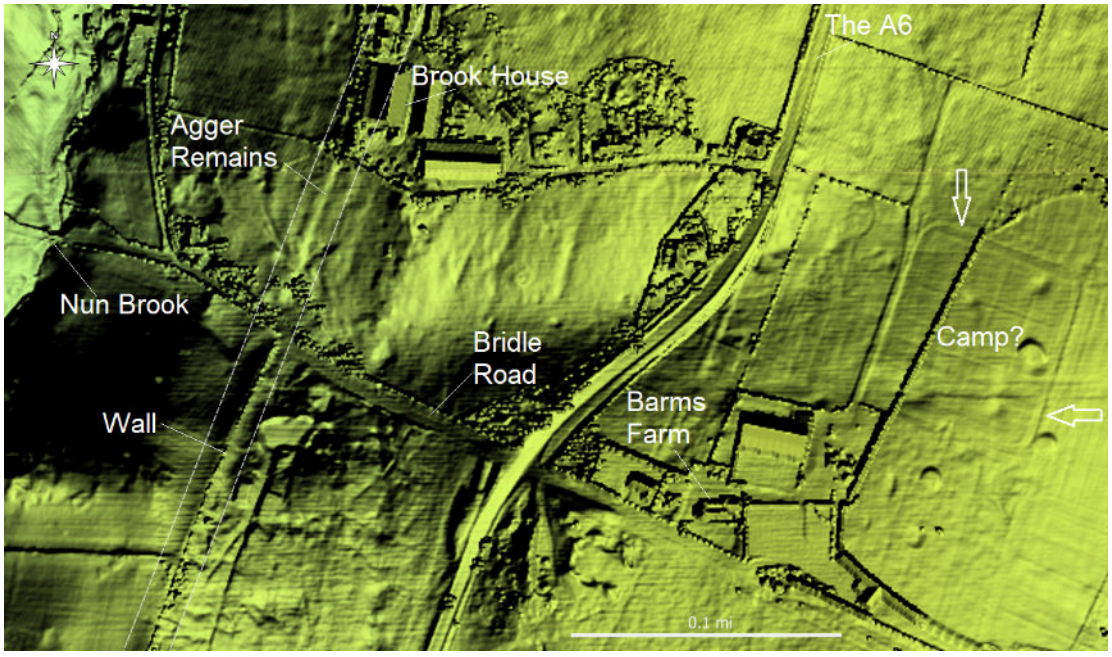


Fig. 8: Possible Roadside Camp on Fairfield Common. Base lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2021.

Tomthorn to Peak Dale (1.6 miles)

The short length of *agger* remains visible on lidar between the fork and the A6 is fully in alignment with the modern Batham Gate Road heading for Peak Dale. The modern road initially runs to the right of the *agger* but soon moves into line with it and then stays on top of it at least as far as the old lime workings in Peak Dale. Despite the extensive lime workings on each side of the road the course of the Roman road appears not to have been altered. The OS 1st Series map of 1842, surveyed before the railway was built and the quarry expanded suggests that the modern road is faithfully following the old road layout down into Dove Dale, probably as far as the junction with Small Knowle End (see fig 9). There is little doubt that this length of Batham Gate Road was Roman but the 1960 digs by Bellhouse and his team remain the only excavated sections across the *agger* (Bellhouse, 1975). However in 2018 an archaeological evaluation was carried out in on a site alongside the road on the edge of Peak Dale village, Derbyshire HER ref. MDR 23051. Where the evaluation area came closest to the road, two trenches were dug and what appeared to be a large quarry pit was found in Trench 9. It was interpreted as a possible road building quarry that would have provided raw material to build the *agger* (Chiara and Lodoen, 2018) but no conclusive dating evidence was found.

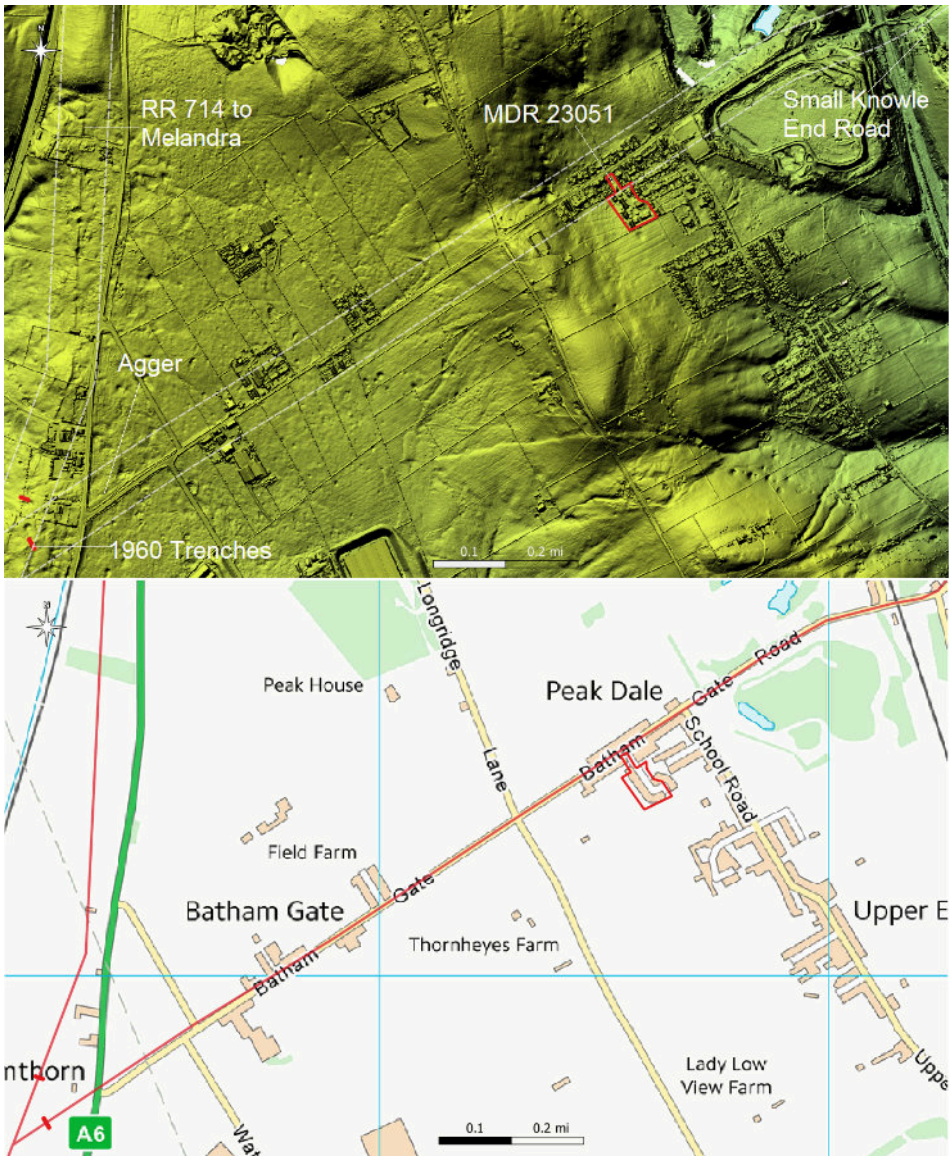


Fig. 9: Batham Gate Road through Peak Dale. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2022. Base map is Opendata copyright Ordnance Survey.

From Peak Dale through Smalldale (west) (0.7 miles)

East of the railway line beyond Peak Dale village is the first settlement on this route that is called Smalldale. In order to avoid confusion later this one will occasionally be referred to as Smalldale (west). Extensive lime quarry workings and lime kilns in the valley have totally obliterated about 500m of the remains of the Roman road between Peak Dale valley and the edge of the Smalldale (west) hamlet. However the course of the *agger* can still be identified on the lidar image in undisturbed fields to the south west and north east of the settlement. From the centre of Smalldale, going in a south westerly direction, the Roman road can be followed as it curves between two buildings at Oak House Farm (Derbyshire HER ref. MDR 21628) and then crosses the two fields that have not been disturbed by mining. It is heading in the direction of the Outfarm building (Derbyshire HER ref. MDR 21631) at SK 094 772. The western end of the Outfarm building was built on top of the *agger* and a short length of *agger* emerges in the small field behind the building

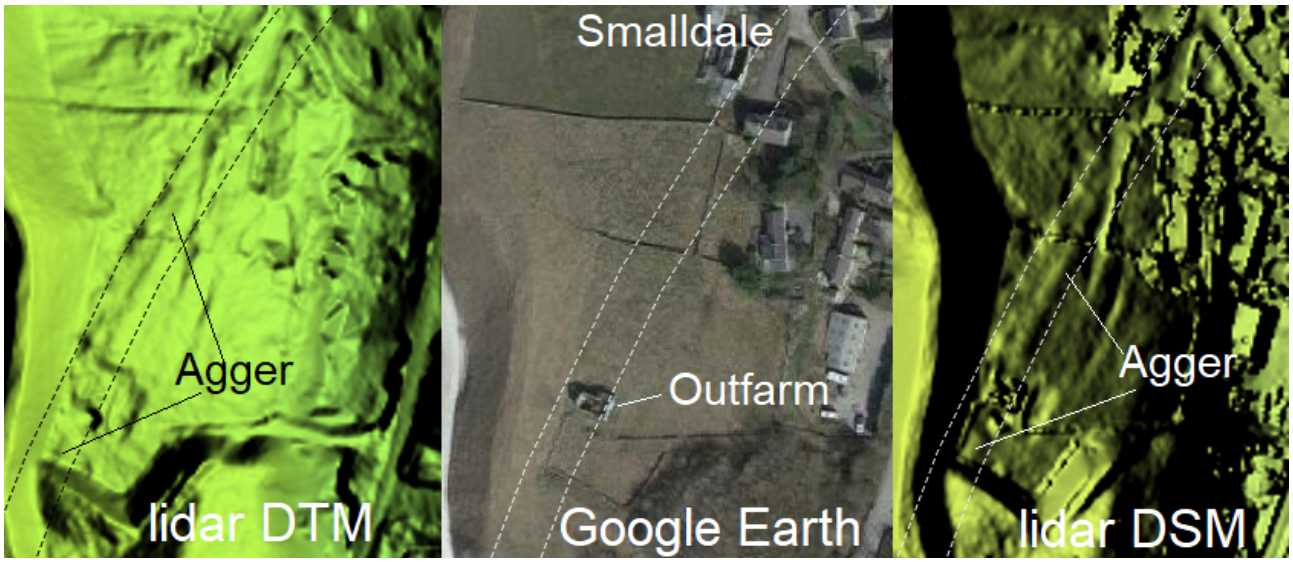
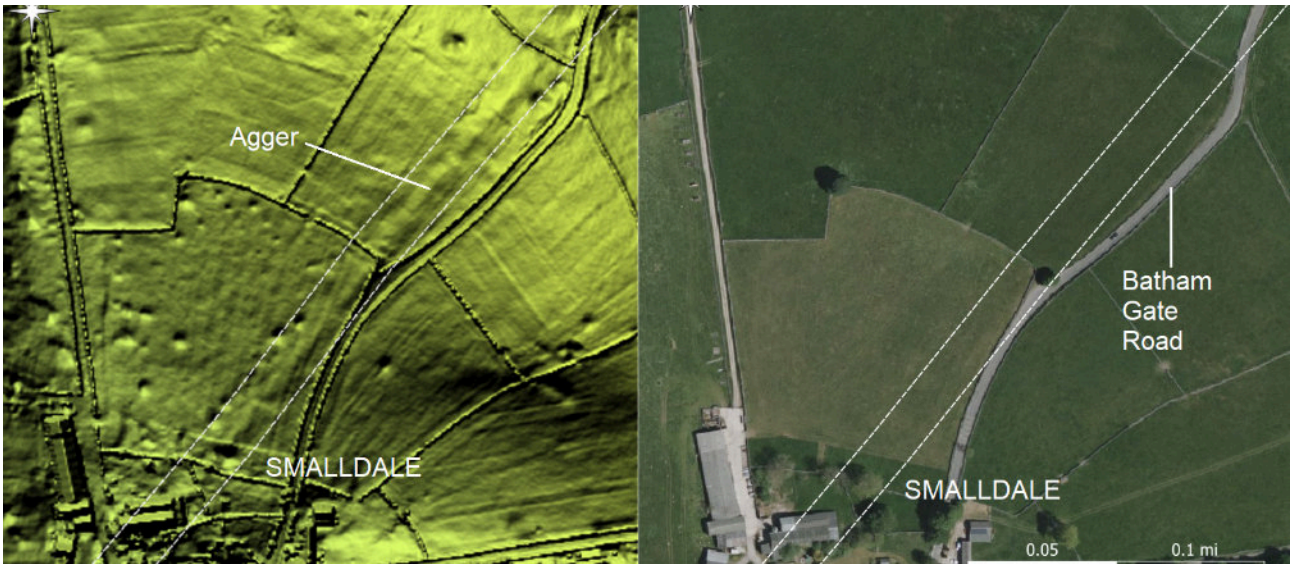


Fig. 10 above: The Roman Road South West of Smalldale (West). Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2022. Aerial view Map data © Google 2020

Fig. 11 below: From the centre of Smalldale the agger heads straight towards the Batham Gate alignment as it bends to the east. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2022. Aerial view Microsoft Bing, Map data/Screen shot reproduced with permission from Microsoft Corporation © (2020) Microsoft, Tomtom.



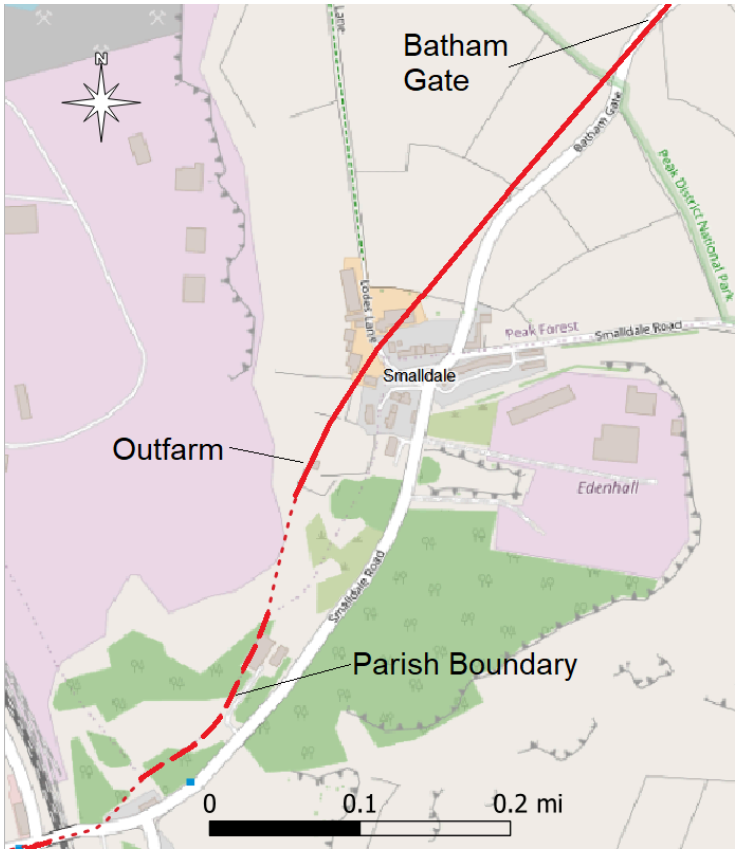


Fig. 12: The Roman road passed through the centre of Smalldale hamlet. In the south west about 500m of the agger remains have been destroyed by mining but the parish boundary gives a hint of its possible route. Map data © OpenStreetMap Contributors 2020, made available here under the Open Database License (ODbL) v1.0.

running alongside the western field wall and then going under the southern wall to enter the mining area where it is soon lost (fig. 10).

Above Smalldale, on the north eastern side, a longer length of the *agger* remains can be seen on lidar. These remains confirm that the road curved back into the line of Batham Gate as it crossed a shallow gulley just inside the Peak District National Park boundary at (SK 097 776) (fig 11).

Extrapolating the curve of the *agger* further south from the Outfarm below Smalldale, the lost part of the Roman road is presumed to have continued down hill to reconnect with Batham Gate (Smalldale Road) at the bottom of the valley. The parish boundary between Peak Forest and Wormhill possibly followed its route some of the way (see fig. 12).

Smalldale (West) to Hernstone Lane (A623) (1.7 miles)

Northeast of Smalldale, the *agger* merges with the modern Batham Gate road at SK 097 776 which remains on top of the *agger* until it reaches a sharp left hand corner at SK 110 782 where the main road meets Sitch Lane from the south. The main road turns towards Peak Forest but the Batham Gate *agger* maintains the Roman alignment and continues into the fields heading for Dam Dale Farm (fig. 13).

From this road junction a public footpath follows the alignment of the *agger* across the fields towards Dam Dale Farm. The line of the *agger* is now very clear on the lidar image as it crosses most of the fields but it is also easily visible on aerial photographs and Google Earth when the conditions are right. The line fades as it passes by Dam Dale Farmhouse but then reappears as a terrace cutting in the side of the gulley leading up to Hernstone Lane. At Hernstone Lane the *agger* crosses the centre of the zig zag and exits in the fields north east of Mount Pleasant Farm (figs. 14 and 15).

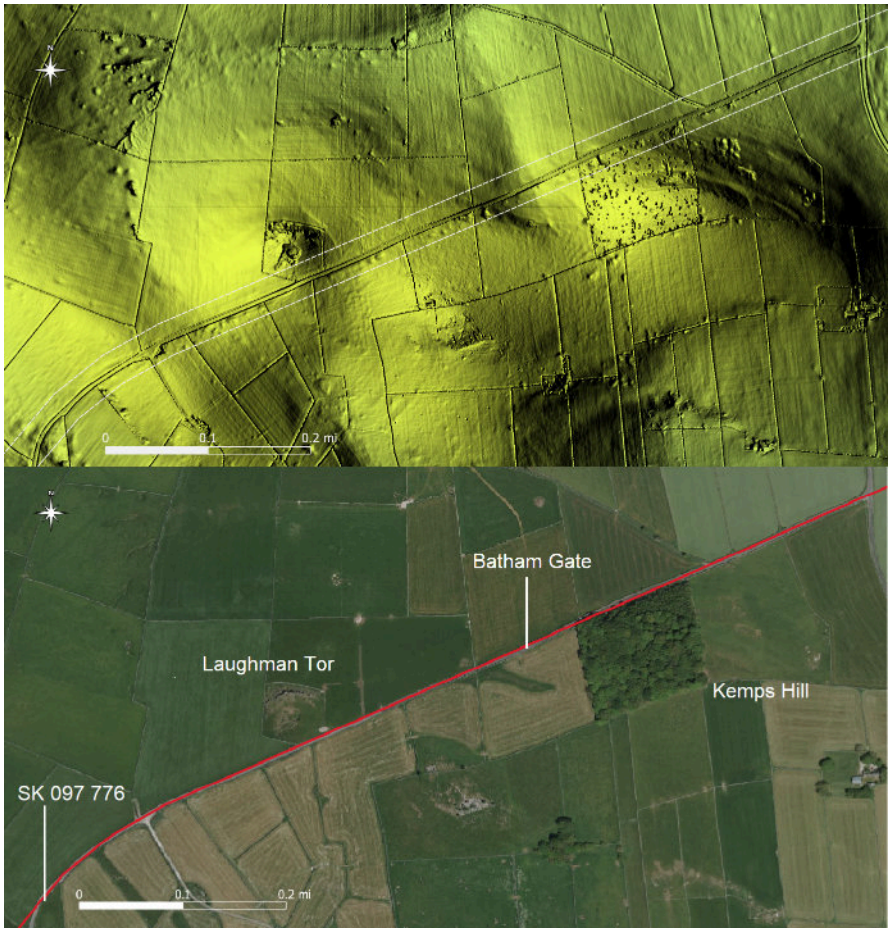


Fig. 13: Northeast of Smalldale the modern road remains on the agger until the main road turns towards Peak Forest at the junction with Sitch Road. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2022. Aerial view Microsoft Bing.

