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NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2020

FROM THE EDITOR

This edition is an extra added in-between the previous Summer edition and the Autumn edition to come. I hope you're enjoying the Channel 5 series Walking the Roman roads of Britain. While some seem to make a point of spotting the (frequent) mistakes and exaggerations, it's good that the subject is getting onto TV and the various interviews are quite interesting. I like watching it and I hope you do too.

Sadly I have to inform you of the death of John Peterson. John Poulter has prepared a few words within this edition reflecting on his work on centuriation.

By strange coincidence quite a bit of information has recently gravitated to me about Roman roads in Wales so I've collated these in this edition. I know there are a few members working in this area plus others just over the border who may be interested in what happens at the far end of roads they are following. I recommend you David Hopewell's YouTube lecture particularly for its details of road construction. We also have the second instalment of David Ratledge's study of East Anglia with more new revelations. Recently released lidar data has given more coverage as described in the last newsletter; in this edition we have some images of what can be seen of RR820 in County Durham, RRX38, two roads between Housesteads and The Stanegate RR85 in Northumberland and an extension of the two roads north of Netherby, previously identified by David Ratledge, into Scotland.

Finally, I suspect many of you know of member John Poulter and his work on long distance alignments. Not only has John been elected to be a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries but is celebrating his 80th birthday this month. Congratulations on both fronts, John!

I hope this finds you and your family well and that you are coping with the current emerging circumstances. Hopefully we'll soon all get back to something like normal - both in general and to follow our interest in Roman roads. Thank you to all who have contributed and made this extra edition possible.

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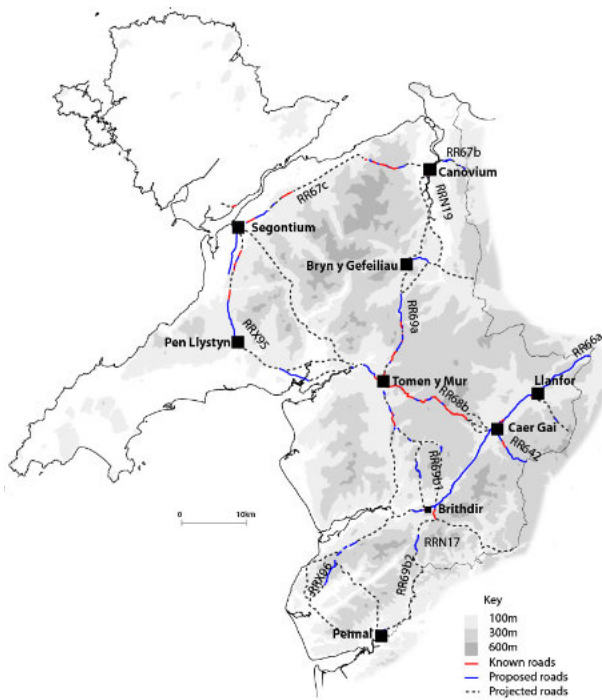
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RRRA Projects, update

Roman roads of Wales

Collated by Dave Armstrong

Thank you for all who have passed information to me to enable this collation. Considerable work went into identifying, studying and assessing Roman roads by the Welsh Archaeological Trusts as part of a coordinated project in the early 2000's and is publically accessible through Archwilio, the website that gives access to some of the core data, images and reports held by the four Welsh HER's. These have been comprehensive reviews, comparable to our own Gazetteer process and have identified a number of new road segments allowing recording of a range of data for each section of a given road based on its perceived form, nature and survival. This necessitated the creation of a numbering system where Margary numbers have not been allocated and concluding with a linear record in the HER to aid the Planning process as well as academic research.



Above; Map showing the Roman roads of Gwynedd. Right; Section across RR69a at Penammen buried in the upland peat bogs above Dolwyddelan with surface layers removed on the right-hand side showing slate slabs 'floating' the road surface.

First to highlight is from David Brear who spotted a series on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...) from David Hopewell of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust covering the roads of Gwynedd, north west Wales with other episodes covering the other Roman forts and installations in the area. This is first class coverage with detail and precision. In particular the section of road laid out on slate slabs as a means of 'floating' the road across a peat bog is very interesting. It shows the ingenuity of the builders recognising and solving a problem using materials that were readily to hand. I can recommend this series to all, it may not be in your area but covers lots of relevant Roman road material and is well worth watching. The final part links to David's book reporting on this work, also covered later in this newsletter. An interim report with part coverage of the work is also available on line [here](http://...).

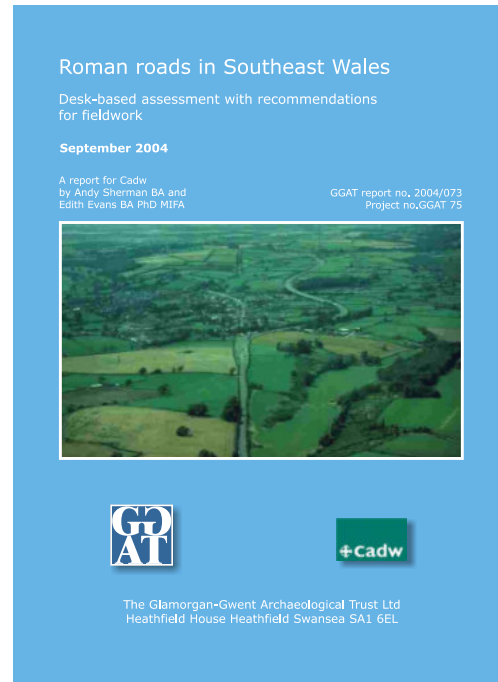
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Roman roads of Wales - continued

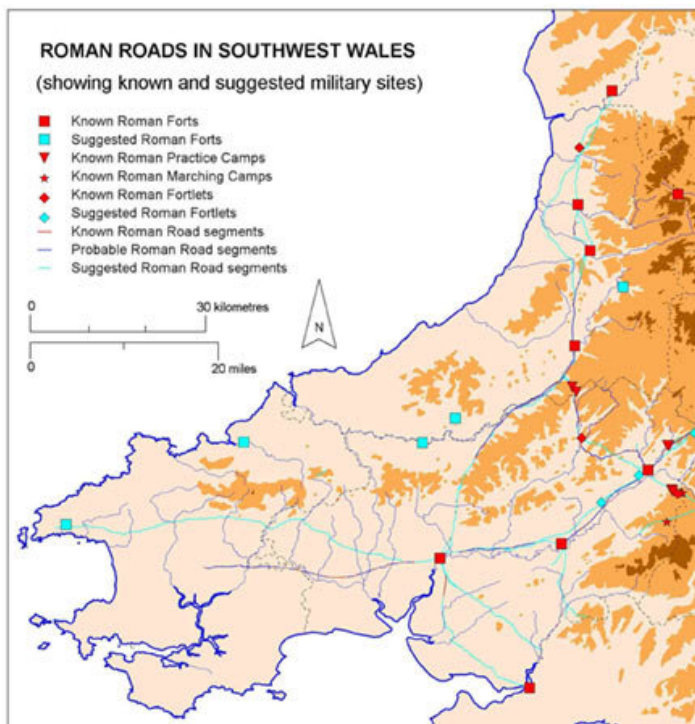
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Pyers Symon is working on the roads of mid Wales, particularly RRX643 to Caersŵs. He has forwarded an extract of Archwilio with interesting Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust files by Bob Silvester from the CPAT HER giving details of the roads in this area. Follow [this link](#) to see the details. While the reports are dated 2002 - 2004 the information within is still valid with many references that can be followed up. [Archwilio](#) along with [Coflein](#), the online catalogue of the RCAHMW provide an excellent resource for anyone interested in Welsh Archaeology, as does the brilliant [Canmore](#) for Scotland. Those of us in England have [Heritage Gateway](#) and what's left of [Pastscape](#)

A similar report *Roman roads of South East Wales* by Edith Evans and Andy Sherman of the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust is available [here](#). Again while dated 2004 the information and references are informative showing a lot of roads and seemingly isolated short segments, much more than illustrated by the Ordnance Survey. Where possible, information on the line has been presented in map form, and the maps for each road are accompanied by a short description. Appendices present details of roads for which there is insufficient information to permit mapping. This uses an alternative road numbering system with GGAT numbers for non-Margary numbered roads.



Dyfed, south west Wales is the fourth area covered by this project. Their work is laid out on their website, [here](#).



All this is collated into what is to date the most comprehensive map of the Roman roads of Wales in the book *Roman Frontiers in Wales and the Marches* by Barry Burnham and Jeffery Davies (with a section part written by our co-founder, the late Hugh Toller), also covered later in this newsletter.

More news comes from David Brear who spotted that lidar coverage of Wales is to be completed with [a new survey](#). Aerial mapping company Bluesky International has been awarded a contract by Natural Resources Wales, on behalf of Welsh Government, to capture a high resolution laser mapped aerial survey of the whole of Wales. Working alongside Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government, Bluesky will capture the data at a resolution of 2 points per metre before processing

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Roman roads of Wales - continued

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and delivering lidar data for more than 20,000 square kilometres of rural and urban landscapes. The Bluesky lidar data will be employed in a range of policy areas including flood modelling, forestry management, coastline monitoring, urban planning and archaeological conservation. The data will be made publicly available though we don't know when that will be.

