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

FROM THE EDITOR

Now that *Itinera* Volume 1 is published with both the on-line and printed copies now complete, it all seems a little quiet. But it is only a brief pause, however, since work is already underway building an equally impressive second volume for 2022. If you feel you could contribute a paper of similar quality to those in Volume 1, or you know someone else who could, please see our Call for Papers on p.22 of this Newsletter.

Also in this Summer edition is the concluding part of David Ratledge's East Anglia series with a collated map of all the regions Roman roads. Also by David is the Western extension of the Stanegate road RR85c(x) from Carlisle to Kirkbride. Anthony Durham has provided a look at Watling Street, RR1b and RR1c from Canterbury to London focusing less on the structure and engineering than on his interpretation of the Antonine Itinerary and analysis of place-names.

Since our last newsletter our series of seminars has continued with excellent talks by David Ratledge on the latest findings from lidar in NW England and Rob Entwistle's thought provoking contribution on long distance alignments. These are available on catch up via our website, go to http://www.romanroads.org/lectures.html and I recommend them to you if you missed them on the night. We continue on a monthly basis with the next one being on the 19th August, a virtual book launch of my own book 'The Hadrian's Wall Military Way, A Frontier Road Explored'. Details are on p21 of this newsletter.

These newsletters depend on the continued contributions from our members; thank you to everyone who has provided material for the 19 editions to date. If you think you could contribute some quality material for future editions, even if you've not done this sort of thing before, please send it to me - all contributions are welcome, whether short or substantial. dave.armstrong@romanroads.org

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Roman Roads in East Anglia: Part 6

By David Ratledge davidr@deep-sky.co.uk

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Roman Roads in East Anglia; continued

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Having completed our lidar reappraisal of the Roman Roads of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex we can now put it all together into a comprehensive map for East Anglia. The road numbering system adopted is that based on Margary but has been supplemented, where necessary, in conjunction with Dave Armstrong and follows the principles he set out in *Itinera* Vol 1 (2021), p279-284.

Editors' note:

There are another five East Anglia and two Norfolk articles preceding the construction of this map. They can be found in previous newsletters.

Roman Roads in Norfolk *in Newsletter 11, p.13*

Roman Roads in Norfolk, part 2 *in Newsletter 12, p. 10*

East Anglia Roads *in Newsletter 14, p. 5*

East Anglia Roads, part 2 *in Newsletter 15, p. 4*

Roman roads in East Anglia, a lidar reappraisal Part 3 *in Newsletter 16, p. 2*

Roman Roads in East Anglia, part 4 *in Newsletter 17, p. 46*

Roman Roads in East Anglia, part 5 *in Newsletter 18, p. 7*

RRRA Projects, update

The Western Stanegate Roman Road

Carlisle to Kirkbride

By David Ratledge davidr@deep-sky.co.uk

Introduction

The proposal for a western road extension of the Stanegate from Carlisle to Kirkbride has been suggested before, most notably by Professor Barri Jones (2001, p70). Kirkbride was an early fort contemporary with the Stanegate period, which of course predated Hadrian's Wall, so the existence of a link road from Carlisle was to be expected (fig 1). Barri Jones never produced a full plan of his suggested route but inferred that it went via Shield Farm (see fig 2) towards Burgh by Sands (Burgh 1 Fort) and depicted a short length of road passing the fort's north-eastern side. The Cumbria HER recorded part of this suggestion between Shield Farm and Fingland, forming a straight line from Burgh to Kirkbride. Did this road exist and, if so, did it go via Burgh 1 or take a more direct route?

The beginnings of the road were first spotted in lidar imagery in 2018 either side of Carlisle Westerly Bypass, A689 (Ratledge, 2020, p62). However, this stretch, although implying a Roman road to Kirkbride, hardly proved it. What was needed was more evidence further to the west. The release of new lidar coverage by DEFRA did just that and enabled the route to be extended passing Moorhouse towards Thurston field and merging into the B5307 via Kirkbampton. This alignment was not supportive of a route via Burgh plus there were no signs of the suggested route via Shield Farm so a direct route was confirmed. From Kirkbampton the existing road continues in a series of

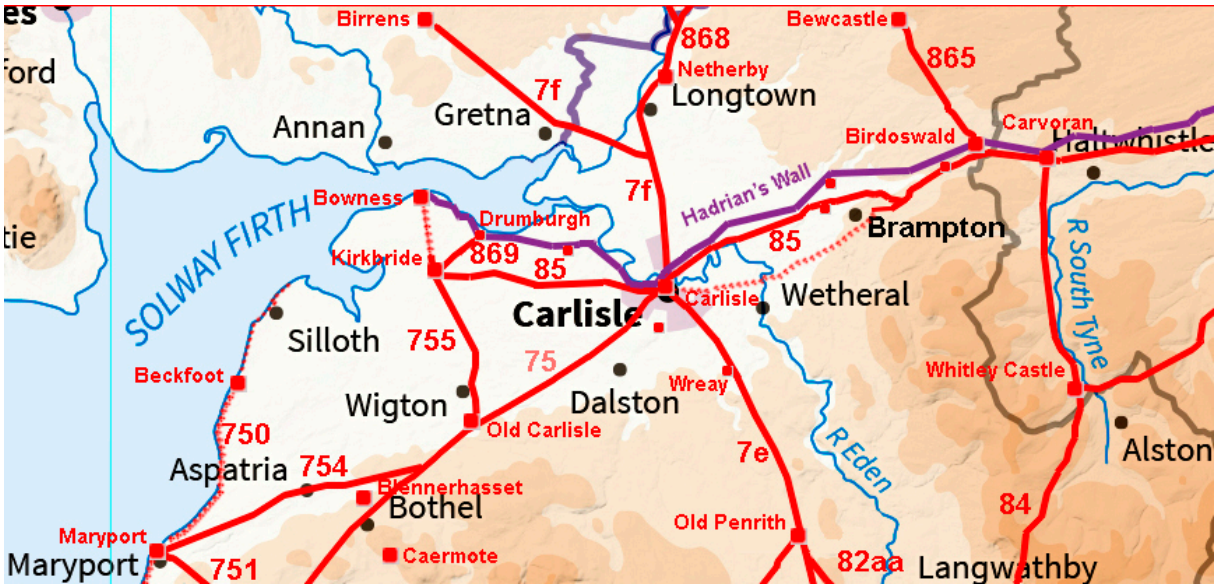

Figure 1: The accepted route of the Stanegate (RR85) is from Carlisle via Brampton and Carvoran and on to Corbridge. We now have evidence that it also went westwards to Kirkbride. Mapping is derived from Ordnance Survey Opendata - © Ordnance Survey.

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The Western Stanegate Roman Road; cont.

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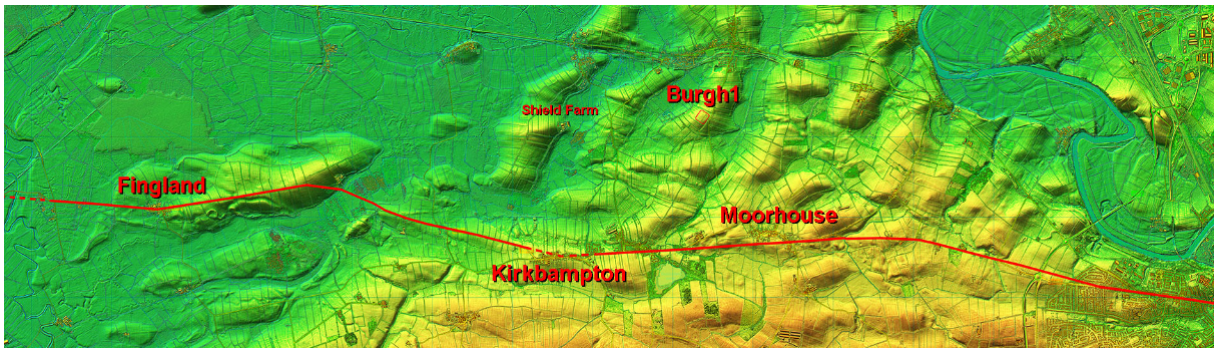

Figure 2: The route of the Western Stanegate Roman Road overlaid on imagery derived from the new lidar data. The locations mentioned in the text are labelled. Base lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2021.

straight alignments towards Kirkbride. We can now be sure that there was indeed a Roman road connecting Carlisle to Kirkbride, the Western Stanegate (fig 2).

