ROMAN·ROADS·RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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

FROM THE EDITOR, HANNAH COLLINGRIDGE

Welcome to the Autumn newsletter . I presume you you are all busy writing up your findings from the field season and that you'll be sending interesting bits and pieces through soon. Meanwhile, David Ratledge has been his usual productive self so many thanks to him for most of the contents of this letter.

It's AGM time again - 20th November. It's online so that as many of us can attend as possible. Note the date and send your offers of help and how to improve the society to Dave Armstrong - there's more about this later.

Send your newsletter bits to me via this mail link, although Dave will send things on if you forget and send them to him.

Enjoy.

Cheers, Han

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A Newly Discovered Roman Milestone, Lancashire

David Ratledge

Background

Lancashire currently has 9 known milestones with no fewer than 6 on the route from Ribchester to Lancaster. This was probably Lancashire's most important road linking two major Roman centres so not a surprise. The Lancashire milestones were stone pillars generally cylindrical but not always – there is a rough undressed one found at Ashton, Lancaster. Some have/had Latin inscriptions but again not always (e.g. Cabus). Several are no longer full height but are now just cylindrical stumps - to be expected after nearly 2000 years.

Assumed to have been erected when their road was first constructed but we do have at least one example (Stonelands) where the milestone was most likely erected after a road upgrade. A feature of Lancashire milestones is that many of them are not stuffed away in museums but out in the countryside – believed close to their original position and all nearby to their Roman road.

The Big Question - were they every mile? The established answer would be probably not but in Lancashire, with plenty of stone quarries, it would have been perfectly feasible. Taking the Ribchester to Lancaster road with its 6 milestones, this represents a 25% survival rate. If 25% are still here 2000 years later how many were there originally? Certainly many more and perhaps even all 23 (24 miles needs 23 milestones).

Over 100 Roman milestones have been recorded in Britain. The current Ordnance Survey Roman Britain map shows just one for Lancashire.

The Garstang Milestone

The route of the Roman road at Garstang has only been known for the last 10 years. Lidar revealed a very prominent agger approaching the eastern bank of the River Wyre. Also visible on that bank



Fig. 1. The course of the Roman road from Walton-le-Dale (& Ribchester) to Lancaster at Garstang. The road on the east (right) bank is very prominent in Lidar imagery as are possible wing walls – shown in black. Base mapping is from Lancashire County Council's Mario website under an Open Government Licence.

was what looked like the remains of bridge training or wing walls (fig. 1 shown in black). We, Wyre Archaeology, have tried several times to gain permission to investigate what has survived – Lidar suggests that much has. However, the landowner has always refused.

Undaunted, my long time collaborator Andy Jackson decided to inspect the western side of the river to see if anything had survived there. What he spotted came as a great surprise. Just visible through bushes in a back garden (exact location cannot be divulged) was what looked like the stump of a Roman milestone (fig. 2 top). The owner granted permission for a closer inspection and this confirmed our first suspicions. It was cylindrical and very similar to several of the other known Roman milestones in Lancashire.

It had been found by the garden owner and re-erected in a central position as a garden feature (fig. 2 bottom). His recollection was that the stone was found nearer the bottom of the garden and therefore very close to the (interpolated) position of the Roman road i.e. only metres away from it. Given its typical form and the find spot there can be little doubt that it is indeed a Roman milestone.

Also visible in another garden were many large dressed stones. This and the milestone prompted a geophysical (GPR) survey, which revealed several tantalising features. However this needs extending in order to resolve what they actually represent.



Fig.2 Top - the view of the milestone from the riverside public path in Garstang. Bottom – a close-up of the re-erected milestone. Images: Andy Jackson

PROBABLE ROMAN ROAD FROM SAHAM TONEY TO STANFORD, NORFOLK

David Ratledge

Introduction

This is a road included as "possible" in the Norfolk HER (No. 5072) which credits it as being suggested previously by A. K. Gregory (Norfolk Archaeology Unit). Unfortunately more than half its route lies within live Army Ranges and is inaccessible. However, with series 2 Lidar covering the area it is now possible to examine the full length, at least digitally. The route appears old and is depicted on Faden's Map of Norfolk, c.1790-4.