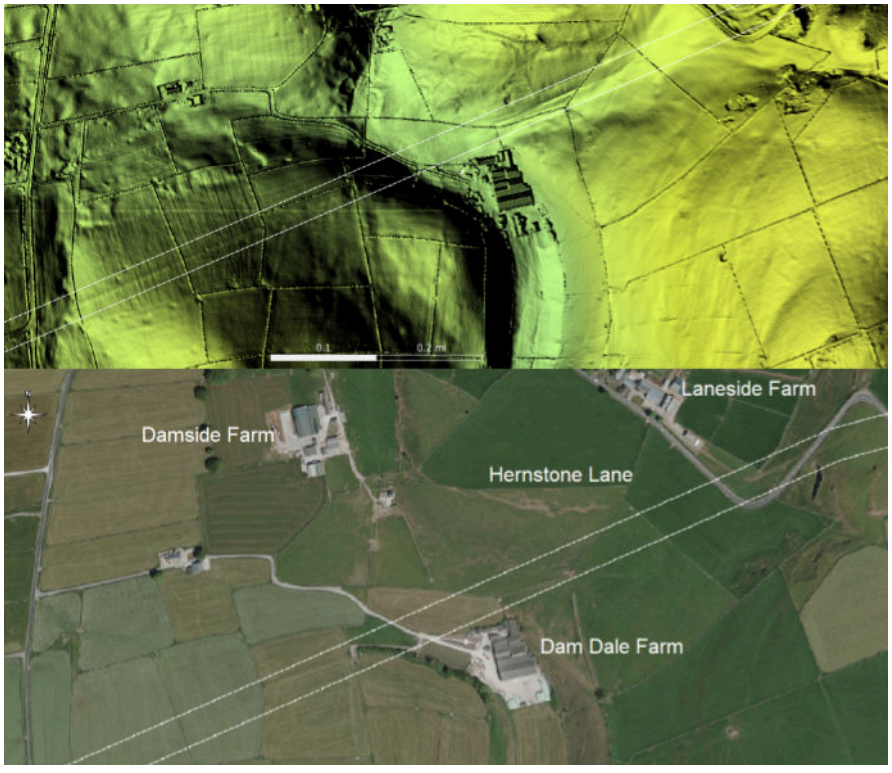


Fig. 14: From the Batham Gate/ Sitch Lane junction to Hernstone Lane zig zag. (A623) Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2022. Aerial view Microsoft Bing.

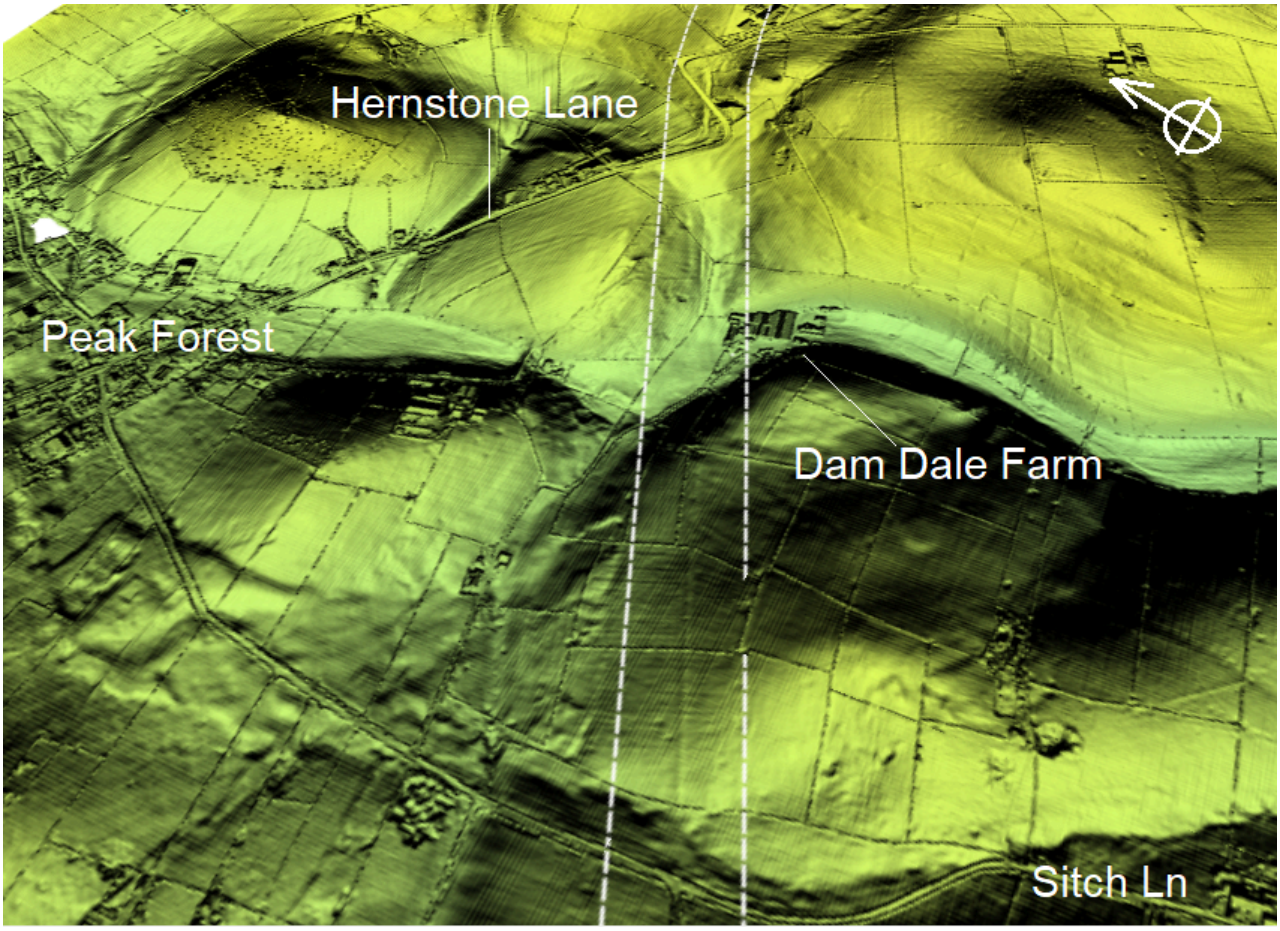


Fig. 15: Lidar DSM 3D view looking east towards Hernstone Lane. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2022

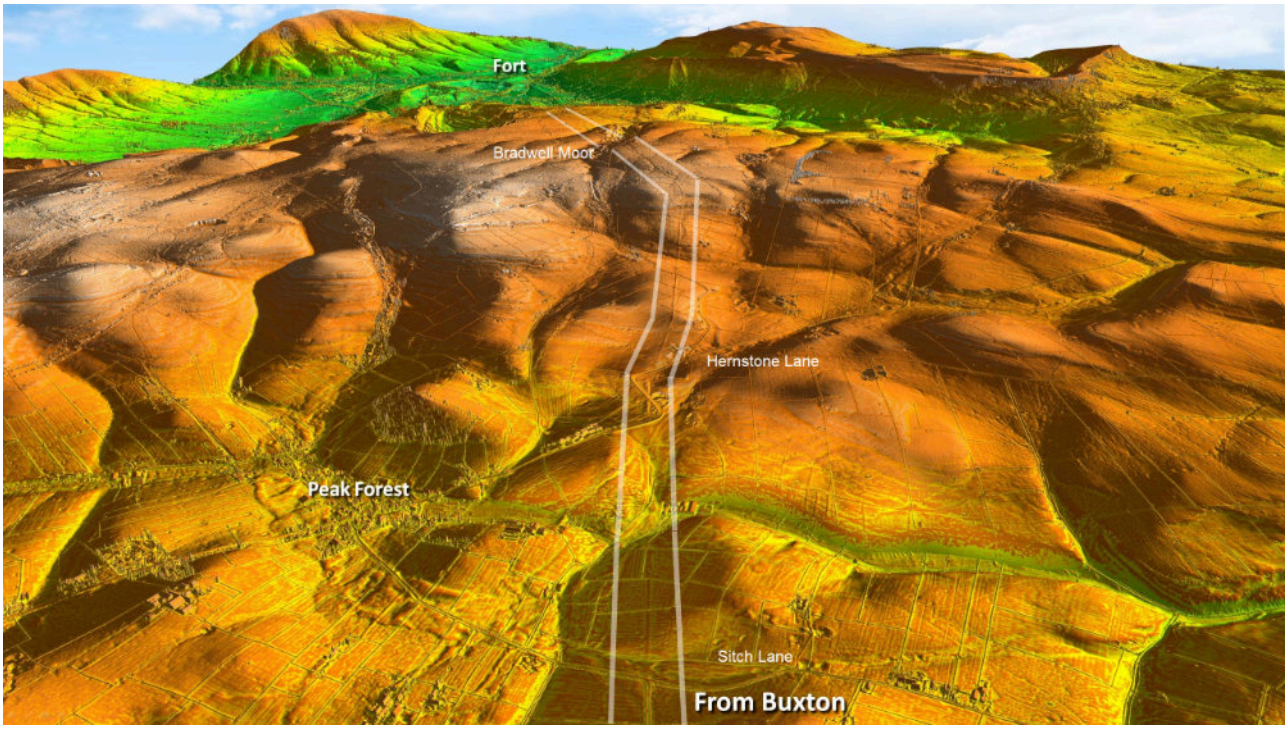


Fig. 16: 3D lidar view of Batham Gate from Sitch Lane. Lidar image by David Ratledge. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2021

Part 2 Hernstone Lane, Peak Forest to Navio Fort, Brough-on-Noe

Hernstone Lane (A623) to Bradwell Moor Ridge (1.3 miles)

Beyond the Hernstone Lane zig zag in the fields just beyond Mount Pleasant Farm, there is a slight change of direction to the north east. After crossing a few fields beyond that point, the *agger* crosses Clement Lane for the first time (fig. 17). In the first field, opposite Wheston House at SK 133 791, a trench was dug across the *agger* in 1976 (Wroe 1982) when at least two periods of road building and a maximum width of about 8m were recorded. The *agger* continues and crosses Clement Lane again, this time aiming for the higher ground at what was historically known as Batham Edge (OS 1st Series Map). It passes on the northerly side of an ancient earthworks or enclosure directly opposite Hulmes Vale Farm. On Bradwell Moor at SK 141 795 the *agger* meets Clement Lane again at the point where the Lane makes a sharp right hand turn. From this point Clement Lane runs on top of the Batham Gate *agger* for just over a mile.

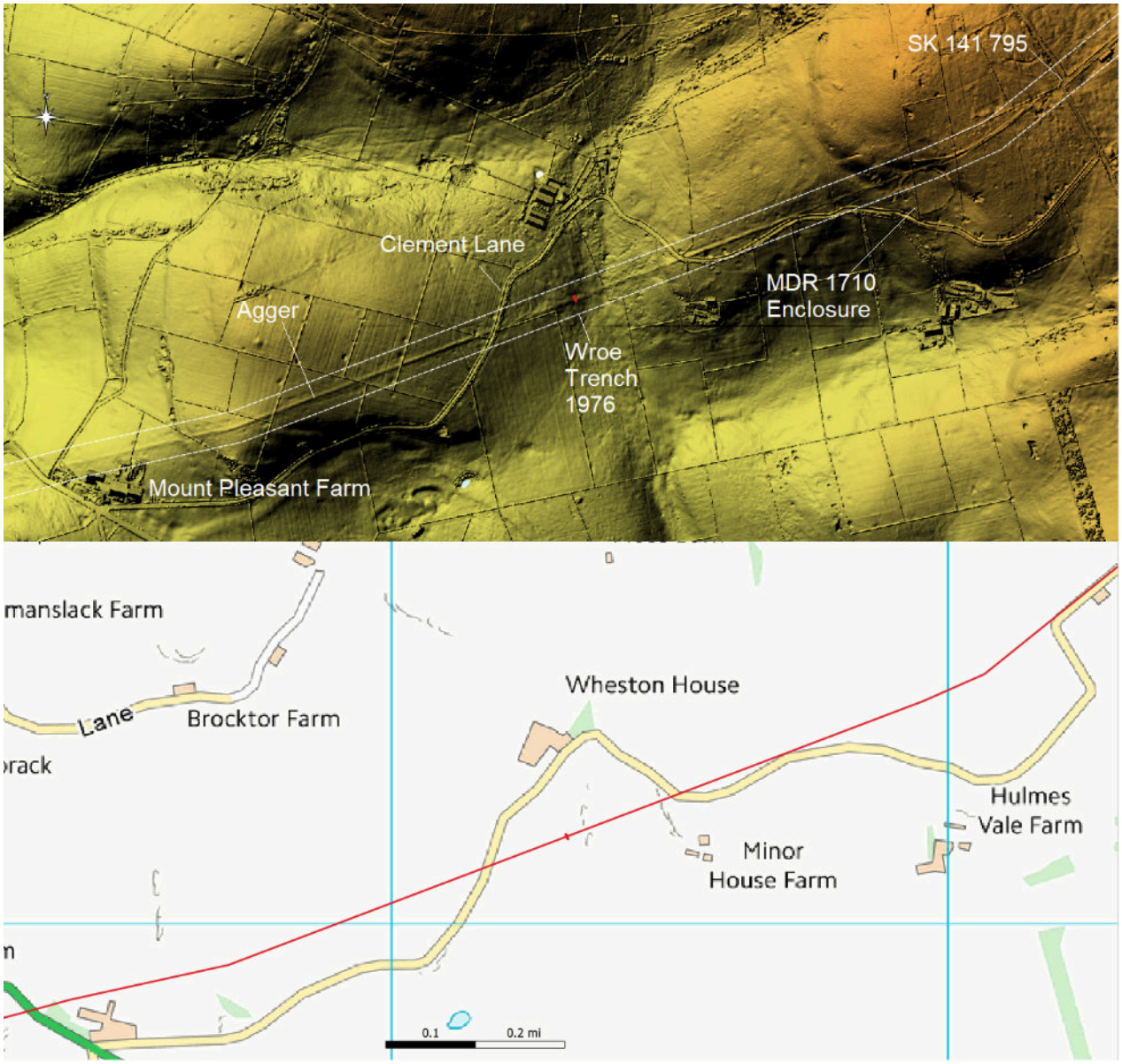


Fig. 17: Hernstone Lane to Clement Lane on Bradwell Moor. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2021 base mapping is Opendata copyright Ordnance Survey.

Bradwell Moor to Smalldale Head (1.8 miles)

Clement Lane stays on the Batham Gate alignment until it crosses the Moss Rake open cast mine workings where the modern road has been diverted around the quarrying. At the top of Green Dale, Clement Lane turns right, towards Castleton Lane, but the *agger* alignment continues across the fields until it also reaches and crosses Castleton Lane further to the north. As the deteriorating *agger* approaches Smalldale Head it can be seen on lidar to curve towards and then cross Cresswellpart Lane just as it fades from view (fig. 18).

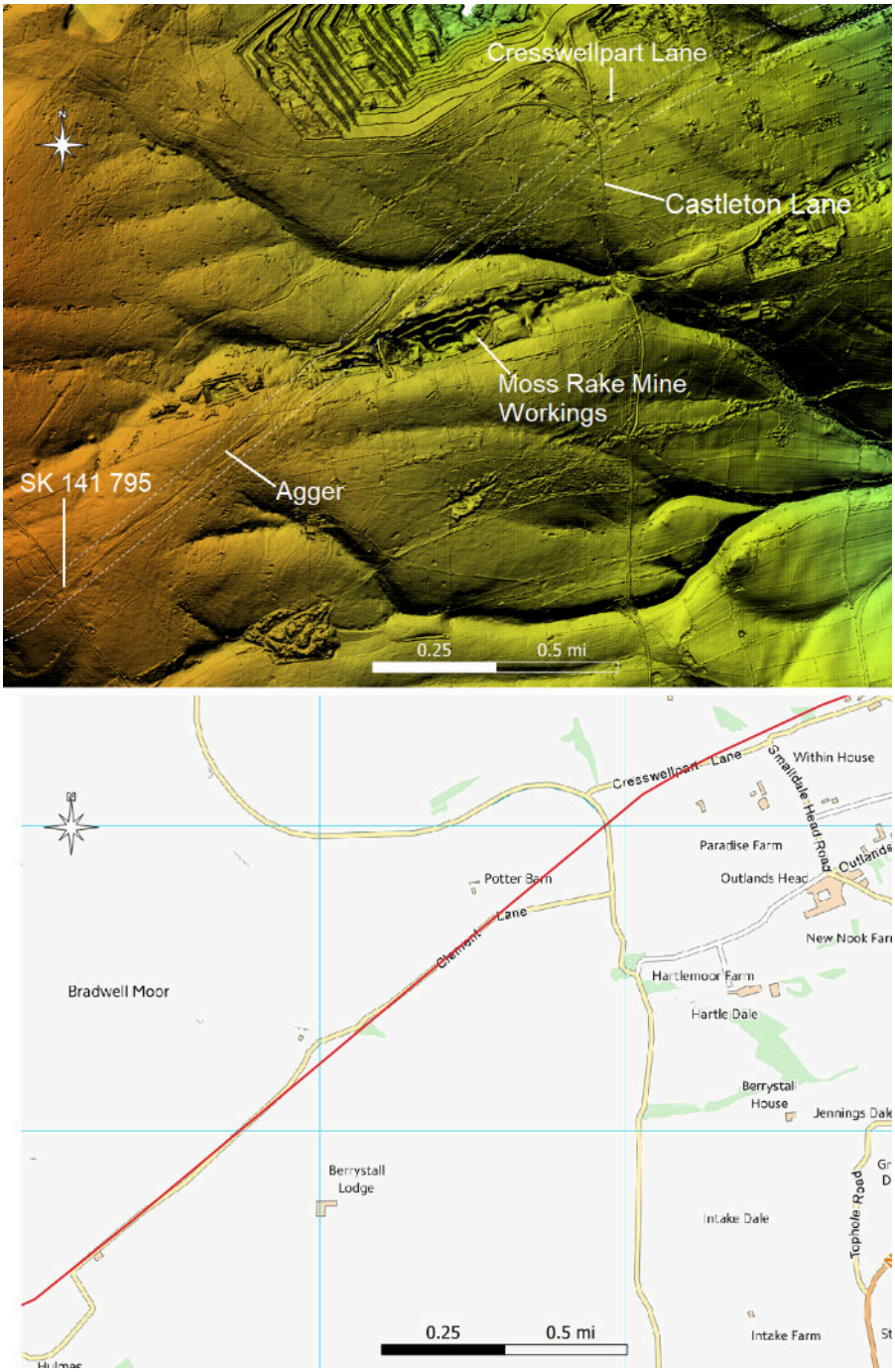


Fig. 18: Bradwell Moor to Cresswellpart Lane at Smalldale Head. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2021 base mapping is Opendata copyright Ordnance Survey.

Smalldale Head to the Grey Ditch (0.5 miles)

As the course of the *agger* crosses over Cresswellpart Lane it is curving onto a parallel alignment to the north of Smalldale Hill road (Fair View) in the fields behind the properties. At the rear of Smalldale Old Hall it was visible as a short length of "*low agger that could be traced downhill as a swelling in the ground and bumps in transverse walls that went as far as Michlow Lane which itself rises up over the agger*" (Wroe 1982).

Bennet as a correspondent of Lysons, described the road beginning at the fort (Bennet 1817). He stated that it was possible at that time to track the road beyond the Grey Ditch after which "*it bent north west to ascend (Smalldale) hill where it could be found by spade and plough in a line well known to farmers*", in other words in the fields. The Grey Ditch is considered likely to have been a post Roman defensive earthworks intended to function as a barrier or gateway to disrupt raiders trying to use the Roman road to gain access to Buxton and the south. The breach in the Grey Ditch through which the B6049 (main road) now passes, can therefore be assumed to mark a known fixed point on the Roman road. For that reason the road down Smalldale Hill must be following a line leading to it or to a position a little to the west of it, the point where Bennet says it turned north west towards Smalldale (fig 19).

