

# ROMAN·ROADS·RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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## NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2020

MILLE·VIAE·DUCUNT·HOMINES·PER·SECU·LA·ROMAM

## FROM THE EDITOR

**T**HIS EDITION WAS intended to be a Spring update with a look ahead for all the excavations and other things, by RRRRA and other organisations, that were scheduled to have been happening across the year. How quickly have events unfolded and changed everyone's plans. While we may not be able to get out with field work and looking at features on the ground, we can still do an awful lot of archaeology. Some will have a backlog of report writing to catch up on. And as you're probably aware, there's a lot of reference material on line now. Gathering and reviewing references is something that can be achieved in self-isolation, I'm constantly surprised at what is available on-line.

In this edition there's news of a group of members starting to analyse the Devils Causeway, road RR87, that runs through Northumberland. While we need to review this road to enable a Gazetteer entry for it, the direct interest that prompted the working team was a talk by Nick Hodgson at the successful November Arbeia Conference. The team are now gathering references and linking together all that we already know about this road and this when added to a review of AP's and lidar, deploying the RRRRA techniques will give us an accurate course of this road and hopefully some adjacent Roman features. All of which can be achieved in the comfort of your own home, with a suitable refreshment to hand!

This edition also has a number of pieces from David Ratledge; a second road up through the Lune Gorge initially noticed by Johnny Scott from the on-line lidar sites. David is being particularly productive in East Anglia, he has more to come from that area and working with Neil Buckley the route from Manchester to Melandra has been plotted. Also here is an interesting set of photos from Carlton Reid of his cycle ride up Dere Street, including the cross country sections. David Brear has also provided interesting news and a piece about road construction. Finally, in the last edition I boldly asserted that there was no accessible digital version of Margary's *Roman Roads in Britain* available. Ed Harkess wrote saying he had an OCR copy which he he has donated to RRRRA and is now [released to all members](#).

Thank you to all the contributors. This is the RRRRA members newsletter, please let me know what you're up to? Thank you. [dave.armstrong@romanroads.org](mailto:dave.armstrong@romanroads.org)

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# RRRA Projects, update

## Cumbria, a second Roman road into the Lune Gorge

*From David Ratledge*

### Introduction

The known Roman road from Burrow (in Lancashire) to Low Borrowbridge Fort, near Tebay, is well recorded. Its course sticks to the east bank of the River Lune virtually all the way. Only immediately south of the fort does it finally cross over the river. But was this the final Roman route into the Lune Gorge?

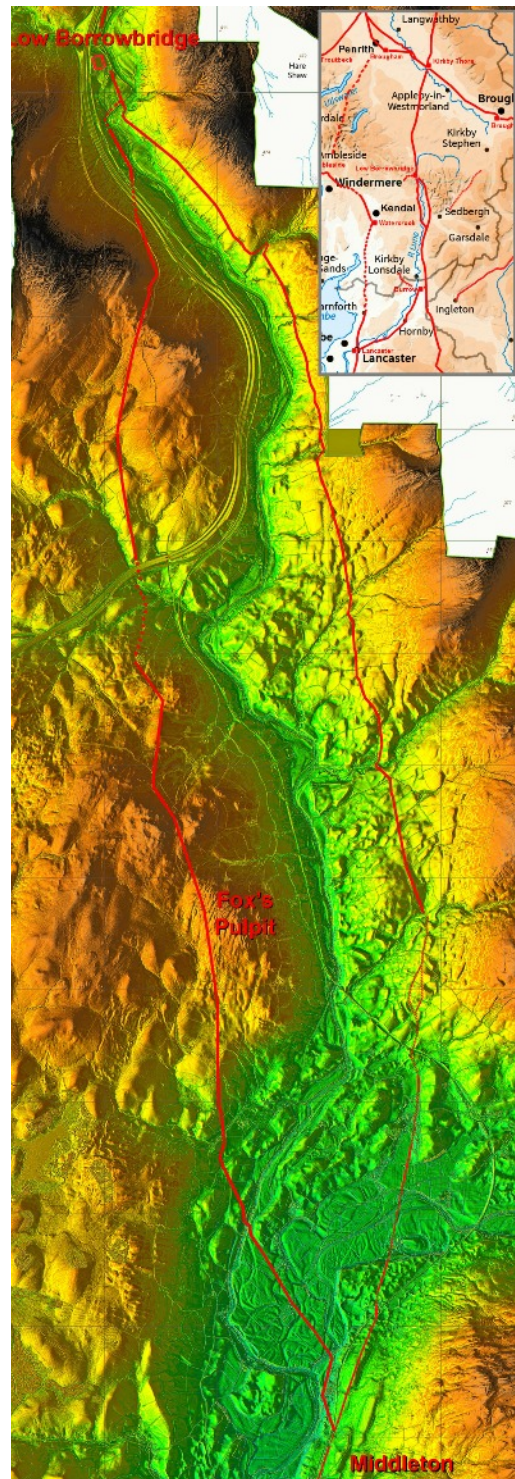
You just have to think how often we have upgraded roads or built bypasses in the last 70 years or so. The Romans were here for over 300 years so surely they too must have carried out upgrades and bypasses for their roads. It would now seem they did just that for their main north road up the Lune valley.

### The Discovery

A previously unknown duplicate Roman road has been discovered heading up the Lune valley but this time on the west bank. It runs from Middleton into the Lune Gorge and on to Low Borrowbridge fort.

Now a confession. I had spotted in lidar imagery several years ago an agger running south from the fort at Low Borrowbridge heading over Grayrigg. In my ignorance I had assumed it must be a road to Watercrock at Kendal. However, all my attempts to extend its course towards Watercrock had met with failure. Roll forward 3 years or so and I received an email from John Scott saying there looked to be an agger near Fox's Pulpit on Firbank. Firbank is on the Lune's west bank, roughly opposite Sedbergh.