The Route Described

The first visible section is alongside Carlisle Westerly Bypass (Carlisle Northern Development Route), A689, but it is clear both sides of it have been severed by the new road (fig 3). During its construction the Roman road was not detected but of course the route was unknown then and the thought was that it would most likely be further south i.e. where a new roundabout now is. It is disappointing that a recent road construction failed to notice a Roman road. This is the section previously recorded in reference 2.

In the new lidar imagery the line of the Roman *agger* is visible in the fields south of Moorhouse (NY34079 56730 to NY32319 56607) heading to Kirkbampton (figure 4). The importance of this length is not just that it extends the road further west but it shows the road was not heading for Burgh but very directly for Kirkbride. Burgh 1 is the earliest of the Burgh-by-Sands forts and pre-dates Hadrian's Wall so must have been served by a branch road. The lidar evidence shows our road going further west and there was only Kirkbride further west at that time.

West of Kirkbampton the modern road (B5307) continues in a series of straight alignments via Fingland, surely overlying the Roman road, to just short of Kirkbride. It follows dry "islands" with just one marshy patch to cross at Grass Dikes in order to reach the Fingland hillock (called a rigg). The modern road sits on top of a large man-made *agger* at Grass Dikes – quite a built-up causeway and there can little doubt now, one constructed by the Romans.

The last straight stretch of modern road at Whitrigglees (NY24220 57207), if projected forward, would match precisely the alignment of the road recorded, on aerial photographs, leaving Kirkbride fort by Professor Barri Jones (ref 1, fig 35). Kirkbride was possibly the Roman site of *Briga*. The name is recorded in the *Vindolanda* tablets - Kirkbride was contemporary with *Vindolanda* – and would seem a logical suggestion. Kirkbride was also served by a Roman road from Old Carlisle. Burgh Fort I is an early

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The Western Stanegate Roman Road; cont.

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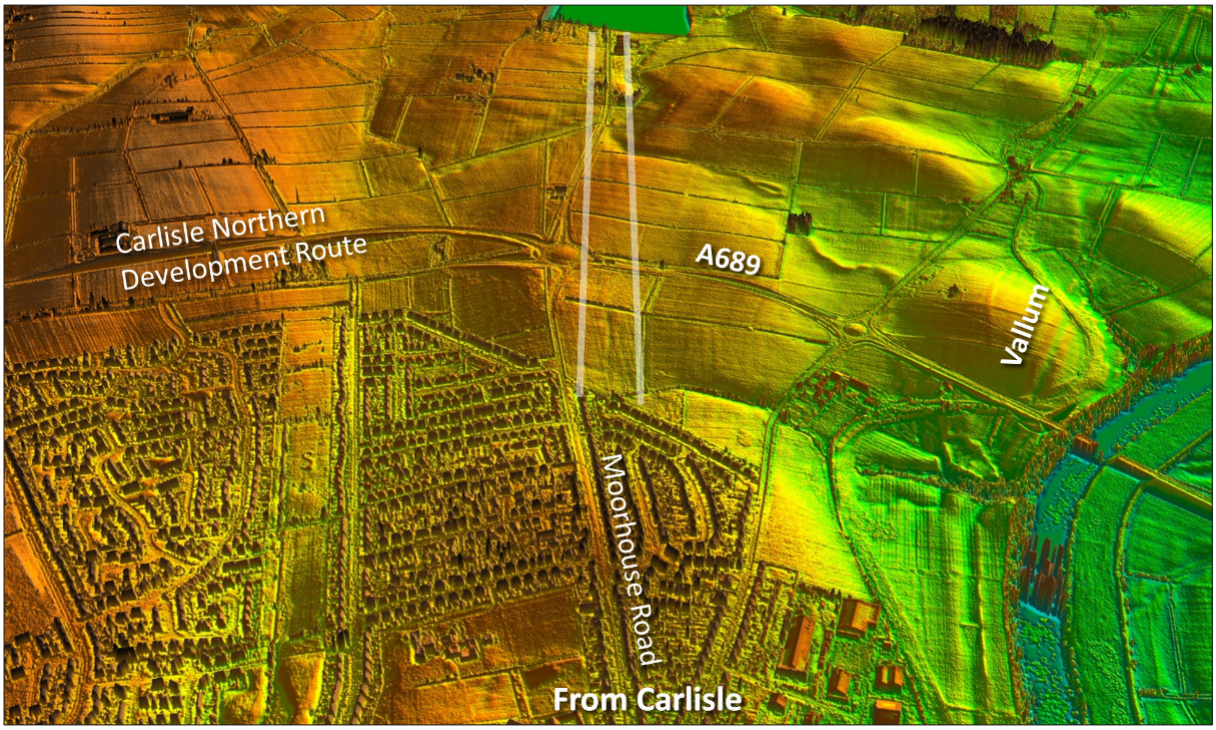
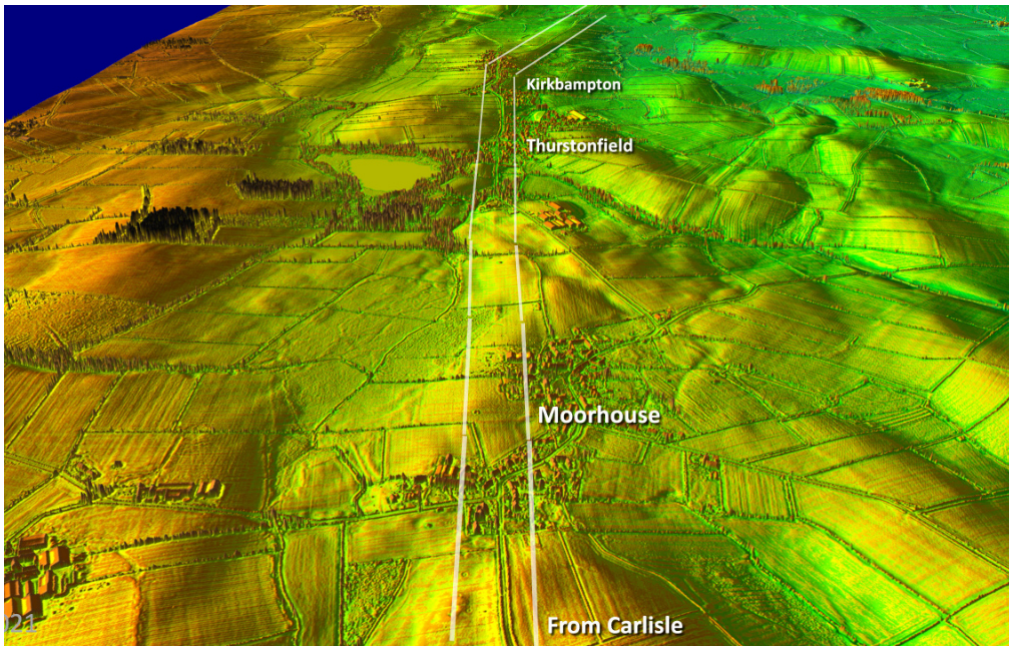


Figure 3 (above): This was the first evidence for a Western Stanegate spotted in 2018. It is very obvious either side of the new road. Base lidar data for both is © Crown Copyright 2021.
Figure 4 (below): Series 2 lidar provided this second clue for the road not going towards Burgh by Sands but heading directly for Kirkbride.