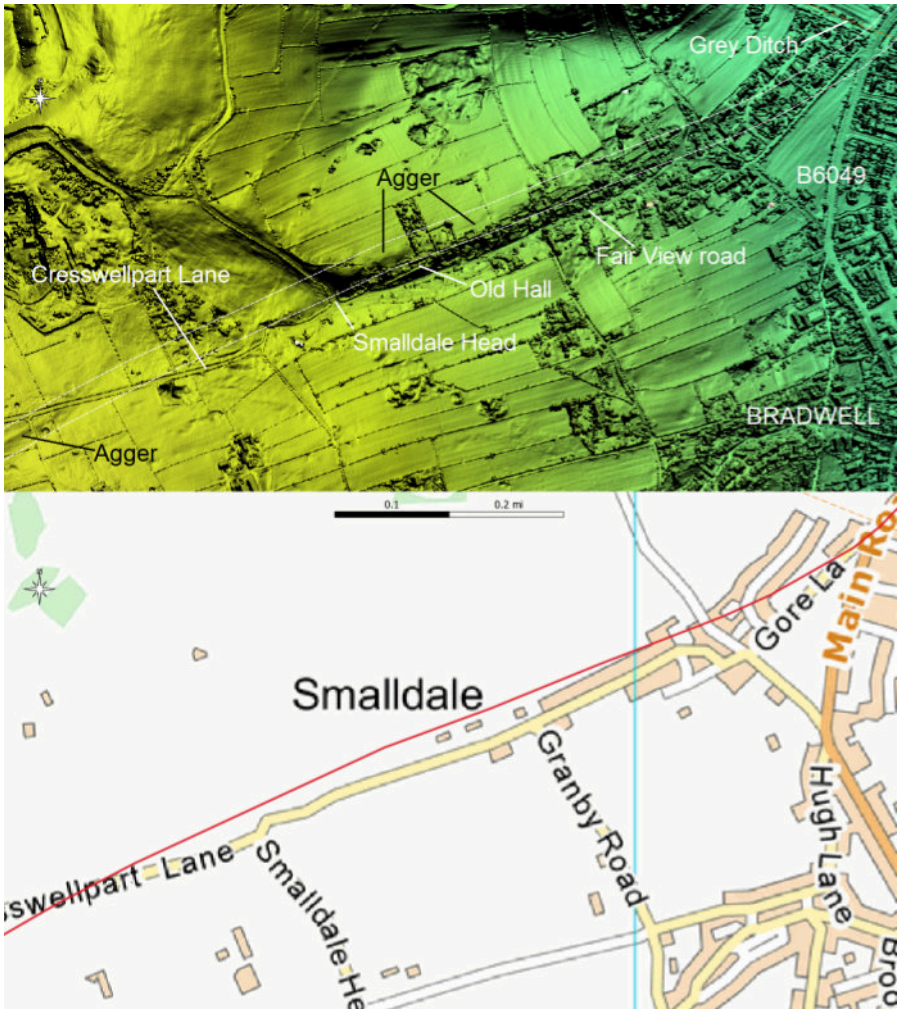


Figure 19: Smalldale Head to Grey Ditch. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2021 base mapping is Opendata copyright Ordnance Survey.

Grey Ditch to *Navio* Fort (1 mile)

From the breach in the Grey Ditch, Stretfield Road appears to follow the Roman road alignment straight to the Burghwash where the Roman road is thought to have turned off to the left and up an incline to the Halsteads field on the east side of the fort. But two alternative routes are plausible and worthy of examination. A number of antiquarians, in the 18th and 19th centuries, described their perambulations following the remains of Batham Gate from *Navio* fort to Smalldale. But their descriptions need to be interpreted to be plotted a modern map. The route they described has the benefit of following a contour and avoiding the Bradwell Brook valley where flooding might have occurred along the Burghwash stretch. This route is along a mostly natural terrace travelling south west to an old ford (the Sandy Ford) on the Salt Sitch. Beyond the ford, the road could have continued on a straight alignment across the fields straight to the bottom of Smalldale hill, but the antiquarians said it zig zagged first to the south and then back to the south west along the lane that in now Stretfield Road. There is a possible explanation for this zig zag but, at first sight, it seems unnecessary because the routes options were more direct (fig 20).

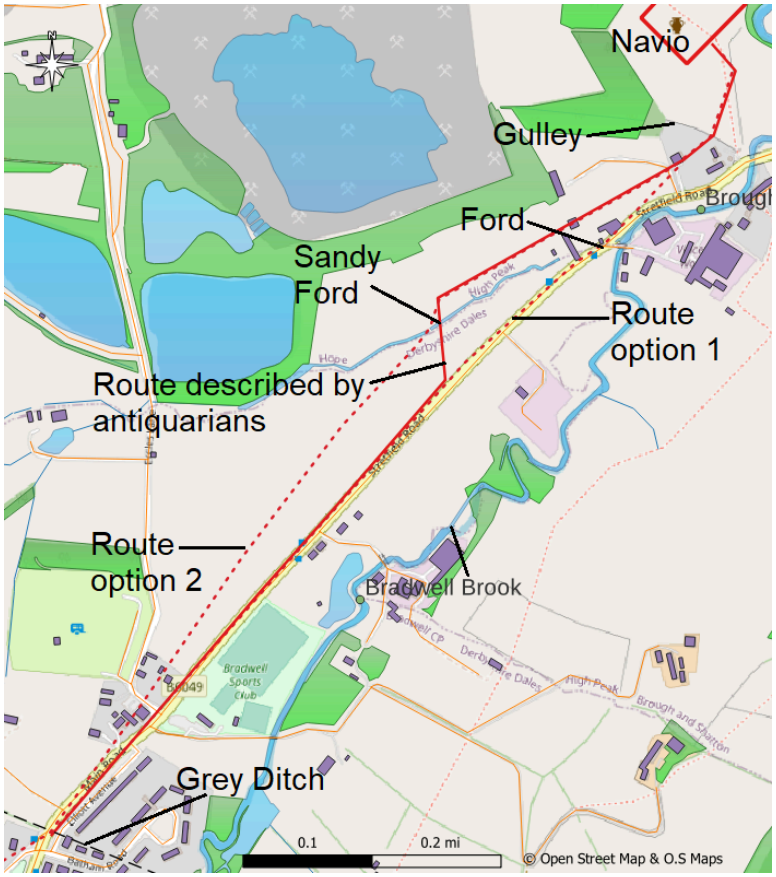


Fig. 20: Grey Ditch to Navio – Three Possible Routes. Base mapping is OpenStreetMap, Copyright OpenStreetMap Contributors 2020, made available here under the Open Database License (ODbL) v1.0 and Opendata copyright Ordnance Survey.

Route Option 1

I.D. Margary was an advocate of Option 1 (Margary 1973). It follows the Stretfield Road all the way to the valley bottom where it then runs alongside part of the Burghwash stretch of Bradwell Brook. The Burghwash was probably named as an easily accessible, ford-like part of the Brook where farmers could drive sheep into the water to be washed. The Roman road would have arrived at the Burghwash after crossing a shallow ford on the Salt Sitch (now culverted) close to where it joins the Bradwell Brook (fig 21). This suggests that the road alongside the Burghwash was shallow



Fig. 21: The Salt Sitch Culvert Under the Modern Road Showing the Level of the Original Ford. Image © N Buckley.

banked and therefore liable to flooding, an unlikely route for a military road when drier options were available.

In the event that the Roman road that did go down to the Burghwash it would then have needed to turn off to the left and up an incline to join up with the known section of road exiting the fort. Archaeological investigations on The Halsteads (Jones 1967) have shown that the Batham Gate road, after leaving the south east gate, turned towards the south and would have crossed the drainage gulley (known as the first water flash to antiquarians) on the field boundary well above the valley bottom (fig 22). This route is now confirmed by lidar imagery (fig 25).

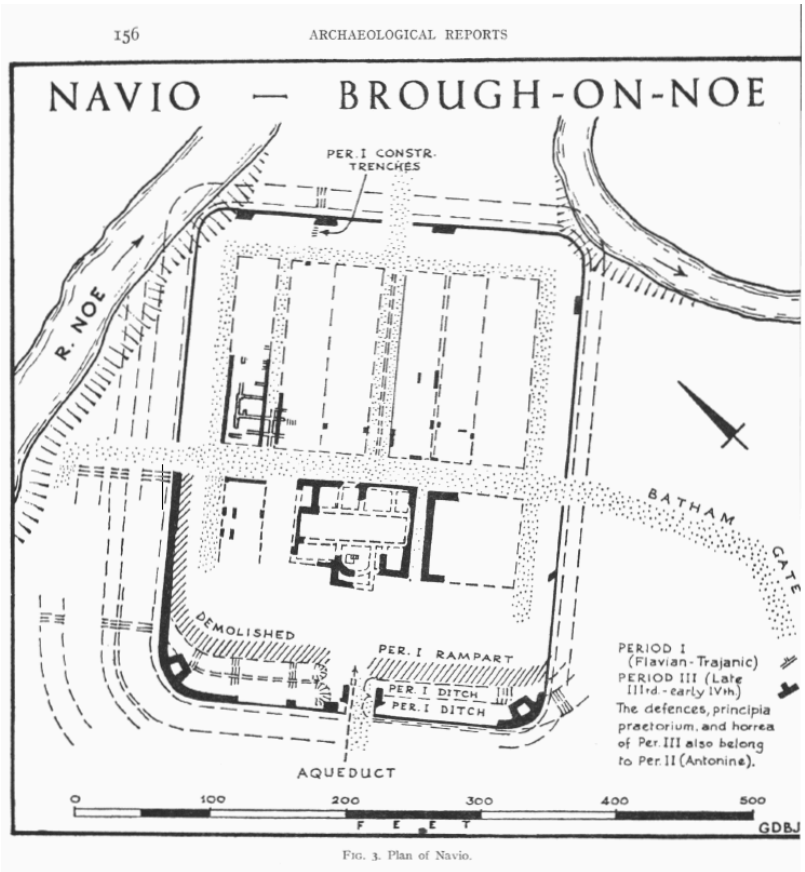


Fig. 3. Plan of Navio.

Fig. 22: Plan of Navio from excavations showing Batham Gate exiting the SE gate and turning South. GDB Jones DAJ v087_ 1967

Therefore, the full Option 1 route from the Grey Ditch would have followed the Stretfield Road all the way to the Salt Sitch ford on the Burghwash (about 2m below the level of the current road) and then climb up to the fort on a terrace (partially identified by Margary) to the gulley crossing point on The Halsteads boundary. There may well have been a minor road continuing alongside the Burghwash as it does today, but the Batham Gate military road is more likely to have taken a drier, elevated route.

Route option 2

Option 2 is suggested by the long, almost straight hedgerow seen on older OS maps between the Eden Tree House entrance road (SK 174 818) and an apparently random point on the Salt Sitch (SK 178 823) (fig 23). The hedge has now been grubbed up and so has disappeared from the map. This route becomes a more persuasive option when it is realised that the random point on the Salt Sitch is about the same location as Sandy Ford, a name found on the Tithe map. On the north western side of the ford it would have been a straight run along the previously mentioned natural terrace and under Brough House to the gulley alongside The Halsteads field. It is quite possible that the old hedge followed an ancient pathway as a direct route between the Brough House farm area and Smalldale/Bradwell, but was it a Roman road? An investigation into the origin of the alignment was included in the project scope for archaeological watching briefs and excavations by the University of Nottingham, Trent & Peak Archaeology, during trench digging by Seven Trent Water in 2004 (Garton & Guilbert 2009). This was when a new main sewer pipe was installed. The sewer trench crossed the line of the grubbed up hedge but according to the report, the archaeologists 'failed to retrieve conclusive evidence for the line of Roman Batham Gate' although it could not dismiss this potential route entirely. The sewer trench also crossed the path of Stretfield Road but as it was installd through a tunnel bored under the carriageway so no archaeological investigation of the road's construction could be carried out.

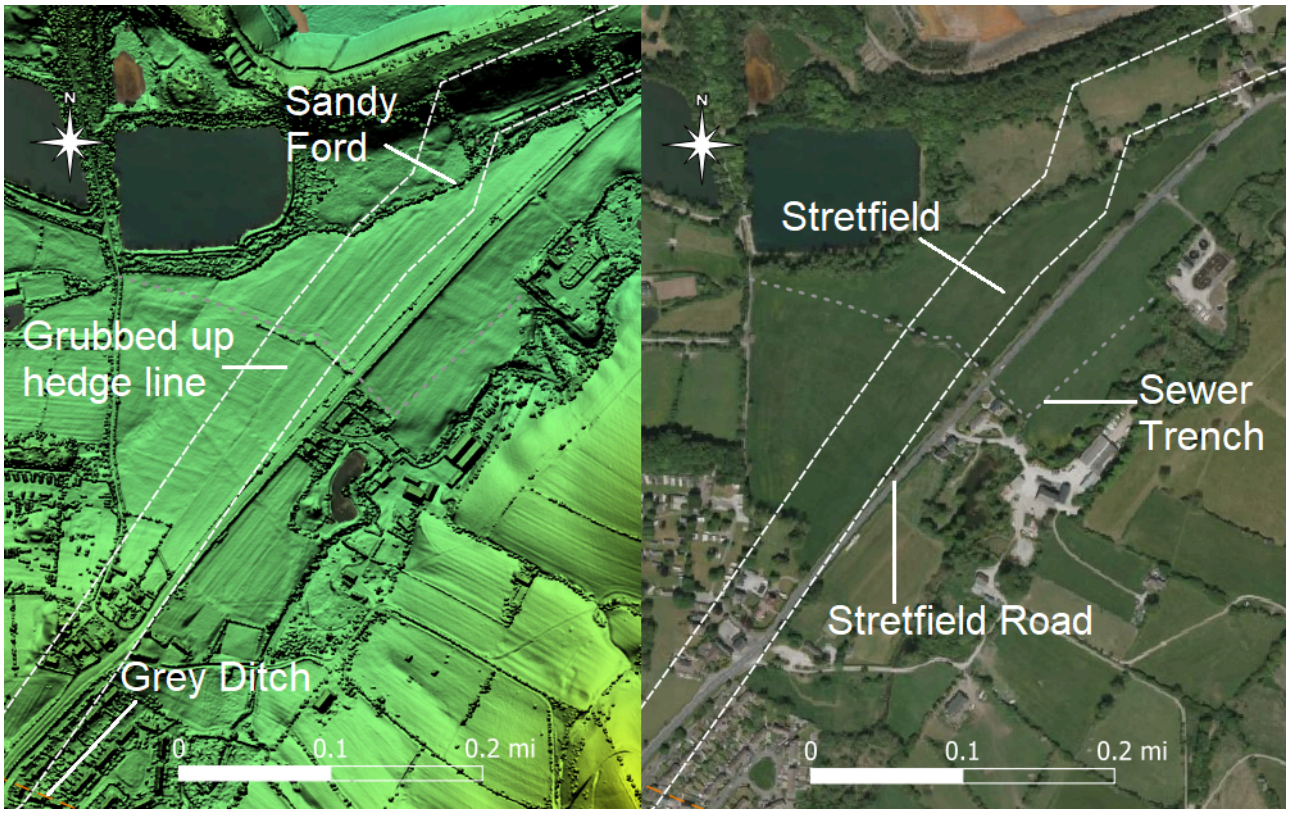


Fig. 23: Route option 2: Grubbed up hedge line crossed by sewer trench. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2021. Satellite Image from Microsoft Bing.

Antiquarian Perambulations

In 1768 the Rev S Pegge published a limited issue pamphlet that was reprinted in Bib Tec Brittanica V4 of 1785 (Pegge 1784). In it he described his recollection of Batham Gate leaving Brough as follows:

> *I shall take it at Brough and proceed from thence to Buxton. As soon as you are over the second water flash, commonly called the Burgwash, which is made by Bradwell brook, it appears in the lane, much raised, but broken into fragments. Then it enters Bull-meadow running up by the left-hand hedge which stands upon it. From thence it turns into the straight lane that leads to Smaldale, where it turns up to the pastures called Doctor's Gate and Bradshaw Pasture, where it is little to be seen. . .*

In 1777 J Bray who claimed that he was not aware of Pegge's account, wrote in 'Sketch of a Tour into Derbyshire' (Bray 1783):

> *The road called Bathom-gate, went from hence to Buxton, and is plainly to be seen for about a mile from Brough, running a considerable part of the way in a parallel line with the present road to Smaldale, the hedge of a field on the right-hand standing on it.*

In 1817 William Bennet (Bishop of Cloyne) wrote in Lyson's Magna Britannia, a description of Batham Gate that was very similar to Pegge's earlier report as follows (Bennett 1817):

> *... on leaving Brough it is discoverable bearing SW as soon as it passes the second water flash called the Burghwash (actually Salt Sitch), and fragments of its broad ridge may be seen in (from) the lane. It then enters Bull Meadow, running up the hedge on the left, but soon appears again in the lane leading to Smalldale, where the right hand hedge stands upon it. It then runs into the enclosures called the Doctor's Pastures and Bagshaw Pasture, and after crossing Grey Ditch, bends NW to ascend the hill ...*

A modern English interpretation of these three descriptions is suggested as follows:

Assuming that the perambulations started at the junction of Stretfield Road and Brough Lane and that the antiquarians were on horseback, The Halsteads field would have been visible beyond the Bradwell Brook on their right. Moving south along Stretfield Road they would have crossed the Bradwell Brook at the Burghwash Bridge or ford, the date of erection of the Bridge is unknown. To their right, just down stream from the bridge/ford a gulley that marks the southern boundary of the The Halsteads and acts as a drain, empties into the Bradwell Brook. This was presumably '*the first water flash*' that the Roman road from the fort had to cross. Continuing south west on Stretfield Road, the Burghwash was on the left as the old lane followed the Bradwell Brook towards another shallow ford across the Salt Sitch (on the 1807 map called the Causeway Bridge Siche) just up stream from where the Sitch joins the Bradwell Brook. Once the riders had crossed the Salt Sitch ford they were presumed to be 'over the second water flash' as described by Pegge and at this point (while '*in the lane*' it was '*discoverable*') they could see the fragments of the *agger* running along the terrace to their right.