He was correct – it was unambiguously a Roman road agger. Then the penny suddenly dropped – the road I had been following didn't go to



*Fig. 1 Opposite; The route of the newly discovered Roman road on the west bank of the River Lune. The well known east bank road is also shown. Inset: Location Plan*

*Continued on p.3*

## Cumbria, a second Roman road into the Lune Gorge, continued

*Continued from p.2*

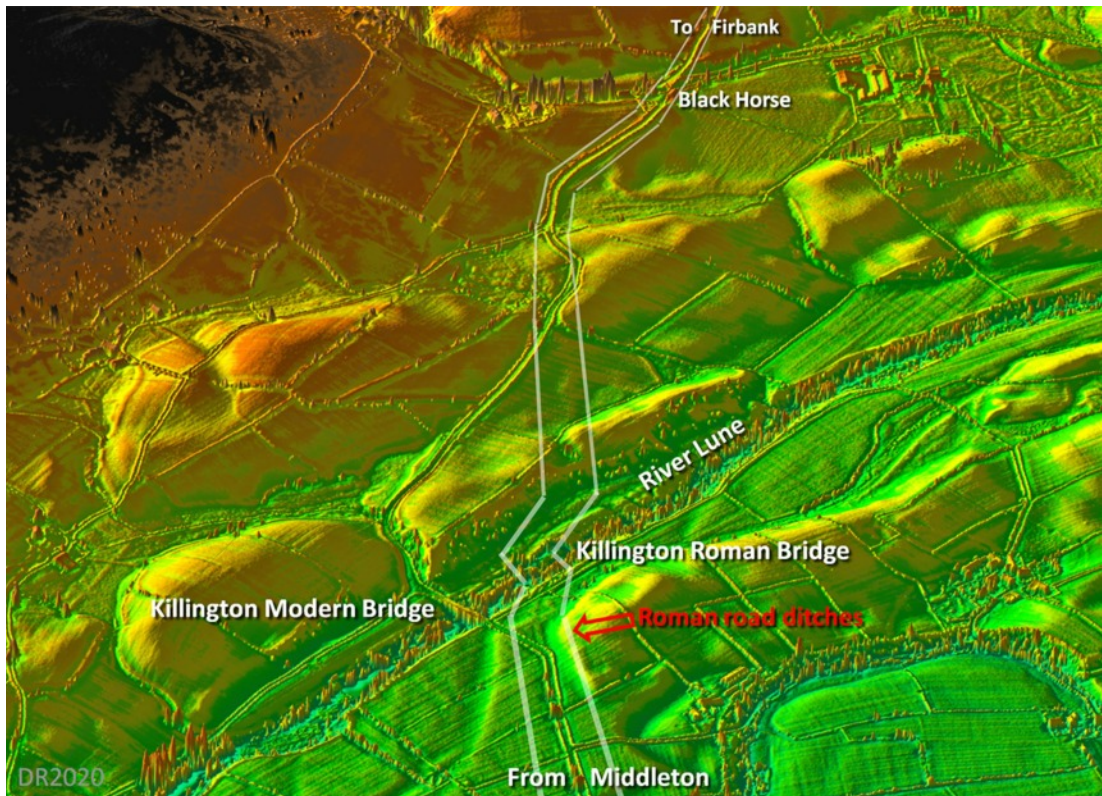


Fig.2 Oblique LiDAR image showing the route of the road at Killington. The Roman bridge over the Lune was 100 metres upstream of the current bridge

Watercrock at all. Instead, there was a Roman road along the west bank of the River Lune. Further studies of the lidar data extended the Firbank section north to my section at Grayrigg and also south to cross the Rivers Lune and Rawthey to where it would join the known road at Middleton.

### The Route described

This previously unknown road left the known road at Middleton and crossed the River Rawthey at Middleton Bridge (SD63009 89750) before crossing the River Lune, 100 metres north of Killington Bridge (SD62273 90903) – the modern bridge is on a turnpike era upgrade. This may seem strange having two bridges close together but the east route also had to cross both rivers, although

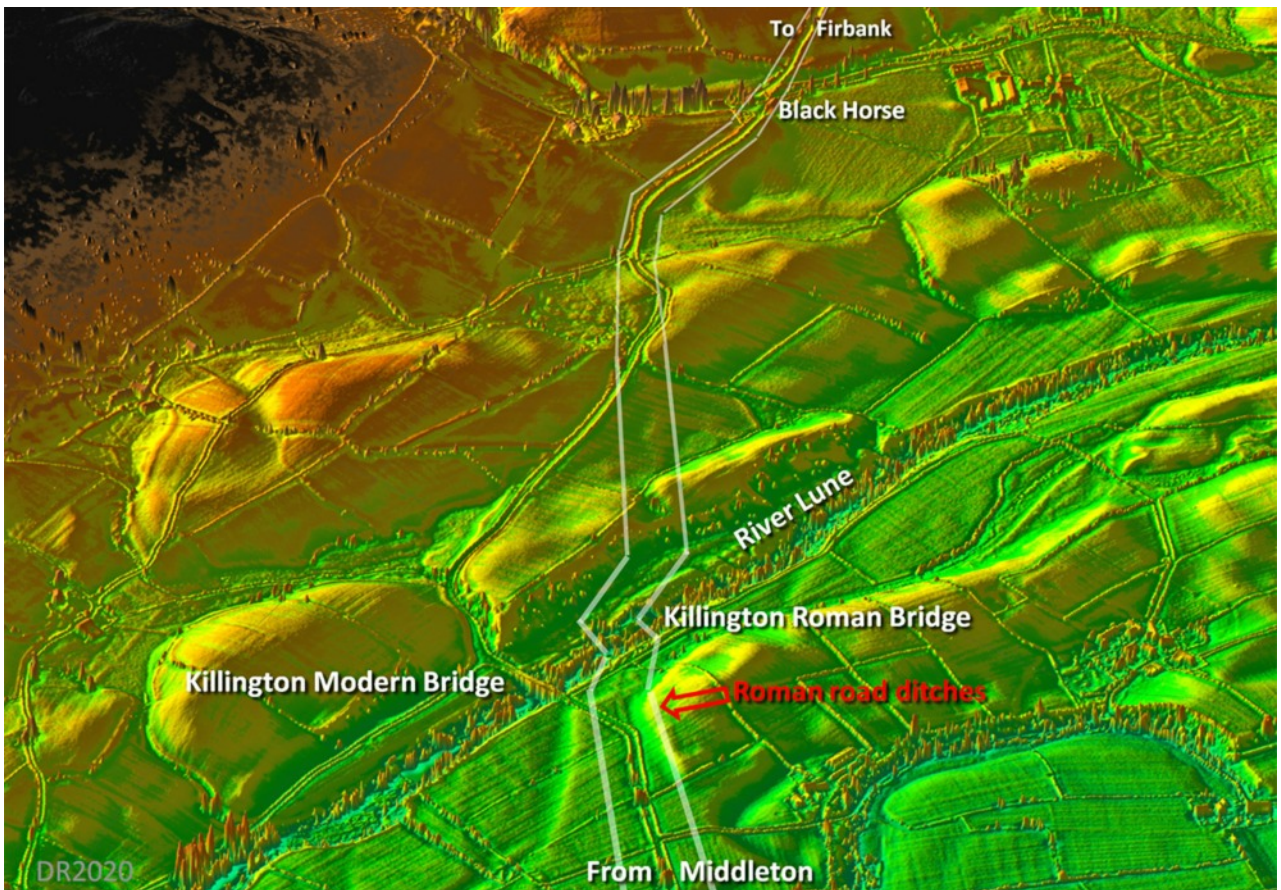
not in close proximity. Both bridge sites on the west bank route are located at rock outcrops so would provide solid foundations for the bridge builders.