The route would represent an easy and logical connection from the Roman road-hub and settlement of Saham Toney on Peddars Way to the Icknield Way at Stanford (fig. 1). Just a quick study of a modern map shows striking straight alignments just as we would expect. A parish

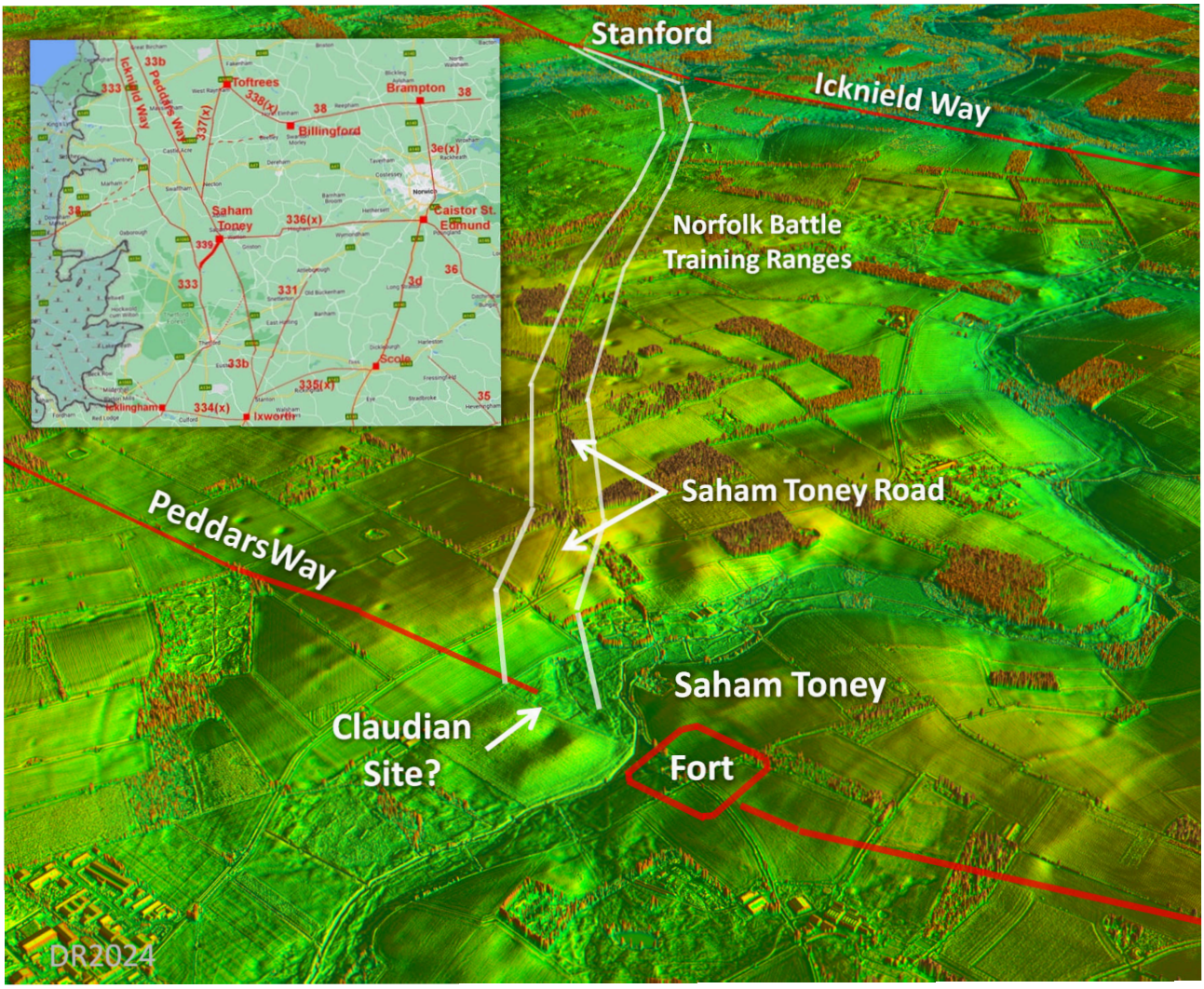


Fig 1: Oblique Lidar image looking across the Saham Toney Roman settlement site towards Stanford and the Icknield Way. Lidar data is © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2023. All rights reserved. Inset: Location map - base map copyright Google 2024.

boundary follows the route for about 1 mile. The number 339(x) has been reserved for it by the RRRA.

The Route

The first obvious alignment (Saham Toney Road TL88578 99721) is to the south of the River Wissey (Threxton) rather than the later large fort on the north side of the river (Saham Toney). This may seem odd but the Norfolk HER (No. 4697) suggests an early Claudian site was located on the Threxton side and Lidar does show a lot going on there with perhaps the outline of camps(?). Aiming for the south side of the river would also mean a shared bridge with Peddars Way Roman Road – so very much to be expected.