What they could see was a straight, south westerly aligned *agger* that Brough House was built on top of and it ran along the terrace above the Salt Sitch. It met the water course at the location named on the 1843 Bradwell Tithe map as Sandy Ford. At about this point the Roman road is believed to have turned through about 120° to go south across Salt Sitch and in due course to became the eastern boundary fence of Bull Meadow. The field name is shown on the Tithe map south east of the Salt Sitch. Both Pegge and Bennet reported that in Bull Meadow the Roman road '*ran up by the left-hand hedge which stands upon it*'. The only map evidence seen so far of the *agger* forming a field boundary topped by a hedge in Bull Meadow, is on the 1807 Rights of Common map (fig. 24). However, what could be the remains of the *agger* can still be seen on lidar crossing the modern field where the field boundary used to be (fig. 25). When the Bull Meadow left-hand hedge

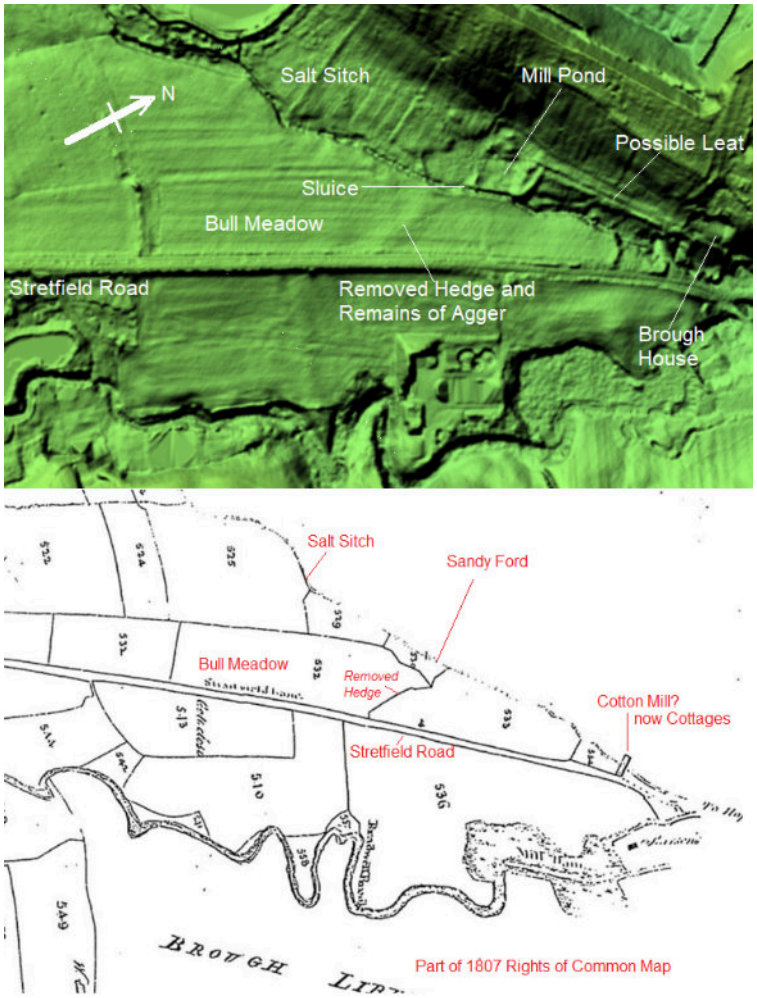


Fig. 24: Bull Meadow and its eastern hedge line. The Mill pond and sluice are just down stream from Sandy Ford. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2021. Map courtesy the Peak District National Park Authority.

met the old lane, now Stretfield Road, the Roman road appears to have turned south west by about 50° to take up a course alongside the modern Stretfield Road but under the right-hand hedge of the old lane. The *agger* appears to have remained on the right hand side but gradually disappeared as it passed through the Doctor's Gate and Bradshaws Pastures (now merged with Bull Meadow and renamed Stretfield) and ultimately went through to the Grey Ditch.

Summing up the approach to *Navio* fort based on the full lidar picture

The above analysis suggests that, when travelling from Buxton to Brough, the Batham Gate route from the Grey Ditch started as Option 1 and finished as Option 2 with a connection across Stretfield to get to Sandy Ford. It is most likely that the Roman road passed through the Grey Ditch breach and followed the alignment of Stretfield Road until SK 178 822 where it turned off towards Sandy Ford. It followed the diagonal lidar feature across Stretfield, where the hedge used to be, and then crossed the Salt Sitch at SK 178 823. Beyond Sandy Ford the road turned towards the fort and kept a straight alignment as for Option 2 passing beneath Brough House and between Halsteads House and Hope House. Finally it crossing the gulley to connect with the excavated road leading into the south east gate of the fort. This is of course the route described by the antiquarians in reverse. Lidar evidence of a probable road across Streafield that later formed the base of a hedge is clear. On the terrace on the north side of the ford, there is no lidar evidence remaining owing to industrial activity between the mill pond and Brough House. At Brough House it is said the road went beneath the north western end of the building (Wroe 1982). Beyond Brough House there is faint lidar evidence of a terrace in alignment with the front of Halsteads House. Behind Hope House a more prominent lidar feature can be seen running down to the bottom of the drainage gully where it

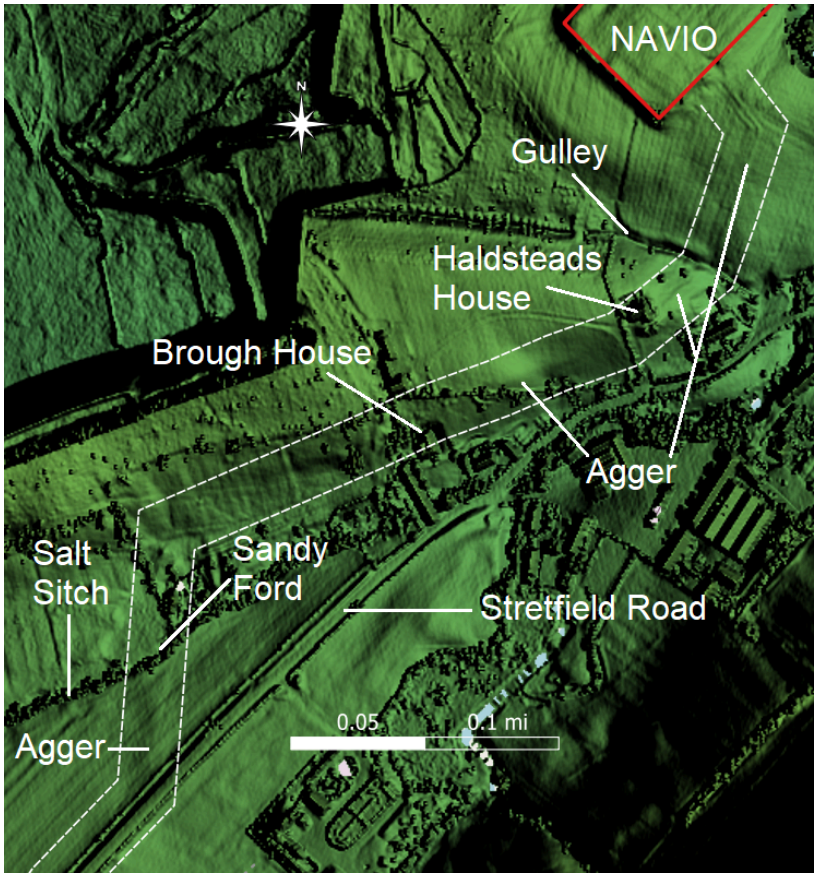


Fig. 25: Lidar image of the approach to Navio Fort. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2021.

appears to meet the line of the road from the fort. The close up pictured in fig. 25 of the Antiquarians Route, appears to show the approach to the fort first described by Pegge. It is a credible candidate for the final part of the Roman road from the Grey Ditch to the confirmed Batham Gate remains in The Halsteads.

Industrial Archaeology at Brough House

The now covered Salt Sitch, Burghwash ford was in front of Brough House. It was probably culverted by 1800 around the same time that Benjamin Pearson of Brough House (Derbyshire HER ref. MDR12083), a cotton pioneer who worked with Richard Arkwright, is said to have owned the adjacent cotton mill that can be identified, astride the Salt Sitch, on the 1st Series OS Map (1842) (Derbyshire HER ref. MDR13220). What appears to be the same building is also shown on the 1807 Rights of Common map. Pearson was known to be living in Brough in 1792 (Hope Parish Records, Baptism). According to Derbyshire Heritage the mill was turned into cottages, evidently the terrace of cottages this is astride the Salt Sitch today. Up stream on Salt Sitch close to the Sandy Ford area, DTM lidar mapping (Fig 25) shows disturbed ground that is identified on the 1883 OS six inch map as a mill pond with a possible leat running along the terrace to the mill. Some modern maps show a sluice on Salt Sitch that is probably integral with the pond. None of these industrial features are mentioned by the antiquarians although Bennett must have passed by the mill as he '*crossed the second water flash*'. Unfortunately it is likely that the industrial archaeology of Brough Farm Cotton Mill has caused significant damage to any Roman archaeology that was present when Pegge first visited. Any remains of '*fragments*' of the Roman road on the terrace, that might have been visible to the antiquarians were probably destroyed long ago.

Why the Zig Zag across Bull Meadow?

Where the possible Roman road turned at Sandy Ford to cross the Salt Sitch, it seems to have unnecessarily turned south rather than just carry on in a south westerly direction towards Smalldale. It did eventually turn towards Smalldale but in the middle of the pasture, part of which became Bull Meadow. Route Option 2 shows that a direct route south west from the ford was a viable option to the road builders, so why did the military road apparently turn south?

In 1974 Wroe & Mellor investigated a possible Roman road going south from Brough up Bradwell Dale to Windmill. Five sections were cut across the presumed alignment (Wroe 1982). The section at Nether Farm (SK 1728 7887) revealed "*three construction periods and possibly four*" and that its greatest width was about six metres in the later periods, somewhat wider than other roads (Derbyshire HER ref. MDR11383). A later Derbyshire HER ref. MDR2435 concurs with Wroe's alignment up the Dale but suggests that the approach to the fort continued on the same alignment in the general direction of what we now know is Sandy Ford. The source of Derbyshire HER ref. MDR2435 is an unpublished document by K. Smith dated 1991, so the basis of the proposed route is not known. Wroe's sections are on a mostly straight alignment and all are on a sight line from Sandy Ford. Also on that sight line is the western breach in the Grey Ditch as it crosses the valley. So, there are a number of clues suggesting that a Roman road did go south from Brough but unfortunately, apart from the diagonal across the Stretfield, there is very little lidar evidence in Bradwell Dale to support it. Although the existence of this road has still not been confirmed the Stretfield diagonal *agger*, if confirmed, would lend some support to it. It would also provide a plausible explanation for the Batham Gate zig zag, suggesting that Batham Gate was a spur off perhaps an earlier road going south (fig. 26). There are some lidar clues south of Windmill of tracks

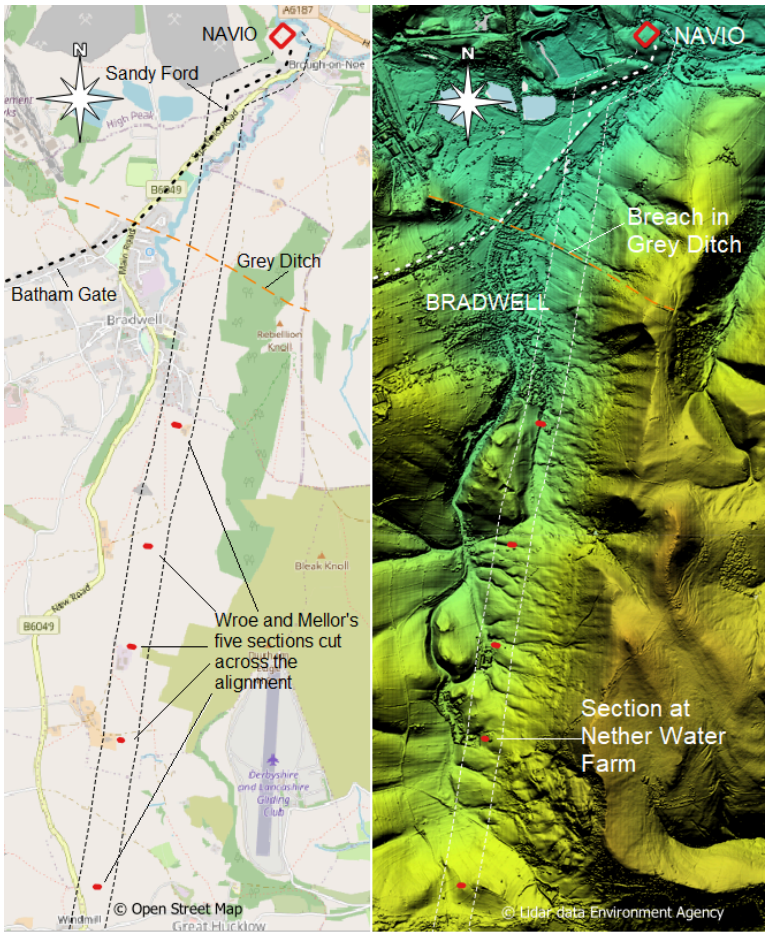


Fig. 26: Possible road to the south via Windmill. Base map is OpenStreetMap, © OpenStreetMap Contributors 2020, made available here under the Open Database License (ODbL) v1.0. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2021

mostly going in the direction of Tideswell but nothing of high confidence that would give an indication of its ultimate destination.

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The Artle Beck Milestone, Caton, Near Lancaster (RIB 2272)

David Ratledge

This famous milestone, found at Artle Beck, as well as revealing that the Roman name for Lancaster began with an 'L' was obviously a key indicator for the route of the Roman road from Lancaster to Burrow in Lonsdale, RR705. It was exposed after a storm in 1803 but its exact location was poorly documented meaning the exact crossing point of the beck was somewhat vague. The milestone was first recorded by Clark in his historical account of Lancaster (Clark, 1811).

However, the only clue to its precise find location was given by J.S. Slinger, who annotated his personal copy of the Clark's book with a location given as "245 yards up the stream from the bridge leading from Caton to Brookhouse" (White, 1992). The excellent legibility of the milestone, with its inscription still clearly readable, indicates that it cannot have been subject to much, if any, river movement, which would surely have defaced it. Its find spot must therefore have been very close to its original Roman location.

The milestone is now on display in Lancaster Museum. However, after its discovery is was transferred to Gresgarth Hall, about 500 metres to the south of Caton. This led to earlier suggestions that the Roman road from Lancaster to Burrow went via the hall. An excavation took place there and even located a stone road. However, not all stone roads are Roman and this turned out to be the case there.

Lidar had already located the correct course of the road west of Caton (Ratledge, 2020 & 2022) heading in a direction commensurate with "245 yards up the stream" description. What was needed though was an on the spot investigations so see if anything had survived of the road crossing Artle Beck, which would pin down the precise location once and for all.



Figure 1: The impressive Artle Beck milestone giving a distance of 4 (Roman) miles to a location beginning with the letter "L". Image: Antiquary, CC BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>, via Wikimedia Commons

River Bank Explorations 2022

Artle Beck is more a small river than a beck and is subject to much erosion due to vigorous run-offs from the Bowland Fells. It was therefore somewhat of a long shot to hope anything of the road had survived. As was to be expected nothing had survived in the river bottoms. The best chance would be at the top edge of each bank of the flood-plain, where the exposed face of the road could perhaps be visible.

Detailed inspections and several excavations were undertaken during the late autumn of 2022 by colleagues Andy Jackson and Phillip Crawshaw (fig. 2). These included examining the top edge of both banks of the beck and amazingly their searches were to prove successful on both the west and east sides.

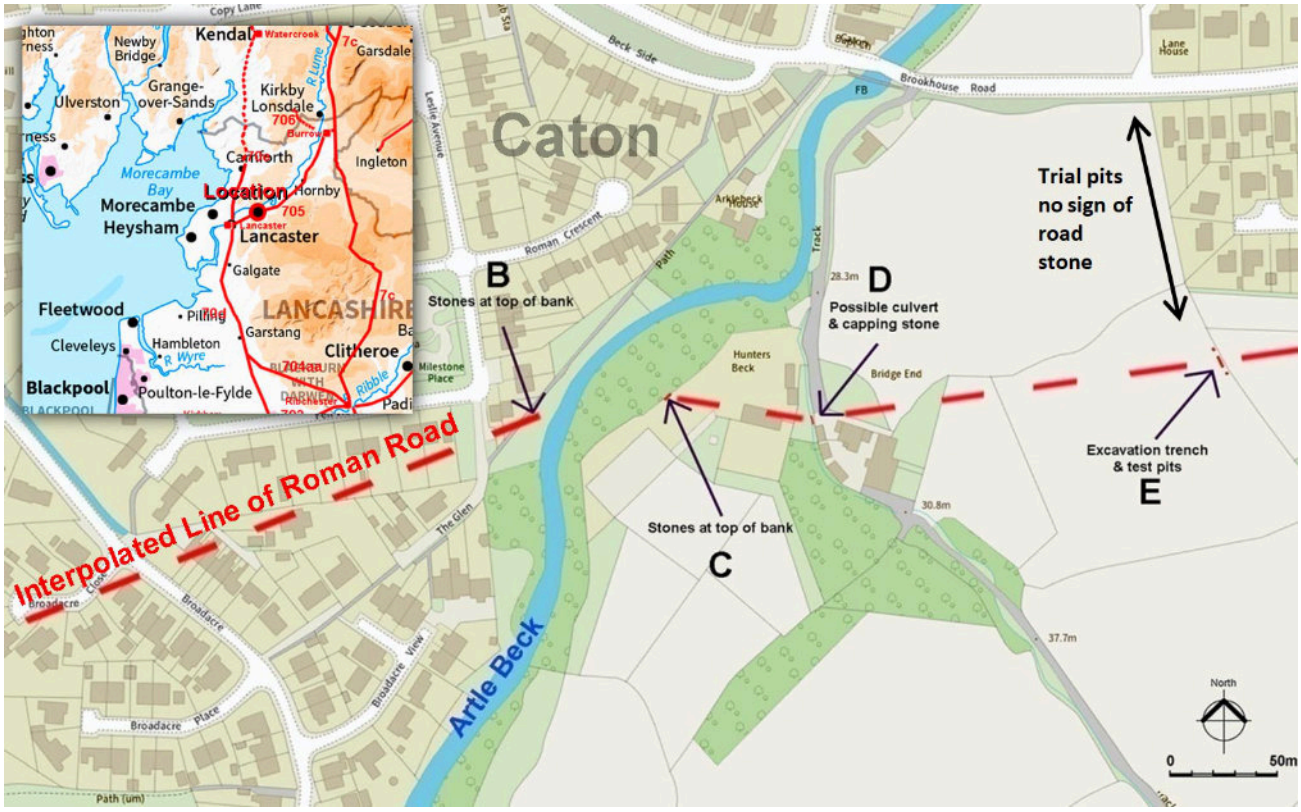


Figure 2: The location of the various sites across Caton discussed in the text. Base mapping is from Lancashire County Council's Mario website under an Open Government Licence. Inset: Location of the site at Caton with respect to the Roman roads around Lancaster. Base mapping is Ordnance Survey Opendata.

Site B, West Bank, SD 53270 64300

This was by far the harder bank to explore being very steep but evidence was found alongside the footpath behind the houses at Milestone Place. This was the very top of the beck's west bank. What was revealed was not a pristine road section but an 8 metre wide spread of large foundations stones, obviously all that remained of the road here. Either side of this spot were very few sporadic stones leaving no doubt the road had been finally located. This spot could only be viewed by climbing up the steep bank from the river and needed the vegetation to have died down to be evident (Fig. 3). This spot marked as site "B" on figure 2.

Site C, East Bank, SD 53345 64314

The east bank was actually the first to be traversed as this was much less steep. The evidence comprised again a very similar spread of what were taken to be foundation stones around 8 metres wide (fig. 4). At its north end (left in Fig. 4) the land drops away, making the edge of the road, for that is undoubtedly what it is, even more obvious. This was taken to be where the original north road ditch would have been. On the road's south side the stones ended fairly abruptly with very few occurring beyond there. This location is below Hunter's Beck House marked site "C" on figure 2.

The Milestone Find Location

So where was the milestone really located? It was White (1992) who first drew attention to Slinger's annotation and interpreted the distance of 245 yards as indicating a map reference of SD 5325 6427 (the AW position on Figure 5). However, this location is actually 285 yards from the bridge as the



Figure 3: Above. At very top of the west bank of Artle Beck is a spread of stones approximately 8 metres wide. On either side only sporadic stones were visible. The stones were typical of Roman agger foundation stones found elsewhere in the county. The houses are on the aptly named Milestone Place. Image: Phil Crawshaw.

Figure 4: Below. Site C. At the top of the east bank of Artle Beck again are the tell-tale signs of the remains of the road agger. The spread of large foundation stones was also around 8 metres wide. This spot is below Hunter's Beck House. Image: Phil Crawshaw.