After crossing the A684 at the former Black Horse pub, the road partially follows the minor road to Firbank. Initially it straight-lines the modern bends but approaching Fox's Pulpit is typically Roman – dead straight and on a prominent agger. Fox's Pulpit could be considered the birth place of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Here, on 13 June 1652, George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, preached to his followers. I had always wondered why Fox chose this spot - today it is in the middle of nowhere, on a road to nowhere. We now know it was alongside the main Roman road to the north. So it was actually a very sensible spot

*Continued on p.4*

## Cumbria, a second Roman road into the Lune Gorge, continued

*Continued from p.3*



*Fig. 3 Oblique LiDAR image with the route of the road passing Fox's Pulpit on Firbank. So far from being in the middle of nowhere, Fox's Pulpit was alongside a main Roman road.*

to which followers from north and south could travel to easily.

Just beyond Fox's Pulpit, the modern road swings off line and a particular fine stretch of agger is detectable on the ground (SD61827 93897). This is the section brought to my attention by John Scott. The route then passes High House (SD61280 95917) but is somewhat less certain for a short section passing to the west of Lowgill.

Certainty resumes again north of the motorway, where it then passes under Graining Field Farm (SD61205 97233). It continues on to the west of Dillicar Knott, Grayrigg and again there is fine surviving agger visible on the ground (SD61147

98175). This is no doubt the best surviving agger on this road. It measures 9 metres over the ditches so this was no minor supply road but a bone fide major Roman highway.

After climbing over Grayrigg, the road descends into the Lune Gorge and, although the route is partly destroyed by the motorway and railway, sufficient survives to confirm its course. The final length to the fort is down by the river (NY61240 00327), which it then follows closely to the fort.

### The Puzzle

Why two roads? The western route appears to branch off the east bank road, which would

*Continued on p.5*

## Cumbria, a second Roman road into the Lune Gorge, continued

*Continued from p.4*



*Fig. 4 It does look typically Roman, the road approaching Fox's Pulpit, Firbank. On the rock to the left is a plaque marking the spot where George Fox preached to his followers*

suggest it was the later. However, this west bank route is hillier and not just slightly but dramatically so. Admittedly it is a little bit shorter (0.5 miles) but it would have needed an important reason to build 8 miles of new road with two bridges. So can it be regarded as a later replacement of the east bank road? In its favour are the bridges. The west bank route bridges are where the rivers are constrained by rock and building bridges would be relatively easy. On the other hand, on the east bank route, the River Rawthey crossing, west of Sedbergh, is where the river is unconstrained. A study of the lidar imagery reveals an active river with numerous old abandoned channels and meanders. Realistically it is only suitable for a fording point.

So my guess is that it was the bridges that clinched it for the west bank route. The east bank route, with

almost certainly a ford, was later to be abandoned. After all, who wants to get their feet wet.

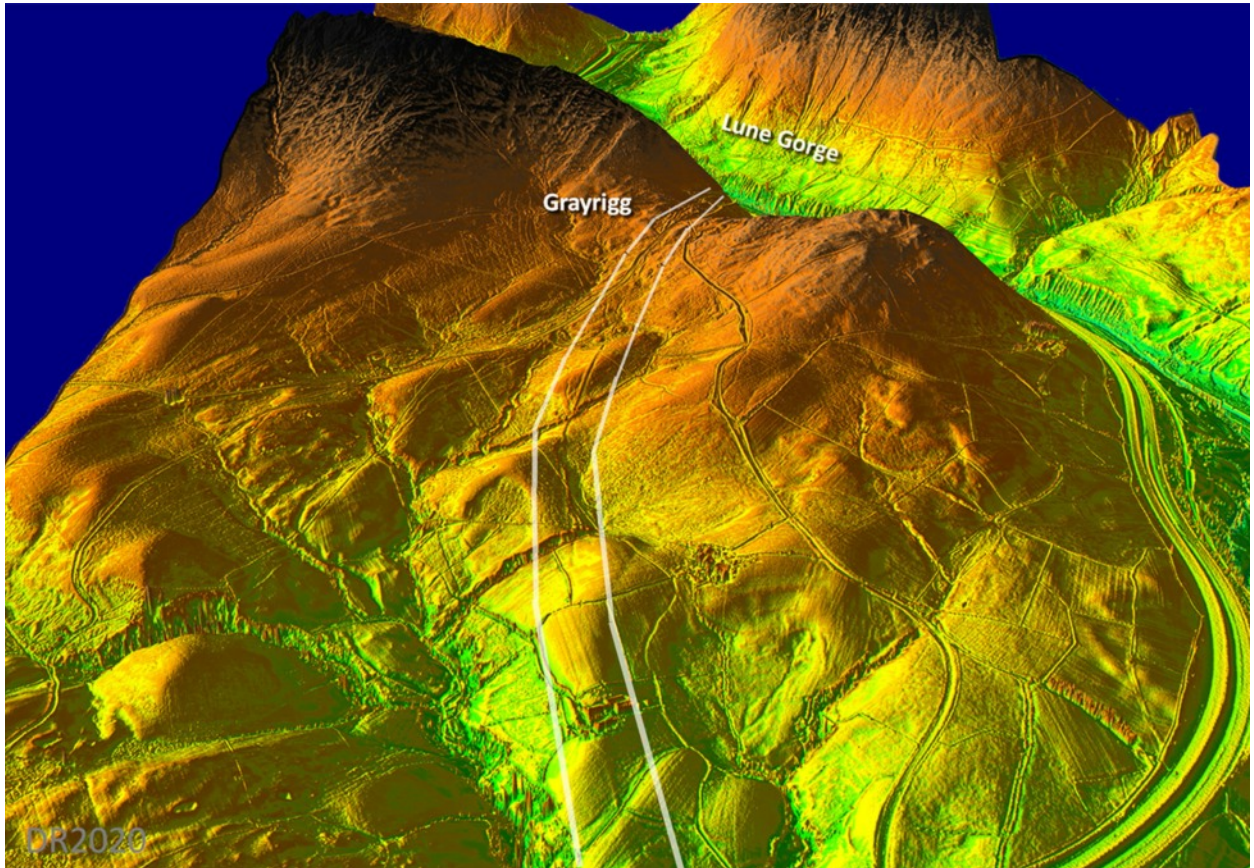
A lidar flyover video of the new route is available at: <https://youtu.be/KhbfPVwpw-c>