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The Western Stanegate Roman Road; cont.

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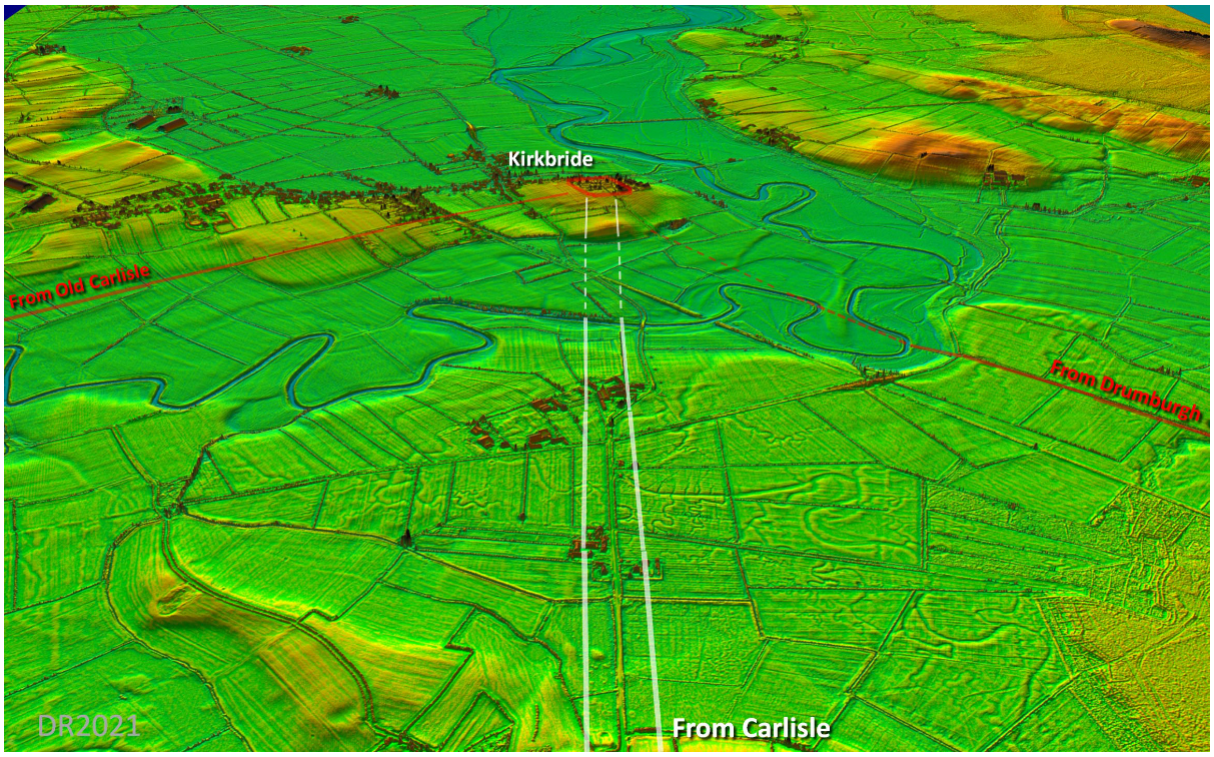
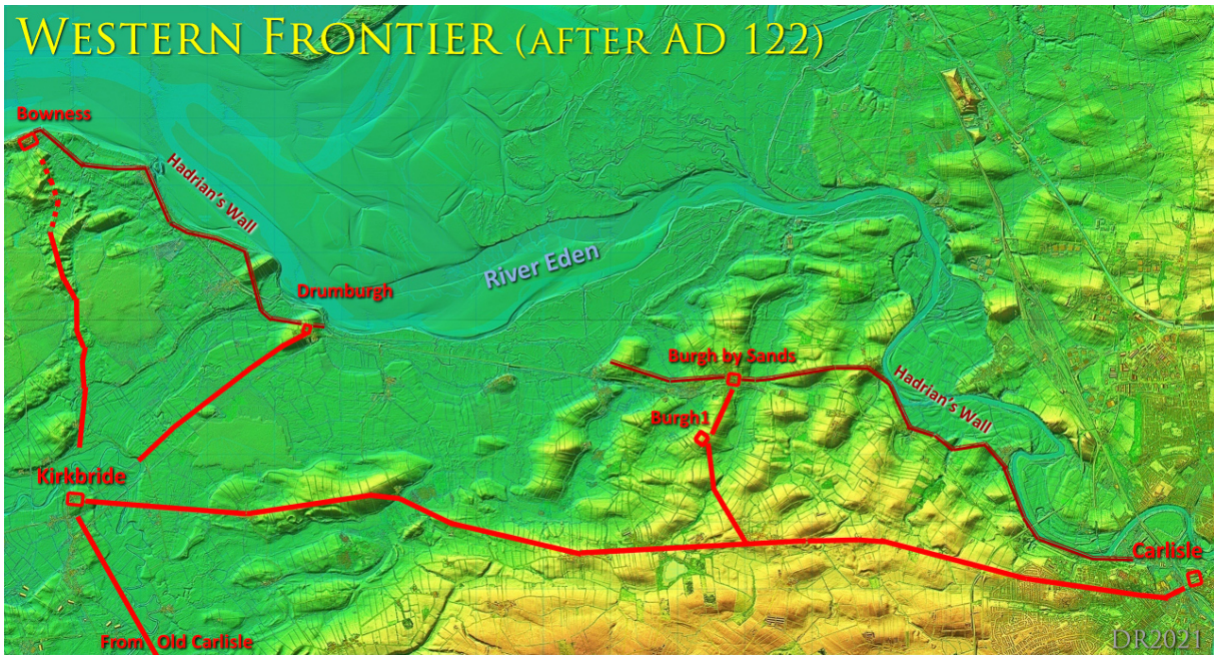


Figure 5: Above. The final alignment is on Kirkbride Fort, exactly aligned with where Professor Barri Jones recorded a road leaving the fort. The (later) road from Drumburgh can only date from the Hadrianic period. Figure 6: Below. Kirkbride fort was abandoned following the construction of Hadrian's Wall but was still the best route around the western marshes. Both, base lidar data is © Crown Copyright 2021.



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The Western Stanegate Roman Road; cont.

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site, pre Hadrian's Wall, and would therefore have surely needed a connecting road. The existing modern road from Moorhouse to Burgh would appear to represent the probable Roman line. In this form the Western Stanegate lasted for around 50 years before a huge change to the frontier took place.

Arrival of Hadrian's Wall

West of Carlisle new forts were established at Burgh by Sands, Drumburgh and Bowness. Burgh by Sands would have easily been connected into the existing road system by a short extension from Burgh 1. A new road was constructed from Kirkbride to Drumburgh and the road from Old Carlisle to Kirkbride extended on to Bowness. There is very little visible evidence that a military way behind the wall was constructed west of Carlisle and possibly one was not needed given the excellent road system that was already there. Kirkbride fort was decommissioned but remained an important road hub. In all probability this was how the western frontier of Hadrian's Wall was serviced (fig 6).

Conclusion

There is now sufficient evidence to finally confirm a Western Stanegate road from Carlisle to Kirkbride. It took a direct path and did not go via Burgh as postulated by Professor Barri Jones. Around 50 years later it would go on to form an integral part of a comprehensive road network serving the western end of Hadrian's Wall.

References

Jones, G.D.B., and Wooliscroft, D.J., 2001, *Hadrian's Wall from the Air*, Stroud.

Ratledge, D, 2020, *Cumbria's Roman Roads, A Second lidar Update*, CWAAS Transactions CW3, 20.

RRRA Projects, update

Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent

By Anthony Durham

Watling Street was an Anglo-Saxon name for several Roman roads, one of which ran through Kent to London. Its course is a remarkably straight line, whose ends are conveniently at Canterbury cathedral and the archbishop's London residence, Lambeth Palace. Its known history began as the likely route of Roman invasions: under Julius Caesar in 54BC and under Aulus Plautius in AD43.