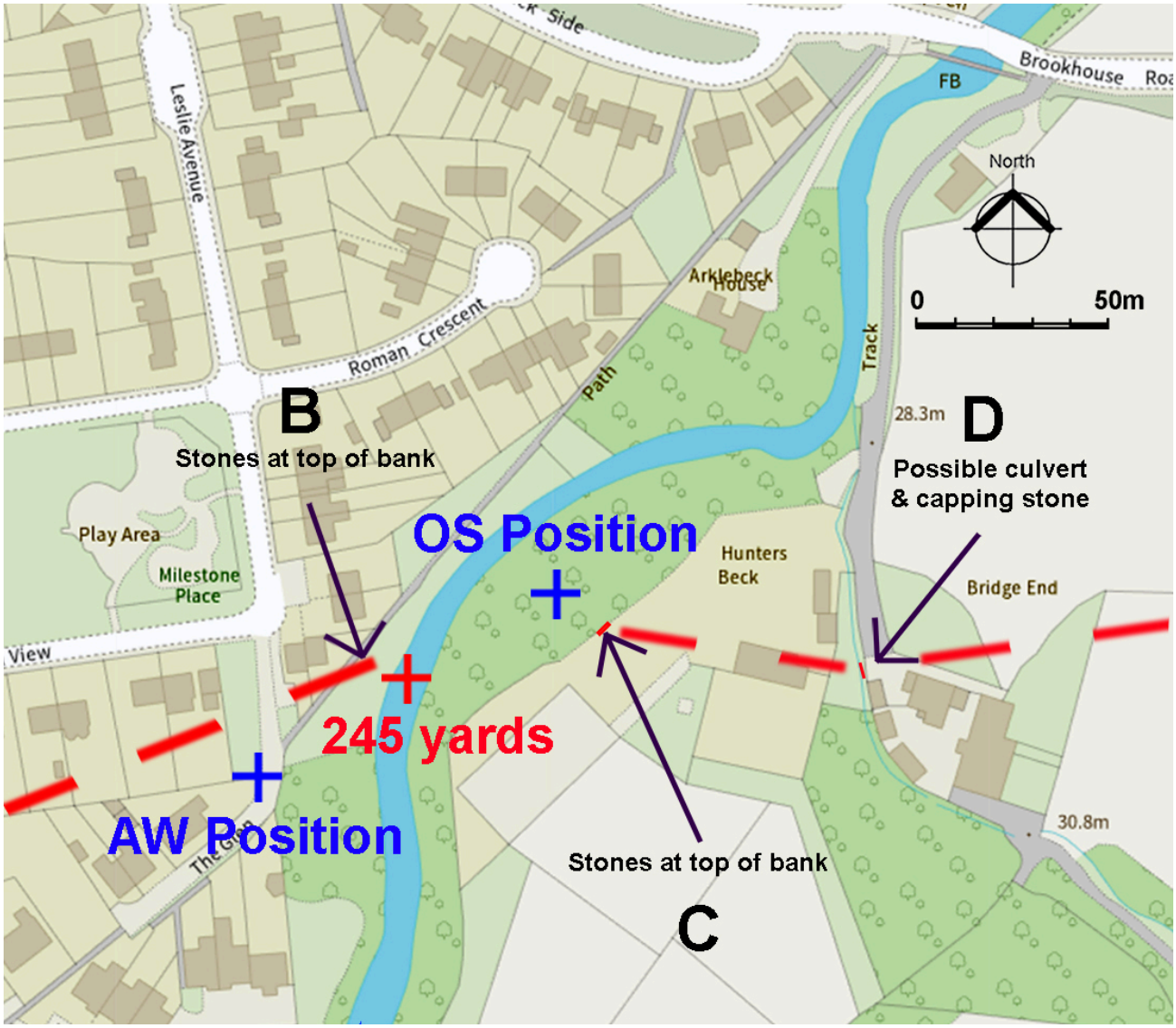


Figure 5: The various positions suggested for the find spot of the Artle Beck Milestone. The Caton to Brookhouse road bridge is towards the top right corner. Base mapping is from Lancashire County Council's Mario website under an Open Government Licence

crow flies. It is also around 36 metres south-west of where the road stones were found in the bank at Site B. This interpretation appears to be too far upstream and is therefore somewhat suspect.

The find spot is also shown on historical Ordnance Survey mapping c. 1850 (marked "OS position" on Figure 5). It is unclear how they derived this location, but the early map's survey date would have been within living memory of the milestone's discovery, so local knowledge could have been used.

Finally, to reconcile the difference in the above locations, a distance of 245 yards was measured up the course of the beck as shown on the OS First Edition mapping, although this map plotted its course around 50 years after the milestone's discovery. This position is marked in red on Figure 5. It should be noted that if the beck were more sinuous in 1803, as is the case today, then it would place the milestone further north, more towards the OS position. A location between the "OS" and "245 yards" positions would therefore best fit the "245 yards" distance. In addition, such a location

would be totally consistent with the stones recorded at Sites B and C thus increasing the confidence in interpreting these sites as marking the road.

Site E – Field East from Artle Beck, SD 53580 64327

A row of test pits was dug before the excavation at Site E (fig. 2) in the field to the north of the excavation field. These pits ran across the length of the field adjacent to Brookhouse Road, a line approximately north-south. No traces of a stone road were found. Attention then switched to the second field south of Brookhouse Road, east of Bridge End Farm. This was to prove a most successful excavation. This was the line suggested by lidar but, with only very faint traces visible, it was not too certain.

An initial test pit located a stone surface a few inches below the surface just west of a hedge line. This was extended in stages eventually forming a trench of around 10 to 11 metres long (Fig.6). A road of obviously solid construction was revealed around 8 metres wide. Small depressions (perhaps infilled ditches) were evident at both edges of the road. No attempt was made to dig through the road and the stones were left as discovered. Beyond the trench, further trial pits were excavated (Fig.6 centre), which encountered only a few small stones, confirming the full extent of an 8-metre-wide road.



Figure 6: Left - looking south along the trench. Centre - again looking south along the trench showing one of the trial pits beyond the main construction, where very few stones were encountered. Right - looking north from the road edge ditch. Images: Andy Jackson.

Conclusion

A little bit more of the puzzle has been solved as to the route of the Roman road RR705 from Lancaster to Burrow across Caton. Still to be resolved is its route across the adjacent village of Brookhouse. Plus, of course, also still to be determined is the Roman name for Lancaster. All that we still have is that letter "L" on the Artle Beck milestone. Over the years it is surprising how many suggestions for Lancaster's name don't actually begin with "L".

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THE SOUTHERN END OF THE ROMAN ROAD FROM ROUND HILL TO ILKLEY

John Poulter (text) and David Ratledge (lidar images and map)

Phil Barrett's report (RRRA Newsletter 27, pages 41-2) indicates that the well-known straight Roman road from Round Hill across Blubberhouses Moor (Margary RR720b) had extended (or had begun) considerably to the west, past Beamsley Beacon. This means that the also well-known Roman road from Ilkley (also RR720b, possibly now to be renumbered) which joins the long straight to Blubberhouses Moor on Round Hill had been a separate road running up from the Roman fort stationed beside the Wharfe in Ilkley. So: the apparent turn at Round Hill had simply been a road junction. Fine for the northern end of this particular Roman road, but how did its southern end make its final approach into Ilkley? See Figure 1.

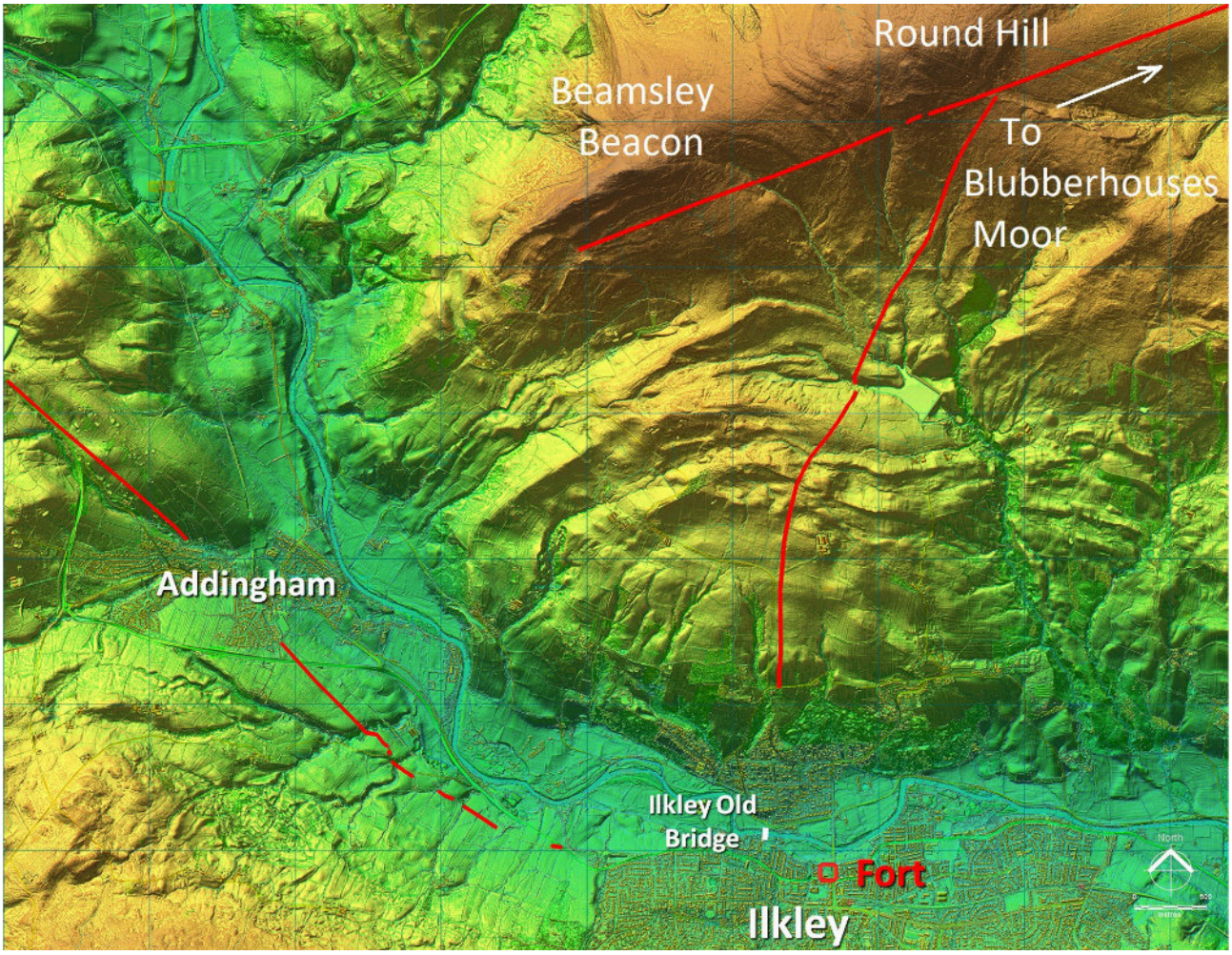


Figure 1. Lidar traces of the newly-discovered westward extension of the known Roman road over Blubberhouses Moor, showing that its long straight had originated further west, by Beamsley Beacon, and also showing what is now realised to have been the road connecting to it from the fort at Ilkley. *© Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All rights reserved. Image Copyright © David Ratledge, 2023.*

Up to now the southernmost part of this particular road is believed to have run under or close by the route of Hardings Lane on its way down on its approach to Ilkley. See Figure 3. In preparation

for a recent visit to an old friend in Ilkley I'd examined the local maps and realised that if this Roman road had continued directly southwards towards the fort at Ilkley it would have run under my friend's son's garden – or maybe even his house! So, in preparation for my visit I asked David Ratledge if he could provide some lidar images of the area, which he kindly did.

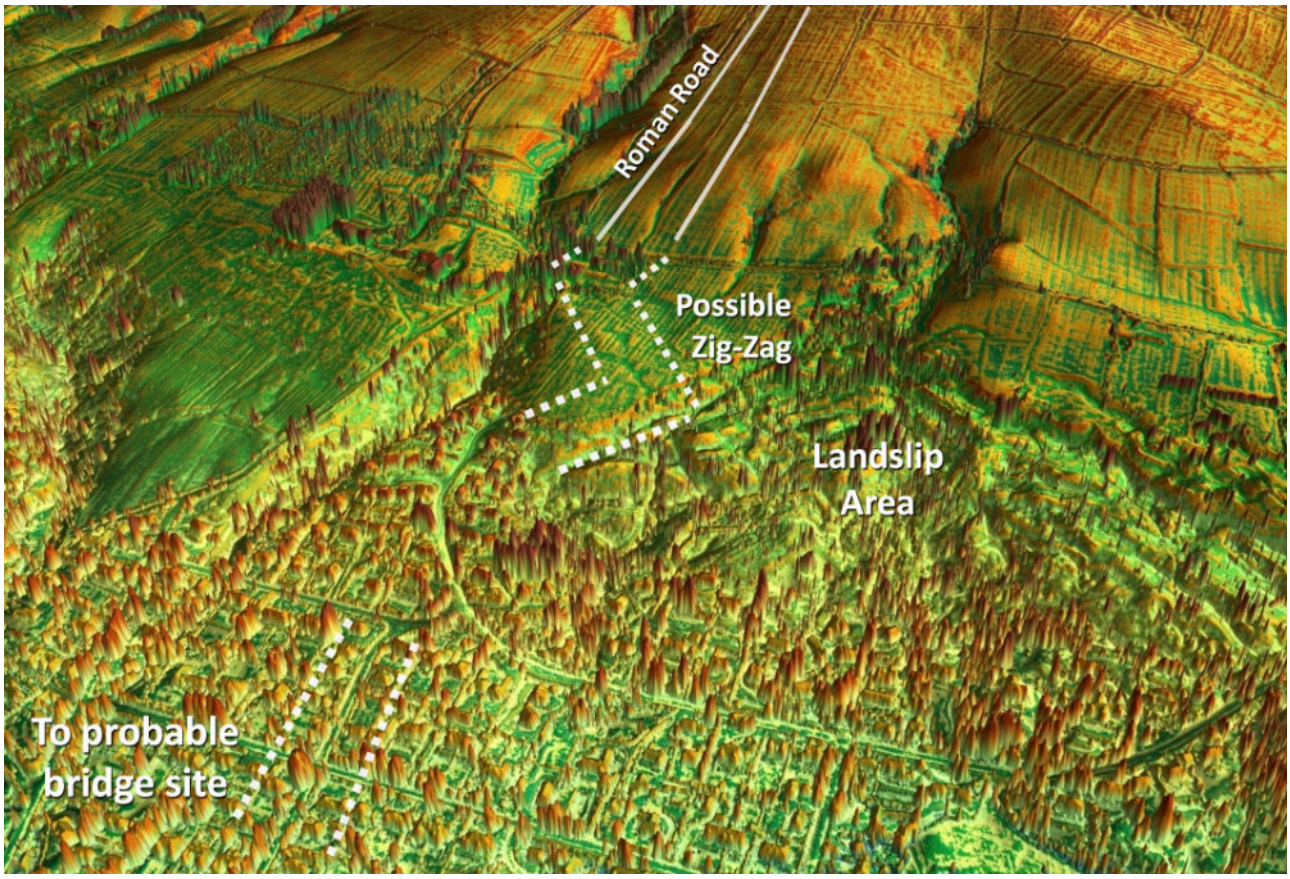


Figure 2. Lidar image of the Roman road making a possible zig-zag in the field above my friend's son's house. © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All rights reserved. Image Copyright © David Ratledge, 2023.

These images seemed to show it likely that this Roman road to Ilkley had indeed run under or alongside Hardings Lane, but that, where Hardings Lane turned off, the Roman road had continued southwards and then entered the field immediately above my friend's son's house. See Figures 2 and 3. However, shortly after entering the field the trace of the road had swung off on a line towards the southeast and then disappeared over or alongside the edge of what looked likely to have been the result of a massive landslip. David interpreted this swing to the southeast as the main leg of a zig-zag to ease the descent, and he considered that the massive landslip could then have eradicated any further traces of the road on its way down into Ilkley.

My friend was as interested as I was to learn that she might have a Roman road in the field above her son's house, and so, armed with printouts of David's lidar images we set off to explore the field on the ground. We wanted to study the lie of the land, to see what Roman road-makers might have made of it, and see if any signs of the Roman road might remain visible.

The first point which we noted was that the ground falls very steeply from the southern edge of the field and past my friend's son's house. Hence the creation of a zig-zag for the Roman road, beginning part way up the field, seemed entirely understandable and practical. A descent past – or under – my friend's son's house would have been far too steep.

In the field itself, the line running to the southeast presented itself to us as just a gentle break of slope. No remains of an *agger* or roadside ditches were visible along the line, but we felt it likely that any such remains would be likely to have been buried under a quite thick bed of silt. This was because evidence of ridge and furrow ploughing is very prominent in the field, and in the northern part of the field the natural drainage from these ridges and furrows would have been into the change of slope. It was also noticed that the angle of the ridge and furrow to the south of the southeasterly line is very slightly different from that to the north, suggesting that there might have existed, perhaps, a division between them at some time in the past. Meanwhile we found that the slope of the line running to the southeast was gentle and easily walkable – an excellent line for a road.

Conclusions

Did we see anything else which might be Roman in the field? No, and, unfortunately, I didn't have any equipment for probing. But we saw nothing to contradict David's Ratledge's verdict from his lidar images and his experience in interpreting the characteristics of Roman road engineering. Namely, that what was running through the field above my friend's son's house were probably among the last detectable remains of the southern part of this Roman road extending from Round Hill and Blubberhouses Moor down into Ilkley. Hence, as well as a record of the extended straight Roman road past Beamsley Beacon, this would appear to be another candidate for inclusion in the RRRA gazetteer.

Postscript

Since drafting this note, David has reassessed the lidar images more closely, and finds that there is a little lidar evidence for a bridge approach on the north bank of the Wharfe, slightly downstream of Ilkley's Old Bridge. David observes that this is where the rock outcrops, offering a solid foundation for a bridge. Figure 3 below charts David's interpretations.