*David, in his younger years, was a bridge engineer. His claim to fame is that although the IRA blew up his bridge in city centre Manchester, they didn't bring it down!*

*Continued on p.6*

## Cumbria, a second Roman road into the Lune Gorge, continued

*Continued from p.5*



*Fig. 5 Oblique LiDAR image of the final climb over Grayrigg, before the road descends into the Lune Gorge*

### DIY lidar - the online sources

*From Dave Armstrong*

Johnny Scott's discovery as further developed by David above came initially from one of the lidar surveys pre-processed and available as an open source on line. We've highlighted these before but perhaps now after this discovery, and as you may have more 'free' time from self-isolation, this may be a good time to browse round these and see what you can find? As Johnny found - there are discoveries to be made.

I don't know why it's there but the best known source is on the [Houseprices site here](#). This has all the coverage of England and Wales utilising 1m DSM data. Some extra features are included; if you click on a spot you're interested in it not only highlights a useful 10 digit grid reference but it will also link into an equivalent area of the OS map

plus generate a 1Km grid square 3D image that can be rotated and slewed.

The Enfield Archaeology Society have an open data maps site [here](#) with full England and Wales coverage.

The Swaledale and Arkengarth Archaeology Group have made available 1m DSM and DTM images of the northern dales area [here](#) and Altogether Archaeology have extended this coverage right up to the Scottish border , available [here](#).

For those that do develop their own lidar data, there is some Scottish data now available that needs exploring, available [here](#).

# RRRA Projects, update

## The Roman road from Manchester to Melandra Castle

*From Neil Buckley & David Ratledge*

### Introduction

At last progress has been made in locating this long suspected but lost Roman road. Previous suggestions included one by Dr. Michael Nevell (reference: *Tameside before 1066*, 1996) who suggested a route running just north of Ashton Old Road on an alignment with Old Lane in Openshaw before heading south-east for Broomstair Bridge, Hyde. On the other hand, and only since the 1950s, OS maps have shown the 1818 turnpike Hyde New Road

(A57) to be a Roman road, also on an alignment with Broomstair Bridge. The RRRA web page for this road sits on the fence and gives both options. The reality has turned out to be totally different and both these options can now be safely discounted. What fooled just about everyone was that the road was not aligned on Melandra fort at all but on a route into the Longdendale Valley.



Fig. 1 Lidar Image and Opendata map. This was the breakthrough length of agger spotted on Lidar imagery at Matley. Matley Lane itself is rarely on the Roman line

### The route described

What changed everything was the spotting of the unmistakable signs of a Roman agger north of Matley Lane (SJ96900 967734) on Lidar imagery by one of the authors (Neil Buckley). We both then realised that projecting this agger alignment westward would see it pass over Hooley Hill (SJ92272 97112), then an old road that breaches

the Anglo Saxon Nico Ditch in Audenshaw (SJ91412 97206) and finally along Ashton Old Road (from SJ89861 97344). The latter is then a long straight road into Manchester where it would have probably joined the road from Castleshaw for the final length to the fort.

*Continued on p.8*

## The Roman road from Manchester to Melandra Castle, continued

*Continued from p.7*

Heading eastward from the Matley agger, further traces are visible in the Lidar imagery, which align with an old cutting across the hill side of Harrop Edge (SJ98302 96612). This strongly indicates the road was directed at the Longdendale Valley rather than the Melandra fort.

We therefore have a very direct route from Manchester to the Longdendale Valley, which passes Melandra fort one mile to its north. A road agger was recently discovered in the Longdendale valley and by Bottoms Reservoir, Tintwistle (SK02844 96718), LiDAR shows what appears to be a junction between the main road and almost certainly a link road to the fort. There would surely have been another link road for traffic to Manchester and the most likely course for this road follows the Coach Road between Mottram Old Hall and Nettle Hall. There is some Lidar evidence

supporting this course south of the A57 (SK00511 95577).

The first essential visit was to the agger north of

### Site Visits

Matley Lane, which crosses a field next to the Rising Moon Restaurant. Despite being unmistakable in the Lidar imagery, seeing the agger when stood on top of it proved very difficult. It was actually seen much better from offline. We probed the agger but indications were that if the road had survived then it must be buried at least 50cm down. In the next field to the east there was a swell in the ground where a fence line passed over the agger. Again the agger was better seen off line.



*Fig. 2 The Matley agger viewed along the road with Neil stood approximately on the line of the south ditch (left). The owner of the White House would appear to have unknowingly marked the line of the road with a tall mast. The agger was more obvious when viewed from the side (right).*

*Continued on p.9*

## The Roman road from Manchester to Melandra Castle, continued

*Continued from p.8*

We next went onto Dukinfield Golf Course where lidar suggested something might have survived. What we found was a complete surprise. On the road line there was an incline down to a stream crossing and in the other direction the rise of the agger plus its north ditch had survived for a short

length (SJ96709 96747). At the bottom of the incline, in the stream bed, were a collection of masonry blocks. Clearly the remains of an old bridge but how old was impossible to assess but just possibly Roman?



*Fig. 3 Amazing survivors on Dukinfield Golf Course. The north road ditch and swell of the agger (left) and an incline down to stream crossing (right).*

Harrop Edge was the next port of call to inspect the old cutting - the modern road (Matley Lane) is in a modern deeper cutting alongside. Despite typical Manchester weather, the alignment of the old cutting with the Matley agger, Hooley Hill, and the Manchester skyscrapers could be made out.

Looking the other way it was evident why the road surveyors had chosen this spot. It is by far the best route through a long ridge of high ground. It was all fitting together nicely.