This article is concerned with Watling Street, Margary RR1a, more as a social phenomenon than as a physical structure. Information comes from maps and archaeological reports, but the key are the names in ancient texts. In the table below, the Antonine Itinerary supplies the first three columns, where Roman numerals in front of a name show the distance to it from the name above, in Roman miles (1.48 km).

Iter 2	Iter 3	Iter 4	Peutinger Table	Where now?
Londinio	*Londinio*	*Londinio*		London edge
x *Noviomago*				Spring Park
xviiii *Vagniacis*				Springhead
			Madus	Cobham Park?
viiii *Durobrovis*	xxvii *Durobrius*	xxvii *Durobrivis*		Rochester
			xvii *Roribis*	Sittingbourne
xiii *Durolevo*			vii *Durolevo*	Ospringe
xii *Durorverno*	xxv *Durarveno*	xxv *Durarvenno*	vii *Duroaverus*	Canterbury

The Peutinger Map reveals only a tiny part of Britain, having frustratingly lost its first page. Such sources can be hard to read, and contain copying errors, but I try to cite names as exactly as modern typography allows, generally not putting them into a theoretical nominative case.

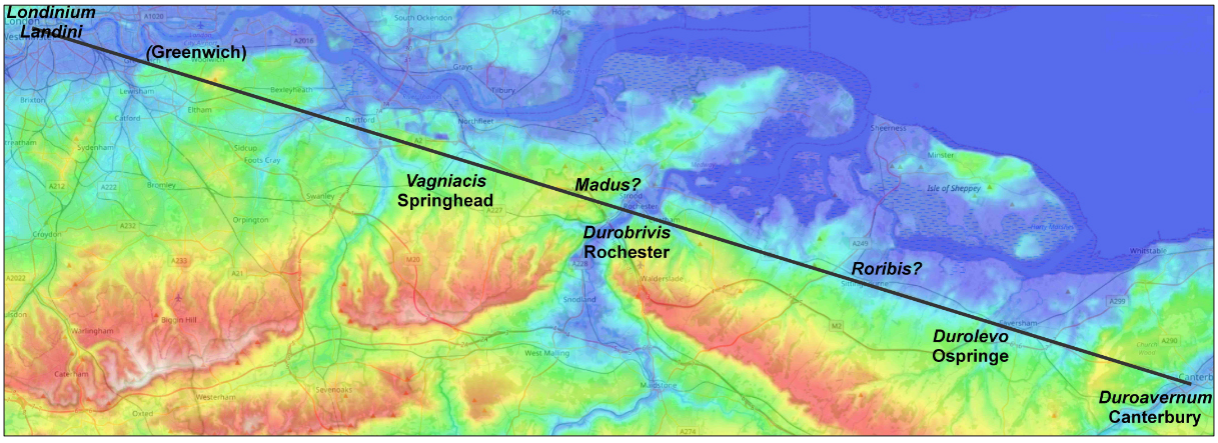

Figure 1 The line of Watling Street across northern Kent on top of a screen-grab from topographic-map.com. Courtesy OpenStreetMap & Merit DEM

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Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent; cont.

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In addition, the Ravenna Cosmography supplies a sequence of names without distances: *Duro averno. Cantiacorum. Rutupis. Durobrabis. Landini. Tamese. Brinavis*. And Ptolemy's geography mentions Canterbury as Δαρουερνον (*Darwernon*). More information is in the classic book by Rivet and Smith (1979), but watch out that many of their interpretations may not always be correct.

Most of the Roman road lies under the modern A2, but the last six miles or so at the western end, under built-up London, have not been found. Presumably the road network evolved over time, responding to changes in habitation patterns, economic activity, and wet ground.

As the oldest Roman road in Britain, and one of the straightest, Kent's Watling Street is particularly interesting for the light it can throw on ancient communities along it. Surviving mileages fix their locations fairly well, which can often be matched up with archaeological traces, but much that is in print about place names along Watling Street is misleading.

It is tempting to dismiss all analysis of ancient names as hopeless, harmless fun. Rather like the way that many people view politics: all politicians lie; it is often hard to tell truth from fiction; let's just leave them to carry on ruling the world. I do not abdicate

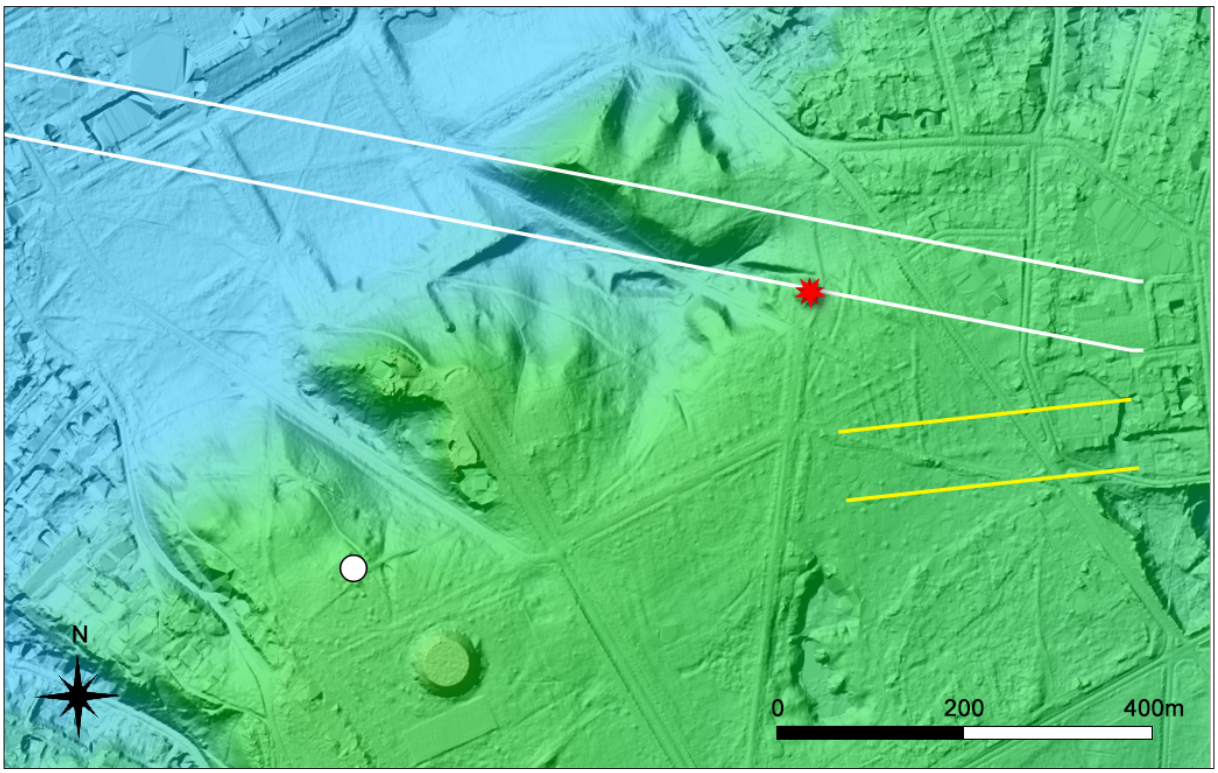

Figure 2, Lidar image of Greenwich Park, with the projected line of Watling Street RR1a in the white corridor and what appears to be an agger in the yellow corridor. Image coutesy of Paul Smith. The red 'explosion' sign marks the Temple and the white circle marks the cluster of burial mounds. .

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Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent; cont.