Finally we have an open access Britannia paper *Roman Wales; Aerial Discoveries and New Observations from the Drought of 2018*, by Toby Driver, Barry Burnham and Jeffery Davies available from [Cambridge Core](#). Thanks to Alun Betty for letting us know about the open access. The paper describes the discovery by the Royal Commission for Ancient Monuments of Wales of two new marching camps, three auxiliary forts and a road alignment south of Carmarthen suggesting that there may have been a coastal fort at or near Kidwelly. This shows that despite all the extensive work in Wales described above there are still probably more roads and other features awaiting discovery.

See also the books describing Welsh Roman roads covered in the later pages of this newsletter.

RRRA Projects, update

Roman roads in East Anglia, a Lidar reappraisal - Part 2

By David Ratledge

Introduction

In the last issue we looked at the coastal roads and their ongoing conundrums in Suffolk and northern Essex. In this article we are literally on firmer ground and take a look at the five most important Roman road hubs in Suffolk. I will leave the interconnecting routes for another time.



Fig. 1, The Roman Road network of Suffolk compiled from Lidar imagery. The road numbers are those of Ivan Margary.

Coddenham

Sometimes referred to as Baylham House, this Roman settlement lies just to the north-west of modern day Ipswich. Its Roman name was Combretovium, based on Itinerary IX, and the site developed from early overlapping Roman Forts. It is believed the first fort was from the invasion period and the second after the Boudican revolt (60/61AD). The smaller fort perhaps seems to be the later based on available aerial photos although they are not overly clear. Normally forts did tend to be reduced in size over time but in this case the Boudican revolt might have necessitated a larger fort. Whichever was the case, the forts were very short lived and replaced with a settlement or small town as was generally the case away from the northern frontier.

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Roman roads in East Anglia, continued

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Combretovium means confluence - usually with regard to rivers but this cannot be the case here. It is likely that small boats would have been able to navigate up the Gipping from Ipswich and the River Orwell to this site. Perhaps its name refers to a confluence of roads and river? It certainly was an important road hub. Initially it would have been located on Margary 3c/d, which was possibly East Anglia's most important route as it linked Caistor St Edmund to Colchester and London. Caistor, Venta Icenorum, was the regional capital of the Icenii Tribe. In addition, 3 other Roman roads emanated from Coddendam, two to the east – those coastal destination puzzles – and one to the west to Long Melford and indirectly to Ixworth. The first 3 miles route of the Stratford St Andrew road are newly discovered thanks to Lidar.

Ixworth (Pakenham)

Like Coddendam, this site has two common names, Ixworth and Pakenham. Technically the original fort is south of the river and is in the parish of Pakenham. However, Pakenham, the village, is 1.5 miles away whereas Ixworth is immediately adjacent north of the river. Fortunately we now know its Roman name i.e. Sitomagus - the itinerary IX distances fit exactly using the newly discovered road to Scole. The Peutinger Table (map) probably also records Ixworth as Sinomagi.

The Suffolk HER records finds both north and south of the river (Black Bourn) so both parishes can claim Roman occupancy. To the east of the fort is the now drained Mickle Mere – again

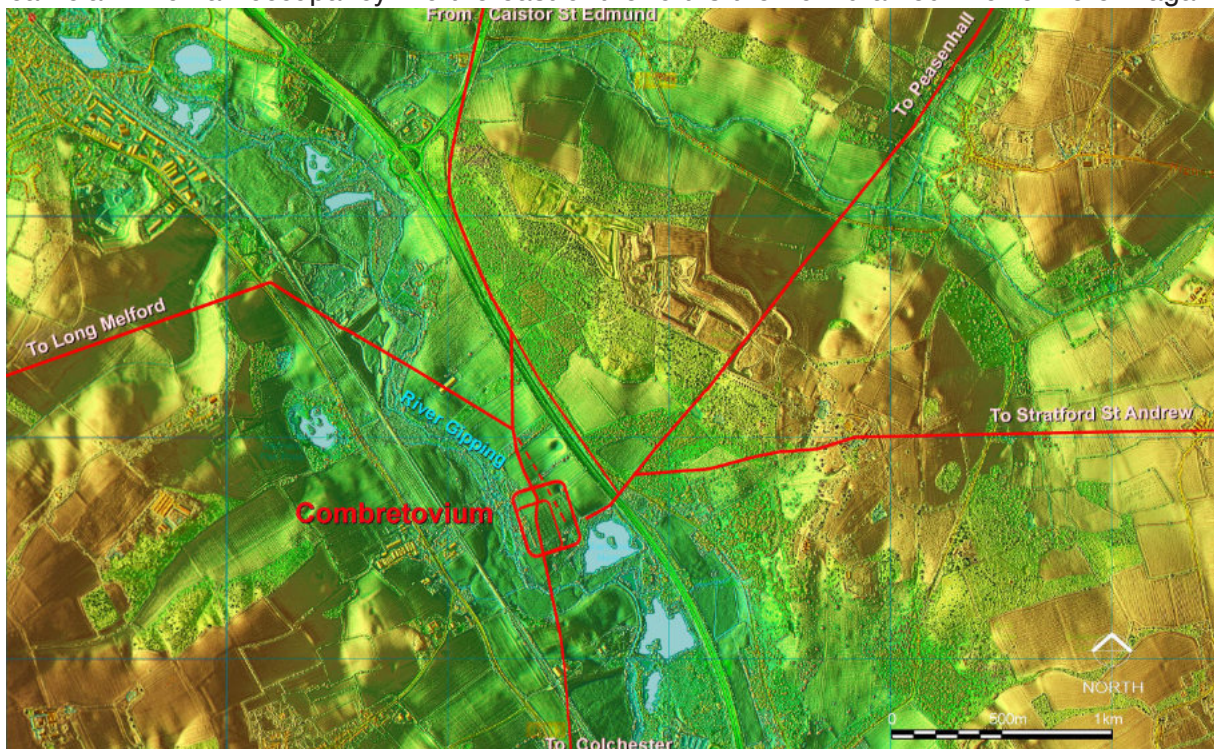


Fig. 2, Lidar plan. The Roman road network around Combretovium (Coddendam). The proximity to water would appear to have been important an important factor. Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All Rights reserved.

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Roman roads in East Anglia, continued

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proximity to water seems to be a common feature for Roman sites in East Anglia.

Most of what is known about the site is from aerial photography and rescue excavations before the construction of Ixworth Bypass in the 1980s. This inexplicably bulldozed straight through the fort (the site was Scheduled) destroying an impressive section of a wall comprising courses of flint and Roman tiles.

The fort was a very odd shape being rhomboidal (fig 4a). Quite why is a puzzle as the site is pretty flat with no difficult terrain to avoid. The next fort north along Peddars Way at Saham Toney was also misshapen. The Roman town evolved from that early fort and again this had a short life being replaced by the civilian settlement. Remains of a water tower is recorded. Suffolk HER (IXW004) also records a bath house, hypocaust and villa alongside Stow Lane on Ixworth's side of the river.

Regarding the roads, the only real puzzle is the beginning of the road to Icklingham. The main