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## The Roman road from Manchester to Melandra Castle, continued

Continued from p.9



Fig. 4 View back to Manchester from the old cutting on the side of Harrop Edge. This cutting is the best route through a ridge of high ground here. City centre skyscrapers can just about be made out.



Fig. 5 The full route from Manchester to the Melandra fort, near Glossop, and onwards into the Longdendale Valley

Inspection of these 3 sites was sufficient to convince us that what lidar was showing was indeed the lost Roman road.

### Conclusion

We were not the first to notice the alignment of Matley Lane with Ashton Old Road. It was suggested by Richardson (ref. *The Romans in the*

*Manchester Area*, 2004) as possibly indicating a Roman road. He was working mostly from place names and was approximately correct although not in detail. However, we now have the supporting evidence to confirm the route and locate it with reasonably high confidence. The only puzzle we now have is: where was its destination beyond the Longdendale Valley?

## RRRA Projects, update

### Sitomagus - Suffolk's lost Roman town

*From David Ratledge*

The lost Roman town of Sitomagus is listed in Antonine Itinerary IX and was clearly located somewhere in Suffolk. This Roman itinerary or road map, dated to either the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, gives its position as 32 miles from Venta Icenorum (Caistor St Edmund, south of Norwich) and 22 miles from Combretovium (Coddensham, North-west of Ipswich). Over the years there has been much speculation as to where it was located. Suggestions have included: Dunwich, Peasenhall, Yoxford, Saxmundham, Knodishall, Wenhaston, Thetford, Ixworth, East Green and several others. All have their advocates and it was likely one of them was going to be correct but which was it? What was missing was a comprehensive Roman road map for the area so distances could be calculated accurately. Without that then trying to locate Sitomagus would be highly speculative and all those options were still possible.

I have spent the last couple of years examining the Roman roads of East Anglia using Lidar. This has been helped enormously with the release of Series 2 Lidar data from the Environment Agency. Much of Suffolk now has excellent detailed coverage. For Suffolk, I started in the east of the county where four roads head that way without having a known destination. Perhaps this was a clue to where Sitomagus could be located. I filled in some of the gaps in these roads but could not solve the puzzle of where they were heading. I turned my attention elsewhere and traced the other Roman roads of Suffolk. It was when looking at the Peddars Way road north of Ixworth (near Bury St Edmunds) that I noticed a previously unrecorded Roman road branching off it at Bardwell. I was able to follow this to the Roman site of Scole (near Diss). What I had found was an unknown road linking Ixworth to Scole, the significance of which escaped me at the time.

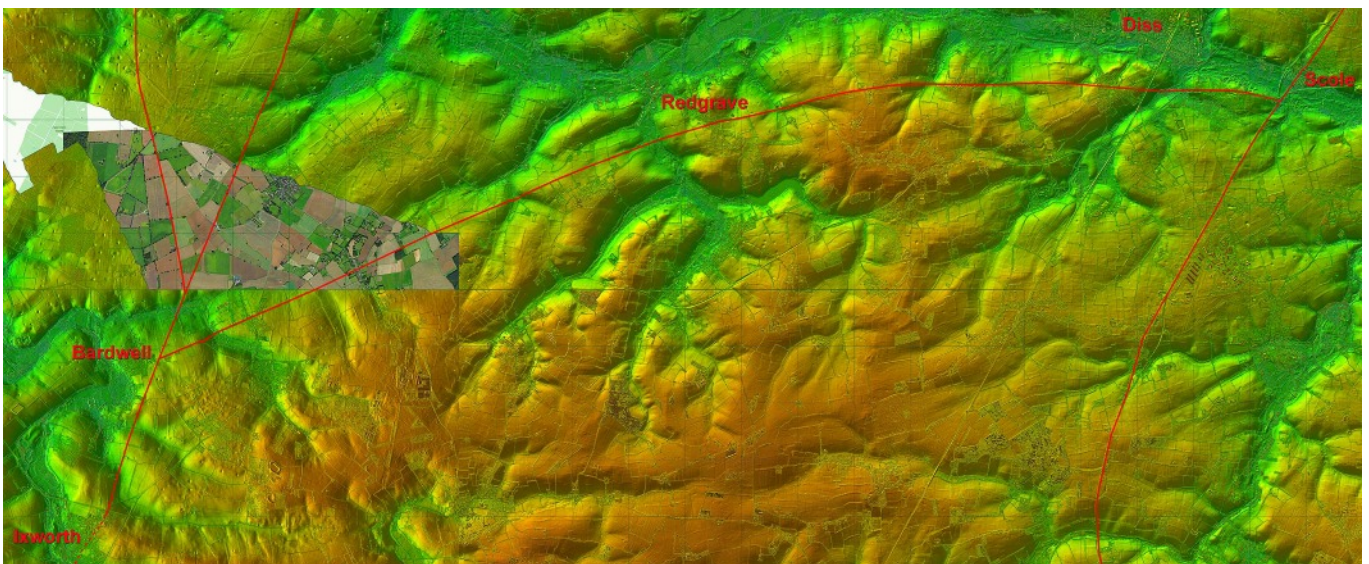


Fig. 1 A Lidar image showing the route of the newly discovered Roman road between Ixworth and Scole

*Continued on p.12*

## Sitomagus - Suffolk's lost Roman town, continued

*Continued from p.11*

I had also looked at a road south-south-east from Ixworth (Margary 330) which was known sporadically with many gaps. I was able to prove a through route to where it joined another Roman road at Bildeston. This latter east-west road connected Long Melford to Coddenham – remember that? It was Combretovium. The penny finally dropped. There was now another route from

Caistor to Coddenham via Ixworth and it was known precisely with no speculation needed. But what were the mileages? I couldn't believe the answer: Caistor to Ixworth = 32 miles and Ixworth to Coddenham = 22 miles. Ixworth fitted exactly with Iter IX – the distances are spot on.



Fig. 2 Roman Road map covering Caistor St Edmund to Colchester. The suggested route of Iter IX is highlighted in yellow

Ixworth sits at an important Roman road hub and evolved from an early Roman fort into a small settlement or town. There have been many Roman finds there including a water tower. The Roman settlement area is mostly south of the river and strictly speaking this is in Pakenham parish rather than Ixworth. However, there was also a villa north

of the river. This site fits the bill in significance of size and importance plus, of course, we now know that it matches exactly the distances listed in Iter IX. So we either have a massive coincidence or Ixworth is the lost town of Sitomagus.