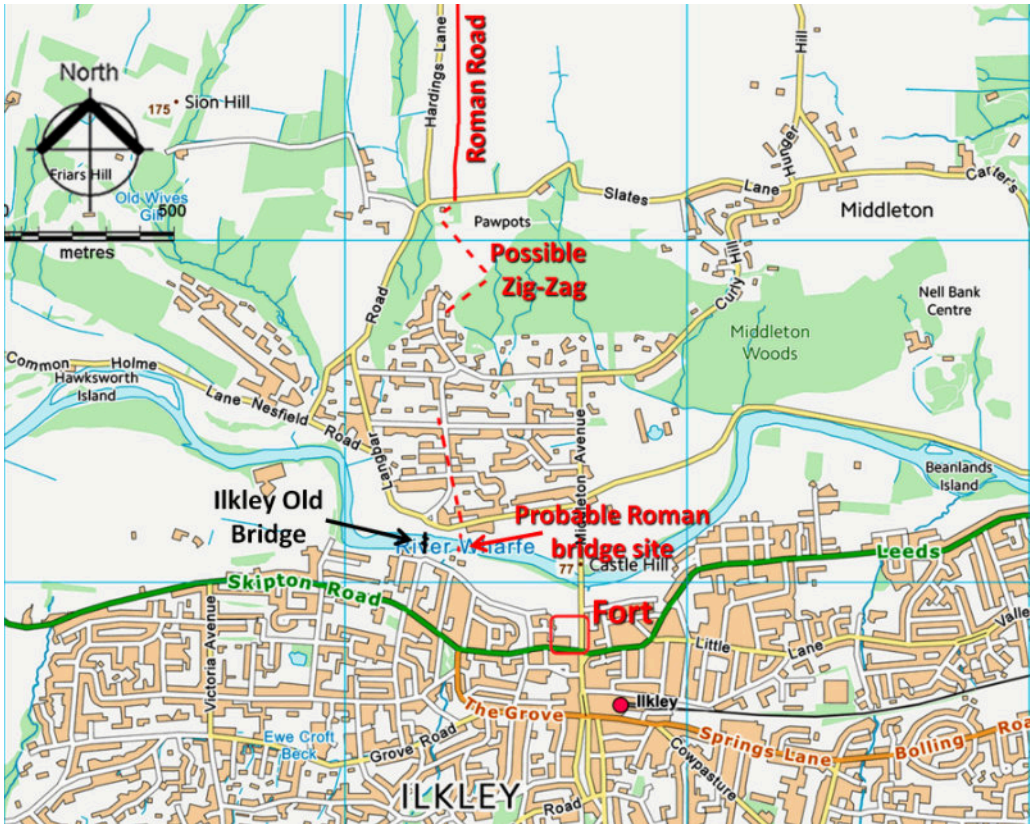


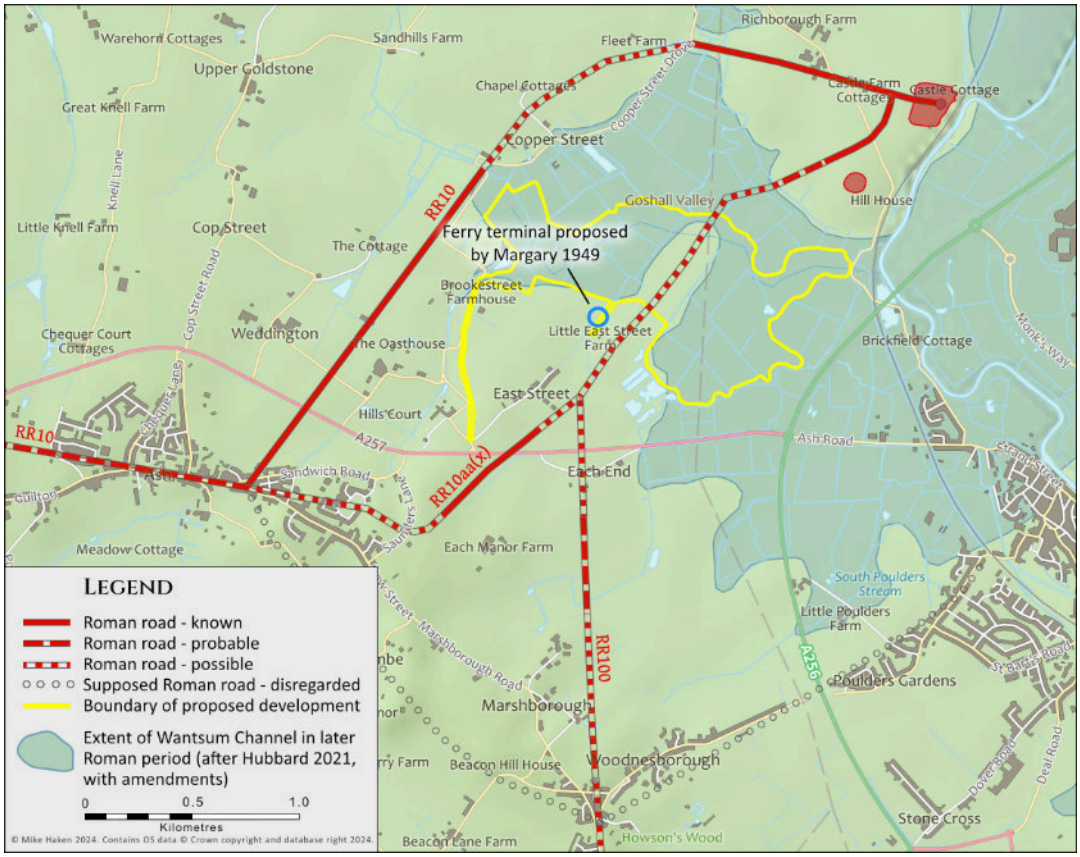
Figure 3. Map of David Ratledge's interpretations of the probable course of the Roman road down into Ilkley and the site of the Roman bridge over the Wharfe. Copyright © David Ratledge, 2023. Base map contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2023).

A Threat to the Roman Site at Richborough?

Mike Haken

If you are a reader of The Times you may have noticed a letter entitled Fort under Seige published on Monday 4th March, pointing out the threat to the landscape setting of the site at Richborough posed by a proposed 83 hectare solar farm immediately south west of the Roman site. The letter was composed by Martin Millett, emeritus Laurence professor of classical archaeology at the University of Cambridge and signed by ten very well known names from the world of Roman archaeology. Oh, and one interloper, a certain Mike Haken, signing on behalf of the RRRA.

Whilst Martin's primary concern was the landscape setting of Richborough Roman site, he invited me to sign the letter after learning that I had spent the previous three weeks compiling a report aimed at determining whether there was likely to be a Roman road crossing the proposed solar farm development. Long story short, it is almost certain. Most modern mapping shows two roads approaching Richborough, from the west (from Canterbury and London) and from the south (from Dover). These are usually shown as meeting at Ash, and then skirting around the western edge of the former Wantsum Channel, now dry(ish) land, to approach Richborough along a known stretch of road to the west gate. However, lidar has revealed that the road from Dover does not swing around north-westwards to head to Ash, rather it goes straight on towards Each End and probably on to meet another road (excavated in 1992) heading towards a spur of land projecting into the former channel and directly to Richborough. I suggest that this second road may be the original road to Canterbury from Richborough and potentially the first Roman road to be built in Britain. If you want to know more, the report is available here. The proposed development is currently going through the planning process (Dover District Council application no. 23/01363), with the closing date for public submissions having passed on the 19th February and a determination due on or before 22nd March. Historic England, a statutory consultee, made a submission objecting to the proposal on the 8th March. Make of that what you will.



The Stanegate: Around Acomb - A Highway Engineers View, Part 2

David Ratledge

Introduction

I read with great interest Steve Hedworth's exploration and review of his possible route of the Stanegate around Acomb, to the west of Corbridge in the last issue of the newsletter (Hedworth, 2023). It is therefore a very appropriate time to review the route that John Poulter and myself proposed 5 years ago. Has our route stood the test of time?

Back then John was researching the possible route of the Stanegate west of Corbridge for a chapter he was writing for a forthcoming book and asked if I could help using lidar. John had identified the straight road heading to St John Lee Church as having all the signs of a Roman road (fig. 1). I was able to extend this west all the way to Fourstones. I had been using lidar for 5 years but it was still a relatively new tool plus the lidar coverage and quality was poorer back then. I cautioned John at the time we should refer to our route for the Stanegate as "probable". Since then there have been around a dozen excavations of the Roman roads I have located with lidar, all of them successful, so confidence and experience in the method has grown.



Figure 1: The straight modern lane to St John Lee Church at first glance appears a bit too narrow to be Roman (right). However, in the DTM lidar image (left) then the huge width of the original construction becomes obvious. Base Lidar data is © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All rights reserved.. Image: Google Streetview.

The Evidence

The modern lane heading towards St John Lee Church is straight but it seems narrow (fig. 1 – right). It is though aligned on Corbridge (fig. 3). Steve Hedworth suggests a line lower down the hillside there but examining the DTM lidar leaves little doubt that this lane is indeed the Stanegate. This version of the lidar data reveals an original road construction twice the width of the modern lane. It is huge and perfectly commensurate therefore with it being originally a very important Roman road i.e. the Stanegate.

So where was this road aiming for at its western end near the Church? At precisely that spot is a little col in the embankment there - the ideal location to construct a zig-zag down. I have lost count of the number of Roman zig-zags I have found – they were standard practice and easily enable gradients of no steeper than 1 in 10 (Armstrong, 2023). The ground in the col looks much disturbed and I would assume the zig-zag has long since been washed away. There are some traces but I wouldn't say they are likely to be Roman.



Figure 2: Orthogonal (plan) lidar image showing the route of the Stanegate based on the visiblel lidar evidence. Base Lidar data is © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All rights reserved.

Supporting the suggestion that the col was used for the descent is that its bottom is perfectly aligned with the visible *agger* heading to the Howford area. This was the *agger* I spotted 5 years ago and the extra experience gained since then has only increased my confidence in it being the Stanegate. There even seems to be a little angle down a small bank – just what you would expect from a Roman surveyor.

Steve was concerned about this stretch being in the flood plain (Hedworth, 2023). But you cannot cross a river with going into the flood plain at some point. The old Border Counties Railway line was constructed across the same flood plain but positioned even nearer to the river (Tyne). The railway

surveyor (1854) was not fazed by running the line there and in a far more vulnerable position than the Roman alignment.

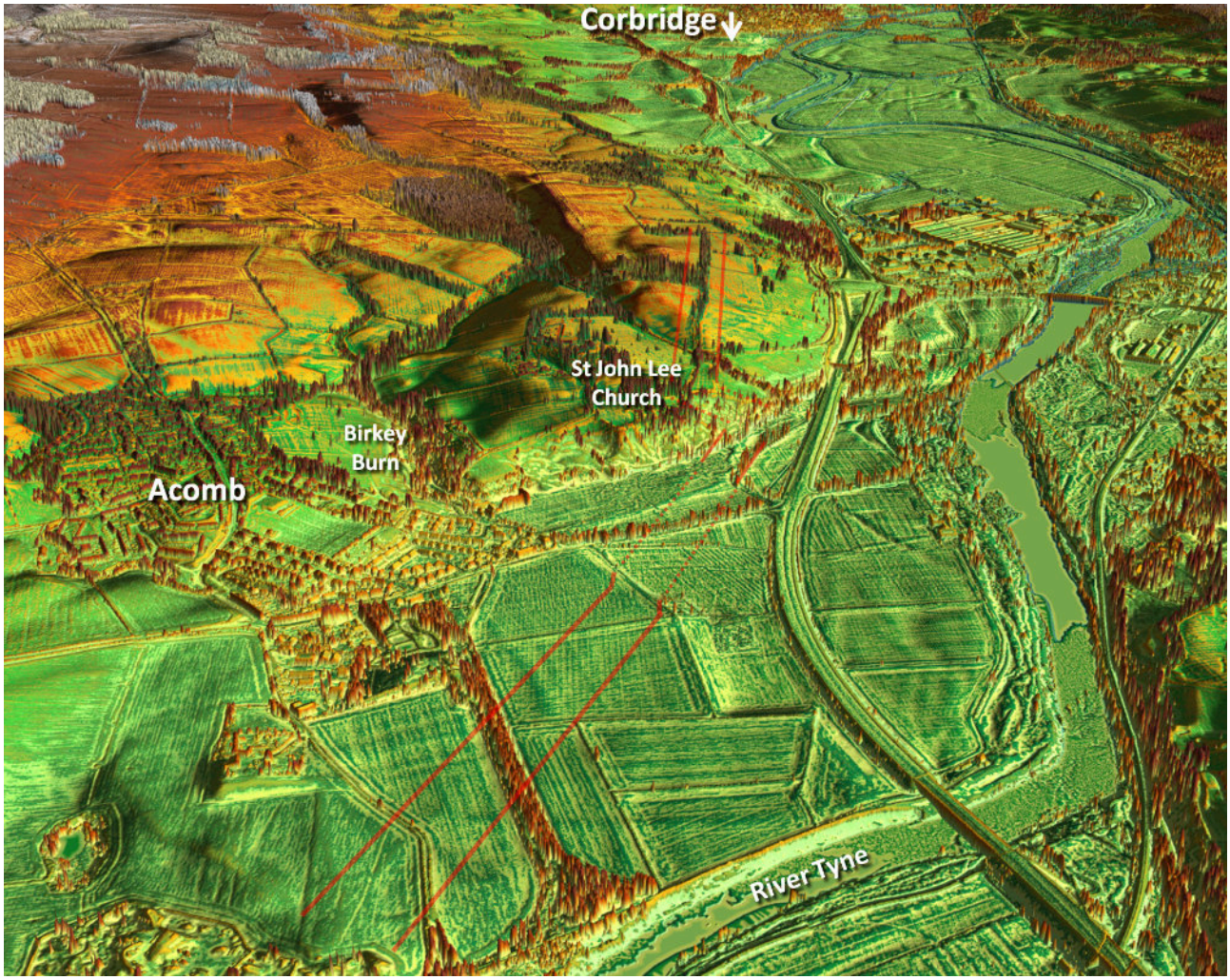


Figure 3: Oblique (3D) lidar image looking east from near Acomb towards Corbridge. The Birkey Brook valley is the where Steve Hedworth's suggested route went and really would be out of keeping for a road as important as the Stanegate. Base Lidar data is © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All rights reserved.

Summary

All the features identified support and confirm the route we suggested 5 years ago with only a few minor adjustments. The lane to St John Lee Church aligned on Corbridge, with its massive underlying construction, its direction to a col for an easy descent, the bottom of the col aligning with the confident *agger* across the flood plain which in turn fits perfectly with a crossing to the prominent *agger* on the west bank of the river (North Tyne). It all makes for a simple and typically direct route that you would expect a Roman road surveyor to have come up with. I cannot see any reason why a very sinuous route into the valley of Birkey Beck (Hedworth, 2023) would have been utilised (fig. 3). Keep it simple applies to highway design too. So yes in the 5 years since we found the route I think it has stood the test of time but I wish I hadn't insisted on the "probable" proviso.

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Hedworth, Steve, 2023, *The Stanegate: Corbridge to Howford*, RRRA Newsletter No. 27.

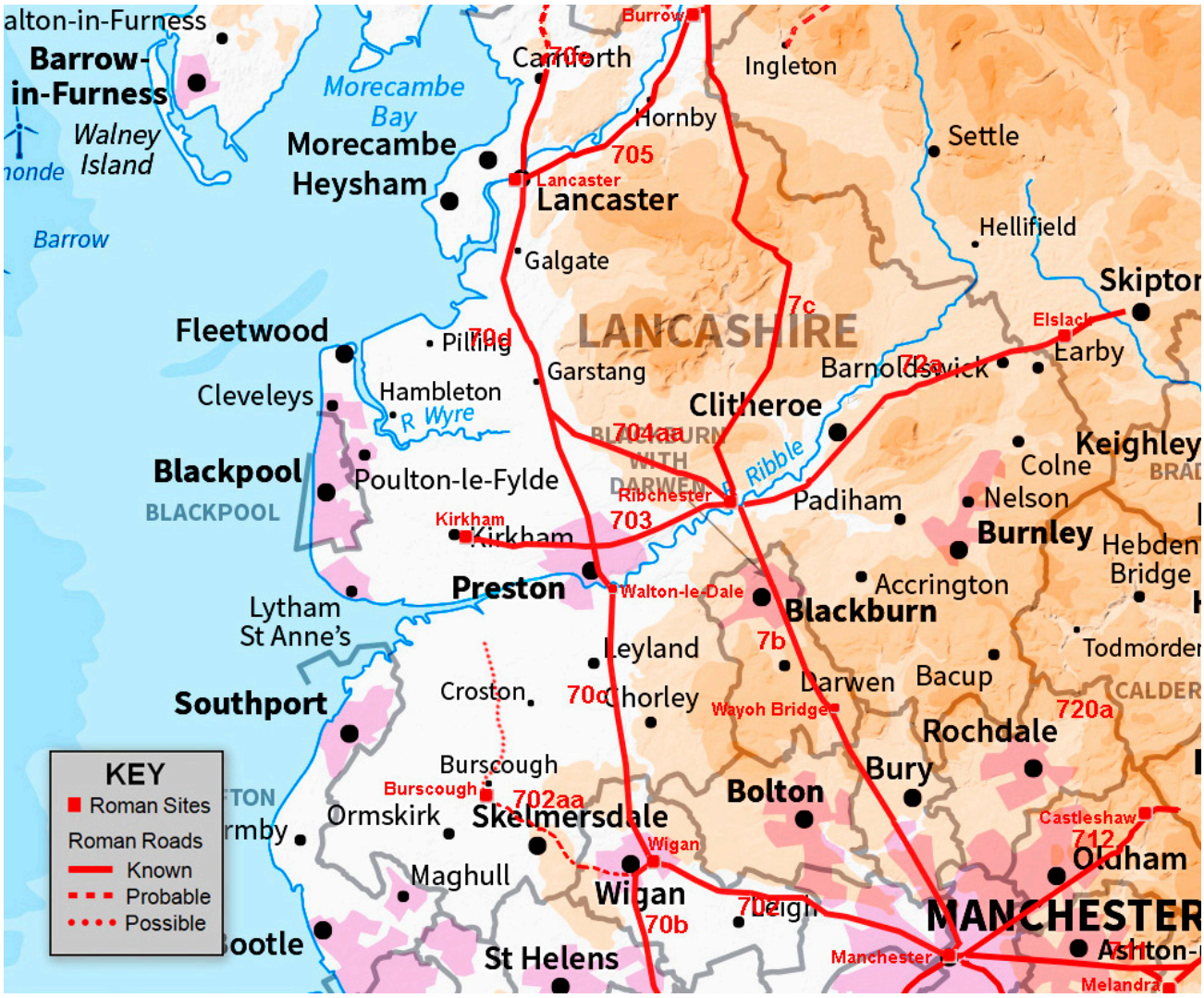
Wayside Stone Crosses in Lancashire - What (Visible) Evidence is there?

David Ratledge

Introduction

"*The alignment and spacing of wayside crosses, and the continuation of the alignment at one or both ends to a known Roman site has suggested several hitherto unsuspected Roman roads in central and west Lancashire*" - David Ashworth, RRRA Newsletter 27.

David is perfectly correct that Wayside Crosses can provide additional evidence as to the location of lost Roman roads. They did add a little support to finding the route of the Roman road from Wigan to Walton-le-Dale 20 years ago. This was supposed to go via Meanygate in Bamber Bridge, about a mile east of where it really was. The Stanifield Lane name plus parish boundaries in Leyland and medieval crosses all pointed me to where the correct location was. This was later confirmed by lidar and finally excavation. However, given the sheer number of old crosses in Lancashire many are going to align and prove false clues. So let's have a look at what we can find to support David's suggestions for Lancashire.



Inglewhite – Cabus

"*This was presumably part of the road from Ribchester – Lancaster, following the route described by Ratledge from Ribchester to Inglewhite. Ratledge has the road continuing to Catterall but the line of crosses suggests an additional direct route to Cabus, where it joined the Walton-le-Dale – Lancaster road.*" David Ashworth, RRRA Newsletter 27.

To be pedantic – it was the Romans who had the road continuing to Catterall - Ratledge merely found it. This is confirmed by virtually full length lidar evidence and 2 subsequent excavations. The northern section of David's suggested route is very similar to what we were looking at over 20 years ago, which crossed the Wyre Ford. Neil Thompson and myself wasted years searching there and we were by no means the only ones to look. There was simply no evidence supporting this suggestion. The lidar imagery shows nothing with certainly no branch off the real road at Inglewhite.

Preston – Longridge Fell

"*This road presumably ran from Preston to meet up with the known Roman road at Longridge Fell on a near-perfect alignment...*" David Ashworth, RRRA Newsletter 27.

This is a very common suggestion that I have received many times. There is evidence for a track coming off the Roman turn on Jeffrey Hill but it is sinuous and obviously later. Not Roman like at all. This sinuous track was replaced by the modern straight road towards Longridge showing that a straight alignment would have been perfectly possible. I have also searched all the way to Walton-le-Dale and beyond but found nothing.

Regarding the 52° turn that The Roman road undergoes on Jeffrey Hill. From the south the road heads up to the fell top via a little valley with quarry pits, expertly chosen. By turning through 52° a descent of 1 in 10 was achieved across a slope as steep as 1 in 3. A smaller angle then a much much steeper road would result, a greater angle then an even longer terrace would be needed plus it would take the road further off the direction they intended to go. The Roman surveyor knew exactly what direction to turn the road.

Walton-le-Dale – Withnell

"*This could be part of the road from Walton-le-Dale to Manchester, which incorporated a branch to Brindle stone quarry.*" David Ashworth, RRRA Newsletter 27.