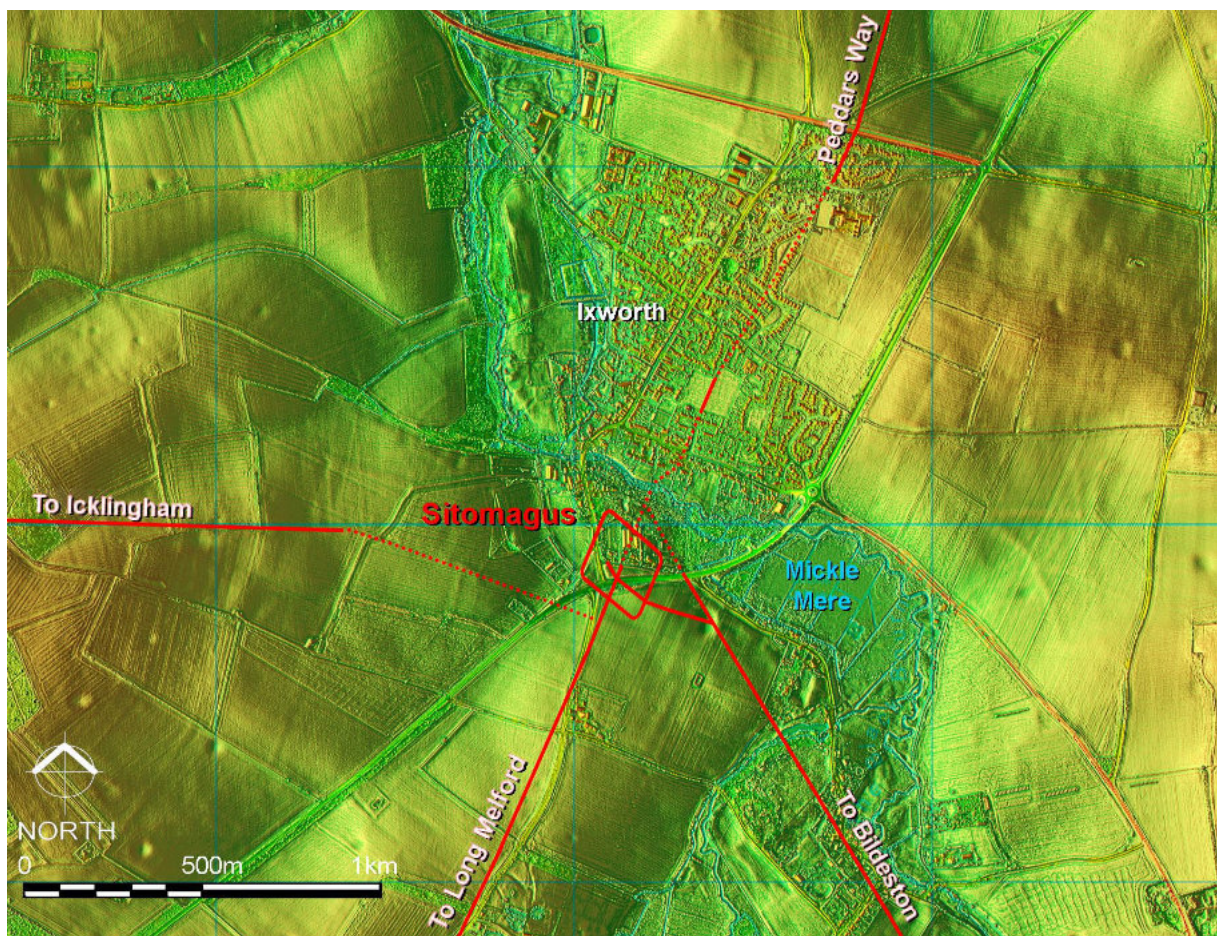


Fig. 3, Lidar plan. The Roman road network around Sitomagus (Ixworth). Mickle Mere has been drained but was probably open water in Roman times. Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All Rights reserved.

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Roman roads in East Anglia, continued

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Icklingham road alignment appears to have been set out on the fort's north west gate but adjacent to the fort there is no trace on that course. Where I have shown the link then there is



Fig. 4. a) The triple(?) ditches of the fort and the road to Long Melford show up well in this aerial photograph. The odd shape of the fort is also evident as is the bypass which destroyed much of it.

b) The road to Bildeston is very clear and its alignment appears to have been from the river bridge rather than the fort. Visible alongside the road are Roman enclosures.

Both images taken by Steve Wilson from a microlight

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Roman roads in East Anglia, continued

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a little bit of evidence but perhaps not totally convincing. The rest of the roads are more definite although for Peddars Way across Ixworth then it is an interpolated line. The road to Bildeston is noted for several roadside enclosures (fig. 4b) and was the route of itinerary IX.

Wixoe

Wixoe Roman town is located on the east side of the River Stour just in Suffolk. Thanks to a pipeline being laid across the Wixoe site we have an excellent site map for part of this small town (ref: Excavations at Wixoe Roman Town, Rob Atkins, Oxford Archaeology, 2012). At least one high status building was recorded next to the river together with the internal road system. Part of the ditch surrounding the town was also located. All these features tie in with what is visible in the Lidar imagery. Today the bridge over the River Stour here is a local beauty spot.

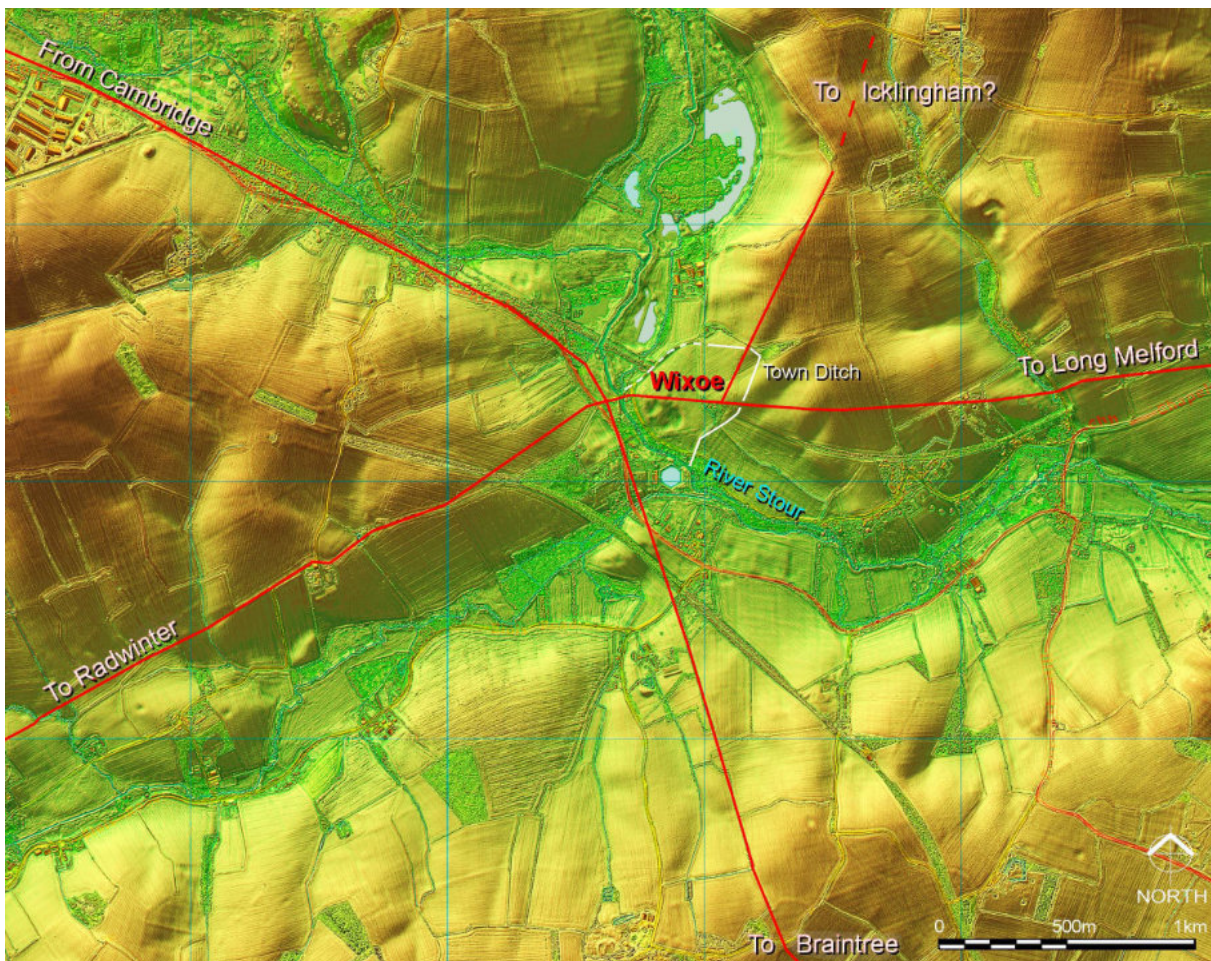


Fig. 5, Lidar plan. The Roman road network around Wixoe. The road south to Braintree is a brand new discovery. A road to Radwinter was suspected from aerial photography and Lidar has now confirmed its existence and mapped the route. Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All Rights reserved.

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Roman roads in East Anglia, continued

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At least four, possibly five, Roman roads meet at Wixoe. The east road in from Long Melford was previously not established but one of the internal Wixoe town roads points to the east and Lidar is able to extend this line for around 5 kilometres to Clare. East of Clare it is most likely overlaid by the modern road to Long Melford. So I think it can be regarded as fact now. The road to the south is a newly discovered one and heads for Braintree (Essex). The westerly road leads to Radwinter, a road previously suspected but now confirmed and fully traced. The north-west road has Cambridge as its destination. A possible fifth road heading north was suggested by Atkins but he plots it somewhat narrower than the east road on his town plan. Since Lidar can only extend it for a very short distance then this is perhaps best regarded as just a local road.

Icklingham

Icklingham appears to have been an important Roman settlement alongside the River Lark on the west side of the Icknield Way. The river Lark is believed to have been navigable in Roman times and its lower reaches (west of Mildenhall) have been canalised and, on the basis of finds, almost certainly by the Romans. An Anglo-Saxon settlement was later to be located at Icklingham but this time to the east of the Icknield Way.



Fig. 6, Lidar plan. The Roman road network around Icklingham. Quite an important (religious) settlement fronting the River Lark, which was most likely navigable out to the Wash. The settlement extent is based on that in the Suffolk HER. Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All Rights reserved.

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Roman roads in East Anglia, continued

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Icklingham Roman settlement is probably most famous for its Christian artifacts, church and graveyard, where 3 lead vessels/tanks were found. One was probably a baptismal font and had the Christian Chi-rho symbol. This is now in the British Museum. Stone coffins, a lead coffin and evidence of wooden coffins plus the remains of buildings were also found dating an occupational period from the 2nd to 4th century. Icklingham was therefore a high status religious site (even suggested as an early minster) and was most likely Camborico of Antonine Itinerary V. The distances don't match exactly but it seems too important a place to have been omitted from the itineraries plus the alternative suggested sites have even worse matches to the itinerary mileages.