## RRRA Projects, update

### Release of a pdf version of Margary's *Roman Roads in Britain*

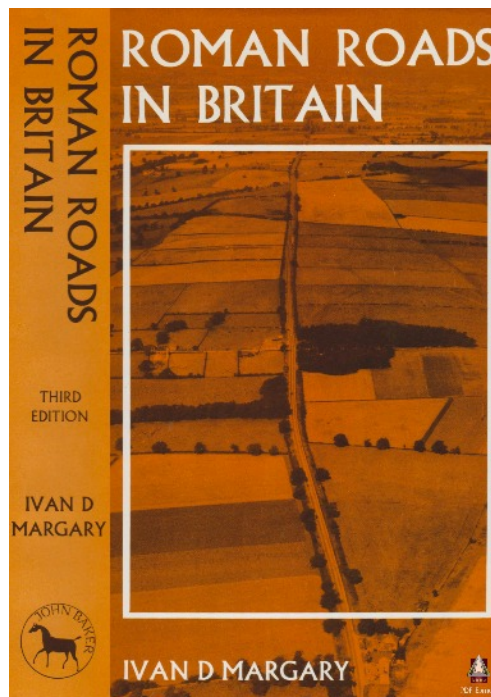
From Dave Armstrong

In the book section of the last edition I boldly stated that there wasn't a digital version of Ivan D Margary's book *Roman Roads in Britain* available. Ed Harkess wrote back to me saying he'd an OCR copy of the book. This is where the scanned letters and digits are recognised and put into a Word file for manipulation. Ed has kindly passed on his copy for RRRA to use.

We've made a pdf copy available for members on the [RRRA site here](#) using our usual generic access code and password. It has 569 pages so does take a few seconds to open up.

Sir Mortimer Wheeler was sagely quoted from the book review in *NATURE* on the original third edition books' dust sheet 'A worthwhile task has been worthily achieved. It will hold its place for long'. That proved to be very wise words about the book. This digital version is intended to continue that usefulness further through the digital age. This enhanced version is now available to members to aid their own research (click on the image of the front cover).

A digital document allows us to hyperlink together all the road numbers, maps and plates in the text, with a grey underlined bold font, to make navigation around the document quicker and more intuitive. Being a pdf this is also searchable so in addition to the links you can word search places, road names or numbers or an original page number if you know which one you need.



OCR, while generally reliable, does however, introduce some typographical errors – it doesn't consistently and accurately record the right character. Ed had sifted out many of these and I've also dug out more but there's probably still some in the document. I may not have captured all the hyperlink places or accurately linked them. Also the digitisation doesn't paginate the last line of each page smoothly onto the next page, the line can finish part way across before continuing on the next page. This is really hard to fix while maintaining the originals' page content so it has been left as it is. If you do find an error or dud/missing link let me know

and I'll update the master copy.

If you know the area you're interested in use the Contents listing near the front to hyperlink to the relevant section or if you know your road number there's a road number index on the final few pages that will take you straight to the road. The two large coloured maps (Maps 11 & 17) are zoomable to pick up the finer detail.

Thank you to Ed Harkess for undertaking the OCR, generously releasing this to all RRRA members and also Mike Haken for scanning and editing the plates and figures. This digital version will continue that usefulness recognised by Sir Mortimer Wheeler further through the digital age.



## RRRA Projects, update

### RRRA Gazetteer project - RR87, the Devil's Causeway

*From Dave Armstrong*

A group of members, Des Kelly, Lancelot Robson, Lynn Bridgett, Roger Miket and Damian Rudge lead by myself are investigating and analysing RR87 the Devils Causeway. This well known Roman road runs north from a branch off Dere Street RR8e just north of Hadrian's Wall to the north of Northumberland near Berwick upon Tweed. The course was well established by Henry MacLauchlan in his 1864 *Survey of the Eastern branch of the Watling Street from Bewclay near Portgate on the Roman Wall to Berwick upon Tweed together with a branch extending from High Rochester to Whittingham with enlarged plans of the adjacent camps*. This was undertaken for the enthusiastic antiquarian the Duke of Northumberland whose land the road traversed, no doubt helping MacLauchlan get access where he needed it!

This road was identified by Nick Hodgson at the November Arbeia Conference as being different to it's near neighbour Dere Street in that there's no obvious destination and despite traversing the length of the county there's only one known fort at Low Learchild along its length. However there have been a number of possible temporary camps recorded and these, near river crossings, could suggest where there may be unknown Roman forts or fortlets comparable to Dere Street.

This inspired us to try and find out more about this road and it's surroundings. The Northumberland section of the RRRA Gazetteer also needs this review. Contacting the local members created a keen team wanting to find out more and deploy the RRRA procedures to this road. In addition, like MacLauchlan's survey we're covering RR88 which links the Devils Causeway to Dere Street and also reviewing speculation by Ray Selkirk and Mike Bishop about other possible Roman roads in this part of Northumberland. This includes, for example; why the Longshaws fort is well away from the known Roman roads.

The project is underway following the RRRA processes. Current Coronavirus problems may be precluding getting out and about but the restriction don't stop us gathering the reference material

which is largely all on line or already in our own collections. To aid the sharing of reference information RRRA have generously funded some communal Cloud space using the BOX utility. The follow on stages are to analyse this evidence drawing in AP and lidar images to confirm the course of the road. We already know that MacLauchlan didn't get it quite right near Hartburn where his route goes over a severe precipice so there may be other corrections and details to discover and map. After that we need to review adjacent ancient features, AP and lidar evidence looking for possible Roman-type layouts. This could lead onto deploying the RRRA geophysics equipment and/or excavation.

It's still early days with the project and there is still scope for others to join, take part and contribute. As above, there's lots that can be done in self-isolation! Please get in touch if you'd like to be

### Key References

involved.