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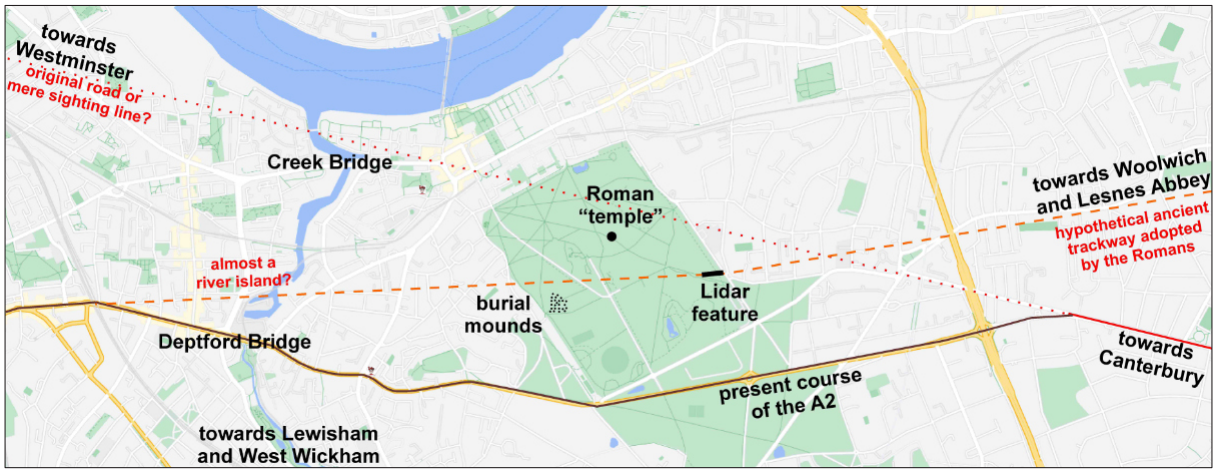

Figure 3, Surmised laying out of a route or routes across Greenwich Park. Courtesy OpenStreetMap & Merit DEMs

responsibility like that. The key to understanding place names along Watling Street is to think like a data scientist and a geographer, as well as a pragmatic linguist.

As will become clear, the surviving place names along Kent's Watling Street all seem to refer to water, or rather to wet ground. And, as the map shows, Roman names have survived mainly at places where only a short cart ride separated the road from boats that could sail on the Thames and the North Sea. Those places are like a string of pearls, linked by relatively dull string.

Let's start in Greenwich (my home), which has a Roman "temple" in the Royal Park. When Time Team came to excavate it, their lumps-and-bumps man, Stewart Ainsworth, spotted a possible Roman road *agger* apparently heading towards the cluster of 30 or so "Anglo-Saxon" burial mounds, on the brow of the escarpment further west inside the Park. Recent lidar data from the Park, kindly processed by Paul Smith into Figure 2 above, shows a definite linear feature (surrounded by yellow lines), which is distinct from a projection of the Roman road arriving from Canterbury (white lines).

Roman surveyors coming from Canterbury would have had a clear view of Westminster from the top of Shooters Hill, our local high point which is way off to bottom right of the lidar image, and even beyond Figure 3 but is on the wider view of Figure 8. If Julius Caesar or the original Roman road had continued in that direction, they could have easily forded Deptford Creek near its mouth, provided that the tide was out and its feeder river, the Ravensbourne, was not swollen with rain. Or, on reaching the Blackheath plateau, they could have turned 30° left, either onto the present course of the A2, towards Deptford Bridge, or onto the line of the lidar feature.

Close-up on the ground (Figure 4) there is little of the linear feature to see now, but that is also true for the burial mounds, which are best seen from the air. Judging by the 1896 Ordnance Survey 6-inch map (Figure 5), this slight bump may have been more visible in the past, extending into what is now a formal flower garden. Obviously this

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Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent; cont.

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Figure 4, above. Line of the conjectured agger across Greenwich Park, slight but still perceptible

Figure 5, below. The same agger shown on the 1896 OS map as a more definite feature. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland under (CC-BY) licence

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Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent; cont.

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lidar hint needs to be followed up with non-destructive geophysics on the Park's manicured lawn, but already it starts to pose some intriguing questions

Outside the Park on the right, that linear feature lines up with some modern property boundaries, which are centuries old. Beyond there, a main road runs along the edge of the escarpment south of the Thames past many burial mounds and grand houses, to reach the Thames again near Lesnes Abbey, so maybe the Romans turned left where their road hit a pre-existing native track.

Another classic marker of the track of a Roman road is a series of quarry pits, dug for stones to make the raised road-bed. Can any Roman quarry pits be recognised near Watling Street's approach to Deptford Creek? Surely they must all be lost among the plethora of dirty great holes, medieval or later, that scar Blackheath and Greenwich Park? Or maybe not…

One reason the Blackheath plateau has stayed open is that it is useless for arable farming, being essentially a prehistoric shingle beach covered with a thin layer of topsoil. As common land it was fair game for anyone to dig, and also for revolting peasants to gather repeatedly. At bottom right of Figure 2 is a huge pit (known to local schoolkids as Cowboy Land) from which stones were dug and carted downhill to

Figure 6, Gravel pit today on Blackheath.

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Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent; cont.

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Ballast Quay to be loaded into ships returning empty after delivering coal to London. Figure 6 shows how the pit's base now looks after a century of regeneration.

I do not know much about the details of Roman quarrying and road construction, but three facts seem certain. Blackheath gravel was ideally placed for use in constructing a causeway for Watling Street across the squelch of Deptford Creek. The easiest place to dig gravel was wherever edges of the Heath descended most steeply towards the Thames. And boats from Deptford Creek could have carried material up to *Londinium* for the construction of its quaysides, much like the lime burned from Blackheath chalk (in kilns where my office now sits) shipped to London after the Great Fire.

Notice also in Figure 2 the series of gullies, now occupied by modern roads, leading downhill from the Heath towards the Thames. Most people have hitherto assumed that the Roman road ran in the big valley on the right, quite steeply down towards modern Creek Bridge. On the other hand, if the road ran along the edge of the escarpment, as that linear lidar feature (and grand medieval houses) suggest, it could have had a more gradual descent towards modern Deptford Bridge. However, that line would cross three modern roads, known as The Avenue, Crooms Hill, and Hyde Vale, each of which sits in a gully that would have been a real problem for the Roman road to cross.

Do we dare to suggest that each of those road gullies started life as Roman quarries, which eroded over the centuries? Is there any way to identify Blackheath pebbles now on the foreshore of central London? I am no geochemist, but can at least draw attention to the name of Greenwich, whose earliest attestation (*Gronewic* in AD918) meant something like 'gravel trading place'.

Exactly where Watling Street crossed Deptford Creek, and how that changed over time, is unknown, because water levels relative to land have changed so much over the centuries. One good guess might be a little downstream from modern Deptford Bridge, where a modern promontory bounded by wharves juts into the Creek. The side-arm there is slightly hidden from view and is now full of houseboats such as the Sabine, charmingly described on the Friends of Deptford Creek website.

One last, important point about Deptford: its main settlement sits at a classic position recognized by geographers, the highest point on a river that can be reached by a cargo boat from the wider world. This is generally near, but not necessarily identical with, the lowest point on the river where men and animals can cross on foot. Technology (boats and bridges) can affect that optimum position, but ultimately the deciding factor is usually where riverside land is highest and driest. All this matters because Deptford is a model for the other named places along Watling Street.

If the Greenwich Park "temple" was some kind of Roman roadhouse, equivalent to a later coaching inn, why is it over a mile from the Creek crossing? Maybe that is simply a matter of class. Roman imperial messengers, like modern expense-account businessmen, expected a higher standard of accommodation than riff-raff down by the docks. Historical Deptford has been a cradle of industry, where poor people hustle for a living, in contrast with the asset-rich gentlefolk living uphill.

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Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent; cont.