The Icknield Way is not shown on the OS Historical Map of Roman Britain but Icklingham's location on its west side would surely indicate that it was in use in the Roman period. The alignment north of the site is typically straight as if the Romans had upgraded at least part of this ancient route. The road heading East to Ixworth appears to have had two courses just east of Icklingham, at least according to my interpretation of the lidar evidence. The road to the west, passing through the Roman settlement and then through Mildenhall may have had the canalised River Lark (possibly Roman in date) and the Wash as its destination.

Long Melford



Fig. 7, Lidar plan. The Roman road network around Long Melford. The shape of the Roman settlement (derived from the Suffolk HER) along the Roman road to the south indicates it must have been the most important thoroughfare. However, attempts to complete the route to Braintree have so far been unsuccessful. Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All Rights reserved.

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Roman roads in East Anglia, continued

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The Roman settlement at the aptly named Long Melford stretched for 1 mile alongside the road to the south. By Suffolk standards quite a large settlement but there is no Roman name known for it. In the last few years Long Melford has been subject to rescue excavations by the Colchester Archaeological Trust under the supervision of Adam Wightman. Roman pottery included common domestic forms such as mortaria, amphoras, storage jars and some Colchester wares. Roman building materials were also found including common roof tiles, bricks, flat brick/tile fragments, three fragments of box flue tile from a hypocaust and two Roman iron nails. Dating of the features was to the 1st and 2nd-3rd centuries.

The Roman road into Long Melford from the east was from Coddensham and probably entered Long Melford along Bull Lane next to the Bull Inn. However, the main Roman road through Long Melford was undoubtedly Margary 33a/b, overlaid today by Hall Street (B1064). North to Ixworth the route is certain but south to Braintree(?) then beyond Rodbridge its course is lost and lidar has so far failed to pin it down. There are lots of possible clues but deciding which are the valid ones is proving difficult. To the west we can now be reasonably certain of a route to Wixoe (see above). Margary recorded another road heading south-east (322) but I could find nothing in the lidar imagery that supported this. He did admit much of this route was conjectural.

Conclusion

One fact common to all these sites, and it can hardly be a coincidence, is their location next to water. Many, if not most Roman settlements in East Anglia, are alongside rivers and meres. In the next issue I hope to cover some of the roads connecting these sites together.

To be continued.....

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RRRA Projects, update

New lidar data: new Roman roads

By Dave Armstrong

You will recall that the release of 2019 English lidar data was covered in the Summer newsletter. This has filled many previous blind spots in the data coverage giving potential to trace gaps in previously known roads and perhaps find new ones. This is what I've discovered.

RR820 Bowes to Dere Street

A couple of gaps have been filled for road RR820, Bowes to Dere Street south of Binchester in County Durham. As you can see there is a surprise too at the Bowes end, Fig. 1. Previously it was thought that the Roman road was under the modern A67, this being so leaving Barnard

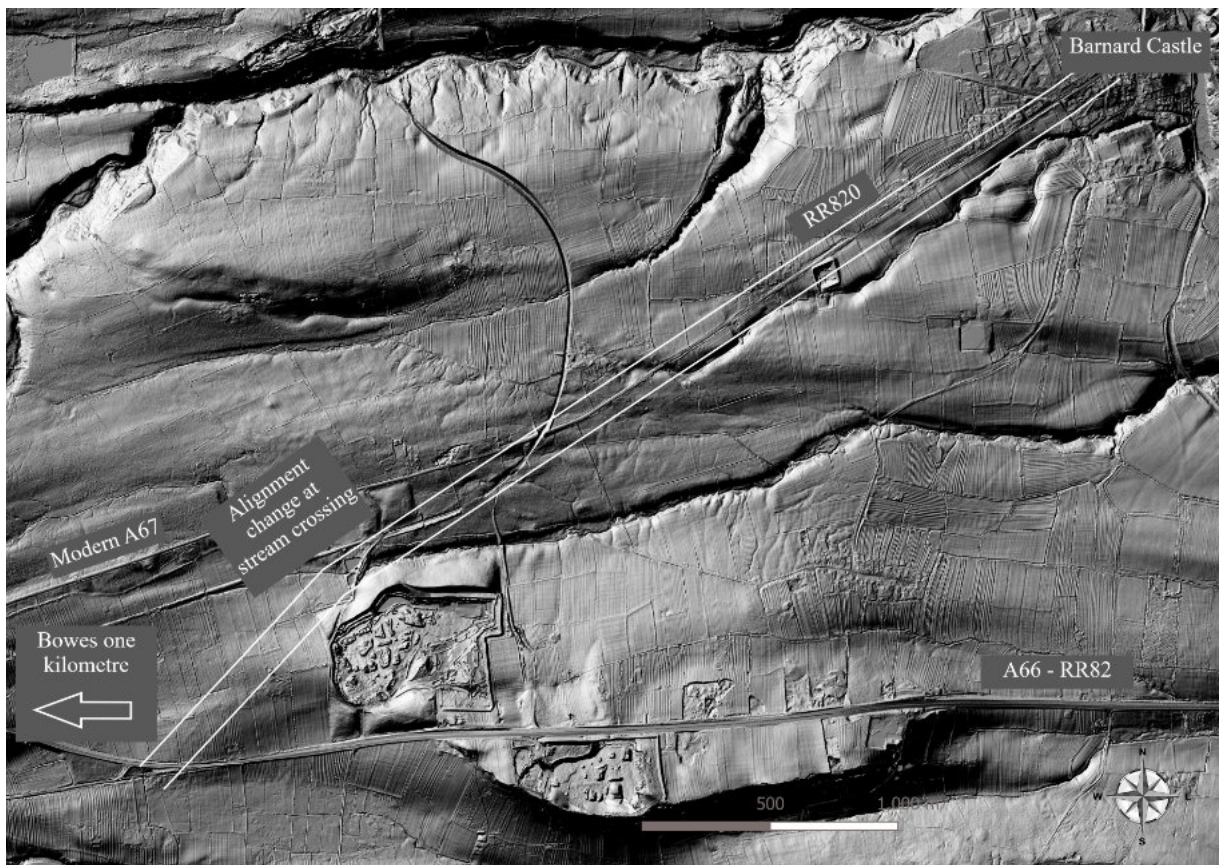


Fig. 1, Roman road RR820 between Barnard castle and Bowes, the new data reveals the true course of the road terminating with RR82 a kilometre east of the Roman fort at Bowes. Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All Rights reserved.

Castle towards the south west. However, the A67 takes a turn towards the west along its course just at the hump backed bridge over the redundant railway line and with the remaining couple of miles being very straight the previous assumption was that it overlay the Roman road. A sharp turn at the Bowes end didn't quite look normal layout practice and searches for the Roman road continuing straight on towards the Roman fort drew a blank. The new lidar data tells a different story. Where the modern road turns, the agger of the Roman road can be seen carrying straight on until a slight turn to the south is made crossing a minor stream. It can be seen continuing on to join the modern A66 that overlies RR82. This does leave a residual

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New lidar data: new Roman roads, continued

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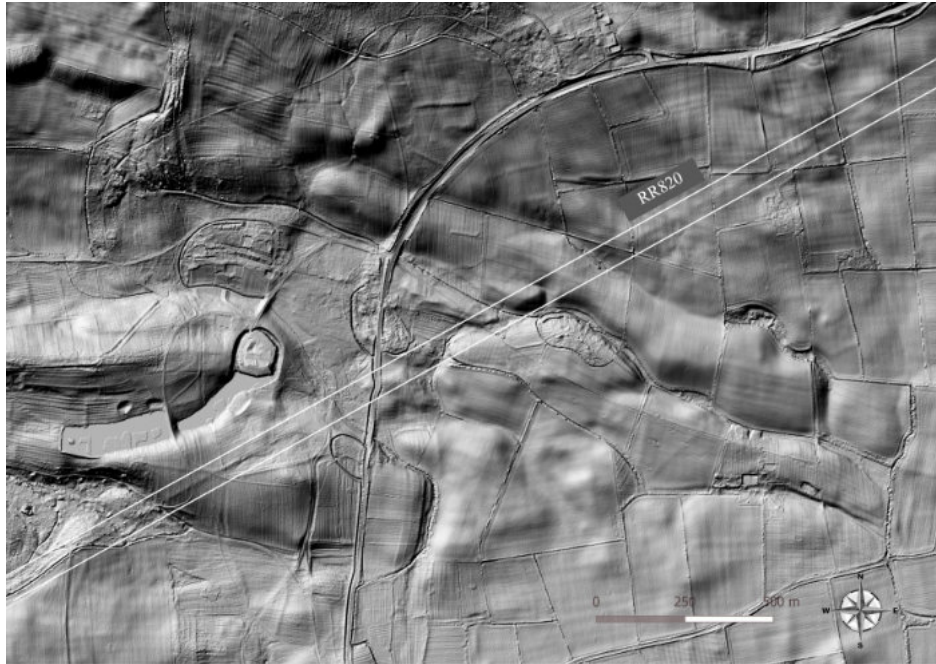


Fig. 2, RR820 very visible across south west County Durham. Medieval Raby Castle in the middle left hand side. Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All Rights reserved.