MacLauchlan, H, 1864, *Survey of the Eastern branch of the Watling Street from Bewclay near Portgate on the Roman Wall to Berwick upon Tweed together with a branch extending from High Rochester to Whittingham with enlarged plans of the adjacent camps*. Bradbury & Evans, London, Also available at [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=qelppwAACAJ&pg=PA61&source=gbs\\_selected\\_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=qelppwAACAJ&pg=PA61&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false). Accessed Dec 2019

Gates, T, & Hewitt, R, 2007, *Some newly Identified Roman Camps in Northumberland and their Relation to the Devils Causeway*, Archaeologia Aeliana, Series 5, Vol 36, P11-30. Also available at; <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/browse/details.xhtml?recordId=3213480&recordType=Journal> Accessed Dec 2019

OS data cards for RR87 & RR88, available on line from the [RRRA site](#)

*Continued on p.15*

**RRRA Gazetteer project - RR87, the Devil's Causeway, continued**

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ROMAN TEMPORARY CAMPS IN NORTHUMBERLAND

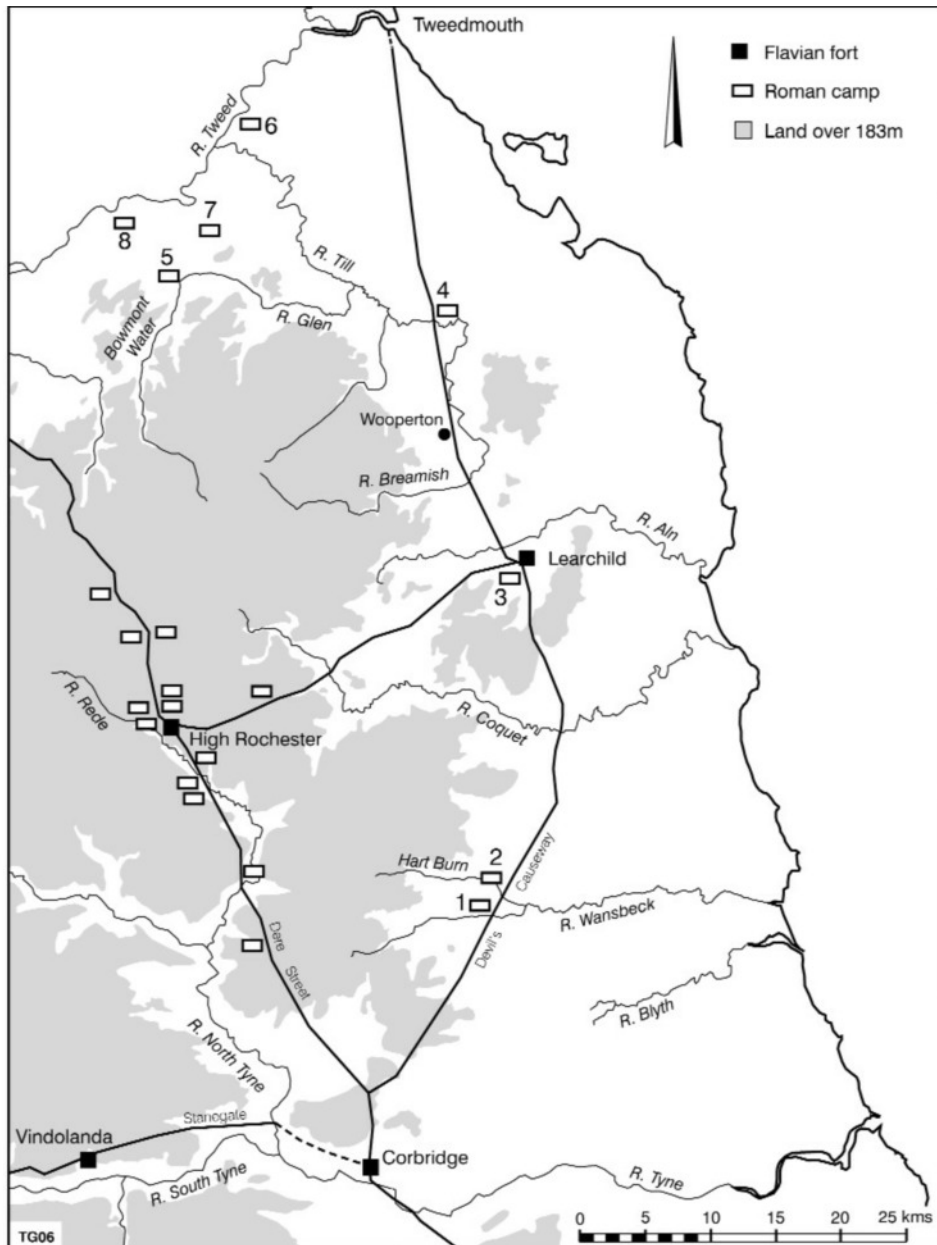


Fig. 1 Roman roads, temporary camps and Flavian forts in Northumberland  
 Reproduced from Gates & Hewitt, 2007, in *Archaeologia Aeliana Series 5, Volume 36*

## Other roads in the news; bits & pieces

### Road construction under Domitian

*From David Brear*

We learn much about Roman roads - the surveying, the design, the quarrying, the excavations, the organisation - but even so, we sometimes think - 'It would be nice if I could watch it happening. Why didn't someone write it all down?'

Someone did. In AD 96 the poet Publius Statius wrote one of his last paeans to the soon-to-be-ex emperor Domitian - *Silvae*, IV, 3 [available here](#).

As usual, he was not so much fulsome as overflowing in his praise of the emperor. Domitian had evidently been looking round for yet another public work to cement his popularity and settled on improving access to the bay of Naples and Campania from Rome. The road he built became

known as the Domitian Way and is still in use today. The existing Appian Way swung inland by Capua to avoid the marshes around Volturnum but Domitian's new road took the short cut around by the coast. It was a poke in the eye to his predecessor, Nero, who had begun but abandoned another project to link Puteoli with Rome – a canal, 150 miles in length, longer than the Suez canal. Where Nero had failed, the new dynasty would succeed - partly by utilising the canal works and partly by hacking through a hill at Cumae.