The first sign on the Threxton site is a ridge (TF88866 00158), which is perhaps natural but is aiming for Saham Toney Road. It could have been utilised for the road but this is somewhat uncertain. Saham Toney Road further on comprises a series of straights with the first three changing direction at high points (TL88425 99563 & TL88071 98921). The first alignment is perhaps a clue in that the road agger is much wider than the modern lane on top of it – a feature often indicative of a Roman origin. I have encountered this several times in East Anglia (fig. 2).

Saham Toney Road continues on its straight alignment accompanied by a parish boundary but this is now inside the live Norfolk Battle Training Area so strictly out of bounds. We are now reliant on Lidar to follow the road's onward course to Stanford. The Norfolk HER shows the supposed Roman line deviating off the road as it nears a tributary of the River Wissey. Lidar doesn't really support this. The imagery shows the road turning due south for a crossing of the river rather than joining the Icknield Way and sharing its crossing. This may seem strange but in reality probably makes sense and in fact probably strengthens the case for the road being Roman (fig.3).



Fig. 2. The first alignment of Saham Toney Road looking back towards the Roman settlement at Threxton/Saham Toney. The modern lane is narrow compared to land-take over the ditches – often a sign of the road's former importance. Image: copyright Google 2024.

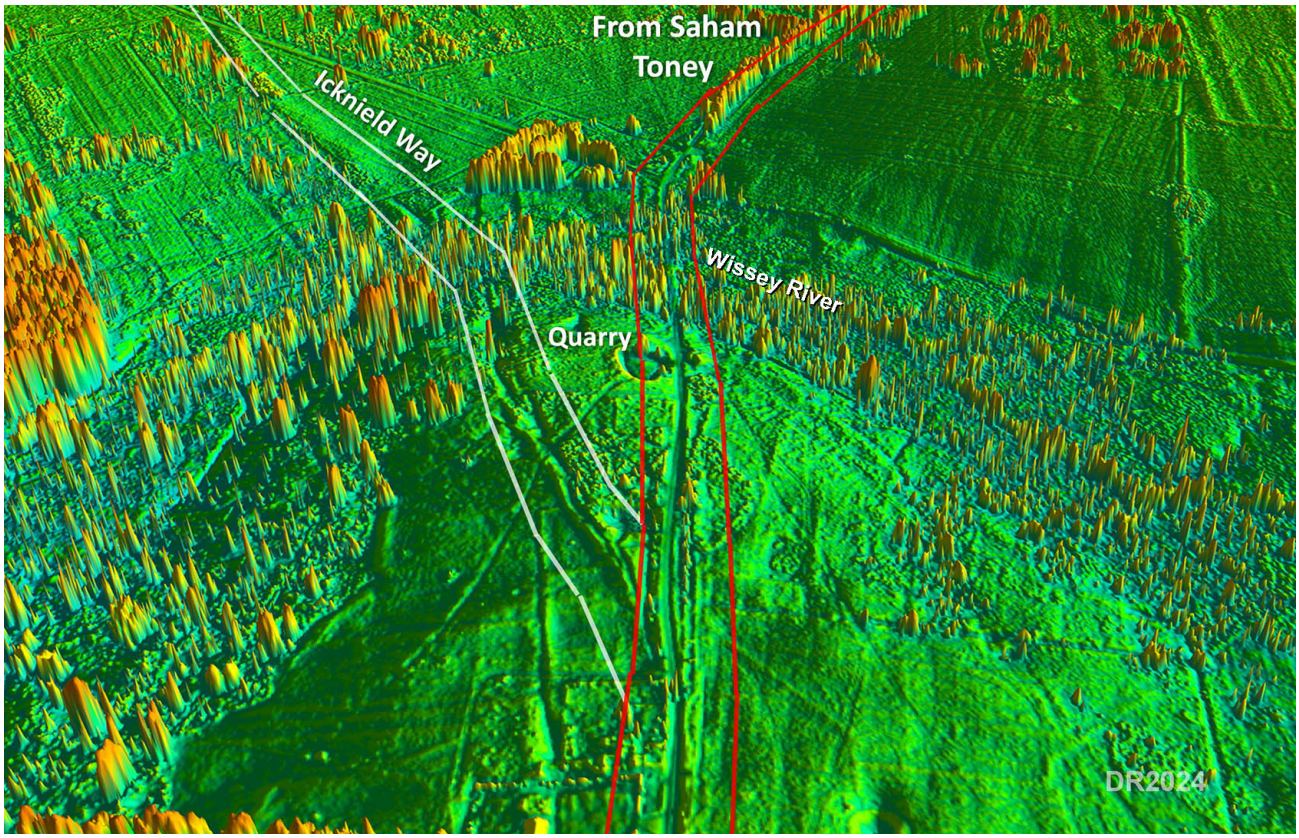