conundrum as this junction is about one kilometre east of the known Roman Fort. However other work by Gary Whitaker extending the known route of RR732(x) northwards from

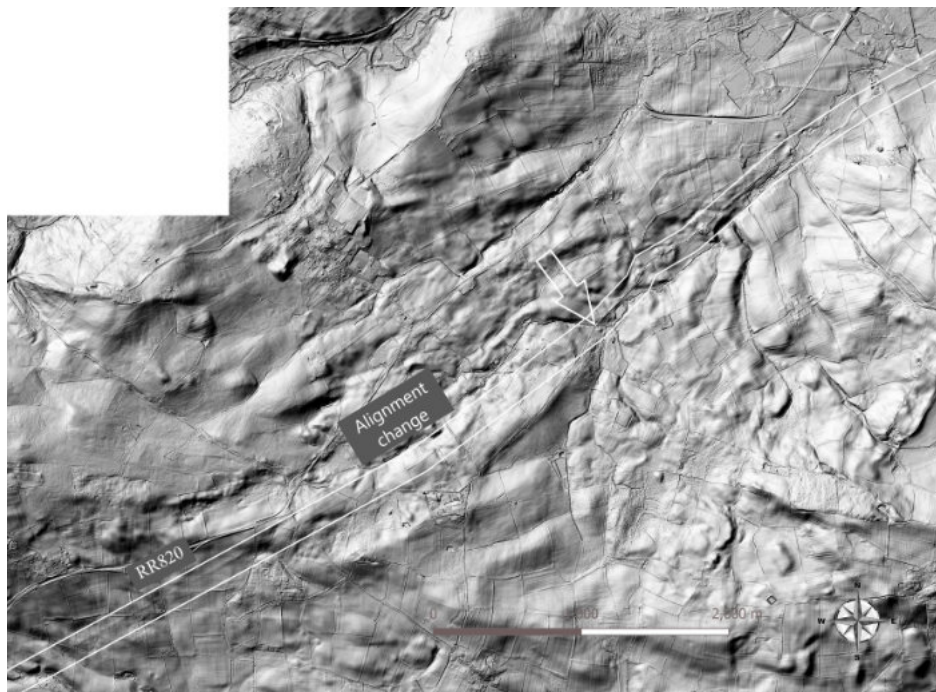


Fig. 3, RR820 junction with Hummerbeck Lane and the sinuous on-wards route. Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All Rights reserved.

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New lidar data: new Roman roads, continued

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Bainbridge suggests that it may be heading towards Bowes with a lidar indication of a road approaching the same area east of the known Roman fort but on the south side of the river.

Further information has been obtained of the route of RR820 across south west County Durham from the extended lidar coverage, Fig. 2. While the direction of the road is well established mostly based on excavations in the 1930's by RP Wright and observations by antiquarians, the actual course on the ground is less clear at the north eastern end approaching Dere Street where it was thought to converge with the green Hummerbeck Lane and then onto Burnhouse Lane. The new lidar data does strongly show the course of the road across south west County Durham, pretty close to where previously thought but now we can be certain that it does converge with Hummerbeck Lane at the stream crossing at NZ 1748 2426, Fig. 3 arrowed. After the long straight alignments from Barnard Castle the route along Hummerbeck Land and Burnhouse Lane appears quite sinuous and indirect and it is not obvious why the long alignment took a slight alignment change to the north not being continued on the higher and presumably firmer ground. Perhaps the straight alignments were targeting a meet up with a pre-existing route on these lanes? The lidar images show the road very plainly across a range of agricultural land, if only all Roman roads revealed themselves so clearly!

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RRX38, Housesteads to The Stanegate RR85

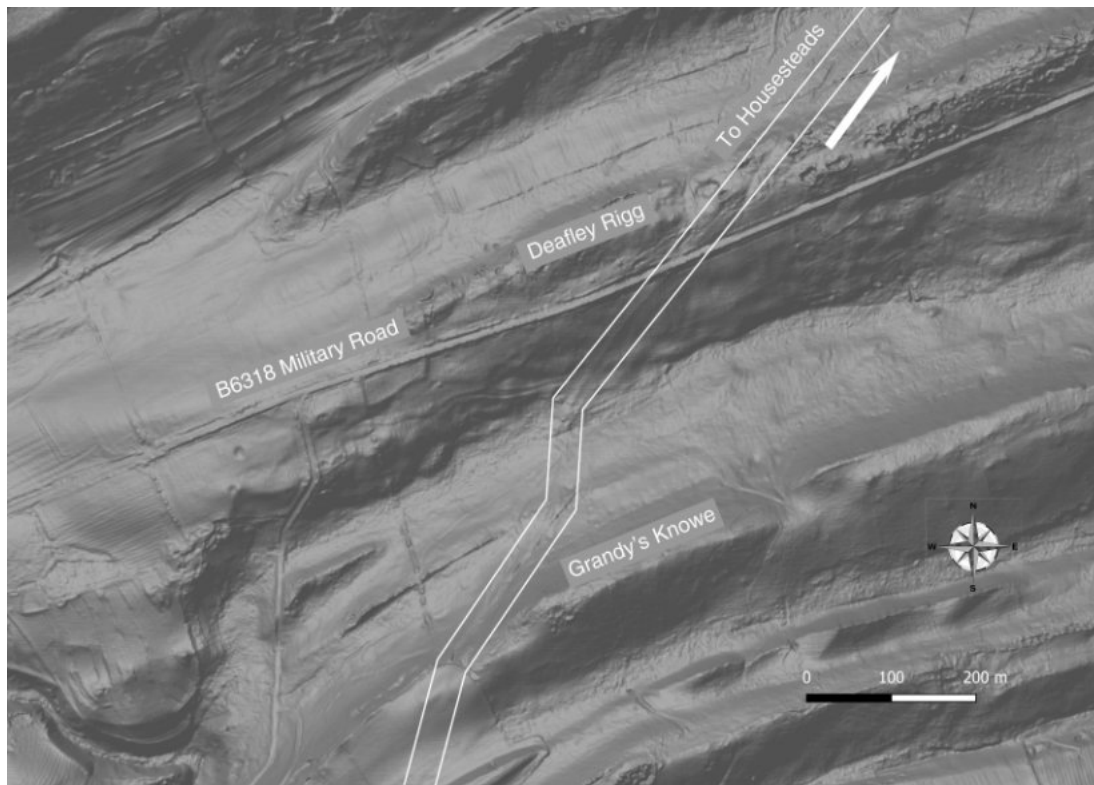


Fig. 4, lidar image showing the course of the link road RRX38 between Housesteads and Vindolanda. Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All Rights reserved.

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New lidar data: new Roman roads, continued

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Another road revealed by the new data is RRX38 connecting Housesteads, one of the forts on Hadrian's Wall to Vindolanda three miles to the south west on Roman road RR85 The Stanegate Fig. 4. As you can infer from the RRX number this route was suspected by the Ordnance Survey but without sufficient confidence for Margary to include it in the 1973 edition of his *The Roman Roads in Britain*, nor consequentially have an allocated Margary number. MacLauchlan had failed to find any linkage between these two forts in his 1858 survey of Hadrian's Wall. Tangible existence of the route was first mooted by Birley (1961, 146) who noticed that the Housesteads vicus street plan had one building outside the south gate with a bevelled corner reflecting the significance of the street/road heading in a south western direction. Following this line, it is then overlain by the modern farm road that zig zags through the crest of a small ridge where the Roman road can be seen both on the ground and on lidar to leave the farm road, continuing on and then resuming the previous general south westerly direction with a terraceway over the next crest at Deafley Rigg. On the south of the B6318



Fig. 5, View of road RRX38 climbing the north side of Grandy's Knowe, visible as a rushy terrace. Image from the top of Grandy's Knowe looking north west.

Military Road lidar shows that the road continues the same alignment down the slope before turning southwards in the foot of the valley to connect to the bottom of a rushy terraced incline up the north side of Grandy's Knowe, Fig. 5. There are some slight lidar indications that the road took another turn to the south on reaching the crest but then the indications run out. Extending the general direction the longer alignments have taken towards Vindolanda, following the grain of the very ridged broken ground here and projecting forward to a junction with The Stanegate; a supposition of the likely route can be made. This probably makes a junction with The Stanegate where the later road makes a turn to the east and the layout here may reflect that junction but the ground is very difficult to interpret with embankments and

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New lidar data: new Roman roads, continued

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cuttings from a number of industrial wagon ways. While only about 2/3 of the route has been traced with reasonable certainty, the lidar images of short straight segments of road give confidence in the existence of the route as a Roman road joining the two forts that are known to have been concurrently operational.