Built in AD 95, the road was a great improvement and evidently made a deep impression on Statius: *'I show admiration for the Via Domitiana, by means of which the annoying delays caused by the sandy*



*Via Domitia through the Arco Felice in Cumae (dedicated as Public Domain by Ruthven CCO 1.0)*

*Continued on p.17*



## Road construction under Domitian, continued

*Continued from p.16*

ground have been eliminated. Thanks to it, you will receive the letter I write to you from Naples in this volume more swiftly' as he said, introducing his latest volume of poems to his friend Marcellus. Indeed, the B-road which Domitian replaced was poor: *'Here the slow traveller gripped the swaying pole of his two-wheeled cart as malignant ground sucked at his wheels, here Latian folk feared their journey through the plain. No swift passage; glutinous ruts slowed tardy travel, while weary beasts crawled along, under the weight of their high yoke, and baulked at their over-heavy burdens.'*

But the wonderful Domitian had solved the problem: *'Yet now a task, that wore away a whole day, scarcely takes a couple of hours. No vessel, no outstretched wings of a bird, speeding under the stars, consumes less time.'*

It seems as if Statius watched it happen. *'What vast cacophony, of tough flints and solid steel, filled stony Appia, on the side that borders on the sea?'*

He was astonished at the noise, the activity, the organised work. *'The first labour was to mark out trenches, carve out the sides, and by deep excavation remove the earth inside. Then they filled the empty trenches with other matter, and prepared a base for the raised spine, so the soil was firm, lest an unstable floor make a shifting bed for the paving stones; then laid the road with close-set blocks all round, wedges densely interspersed. O what a host of hands work together! These fell trees and strip the mountains, those plane beams and smooth posts; some bind stones, consolidate the work, with baked clay and tufa mixed with dirt; others toil to drain waterlogged ditches, and divert the lesser streams elsewhere. ... Shores are roused, and swaying woods. The din travels the towns along the road, and vine-girt Mount Massicus returns faintly-heard echoes to Mount Gaurus. Peaceful Cumae, the Liternian marsh, the slow Savone, wonder at the sound.'*

The new work was a triumph, no less than the emperor's military conquests: *'Its gateway,*

*auspicious entrance, arched gleaming with the output of all Liguria's quarries and the warlike leader's trophies ... Come then, all you peoples of the East, who owe allegiance to Rome's Emperor, flow along in your unimpeded journey, arrive more swiftly, you Oriental laurels! Nothing obstructs your wish, no delays. Let whoever leaves Tivoli at daybreak sail the Lucrine lake in early evening.'*

It is, of course, hyperbole. Yet the writer is, surely, genuinely impressed - *'Such hands might carve Mount Athos.'* The vigour of Rome could not but be reflected in its achievements. The new road was a genuine improvement - it shortened the route to Rome, it improved access from Rome to Puteoli, which was an important harbour for African grain, and it made Domitian's villa at Baiae, and many others around the Bay, much more accessible. It did have other advantages: it demonstrated to Campanian aristocrats that Domitian could readily project force into their territory if necessary, which was not unwelcome, considering that Campania had a right of asylum and was a natural destination for those exiled from Rome. Part of road construction, the cutting-down of trees, was seen by Romans as a military activity, an act of domination, which emphasised Domitian's conquest - not just of Nature. When the senate was grumbling, the labour was not wasted.

Nowadays we can understand Statius' words as some indication of the effect on the local populace which building roads in Britain may have had. The huge numbers of workers employed - mostly slaves, no doubt - the organisation, the unaccustomed racket from the quarrying and wood-cutting, the mastery of the landscape and the permanence of the work no less than its long-term effects - the swift passage of troops and messengers, the regular patrols, the immediate importation of unfamiliar people and goods, the access to the new forts and towns - all this happened quite quickly and must have made a deep impression on witnesses. They would be forced to respect the man who could command such irresistible force - the Emperor.

*Continued on p.18*

## Road construction under Domitian, continued

*Continued from p.17*

However, Domitian's accomplishments, loudly trumpeted as his own, rather than, as Augustus had carefully preferred, the work of a team of emperor-and-senate, challenged the elite of Rome, always sensitive to such overwhelming authority. In the words of Suetonius: *'He erected so many and such huge vaulted passageways and arches in the various regions of the City, adorned with chariots and triumphal emblems, that on one of them someone wrote in Greek: "Enough already."* Indeed. By the end of 96 he was dead.

### Further reading

Ruurd R. Nauta, Harm-Jan Van Dam & Johannes J.L. Smolenaars, editors, 2006, *Flavian Poetry*, Johannes J. L. Smolenaars, *Ideology and politics along the Via Domitiana*,

Newlands, Carole E. 2009, *Statius' Silvae and the Poetics of Empire*, Cambridge University Press.

## Other road snippets

*From David Brear*

### Roman road found in Chesterfield

The [Derbyshire Times](#) have reported the discovery of a road surface in Chesterfield. This doesn't seem to have been picked up by any other agency so the details are a bit sketchy. It's not clear if this is RR18e, RR18ee or another unknown road

heading north east (?) From Chesterfield. Any more information by those nearby would be appreciated?

### Roman road found in York

An excavation by York Archaeological Trust near the Guidhall in York has uncovered a road surface. This has been dated by pottery and coinage to the Roman period and has three distinct surfaces showing it had been in use for some time. The

report in the [The Press](#), a local York paper, considered that while it was close to the projected river crossing, that the surface may not be a road but a yard or lane.



*Continued on p.4*

## Other roads in the news; bits & pieces

### Dere Street by bike

*From Dave Armstrong & Carlton Reid*

Those that have studied Dere Street (RR8e, f & g) will have read the account of Miss Jessie Mothersole; *Agricola's Road into Scotland*. This was a record of her journey following the road by bike and on foot. It was written in the 1920's and was illustrated with her own watercolours - a talent that she is still known for in art circles. While not an archaeological account it does often recount the visible state of the road at that time which is useful. It's also a very easy engaging book. Reading between the lines, she didn't forward book accommodation but when it stated getting dark started knocking on doors often soaking wet, looking to be put up, the local vicarage being the first target.

Fast forward almost 100 years; Roman and bike enthusiast Carlton Reid with his son Josh decided to undertake almost the same journey from Corbridge to Jedburgh on their bikes. This was achieved just before the country was locked down and is being written up by Carlton to make an article in [Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com). The images enclosed are some that have been taken by Carlton. While many miles of the route were covered on tarmac you can see that they have meticulously followed the alignment of the road cross country.

He says that the course was fairly obvious in most places and easy to follow. A great way to see Roman roads!



*Turning off from the A68, the agger can be seen in the rise of the dry stone wall behind the rider*

*Continued on p.20*

## Dere Street by bike, continued

*Continued from p.19*



*Determined to follow the route across country*



*Continued on p.21*

## Dere Street by bike, continued

*Continued from p.20*



*Following the route*



*Continued on p22*

## Dere Street by bike, continued

*Continued from p.21*



*Dere Street crossing the Otterburn Ranges, taken by drone*



*Two drone images of the famous High Rochester tomb*