Fig. 3. Oblique Lidar image looking north over the junction with the Icknield Way. Note the large roadside quarry. The army road appears to have diverged slightly to the west (left) but there are traces of a straighter older course. This spot is inaccessible due to the live Army Battle Ranges. Base Lidar data is © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2024. All rights reserved.

The older Icknield Way would most likely have forded the river whereas, as we know, the Romans were skilled bridge builders and this tributary would have been easy for them to bridge (TL85297 95274). The chosen alignment shortens the route and is more direct. One would assume that once this road and a bridge was constructed then a Romanised Icknield Way would divert over to it. There is perhaps some evidence for just such a link (see Appendix).

Across the river and alongside this route, but before its junction with the Icknield Way, is a prominent roadside quarry (fig. 3). Building material for roads is scarce in East Anglia but the quarry is positioned on top of Sandy Hill. A clue perhaps in the name that there was building materials to hand here. Note the square feature with perhaps round corners immediately south of the quarry is a demolished 18th century house (HER No. 50056).

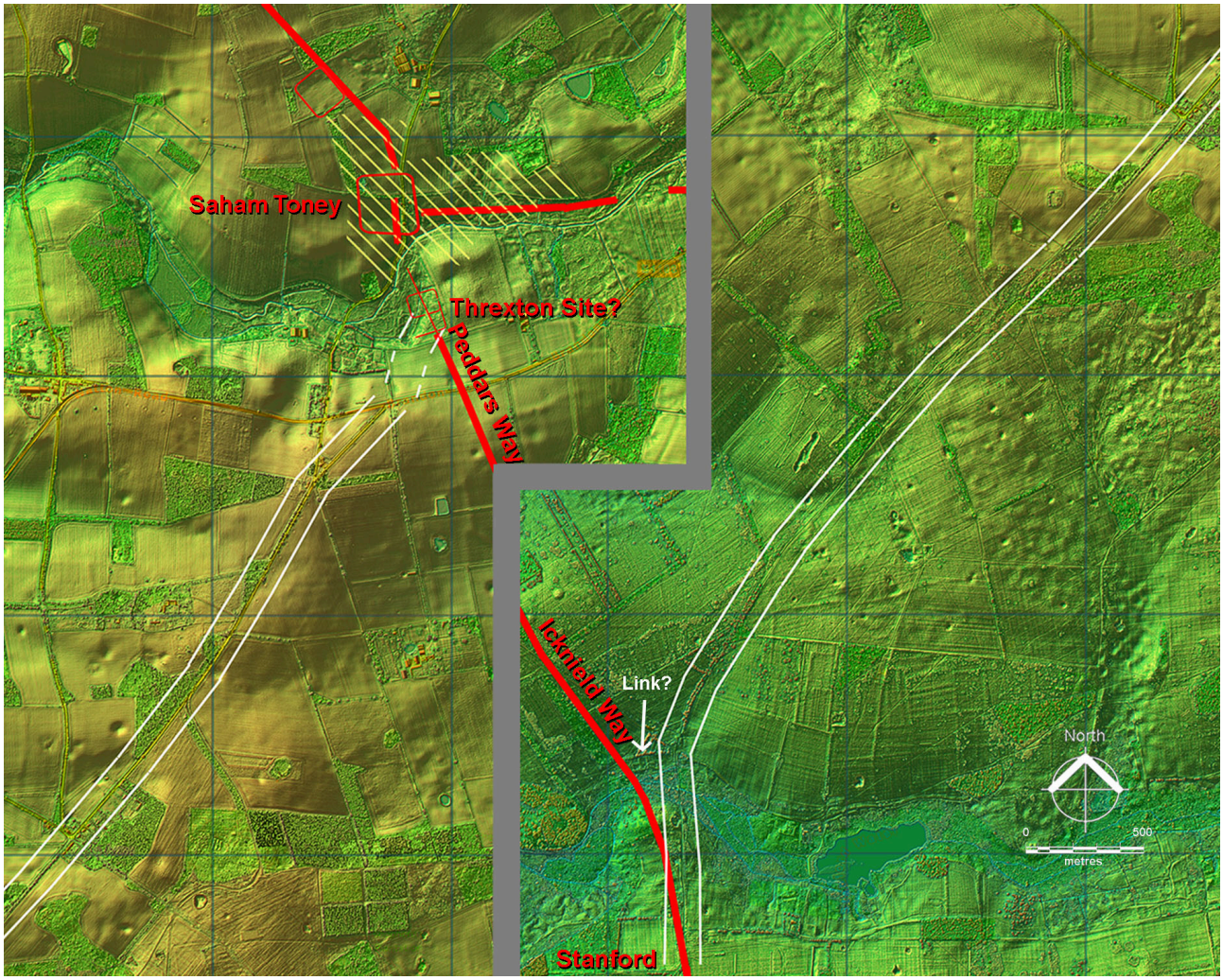
The route then merges into the Icknield Way (TL85310 94832) and passes through the deserted village of Stanford, where only the round-towered church seems to have survived.