The OS data file for RRX38 actually contains information relating to two roads, both from Housesteads towards the Stanegate. One towards Vindolanda as above but also a second route in an easterly direction. This has been equally as elusive and only with the assistance of lidar does it become apparent. MacLauchlan (1858, Sheet 3) did trace and map a route which lidar has now largely confirmed particularly so at the eastern end where the junction with The Stanegate is made at Grindon Hill Farm, approximately 70m west of the modern roads' crossroad, Fig. 6. With no continuation on the south side of the modern road, this gives corroborating evidence that The Stanegate is under the modern road surface. From the junction an agger can be seen heading north west which turns to the west on a straight

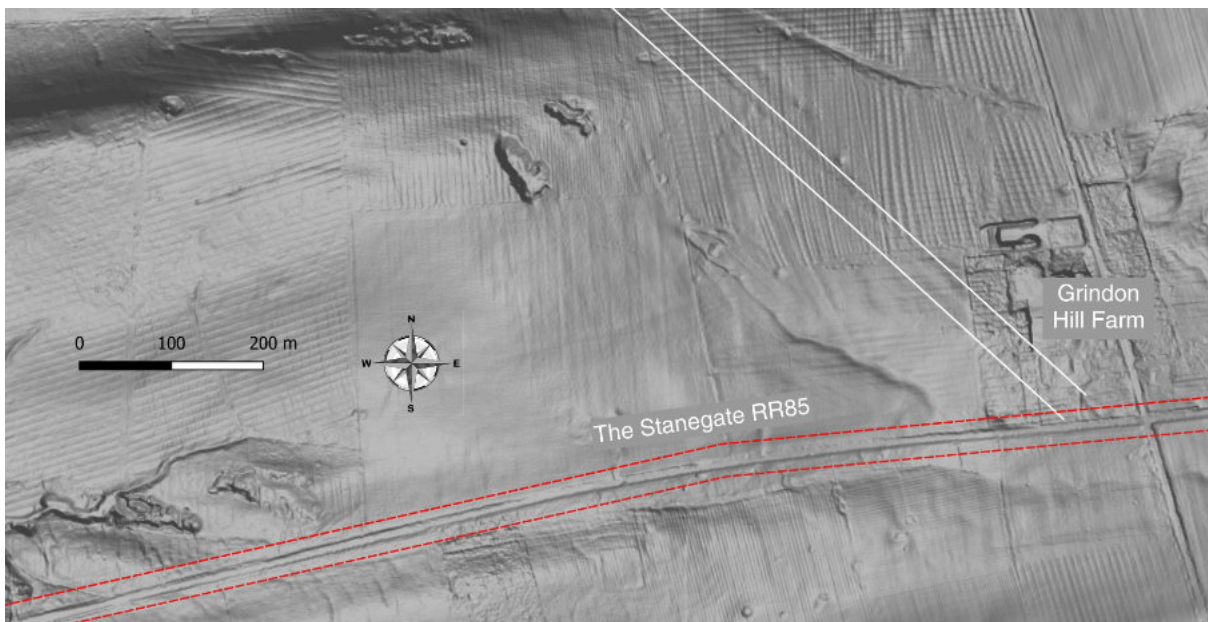


Fig. 6, Lidar image showing RRX 38 making a junction with The Stanegate at Grindon Hill Farm Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All Rights reserved.

alignment running across the north of Lady Shield Wood and Grindon Mill Hills passing through New Beggarbog at the B6318 Military Road. MacLauchlan did map a route from here following the footpath approach to Housesteads then up the steep vicus street to the south gate but this sinuous route is not visible as a Roman road on the lidar. Perhaps the route linked up with the cobbled road surface discovered when the car park was extended as reported in our [No. 1 Spring 2016 newsletter](#).

With there being evidence of two routes described by the OS files title RRX38, new Margary numbers need to be allocated for these Roman roads.

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New lidar data: new Roman roads, continued

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Ordnance Survey, pre1984, *RRX38 data files*, also available to RRRRA members at <http://www.roadsofromanbritain.org/os/rrx/RRX038.pdf> (accessed June 2020)

RR868 into Scotland

This new English data is very helpful but additionally there has been a similar release of [lidar data in Scotland](#) where previously there was poor coverage of the areas occupied by the Romans. Like the recent English data, this is Phase 3 data in 5Km2 geoTIFF format. When added to the excellent information accessible in [Canmore](#), the online catalogue of Scottish archaeology, we can further piece together the course of the Roman roads. [RR868 north](#) from

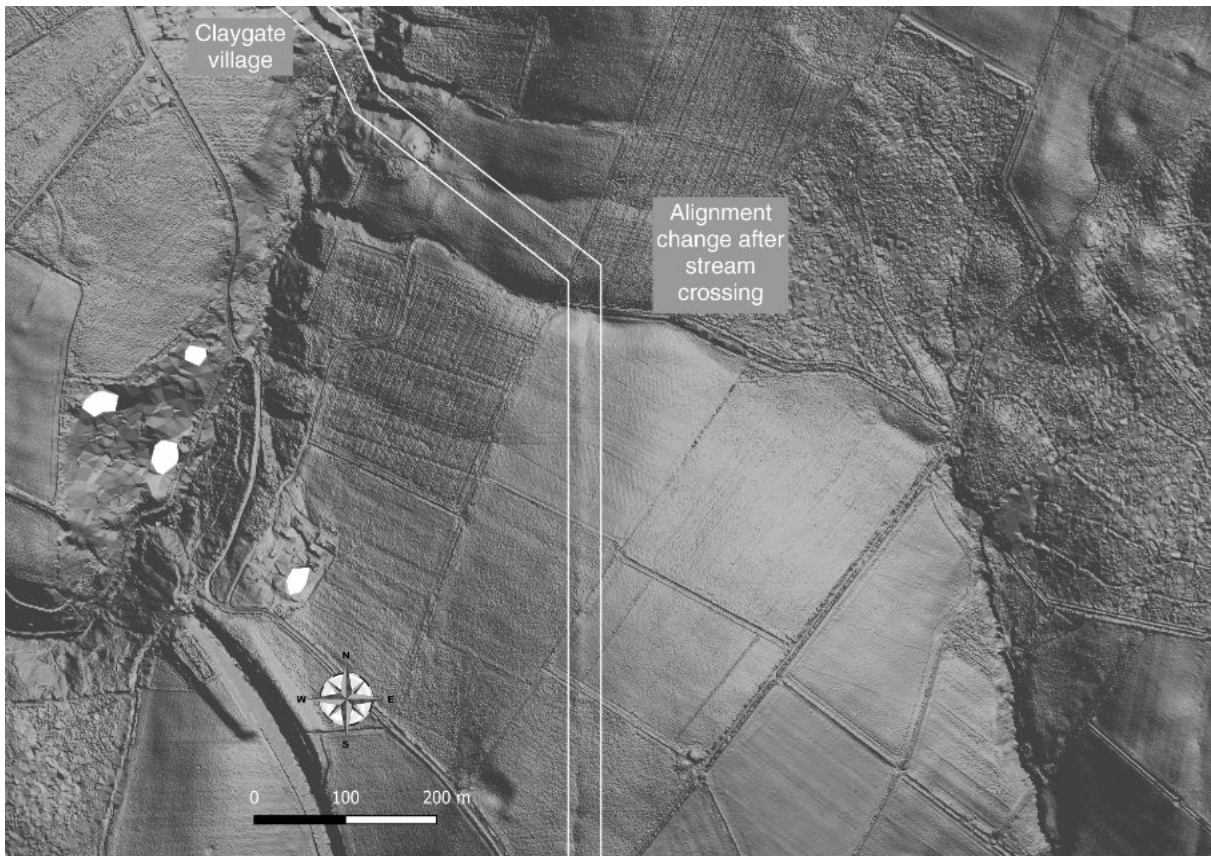


Fig. 7, RR868 heading north as a clear agger after the Liddel Water crossing approaching Claygate. Lidar data licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. All Rights reserved.

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New lidar data: new Roman roads, continued

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Netherby identified by David Ratledge has an intriguing fork into two roads just after the Liddel Water crossing in Scotland where the English lidar data ran out for David. With the new information we can track the on-wards courses. The right, north eastern, fork does have some faint indications heading up Liddelsdale and needs further work to consolidate a route that could be heading towards Newstead. The left, north westwards, fork heading up Eskdale has been the subject of previous speculation of a road linking Netherby with Broomholm and onwards (Margary 1973, 461 & Wilson 1999, 17-22). Lidar helps reveal more, there are indications of tracks laid out in short straight alignments from the Liddel crossing climbing out of the river valley through a cutting. Lidar gives a strong indication of an agger running out of the cutting which, after a stream crossing, turned to the north west to approach Claygate