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Historians have long suggested that, during the Roman invasion in AD43, the Roman HQ advanced along Watling Street flanked by supply ships on the Thames estuary. However, it is rarely spelled out just how much effort the Roman army needed to put into its logistics. An army advancing into unfamiliar, potentially hostile territory, with no pre-existing roads, cannot carry more than a few days' worth of food. Foraging (stealing from the locals) can be counter-productive and a baggage train of ox-carts is notoriously slow. It follows that the Thames must have been buzzing with ships during the Roman invasion.

No Roman forts are known in Kent, except at the coast, and there is little sign even of marching camps. This suggests a largely consensual takeover of Kent in AD43, as if the elite knew about life in Romanised Gaul and the futility of resisting a Roman army. All the Roman names along Watling Street are where boats could bring in supplies from the wider Thames estuary. In AD43 each such place would have needed a small garrison guarding stores depots and keeping the route open – the original meaning of Latin *praesidium* – plus, ideally, a good relationship with local elite people. Deptford Creek, with its surrounding wet ground, and possibly a river island or promontory, is an instructive model for all other named places along Watling Street.

Of course, there was conflict during the Roman invasions. Bigbury, near Canterbury, is usually suggested to be the native fort overcome by Caesar in 54BC. And there was at least one river-crossing battle in AD43 , according to Cassius Dio, against the sons of king *Cunobelinus*. David Young has discussed online, in BritishBattles, the likely course of a battle at an upstream Medway crossing.

Now let's look at the eastern end of Watling Street. Three names begin with *Duro-*, which is essentially the modern word door, but in early place names its core meaning was 'transport hub' or what geographers call a Central Place. In 1980 Leo Rivet described *Duro-* as "Belgic", because of where it occurs across northern Europe. In Britain it is a distinctive marker for the early stages of the Roman road network, because eight more *Duro-* names lie north of the Thames and into East Anglia, where the conquering Roman army would have headed after pacifying Kent.

Prominent among the invading Romans were some Batavians. They came from a river island in the Rhine delta around modern Nijmegen. Their fighting skills were vital for crossing the river Medway; they (and similar auxiliaries) later won Agricola's battle at *Graupius mons*; and it is even suggested that they made up Caesar's personal bodyguard. The name Batavia is said to contain a Germanic word for river island, **awjo-*, related to *aqua* 'water', seen, for example, in the *Ingaevones* people. Descendant words show up in a remarkable number of place names across northern Europe.

River islands positively infest the story of Watling Street, which runs from one at Canterbury (formerly called Binnewith) to one at Westminster (formerly called Thorney Island). And Strasbourg, whence came one invading legion, is river island incarnate. Actually, island is not the ideal word for these places so much as wet ground more generally. All around the North Sea, military and economic success depended on mastering the boundary zone between land and water.

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Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent; cont.

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For crews of their supply ships, the Romans would have recruited from cultures that regularly messed about in boats. With the Mediterranean far away, and after Caesar had slaughtered most *Veneti*, the biggest available pool of experienced sailors lived in the Rhine–Meuse–Scheldt delta or the coastal marshes of *Belgica*. Even if the Roman fleet was commanded in Latin, most sailors would have grown up speaking languages related to Old Dutch, Old English, and Low German.

The Roman army in Britain was, right from the start, more strongly Germanic than books like to admit when they discuss later *foederati*, *laeti*, and a post-Roman Anglo-Saxon "invasion". When Watling Street was born, key newcomers would have been sailors, who were generally lower down the pecking order than Roman soldiers, but more likely to abscond with a pretty British girl. There is no credible evidence that native people around the Thames estuary had close cultural and linguistic links with Wales, but plenty of hints about links across the Channel, such as Caesar's comment about *Belgae* or the *Notitia Dignitatum*'s mention of a Saxon Shore.

One oft-repeated bit of nonsense is that Canterbury was originally *Durovernum* 'fort on the alder swamp'. That idea traded on medieval Welsh *dur* 'steel' and *gwern* 'alder tree', two words that came from Latin (*durus* 'hard' and *vernus* 'of spring'), plus failure to recognise that alders are among the first trees to flower in spring and to colonize a wet habitat. Another contributor to the mistake was cherry-picking evidence: the source texts suggest that the original name contained a letter A. Both elements of a name like **Duroavernum*, *Duro-* and something like **awjo-*, were mentioned above as looking very north-European.

Archaeology at Canterbury (notably in the very latest *Archaeologica Cantiana*) reveals extensive native settlement uphill to the west (beyond Bigbury fort), whereas the earliest signs of urban development and riverside wharfs are down by the river island. In other words, Canterbury fits the picture developing here of a place that started out as a Roman logistics base.

Next along Watling Street, heading west, is *Durolevo*, generally identified with the Roman site at Syndale (at Ospringe near Faversham), about 11 Roman miles from Canterbury on a modern map. *Iter* 2 reports 12 miles, but Peutinger shows 7, perhaps due to confusion between *xii* and *vii*. Two more Peutinger names' locations rely on *Durolevo*, so it worth asking what that name meant.

In geographical names, **lev-* is related to our modern words lips and labia. For example, ancient *Levefanum* (literally 'fen lips') was beside the Rhine, not far from the infamous Bridge Too Far at Arnhem. Here it refers to the single narrow opening through which Faversham Creek, Oare Creek, and their associated marshes flow into the Thames estuary.

I spent entire days poring over maps and dictionaries, to understand why L–vowel–-V shows up in so many river and place names, both ancient and modern, all over Europe. Then it turned out that a fine example is just down the road from me, at Lewisham. Figure 7, screen-captured from Google Maps 3D, shows the confluence of the rivers Quaggy and Ravensbourne, squeezed together originally by two hills but now by the concrete canyons of commuter blocks near the station.

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Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent; cont.

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Figure 7, Confluence of the rivers Quaggy and Ravensbourne, coutesy of GoogleMaps 3D

Next, heading west, the Peutinger map shows *Roribis*, which is almost the same as Latin *roribus* 'to or from the dews'. The distance from Ospringe puts it at the end of Milton Creek, Sittingbourne, another obvious site for a Roman army/navy logistics base.

Next along Watling Street is the mouth of the river Medway, with a Roman place name usually cited as **Durobrivae*, based on three different spellings in the Antonine Itinerary and a fourth in the Cosmography. Even though the Itinerary supplies mileages from this site to four other places, they do not locate it precisely within the Medway conurbation. Rochester's claim on the name **Durobrivae* relies heavily on a belief that **briva* meant 'bridge', which is probably wrong.

In at least late Roman times, the main road is thought to have crossed the Medway near the line of Rochester's big modern bridge. This idea is supported by archaeological finds (Thornhill, P, 1978. Second Thoughts on Strood's 'Causeway'. *Archaeologia Cantiana*.94:249-254), the castle, and the location of a medieval bridge (AD1392) just a little upstream, but it is hard to believe that building a multi-span stone bridge across the Medway would have been an early priority for Britain's Roman administration. If Watling Street originally stuck to its straight line, it would have crossed the Medway half a mile upstream from the modern bridge, roughly between St Margaret's church on the east bank and Strood Temple on the west.

The Peutinger map's next name (or name-fragment) is *madus*, 17 miles from *Roribis*. That name obviously hints at the river Medway and at Latin *madeo* 'to flow', but the

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Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent; cont.

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distance does not fit Rochester, while alternative crossings of the Medway at Maidstone or Yalding are not supported by any archaeology. A possible solution may lie in the Roman villa at Cobham Park, which is over 3 miles from the Medway and about the same from wetlands beside the Thames. A roadhouse there, as unmilitary as *Villafaustini* in Suffolk, might use a name based on another sense of Latin *madeo* (whose nearest relative in English is meat) if it offered free-flowing food and drink to travellers.