Another common suggestion often triggered by the "Pippin Street" name in the locality. I have even had suggestions for it continuing over the tops of the West Pennine Moor Fells towards Edgworth. Again unfortunately no evidence has ever been spotted either on the ground or using lidar. I have searched repeatedly for every variation suggested but they always draw a blank.

Summary

Wayside Crosses can provide additional support to a possible Roman road but, at least to me, using them as a primary source is far too speculative. One thing lidar has taught me is: go with the visible evidence.

Reply to Stanegate: - a Highway Engineer's View by David Ratledge

Steve Hedworth

While David's Sherlock Holmes quote in Newsletter 27 suggests he has dealt with all the challenges to the Ratledge/Poulter route there are several additional points that require further consideration.

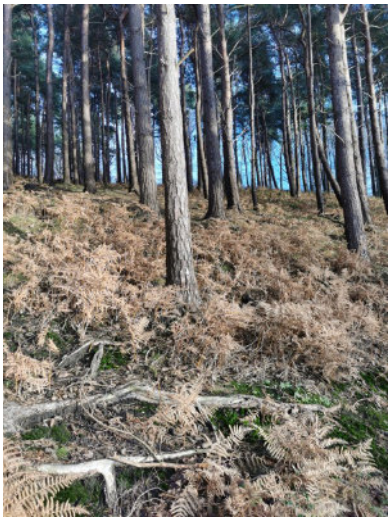
David doesn't like the dog leg at the east end of Fourstones that the Low Route has been given. I agree but this was one of two alternatives from my paper. In the supportive text to the lidar shot it clearly states the projection could have turned right, cutting the corner created by the modern road, to merge with the feature David accepts is there. This is shown as a dashed yellow line on Fig 1 of David's reply. As he states, " *There is no reason for the short-cut direct route(dashed) not to have been adopted – it is simply sensible engineering.*" I'm glad David agrees there is a viable low route.

The traverse shown in Fig 2 has been covered in Part 1. Apologies, but I can't see what was wrong with the map therein. However, the DR/JP route continues over an additional climb to merge with the footpath to High Warden. I'm not an engineer but to traverse this section, I would expect at least part of the road would be terraced into the slope. The projection of the DR/JP route cuts through Laverick Plantation. What I did notice of this wood is that the Low Grit sandstone outcrops to form the steep incline within it. Paths through the wood utilize narrow terraces and I would be surprised if a road did not require a similar solution to continue passage up this part of the hill. If David's route navigates this gradient one would expect some signs of passage through the slope created by the rock outcrop. This was certainly the case where the lower route was photographed and published in On The Trail of the Legions. There doesn't appear to be any signs of such work but David appears to suggest this is normal.

Another point that strikes me as strange is why traverse this slope to then travel down the reverse slope to High Warden. This track heads from High Warden towards Warden Hill and then traverses the slope just mentioned before descending through Laverick Plantation, and the stone outcrops, to merge with the path to Whinney Hill from Low Warden about 300ms north west of the point







Left image. This is the terraced track from High Warden as it descends through Laverick Plantation to merge with the footpath from Low Warden to Whinney Hill. Centre image. A projection from the Ratledge/Poulter feature shown in Fig 2 of David's reply should cross the Whinney Hill-Low Warden path in this vicinity after approaching from the right. Right image Part of the south end of Laverick Plantation. There don't appear to be any tracks in this part of the woods.

David's route should cross over. So why did this projected route continue over a steep climb when it could have merged with this path to Low Warden? This is the path that leads to Private Walk Wood. At this point the proposed Low Route merges with the path and heads towards the Norman motte and from there to the North Tyne. To me, a non engineer, it makes perfect sense that the DR/JP projection would merge with this route to the river crossing. However, to be viable, one would have to accept that the Stanegate had passed through Fourstones and traversed the slope to Laverick Plantation. I'm afraid, to my eyes, this route remains a fallacy.

At Low Warden, David's zig-zag is part of Homer's Lane. While plausible, if you accept the High Warden route, I prefer the Low Route which exhibits its own zig-zag as it traverses the same escarpment. It also has an adjacent Norman motte, which was presumably to control access to and from the river, next to the road. David's "*agger*" leading to the church is intriguing and does call out for excavation. However, it doesn't appear to be heading towards either the suspected bridge crossing of the North Tyne, identified by Poulter, Selkirk and myself, or the ford at Waters Meet, Howford. But, there are buildings in Fig 3, to the left of the centre of David's zig-zag, which appear to be the Old Vicarage. From here I suggest the Low Route runs towards the *agger* across the arable fields to the North Tyne. On Fig 3, the suspected bridge site, where the large stones lie in the river, would be between the white arrow pointing to the *agger* and the N of North Tyne. These fields are all arable and have probably been ploughed for many years. It is also worth considering that the Stanegate remained in use as the main east-west road until at least the mid 18C. One would think that sections would wear out and need repair, or diversions would be created. Perhaps, the *agger*, and other possible features on the east bank, represent later stages of the Stanegate's history. Alternatively, it may be a branch from the Low Route to the church.

Finally, with regard to building on top of Roman roads. Were the buildings referred to built on disused sections of road? At Low Warden, it is supposed that the Stanegate was active at the time of construction. If you're going to have to build a new road around the new build, then what's the point?

DO YOU KNOW OF A SECOND AGGER ON A ROAD IN YOUR PART OF THE COUNTRY?

Keith Hopkinson and Paul Smith

An article in the RRRA Newsletter 22 (Hopkinson. K. 2022) described a second *agger* running parallel to the original line of Icknield Street or Ryknild Street (RR18b) in Sutton Park, Birmingham. A second article, again based on RR18b in Sutton Park and published in RRRA Newsletter 23 (Smith. P & Hopkinson. K. 2022), considered the need for the Roman army to build culverts under this, and other Roman roads.

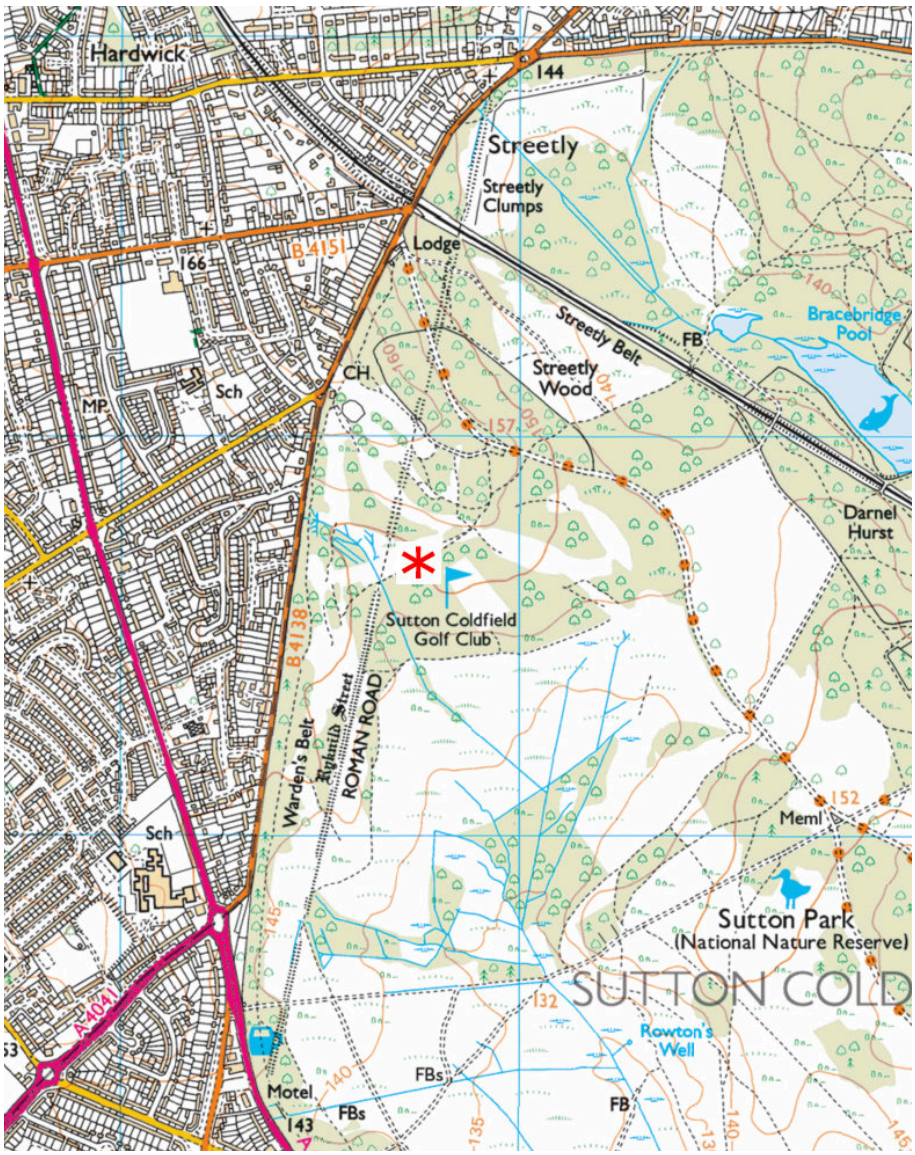


Fig 1. OS map of the west side of Sutton Park. The second agger is located to the left of the red star between approx. OS Ref SP 0865 9764 & SP 0867 9771. (c) Ordnance Survey.

The second agger was described in Newsletter 22:

"*As the Roman road crosses a tributary of the Longmoor brook, a few hundred yards to the north of the Golf Course Earthwork, a second agger diverges from the original agger. This second agger runs between the original agger and the outer ditch line, with the second agger slightly overlaying the edge of the original agger. The second agger runs for approximately 100 yards from the north until the road crosses the stream. It is not visible to the south of the stream. A quarry pit alongside this second agger seems to have been enlarged to provide material for this rebuild.*

The purpose of the second agger is not known. It seems likely that it is related to the stream crossing. Possibly the original agger was washed away by big floods, which have occurred in the Park. However, this does not account for why the original agger was not simply rebuilt. It also does not explain why the second agger exists so far back up the slope away from the stream, and not on the other side of the stream.'

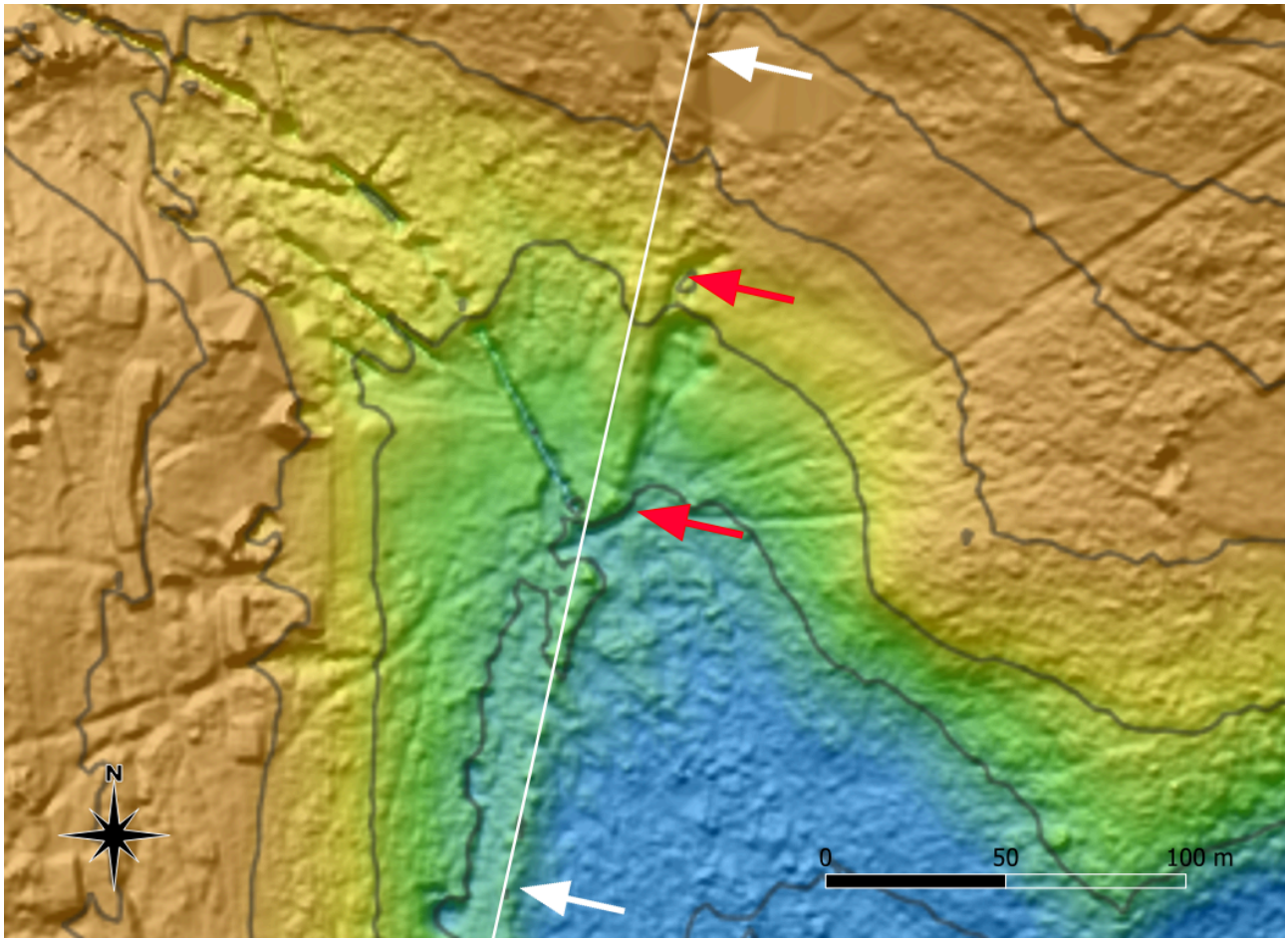


Fig 2. Lidar image of the second agger. The two white arrows point to a white line – this indicates the centre of RR18b in Sutton Park. The two red arrows point to the second agger which can be clearly seen as having been placed to the east of the original road. Base Lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2022

However, these examples do not provide conclusive reasons for the presence of dual *agger*s. We have searched the internet for further examples with no success.

What we need to be able to conduct a meaningful analysis of the characteristics of second aggers are more examples. The authors would really appreciate it if you could contact them if you know of any further examples of a second agger. Keith Hopkinson concluded this paragraph by stating that further analysis and investigation are needed. Theories as to why the Roman Army should have built an agger parallel to the original line of the road have been proposed but non conclusively explain the presence of the second agger. However, we would both accept that we are no closer to a solid understanding of this unusual feature. We decided to compare the various places where a second agger has been identified in Brittania to see whether there were any similarities between the various sites. In addition to Sutton Park we were able to discover three other places in the country with a second agger. They are at:

- Old Weir, Kenchester on RR6c, 'Watling Street West'
- Blackgrounds, Chipping Warden, Northampton on a previously unknown section of road discovered whilst building HS2, and
- Quenington on RR16b 'Akeman Street', the road from Alchester to Cirencester. (Margary. 1966. P161)

We have searched the internet for further examples with no success. This may be evidence of our failure to find the best search terms or may be because there are no more examples. It is very doubtful that comparison of four examples of a second *agger* are sufficient to come to any valid conclusion. It was therefore frustrating to learn that the example noted by Margary is a natural feature.



Fig 3. Roman dual carriageway. Original agger on the left, second agger in the centre, quarry pits on the right. © K Hopkinson 2021.

What we need to be able to conduct a meaningful analysis of the characteristics of second *aggers* is more examples. The authors would really appreciate it if you could contact them if you know of any further examples of a second *agger*. If you have any relevant information please contact Keith: kah07@msn.com and/or Paul: paul@paulesmith.co.uk

A Roman Early Warning System in Tynedale?

John Poulter

David Ashworth's findings (in RRRA Newsletter 27, Autumn 2023) about the alignments of some medieval crosses are interesting, and it will be intriguing to see if any remains of Roman roads do prove to be detected along the alignments which he postulates. His article prompted me to have another look at one possibility which had been at the back of my mind for some time. This possibility suggests, however, a different origin for at least two ancient crosses.

Homer's Lane is a minor road which runs above the western side of the River North Tyne, from Walwick Grange down to the village of Warden. See Figure 1.

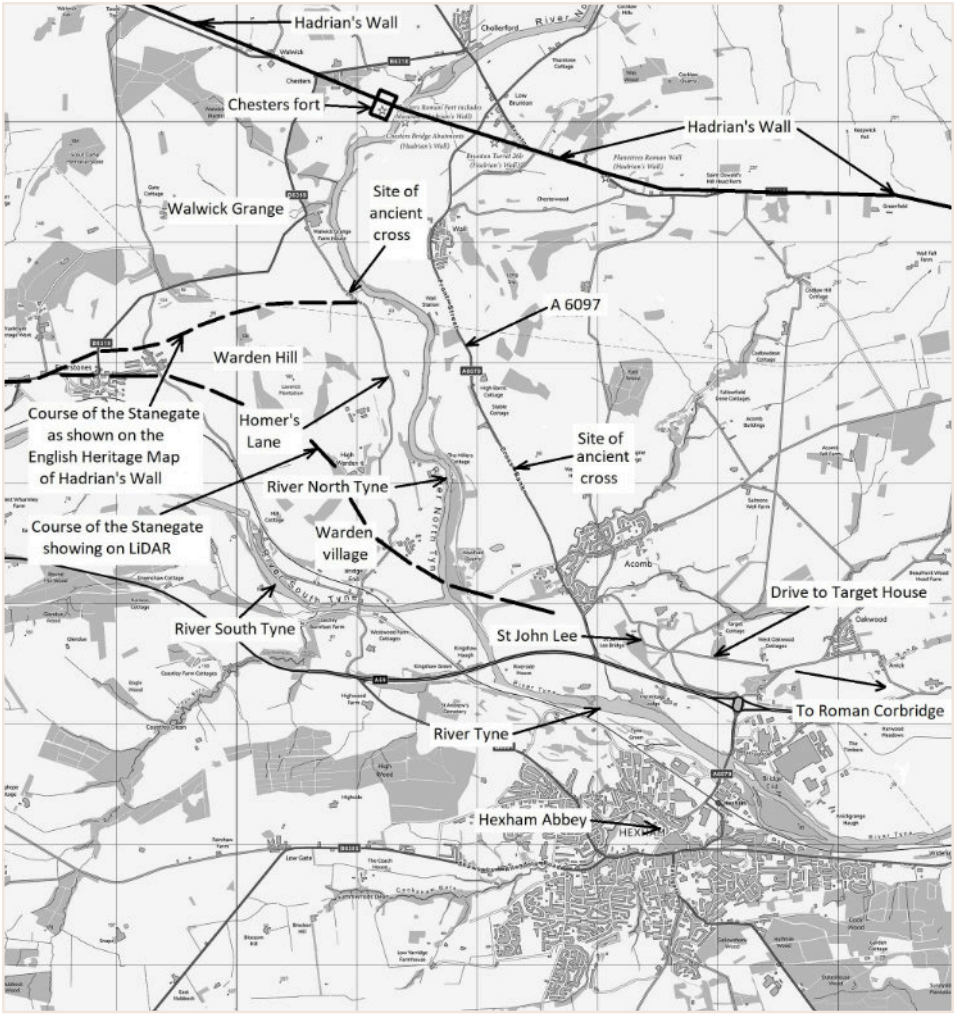


Figure 1, showing the locations of the places mentioned in the narrative. Base mapping is derived from Ordnance Survey Opendata – Copyright © Ordnance Survey

The English Heritage Map of Hadrian's Wall (English Heritage 2010) shows the course of the Stanegate Roman Road (RR85a) to be running eastwards, around the northern flank of Warden Hill, until it meets Homer's Lane, but beyond that point no traces of the Roman road have been firmly detected. Just to the north of this point there are the remains of an ancient cross, from which there is an outstanding view northward up the valley of the North Tyne. This has always struck me as an ideal position for a look-out post, watching for trouble coming down the valley from the north.