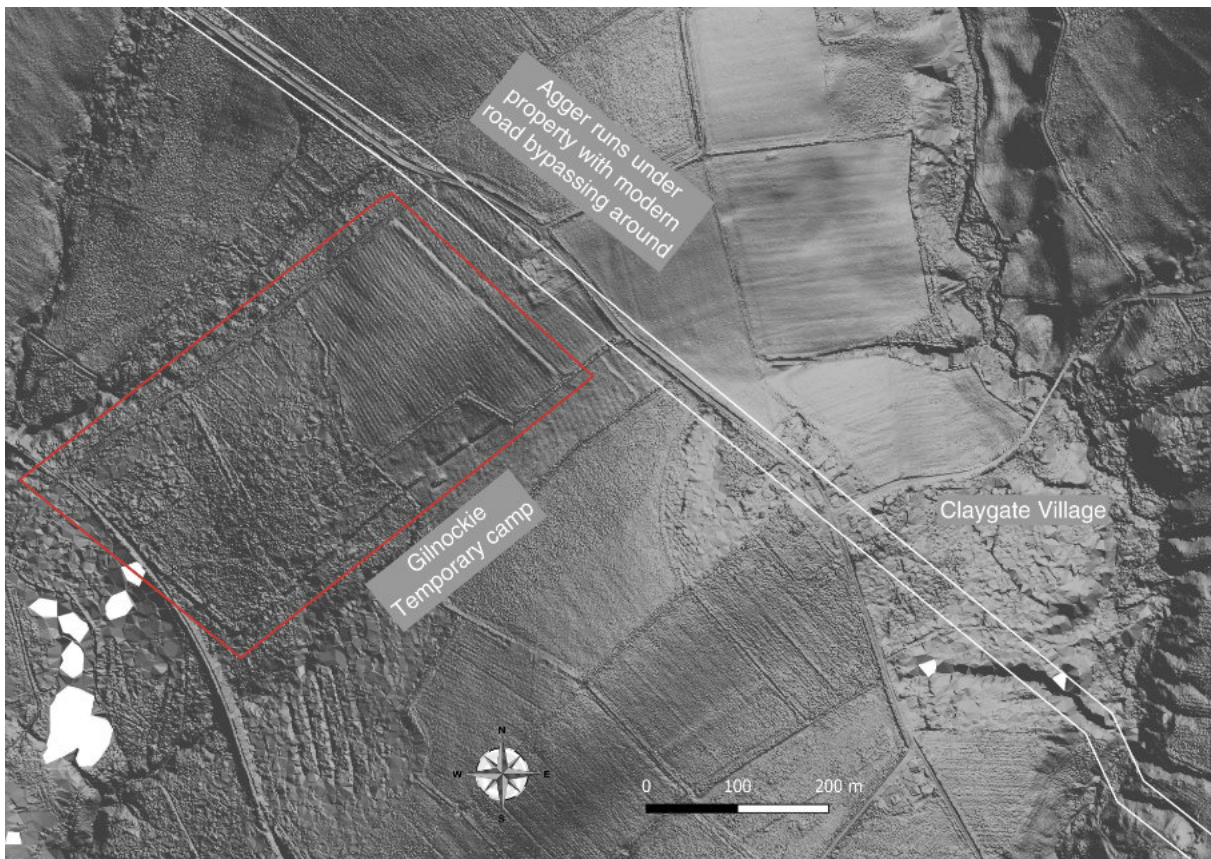


Fig. 8, RR868 passing Claygate village under the modern B6318, revealing itself either side of a property where the modern road skirts around. The large Gilnockie temporary camp sits alongside this route. Lidar data licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. All Rights reserved.

village, Fig. 7. Underlying the modern B6318 out of Claygate, lidar reveals the Roman road at New Woodhead NY 3919 7942 where the modern road swings around the property but the agger can be seen continuing straight on either side of the buildings, Fig. 8. This also closely passes the known large Gilnockie temporary camp with its six gateways all protected by tituli. Previously this camp appeared to be an orphan with no known route past it. This lidar image

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New lidar data: new Roman roads, continued

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suggests a Roman road is roughly parallel to the north east rampart. The multi phased fort complex at Broomholm, was only discovered in the 1940/50's and not confirmed by excavation until 1960. Consequently it was not considered in the authoritative review *The Roman Occupation of South West Scotland*. Outside the fort is a strong lidar indication of a road with a change of alignment to continue on up the valley. Previous excavation (RCAHMS, 1997, 171) has sentenced this as an 18th century road but the close association of it with the fort plus the typical Roman layout of short straight alignments suggests that this should be reviewed. An onwards course is lost in the outskirts south of Langholm. Potentially this route could continue up Eskdale to Raeburnfoot and/or up Ewesdale towards Newstead on a similar course to the modern A7 as speculated by Wilson. Also apparent on the lidar is another potential Roman road approaching Broomholm from the south west. A modern track way is laid out in straight alignments towards the Roman fort with the final terraced descent into the valley continuing the course down a straight and direct path, suggesting this may have a Roman origin.

Of course this is just speculative interpretation of the visual lidar evidence, further research, field work and perhaps excavation would be needed to bolster a belief with evidence that these are Roman roads.

References

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Has the new lidar data helped your work, it would be good to preview your research and lidar images in the newsletter?

The late Dr John Peterson

From John Poulter

With great sadness I have to inform you of the death of John Peterson who you may have seen at one of the 2016 RRRA Conferences talking about centuriation. John died shortly before Christmas, after several months of un-diagnosed illness which subsequently turned out to have been cancer of the bladder. He leaves a wife, Anne.

I did not know John Peterson well – certainly not well enough to compile a proper obituary. In fact, he and I met only once, but we corresponded quite a lot, often in collaboration with Rob Entwistle, on various aspects of Roman roads and centuriation. Centuriation is the name given to the Roman practice of marking out large tracts of land in rectangles or squares, typically about 710m x 710m. The motive was principally to be able to allocate equal-sized plots of land for agriculture, but, once marked out, such grids could also be useful for setting out the lines of Roman roads.



Coming from a mathematical background, I believe that before he retired John headed up the provision of IT services for the University of East Anglia - whilst also becoming an acknowledged expert on Roman centuriation in Britain. His PhD thesis of 1993 revealed a landmark study into the possible existence of centuriated areas in Britain, although it must be said that not all archaeologists have been ready to agree with his conclusions. I am not qualified to judge, but there is no doubting the rigour which John brought to his analysis of the evidence.

For instance, in *Britannia* 2000, pages 350-5, Professor Frere published what he proposed had been a very extensive scheme of centuriation covering most of Norfolk. His view was that after the suppression of the Boudiccan revolt the Romans had confiscated the lands of the tribe of the Iceni and divided it up for distribution to incomers. John examined the proposal and noted that the alignments on the eastern side of the putative scheme were one or more degrees out. This led him to regard the proposal as wishful thinking. He made a presentation of this criticism to the 2005 TRAC conference, although it was not published.

A few years later, when I was seeking to explain the peculiar behaviour of the Roman road from Ilkley to Aldborough on Blubberhouses Moor, I felt that it might have been caused by a scheme of centuriation which the Romans could have set out in the Vale of York. Indeed, I thought I'd spotted evidence to support my suggestion. However, when I sought John's opinion his verdict was that the evidence wasn't sufficient, and hence that was what was published in my BAR 598 monograph. John's authority will be sadly missed.

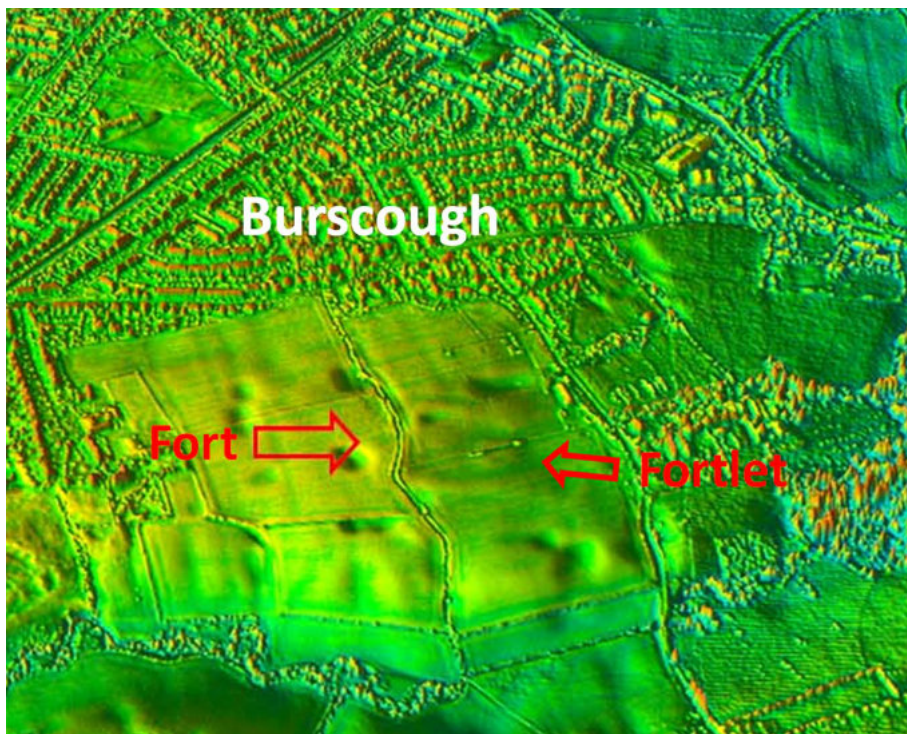
Other roads in the news; bits and pieces

Burscough Fort

From David Ratledge

The important Roman fort at Burscough, West Lancashire, has at last been Scheduled by Historic England (July 2020) and is therefore now thankfully a protected ancient monument – see [this link](#).

The Association gets a mention in “Sources” so perhaps we helped just a little in getting this previously unprotected site Scheduled. However, the Scheduling came too late to prevent around 5% of the fort being destroyed. The Police had to attend to stop further destruction.



Lidar image of the Burscough site. Lidar data © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2020. All Rights reserved.