Conclusion

This road has much circumstantial evidence supporting it being genuinely Roman but it has to be admitted nothing that makes it absolutely certain. It would have been an easy connection of less than 5 miles between two important roads. There are up to nine Roman villas located along the Norfolk section of the Icknield Way so was almost certainly made use of by the Romans. Intriguingly this link could even have been part of the route of Antonine Itinerary V. Route maps are included in the Appendix.

Appendix – Routemaps

Base Lidar data is © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2024. All rights reserved.



Other News, Events, Updates & Miscellany

AGM 20th November 7.30-9.30

from Dave Armstrong

Please find below the Zoom dial in details for the 2024 AGM. I hope you can make it to hear what the Association are doing and how it is progressing. If you would like to raise something please notify me in advance so we can list it on the agenda. As ever, if you would like to get more involved in the Association's work please let me know, there is always plenty to do and many hands etc! I will be circulating the agenda and any other supporting paperwork in advance of the 20th, plus another copy of the dial in details.

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88500040298?pwd=68BYf4x541fBfMagqzKiF4Za7KBT9B.1

Meeting ID: 885 0004 0298

Passcode: 949141

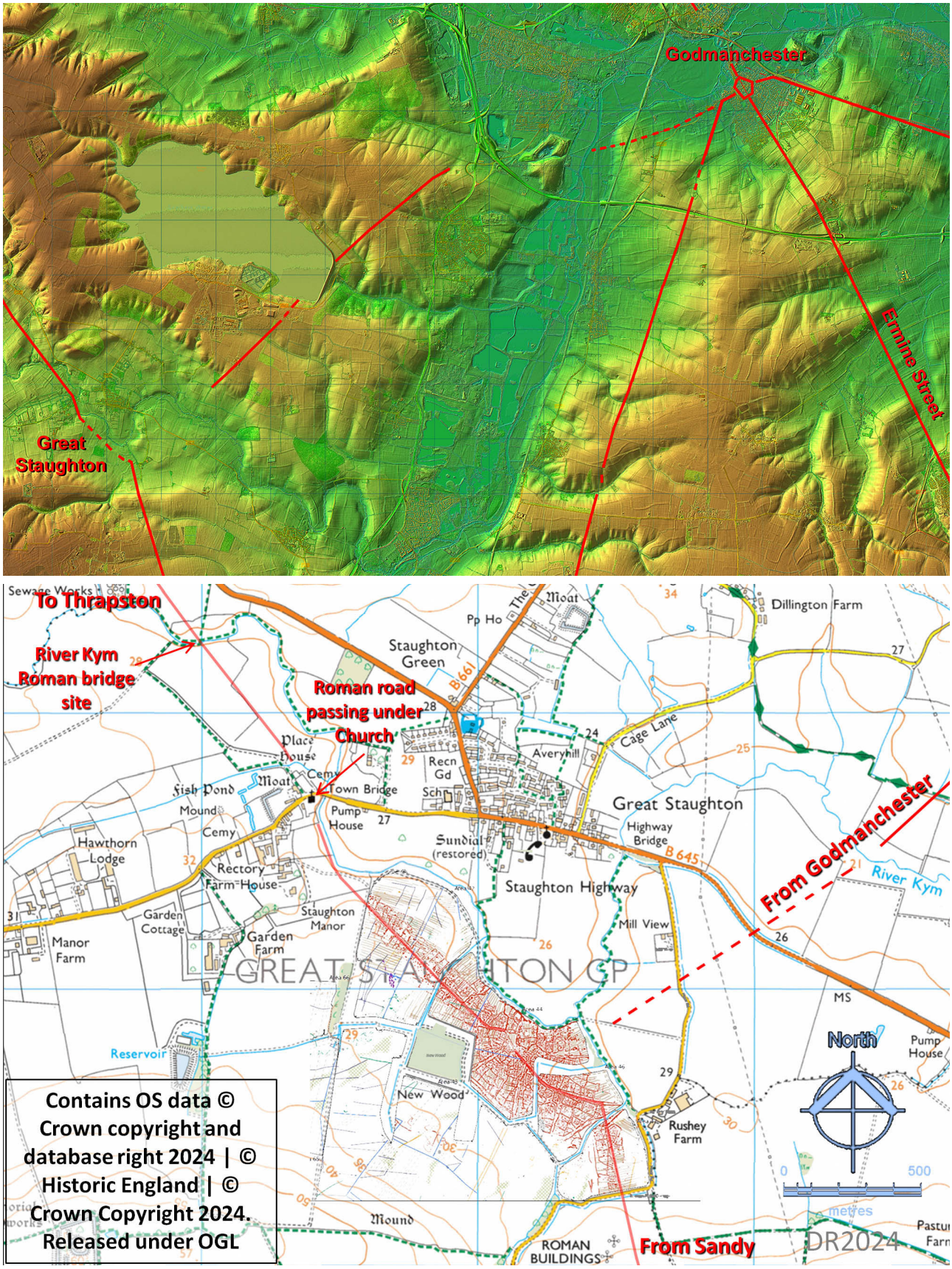
Itinera

Work is underway putting together Volume V of our yearly journal, to be published in the Spring. We already have the offers of a number of interesting and informative papers and the volume will contain the yearly round up of Roman road work across Britannia. Copies of Volumes 2, 3 and 4 are still available if you've omitted to get your copy. See the *Itinera* page on our site for the ordering details. Volume 1 has sold out. Contact Chris Webb, our delivery Czar at itinerasales@romanroads.org, if you need a postage rate for delivery outside of the UK.

A new road between Godmanchester and Great Staughton RR705