A ROMAN EARLY WARNING SYSTEM IN TYNEDALE?

To the Romans, the North Tyne valley would have been an obvious route of penetration into their territory by any hostile forces coming from the north, but the puzzle is that, so far, no substantial Roman fortification has been found which would have blocked the way (that is, before Hadrian's Wall had been constructed) – as well as, of course, also protecting the Stanegate's crossing of the river. Perhaps the strongest possibility is that there had been some Roman fortification underneath what is now the church of St John Lee, which stands on high ground overlooking the confluence of the North and South Tyne rivers. At the time of the Venerable Bede, this had become an oratory for the early Christian community in Hexham (Bede, 5.2). However, as pointed out in my article for Paul Bidwell's festschrift (Poulter 2022, 299-300), such a location would not have been able to signal to what is currently known to be the nearest significant Roman fortification, initially at Red House farm, but which was later migrated to Corbridge. As can be seen in Figure 9 of the aforementioned article, an intermediate signal station, which is postulated to have lain at the

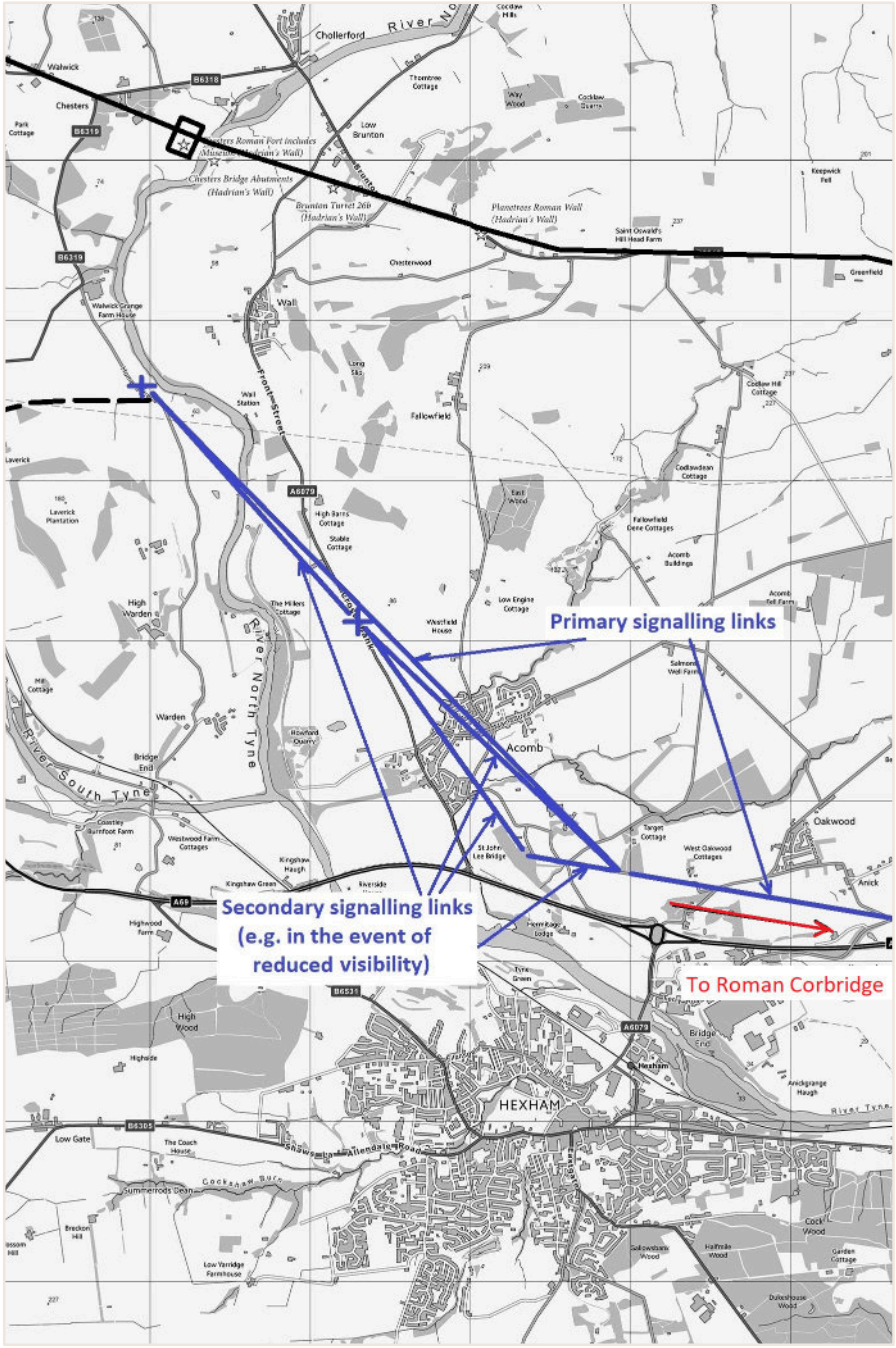


Figure 2, showing (in blue) how a Roman early warning system could have worked. The primary signalling link could have run directly from an observation tower by Homer's Lane to a postulated tower at the entrance to the drive to Target House, and thence on to Roman Corbridge. Secondary signalling links, perhaps required when visibility was more restricted, could have run over shorter intermediate distances from the observation point by Homer's Lane via the high point at Cross Bank on what is now the A6079, and thence on, either directly to the tower at the entrance to the drive to Target House or via St John Lee, from which it would then have been relayed to Corbridge, again via the tower at the entrance to the drive to Target House. Thus the primary signalling links of this system would have had several backup lines in the event of restricted visibilities in or around the Tyne valley. Such backup lines would have been an asset in any miliary operation. Base mapping is derived from Ordnance Survey Opendata – Copyright © Ordnance Survey

entrance of the drive to Target House, would have been required to relay an alert from St John Lee to Corbridge.

To test the possibility that the cross beside Homer's Lane might have marked the location of a Roman observation and signalling post, I examined its intervisibility with St John Lee, and found that it would have been blocked by high ground on the eastern side of the North Tyne, a little to the south of Low Barns farm. However, exactly on the highest point of this high ground are the remains of another ancient cross, standing beside the A6079 road (which is now thought to have been a Roman road), and this cross is clearly intervisible with the cross beside Homer's Lane, as



Figure 3, showing (in green) how an early warning system could have worked in Christian times. Signals from the cross beside Homer's Lane would have been relayed to St John Lee via the cross beside what is now the A6079 and then communicated directly onward to Hexham Abbey on the other side of the River Tyne. Base mapping is derived from Ordnance Survey Opendata – Copyright © Ordnance Survey

well as being intervisible with St John Lee and the postulated tower at the entrance to the drive to Target House. As it happens, a look-out tower beside Homer's Lane would also have been intervisible with the postulated tower by the drive to Target House – but only at tower height, and then only just.

It therefore seems very likely that the two ancient crosses mark the locations of components of an early Roman warning system, designed to detect trouble coming down the North Tyne valley from the north and to alert the nearest large concentration of troops at Corbridge. See Figure 2, for a suggestion of how such a scheme would have worked. As the figure shows, the most direct signalling of an alert would have been at tower height, from Homer's Lane to the postulated tower near the entrance to the drive to Target House. However, in the event of limited visibility such as mist, snowfall or rain, there would have been several alternative and shorter links via the cross on Cross Bank and St John Lee, thus affording back-up facilities.

This would help to explain the apparent absence of a substantial Roman fortification near the confluence of the North and South Tynes. Such a system would, of course, have become redundant once Hadrian's Wall had been built across the North Tyne and the fort erected at Chesters. It also, though, prompts the thought that the course of the Stanegate around the northern flank of Warden Hill may only have been a branch from the main Stanegate road (see Ratledge, 2023), constructed simply in order to service the look-out point beside Homer's Lane. What is now believed to be the course of the main Stanegate road is indicated in Fig.1. If the Roman road around the northern flank of Warden Hill had indeed been no more than a branch to service the look-out point, it would answer the long-standing question of why the Roman road appears to extend no further (However, see Ratledge 2023, where lidar now shows the main course of the Stanegate to have run, in RRRA Newsletter 27, Autumn 2023, pp 31-33). David Ratledge reports (pers comm) that, based upon the latest National Lidar Programme data, he is now pretty convinced that no Roman road ran around the northern flank of Warden Hill. If so, this would nullify my suggestion that it could have been a branch to a Roman look-out post.

It remains to consider why these two postulated Roman look-out positions should have become sufficiently sacred to have warranted the erection of crosses at their locations. As noted above, to the Romans they would have become redundant during the second century, once Hadrian's Wall had been constructed across the North Tyne a little further upstream. However, after the Romans had left Britain, Hadrian's Wall would no longer have been manned, and the fort at Chesters become abandoned subsequently, so that the early Christian community at Hexham would have wanted as much warning as possible of trouble coming down the North Tyne valley. Hence they might have been motivated to resurrect the look-out and signalling positions vacated by the Romans, and marked them with crosses. This arrangement would have worked even better than in Roman times since St John Lee is directly intervisible with Hexham Abbey, almost due south on the opposite side of the Tyne. See Figure 3 for an illustration of how such a scheme could have worked.

References

An Archaeological Map of Hadrian's Wall, scale 1:25,000, English Heritage, London, 2010

Bede, *An Ecclesiastical History of the English People* 5.2

Poulter, J., 2022: 'Unravelling the North Tyne crossings of the Stanegate', pp 287-302 in Hodgson, N. and Griffiths, W. (eds) *Roman Frontier Archaeology – in Britain and abroad,* Archaeopress, Oxford, 2022

Other News, Events, Updates & Miscellany

Notes from the AGM, 30th November 2023

from Dave Armstrong

These notes are to keep you in touch with the outcomes of the AGM if you couldn't make it yourself on the night. They are not the formal minutes that will be reviewed at the next AGM.

The virtual meeting was opened on Zoom by the Chair Mike Haken with a welcome to the good turn out of members and those who had presented apologies for absence. The attendance exceeded the quorate requirement of 5% of the membership (i.e. >26), as required by the Constitution.

Minutes from the 2022 AGM were accepted unanimously by the meeting. The three actions within them were seen to have been discharged. Trustee (and founder) Mike Haken stepped down at this meeting in compliance with the Constitution but put himself forward for re-election. Even though there were no other nominations a vote unanimously re-elected him 30/0 as a Trustee.

The Trustees Annual report was summarised by the chair, Mike Haken. Analysis of the membership data refutes the perception that some have that the Association is northern centric. There is an almost equal split in membership numbers for the North and central counties of England as against the southeastern and southwestern areas.

The significant activities of the past year were considered; the issuing of Volume III of *Itinera*, our popular and successful Talks schedule, as well as geophysics at *Petuaria* and Rudgate in Yorkshire and the Devil's Causeway in Northumberland but there has been no planned Association excavation this year.

Looking forward, the Trustees have created a Strategic Plan 'RRRA in 2028'. This sets out the aspiration of what the Association will look like in five years hence and sets six strategic objectives;

1. Placing the Association on a firm organisational footing in terms of business and risk management. This to include succession planning for Chair and Trustees, timely replacement of members in other key roles, backup for information systems, continuing the AGM's.

2. Grow the Membership. Both for the purposes of enlarging the pool of potential contributors, and for increasing subscription revenue to enable other activities.

3. Involving members in activities. This for the purpose of extending the Association's core objectives, developing the level of satisfaction in membership, and providing a pool of potential role holders and officers. This strategic objective is linked to an associated objective:

4. RRRA Education Initiative. To increase knowledge of, and interest in, the study of Roman roads. This might include development of a suite of training and educational guides, and programmes of on-line talks and live talks, continuing to issue *Itinera*, going out to schools and communities.

5. Improved management of the Association website as an effective, and up-to-date digital showplace, and access point, for the Association. It should include removal of out-of-date information, verifying of links, and ensuring relevance to current activities. This to be achieved through appointment of a paid web manager, lifting a major administrative and technical burden off the current Chairman.

6. A planned approach to completing the gazetteer 'The roads of Roman Britain'. This is key to the organisation's purpose of becoming the acknowledged reference point for information on the roads of Roman Britain, developing Margary's work in the context of present knowledge,

making it fit for purpose in the mid-21st century. Actions to be detailed about how this should be achieved, e.g. by creation of digitised road maps (QGIS and Google Earth/.kmz files), and milestones for step-by-step completion of the whole gazetteer.

The financial performance was laid out by the treasurer Albert Hills. Greater revenue from subscriptions and *Itinera* sales plus no significant excavation in the year has led to a surplus of almost £4,000 across the year increasing our funds to over £26,000. Those who have made an optional donation towards our Talks when booking have more than offset the Zoom and occasional speaker fees.

A report on the status of membership was delivered by Dave Armstrong in the absence of the Membership Secretary Peter Webb. This gave a positive picture of an increasing number, bucking the trend of other archaeological groups since covid. A year ago the Association had 454 members which has risen to 525 members plus associates with 139 having chosen to join us while 68 have decided not to renew their subscription within the year.

Peter Webb raised some related issues. While the subscription rate increased a year ago, some are still renewing at the old rate. This has been tolerated in 2023 but will be challenged going forward. Equally those paying the student rate will be required to give assurance that they are still within Education to retain the discounted rate. Renewing could be made easier with a simple click Paypal facility on our website. It is hoped that the refresh of our website could include this enhancement which may help retain some who we would otherwise lose. 30% of new members have opted to include an optional donation with their subscription. This is not offered to existing members when they renew automatically through Paypal. Finally, Peter thanked the membership for the kind and often entertaining messages he receives, it does help lighten the load.

Following on from the Strategic Plan objectives above, starting the move towards achieving those, members were asked to consider and vote on some specific activities proposed for the year to come.

- That current activities; e.g., *Itinera*, monthly talks, newsletters, etc continue and are developed where feasible. This was agreed unanimously.
- That the overall objectives and strategic intent of the Strategic Plan are acceptable to the membership with a unanimous vote.
- Members agreed to the Association employing a professional to restructure the website and resolve the deficiencies.
- Members agreed that the Association will take steps towards creating regional groups across *Britannia*.
- Members agreed that the Association will form working groups to define (but not necessarily create) what infrastructure suite of 'how to' Guide documents are needed to ensure RR research work is conducted to the necessary high standard.
- Members agreed to preliminary steps be taken exploring how funding could be sought.
- Members agreed that the Associations Gazetteer is progressed. As an intermediate step in progressing the development of this, the Association will start to produce digital mapping of each Roman road in Britain, easily downloadable from an online catalogue.

These aspects are to be pursued across 2024 and progress can be assessed at the next AGM

Under Any Other Business a number of issues and observations were raised by one member who unfortunately could not be present at the AGM. A précised extract of these points from a mail was made by Dave Armstrong. These summarised as;

1. Association activities and previous proposals were not progressing.
2. A proposal to have local groups or 'conventions'.
3. What was happening with the database – the Gazetteer?
4. Access to lidar, including the Guide to lidar for beginners.
5. The Association was too diversified into multiple projects and proposed to downsize *Itinera* into an upgraded newsletter.

The meeting considered these points and after discussion, did recognise the issues described. However, the overall consensus was that the proposals agreed in the meeting largely provided what was being sought;

1. Agreed, but the planned aspects will get things going dependant on getting members' help (which is crucial). The chair and secretary can't do everything, especially from a distance. We can be judged on this at the next AGM.
2. Also agreed. It is intended to set away some local groups starting where we already know there is a cluster of members. But, as above, we will need the local members to do it, with the help and advice input from the officers.
3. A fair point. We are making moves to progress the national mapping project as in our plan. This will need the input from the local groups as above and being digital we need to define how they undertake the research and deliver the data in a usable format. Infrastructure Guidance documents will be needed.
4. The meeting thought getting a bespoke lidar coverage for the Association would be very expensive and do no more than some of those already available on-line. A number of these are available.
5. The meeting disagreed with this challenge. The various aspects so far undertaken have all raised the profile of the Association (See the following *Britannia* section) and brought in new members, some of whom are now contributing members. The bigger the Association becomes the more active members we will have. *Itinera* in particular is more than a report of Roman road work; it demonstrates to the archaeological world that we work to very high standards in all things and have distanced ourselves from those with an excess of enthusiasm but who were less well endowed with scholarly thought. Besides all that, from the accounts, *Itinera* was well in the black last year plus those involved really enjoy working together creating it. The meeting was of a mind to carry on *Itinera* and our current activities.

Further AOB was raised with the helpful suggestion of reinvigorating the website Forum for members into a grouping aligned with the proposed local groups. This could enable their communication and sharing of information. A number of individuals spoke up offering their help in what was being proposed and these have been noted.

The meeting was summarised by the secretary and was closed by the chair with thanks to the attendees and contributors.

Itinera given a role alongside Britannia

from Rob Entwistle, Hon Editor of *Itinera*

The RRRA's academic journal, *Itinera*, will publish its fourth volume this spring, whereas the illustrious journal *Britannia* (from the Roman Society) has now reached its 54th volume. The traditions and structure of that celebrated journal helped guide and shape the form taken by *Itinera*.

We are greatly heartened by the respected position that *Itinera* has achieved in the short period of its existence. This is reflected in a recent decision taken by *Britannia's* Editorial Board, that in the light of fast-developing research into Roman roads (championed by the RRRA), the burden of publishing materials relating to this theme should in future be shared with *Itinera*. *Britannia's* 'Notes for Contributors' will specify that submissions on Roman roads intended for their annual update section, 'Roman Britain in 20XX' will – when substantial accounts of matters are appearing in *Itinera* – be limited to brief summaries of the main points of interest. References will cite the full accounts being published in *Itinera*.

Itinera, published by a committed body of volunteers focused on high standards of editing and production, aims to make information publicly and readily available to professional and enthusiast alike.

Suggestions for future papers are welcomed by the Hon Editor, whether from professionals or independent researchers. We are happy to support those less experienced in producing papers with advice: our own 'Notes for Contributors' are available on the RRRA site. Our publication is open to the full range of studies upon Roman roads and transport, both within and outside Britain, with all papers peer-reviewed before acceptance. The forthcoming volume will, for example, include an extensive paper on the construction of Roman roads in Spain, alongside a survey of the road network around Exeter, and aspects of networks in the Chilterns and Oxfordshire. For the first time we have a group of papers all focused on a single issue: the Devil's Causeway, south of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

The decision by *Britannia* marks a big step forward for the RRRA, acknowledging the value of what we do and the way in which we are doing it.

Some reading material

from David Brear

Ortman, S., Bulik, O., Wiseman, R., Lobo, J., Bettencourt, L., and Lodwick, L. 2023 '*Transport Costs and Economic Change in Roman Britain*', European Journal of Archaeology 1–24. Available at https://doi.org/10.1017/eaa.2023.37 Thank you David.

Roman Britain mapping

from Mike Haken

You may remember the now defunct website roman-britain.org – not without its failings but so much better and more accurate than the current roman-britain.co.uk, which looks more modern but is very dated (and inaccurate) containing some dated and inaccurate content. Unfortunately, it's not possible to help put things right because the creator is anonymous and can't be easily contacted. Well, I've just discovered that the old site can still be visited, courtesy of Internet Archive Wayback Machine – most of the site still seems to be there, although the search facility no

longer functions and to find a site you have to use the clunky map here https://web.archive.org/web/20131206121802/http://roman-britain.org/cgi-bin/full-rbo.pl. Still, I'm sure many members will be keen to know it still exists.

Roman Roads of East Anglia

from David Ratledge

After completing Cambridgeshire recently I was able to finish off mapping the RRs of East Anglia – attached. It has taken me 4 years to do the flat lands. The map is based on the OS grid so does not quite match Google maps or Openstreetmap. The Fens area is from Francis Pryor.

The Cambridgeshire web pages are now up on my http://www.twithr.co.uk/ site.