Cobham Park is a natural place to branch off Watling Street and head north towards the Thames, to where a medieval ferry used to run between Cliffe, in Kent, and East Tilbury, in Essex. Patrick Thornhill in 1977 (A Lower Thames Ford and the campaigns of 54BC and AD43, *Archaeologia Catiana*. 119-128) made a case for the Thames being fordable there at low tide in Caesar's time. Exactly how much water levels have risen relative to adjoining land since Roman times in Britain's estuaries is a much-discussed puzzle, but one needs to remember a strange paradox. In eastern England, land onto which rivers are allowed to flood and to deposit silt tends to rise in step with water, whereas land protected by sea walls tends to sink.

Vagniacis meant something like 'marshy', being related to the river Quaggy mentioned above. The Roman settlement lay at the head of a respectable river, the Ebbsfleet (where -fleet implies use for transport), now vanished because its water has been diverted to human consumption.

Next comes the river Darent and its tributary, the Cray, whose joint estuary was wide, flat, and soggy where Watling Street crossed. Presumably the Roman road ran over a succession of causeways, small bridges, and fords, leaving little for archaeologists to find. However, there is evidence of over a dozen substantial Roman villas in the rich farmland upstream. The one at Lullingstone has even been suggested as a Roman governor's country residence.

No ancient settlement name has survived from this valley, but the river names Cray and Darent have attracted a deluge of nonsense guesswork; even the great Eilert Ekwall went badly wrong over them. The battle of *Crecganford* in AD457, after which *Brettas* fled from *Centlond* to *Lundenbyrig*, probably has nothing to do with Crayford, but may have happened in East Yorkshire. (A long story, for another day.) However, there was conflict in this area after the end of Roman imperial authority, judging by the earthwork known as *Faesten Dic*, which runs south from Watling Street near the Cray/Darent confluence. It is well known to appear to defend Kent from London, but the fact that most Roman villas are on the Kent side must mean something.

Continuing west leads to south-east London, where Figure 8 shows what is known of the Roman road network. Many people have dabbled with archaeology and road-hunting in this area, most notably Brian Philp, (2002, *Archaeology in the Front Line: 50 years of Kent rescue,* 1952-2002) who found the correct location for *Noviomagus* on *iter* 2. Philp has feuded with "establishment" archaeologists in Kent, and I can sympathise, after my own bad experience with some academic linguists.

Finally, at the western end of Kent's Watling Street lies London. The Cosmography name-checks places called *Landini* (probably *Londinium*, now the City of London) and *Tamese* (probably the fording place by modern Westminster). Various classical

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Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent; cont.

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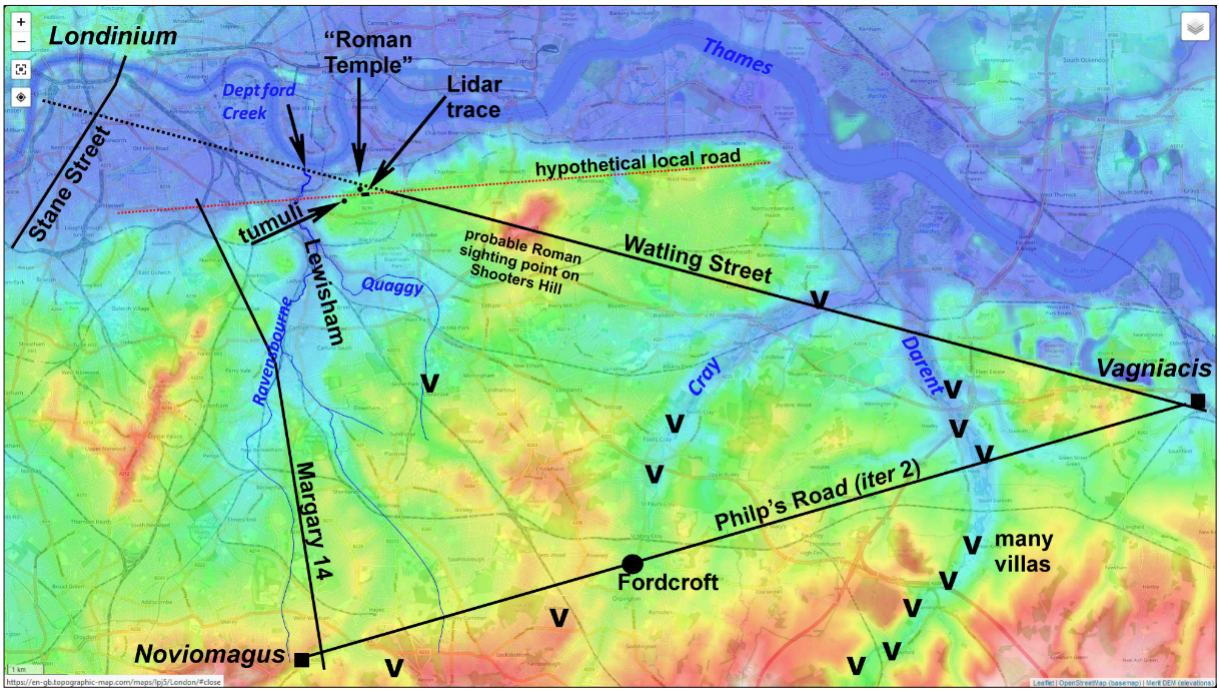

Figure 8, Projected road network of North Kent. Background map courtesy OpenStreetMap & Merit DEM

authors mentioned a river *Tamesis*, probably referring to the estuary generally. Some scholars' efforts to explain the names London and Thames deserve prizes for comedy or long-windedness, but Occam's Razor suggests 'landing place' and 'cut', respectively.

Roman London was a very cosmopolitan place. Much like a modern airport (or that famous bar scene in Star Wars), it was buzzing with people who grew up speaking a hundred different languages. They all needed to know some Latin, but a large proportion of the vernacular speech would have come from around the North Sea and the English Channel.

Simple arithmetic yields a surprising conclusion about routes into London. The distance by road from the Channel coast (for example *Rutupiae*, Richborough) via Canterbury to *Londinium* was about 72 Roman miles. By boat, through the Wantsum Channel and all the wiggles of the Thames, the distance was about 82 miles. Roman sailing vessels could average about 5 miles per hour, which is much faster than a human or horse can walk comfortably for long.

It follows that not just heavy cargoes travelled on water. It would have been logical for Roman pedestrians and marching soldiers to catch a boat whenever possible. Water travel is usually safer, and a lot more restful, too. Then why does Watling Street exist at all? Imperial messengers with relays of horses could outrun a boat, but not a simple message passed between Roman signal stations. Even if the Roman road started out as a prestige project, it ended up mostly carrying local traffic.

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Watling Street, RR1b & 1c through Kent; cont.

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Kent's Watling Street, Margary RR1a, is exceptionally long and straight, but what makes it unique in Britain is how exactly it parallels the river Thames. The closest equivalent anywhere else in the Roman Empire was along the Rhine frontier, where most of the auxiliaries and many of the legionaries who invaded Britain were recruited. No one truly knows how close the native population already was to incoming "Romans" from the Rhine delta, but they seem to have accepted place names and waterside settlement patterns from there fairly peacefully.

One final bit of name-foolery. The name Watling, applied to roads outside Kent, has been linked with *Uæclingacæstir*, offered by Bede as one of two names for the site of Britain's first Christian martyrdom. Bede's bit of hagiography rests on a flimsy foundation and almost certainly has nothing to do with Watling Street. That was first attested as *wætlinga stræt* in about AD880, where *wæt* was the Old English precursor of modern wet, whose vowel has become A in water. What a charming way to end this story: watermen were once called wetlings.

Editors Note. In this text Anthony speculates on the size of road side quarries. His suggestion is enormously large in this context. Road side quarry pits, where material has been dug out to construct the road can be a diagnostic feature of Roman roads and are usually regularly spaced along one or both sides of the resulting road. They are generally up to 5m across and hardly ever more than 10m perpendicular to the road. Those would like to know more about these are directed to Mike Haken's paper, Classifying with Confidence, Rating the Veracity of a segment of road, Itinera, Vol1, p301, available to members on our site. The suggested quarry may have had a Roman origin but, as a convenient source of gravel, has probably been repeatedly quarried over many centuries.