David Ratledge's work in East Anglia has revealed another new road. The proposed link from Godmanchester to Staughton makes perfect sense – in terms of the terrain it's the most sensible route, avoiding as much of the wet valley bottoms as possible. Now we're finally getting away from the idea that all roads in Britain had to be military in origin, links between nearby vici are perfectly logical and to be expected and anticipated. There used to be a false perception that all forts within a day or two's march had to be connected, leading to much nonsense. That notion never made sense, since for the most part the forts are there to protect the roads, rather than the roads being built to link forts. Settlement on the other hand often formed to serve the needs of travellers on one specific road but to expand and develop needed greater connectivity – Central Place Theory sort of applies, but not quite. We should therefore expect nearby small towns to be connected and with the exception of the south west peninsula, and possibly parts of Cumbria and Scotland, pretty much all 'new' roads will fall into this category. This of course would also mean that the idea of the network being pretty much complete by the end of the 1st century can also be consigned to the bin, at least for the area south and east of the Fosse Way.

The Great Staughton small town site has now been scheduled: https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1491190?section=official-list-entry



Great Staughton location maps from David Ratledge

Nippets

A geophysical survey near *Viriconium* has revealed a lot of previously undiscovered Iron and Roman Age material. More on the area here.

In Oxfordshire, the site of a Roman road has been confirmed under the playing field of the local primary school. Apparently local lore told of the site but now there's full confirmation. There's also a bit on the local history group's Facebook page

And finally, again from David Ratledge (the rest of us must try harder), a little teaser about everyone's favourite 'is it or isn't it a Roman Road', High Street, RR74. The story starts with an aerial Bing image, which looks tantalisingly convincing. Maybe too good to be true.



Sadly it is too good to be true. As DR reports, when you compare it to the Lidar and the previous aerial photos, there's nothing there.

"My guess is the farmer has created it and believing the OS route for the road is genuine has respected the line and done something or not done something on the supposed line. Far too suspicious to be real – well what is showing is real but not caused by a Roman road."