The writings of the Roman Land surveyors

This 2000 authoritative review by Brian Campbell is still available as a (pricey) book. Amazon summarises it as; The Corpus Agrimensorum Romanorum, compiled in the 5th century AD, was a collection of Roman surveying manuals, produced by a variety of authors, writing at different times and with very different priorities; authors include Julius Frontius, Aegennius Urbicus, Hyginus, Balbus, Siculus Flaccus, as well as miscellaneous texts. This substantial volume aims to make these sources more accessible by presenting the Latin text with facing English translation, succeeded by a 130 page commentary. The eclectic choice of sources avoids the purely technical texts and includes those which Campbell considers to be most useful for historians, archaeologists and those studying ancient technology. The introduction discusses the text and authors, the origins, development and status of surveying and Roman land division. A series of illustrations, diagrams, a glossary of terms and a large bibliography conclude the volume.

However if you don't want the expense of a hard copy a digital version is available to freely download from Archaeology Data Services [here](#).

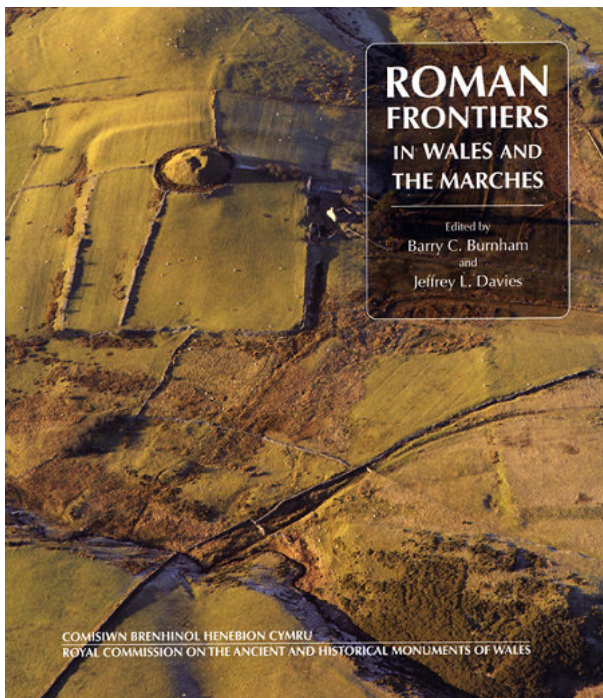
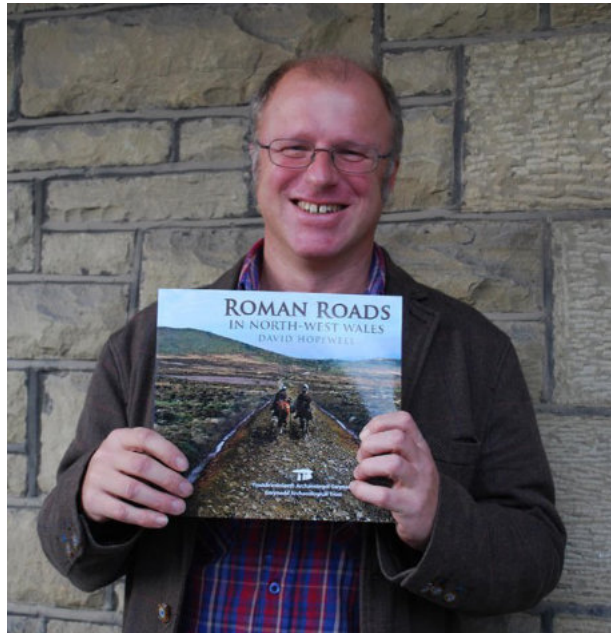
Roman roads in books - Wales

Compiled by Dave Armstrong

Following this newsletter's theme on the Roman roads of Wales, you may be interested in these books. None of these are recent publications and I haven't (yet) read them but they do seem to hold relevant and useful information.

The Roman roads of North-West Wales, 2013 by David Hopewell.

The Amazon review of this book informs us; Roman Roads in North-West Wales is a new publication by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. It describes the results of a ten-year project that has reassessed all of the evidence for Roman roads in the region and has resurveyed the known surviving portions. The evidence comes from well over a hundred years of previous work by a wide range of researchers, the results of the Trust's Cadw grant-aided Roman roads project and the latest discoveries from geophysical and lidar survey. The book examines the distinctive archaeology of Roman roads in the upland regions. These are very different to the well-known roads running in straight alignments through the lowlands of England but are still recognisably Roman. The book is well illustrated and carefully referenced and should appeal to newcomers to the subject and experienced researchers alike. The author, David Hopewell is a Senior Archaeologist at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. He has published both academic and popular articles on a wide range of archaeological topics and specialises in the archaeology of Roman Wales and geophysical survey. A limited number of copies are economically available direct from [Gwynedd Archaeological Trust](http://www.gwyneddarchaeologicaltrust.co.uk).



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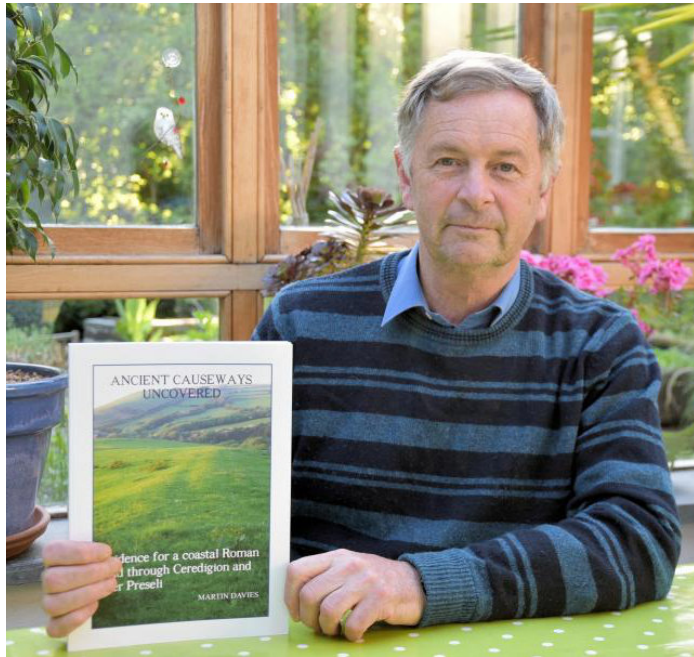
Roman Frontiers in Wales and the Marches, 2010 by Barry Burnham and Jeffery Davies. Amazon is very succinct on this book; This is a comprehensive study of the impact of the Roman army on the people and landscape of Wales and its borderlands at the western extreme of the Roman Empire during the first four centuries AD. As David reminded us it contains what is currently the most up to date map and summary of Roman roads in Wales, with contributions from our co-founder, the late Hugh Toller.

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Roman roads in books - Wales, continued

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Ancient Causeways Uncovered: Evidence for a Coastal Roman Road Through Ceredigion and Over Preseli, 2017 by Martin Davies. Amazon completely fails us with no summary review at all but the Tivyside Advertiser lucidly rescues us with; National Trust architect Martin Davies from Cardigan has made a significant new discovery of what he believes to be a Roman road extending from Wiston near Haverforwest all the way north past Cardigan and ultimately via Trawscoed to a surviving Roman fort five miles east of Ponterwyd. Following four years of research, his discovery has been published in his latest book *Ancient Causeways Uncovered – Evidence for a coastal Roman road through Ceredigion and over Preseli*.



Martin says that he has purposely avoided producing a book that is technical or academic, and hopes that the thrill of finding new evidence comes over in its pages. His work is supported by maps, aerial photographs, lidar and field explorations, also by no less than eight excavations. “It’s written for the lay public by a lay author. Nor is it scientific: it relies instead on observation, practical experience and the occasional hard graft with a shovel and trowel. The readers are the jury who can come to their own conclusions based on the evidence,” said Martin, also author of ‘Save the last of the Magic’, a booklet on local cottages first published in 1991. “Some of the traces are so faint on aerial views that they can only be seen on a computer screen, because it is back-lit. But it is the ephemeral nature of this evidence that makes exploration so addictive. As for the excavations, they always throw up the unexpected and usually pose more questions,” said Martin.

His interest in this particular route began when his wife Dawn bought him an old local map and he spotted what looked like an ancient road on it. The owner of the land referred to it as the ‘Roman road’ and as Martin traced its line across the Teifi and up into western Ceredigion he became increasingly convinced that it was indeed Roman.

“I could see it heading for the river Teifi and it continued in the same line for miles the other side. The route goes past the Penllwyndu pub in Llangoedmor and right past Tafarn y Bugail farm, now down a track. It makes sense that an inn would have been sited on a main route as it would not get much custom if it was off the beaten track,” explained Martin. “I’ll make a test hole with a spade, around 1’6” square, then investigate with a trowel to see if there is a road. I remember making a three foot deep dig with the land owner’s permission in Llangwryrffon with a large bull watching over me all day,” laughed Martin. “It can be a strange experience. It’s like dropping into another era. One minute you are in 2017, the next you descend to perhaps 1000 AD or whenever the road last saw the light of day.”

But making these discoveries hasn’t been easy. “It is very exciting to find things. You can be exploring all day and find nothing, then just as you are about to prepare to leave for home, you find something exciting and interesting and it makes it all worthwhile.”