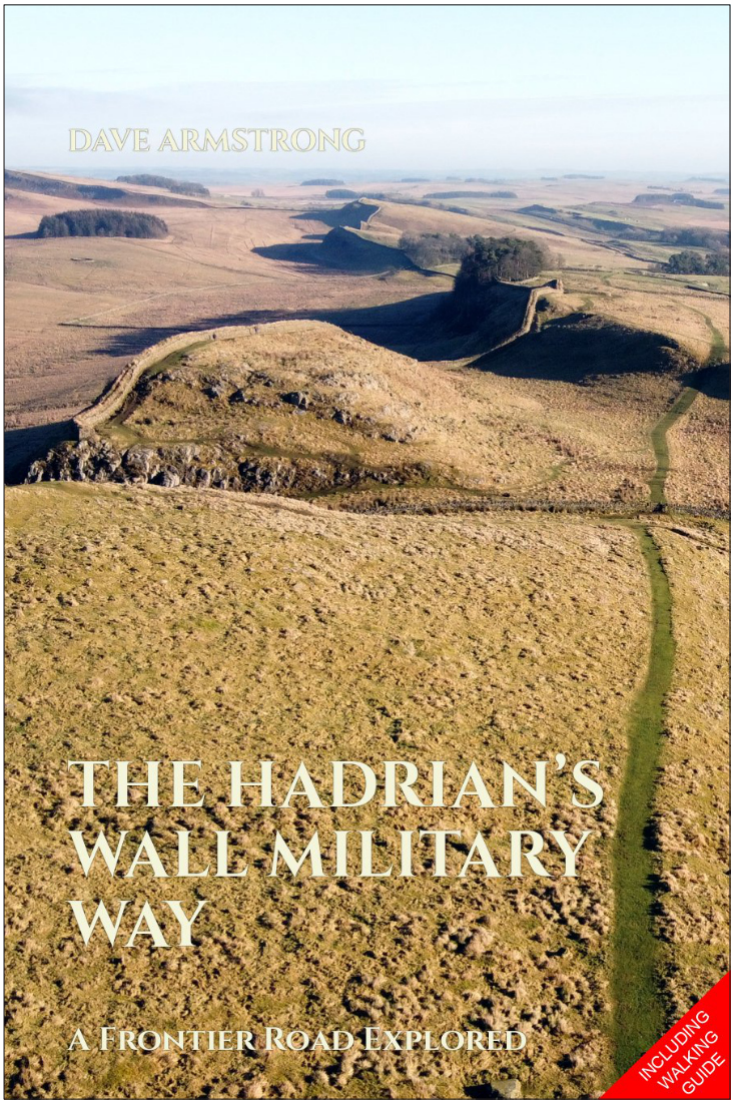
I'm sure Anthony would be interested in any correspondence on this subject or his wider passion of place names. Contact him through his own site Roman Era Names

Other bits and pieces

Book Release, The Hadrian's Wall Military Way, a Frontier Road Explored

By Dave Armstrong

Arising out of work to accurately locate, investigate, and record this road for the Northumberland section of the Associations Gazetteer, this book collates and summarises the previous excavations and findings of this poorly understood Roman road, analysing the road's location along a constrained corridor between Hadrian's Wall and the earthwork to its rear, the Vallum. The analysis reveals a clear pattern as to how the road was laid out relative to the other linear structures. The build up of the road, plus the many and impressive road engineering features such as terraces, cuttings, zig zags and inclines are considered, as is a likely construction date, leading to an inference as to the traffic the road could support and therefore its likely role as part of the frontier. The road is very visible and accessible, particularly in the centre crags section and is probably the most impressive example of Roman road engineering in Britain, one which is well worth taking the effort to visit and walk along, for which a walking guide is included.



Publishing is through Mike Bishop's Armatura Press who is generously offering RRRA members a £5 discount against the full price of £15 so members can buy their own copies for just £10 plus £2.50 P&P for UK delivery. Cheques should be made payable to 'M.C. Bishop' and sent to Flat 1, 39-41 High Street, Pewsey, Wiltshire SN9 5AF. Payment can also be made through PayPal, account mcbishop@pobox.com. This book will be released (with a taster of the content) at our next RRRA seminar on Thursday 19th August, book your (free) place through Eventbrite.

Other bits and pieces

Other news

By Dave Armstrong

Imperial Power in the Roman World

Although already underway you may be interested in this twice a week series of on-line talks coordinated by York St. John University taking us on a journey through Ancient Rome. Inspired in part by the new Nero exhibition at the British Museum, and recent thoughts on the nature of imperial authority, these mini-lectures from experts across the world will take a closer look at imperial power within the Roman Empire. Visit the blog post for up to date information on the full series. There is a catch up facility to watch previous talks in the series.

Draining the Thames

Alun Betty has spotted this programme on Channel 5 that speculates on what the bed of the river contains, possibly including the Roman crossings. This could link in with the enclosed article on Watling Street and Rob Entwistle's recent seminar on the origins of London. The programme is available on My5 catch up.

Bridge over Troubled Water: The Roman finds from the River Tees at Piercebridge in context

David Brear has noticed that this report has been released on ADS for downloading. Over a period of many years two local divers, the late Rolfe Mitchinson and Bob Middlemass located many small finds while exploring the remaining piles and structure of the Roman bridge for Dere Street over the Tees at Piercebridge. This report analyses the full assemblage and makes conclusions on the circumstances of their deposition, either ritual or simple rubbish disposal.

RRRA seminars

Our series of seminars continues after the successful *Watling Street, Stane Street and the origins of London* by Rob Entwistle. August's seminar on Thursday August 19th is slightly different being a virtual book release by Dave Armstrong: *The Hadrian's Wall Military Way, a Frontier Road Explored* as described elsewhere in this newsletter. In September we have Mike Haken drawing on his years of experience to help us in how to identify Roman roads and Geoff Lunn describing the roads around Colchester in October. Further seminars are being booked for future months to keep this informative series running. Keep an eye on updates on the seminar page of our website.

Itinera

Work has now started compiling *Itinera* Volume 2, and we are keen to receive submissions of papers. If you, or someone else you know, has Roman roads related material which may be suitable for publication in *Itinera*, please get in touch with the Editor, Rob Entwistle. Papers should be of a similar quality to those published in Volume 1, and the deadline for submissions is November 15th. Guidance notes are on our website. Copies of Volume 1 are still available for immediate dispatch, if you haven't already got your copy order through our website.

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Other news, cont.

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Geophysical survey near Stony Stratford, Northamptonshire

The RRRA has been invited to undertake geophysical survey on land adjacent to the Stratford Arm of the Grand Union Canal, close to the crossing of the River Great Ouse by Watling Street, in association with the Canal & River Trust, as well as the Services Archaeology and Heritage Association.

This large and special site is known to include extensive Roman period archaeological remains, including a possible temple complex with multiple other Roman buildings, a suspected Roman road as well as evidence of Bronze Age activity. Investigations of the site will take place between the 18th and 26th of September 2021, and will include gradiometer and resistivity survey, fieldwalking and trial trenching. This is therefore a perfect opportunity for some extra archaeological training.

Free camping is provided on an established camp site.

If you are interested in taking part, whether for the whole week or just a day or two, please email admin@wdhuk.com, making sure you mention you are a member of RRRA and using the reference Northamptonshire.

Talk, Roman Millom; Saturday September 18th

This talk may be of interest to Cumbrian and North Lancashire members at Holy Trinity Church Millom, 2 - 4:30. Entry is £5 on the door which includes some refreshments.

Driving the Great North Road in a Morgan

Carlton Reid has an article in the Mail on-line covering a journey he made combining his interests of Roman roads and cycling. The Roman heritage of the route is drawn out well with good descriptions. One to replicate in this years staycation?