

ROMAN·ROADS·RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER

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

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to our latest Newsletter; as always we hope that you find it both interesting and informative. In this edition, apart from news and recent discoveries, which include an intriguing probable fort near Chester, we bring you up to date with progress on data gathering for the Gazetteer, and take our first steps our new geophysics equipment, with opportunities for members to get involved.

Whilst in theory the newsletter is quarterly, we sometimes have to skip an edition or two because of a lack of content, hence 2018 skipped Spring and went straight to Summer, pretty much just as the weather did! Contributions for future newsletters are always welcomed, large or small, whether they be news of recent discoveries, accounts of personal research, notifications of excavations or fieldwork, an interesting image, or just an idea for any of the above. If you have anything of interest and related to Roman roads, send it in, either to me mike@romanroads.org or our membership secretary Dave Armstrong dave.armstrong@romanroads.org, or both!

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Recent Discoveries

A “new” road near Newcastle?

from Dave Armstrong

Over the winter pre-construction excavations in Benwell, to the west of Newcastle-upon-Tyne uncovered the remains of a road surface. The road is north of the Benwell Hadrian's Wall fort (*Condercum*) and seems to be aligned on where the north gate is thought to have been (now beneath modern development). Assuming that the road is Roman, it is less than clear whether it is just a stub leading

from the north gate, or part of a currently unknown road heading north. The fact that it is not entirely straight, changing alignment part way across the site, may potentially point to the latter. Unfortunately, given that the Newcastle conurbation stretches for another three miles northwards we may never know, although we await the archaeological report with great interest.



The road from Binchester's north east gate?

from Dave Armstrong

Now part of the wider Auckland Project, the annual excavations are underway at Binchester (*Vinovium*) in County Durham, led by David Mason and supervised by staff from Northern Archaeological Associates. This year the area around the north east gateway of the early fort is being excavated. Not only will this help with dating the large early fort but will also give more information of the overlying vicus that grew around the later reduced size fort.

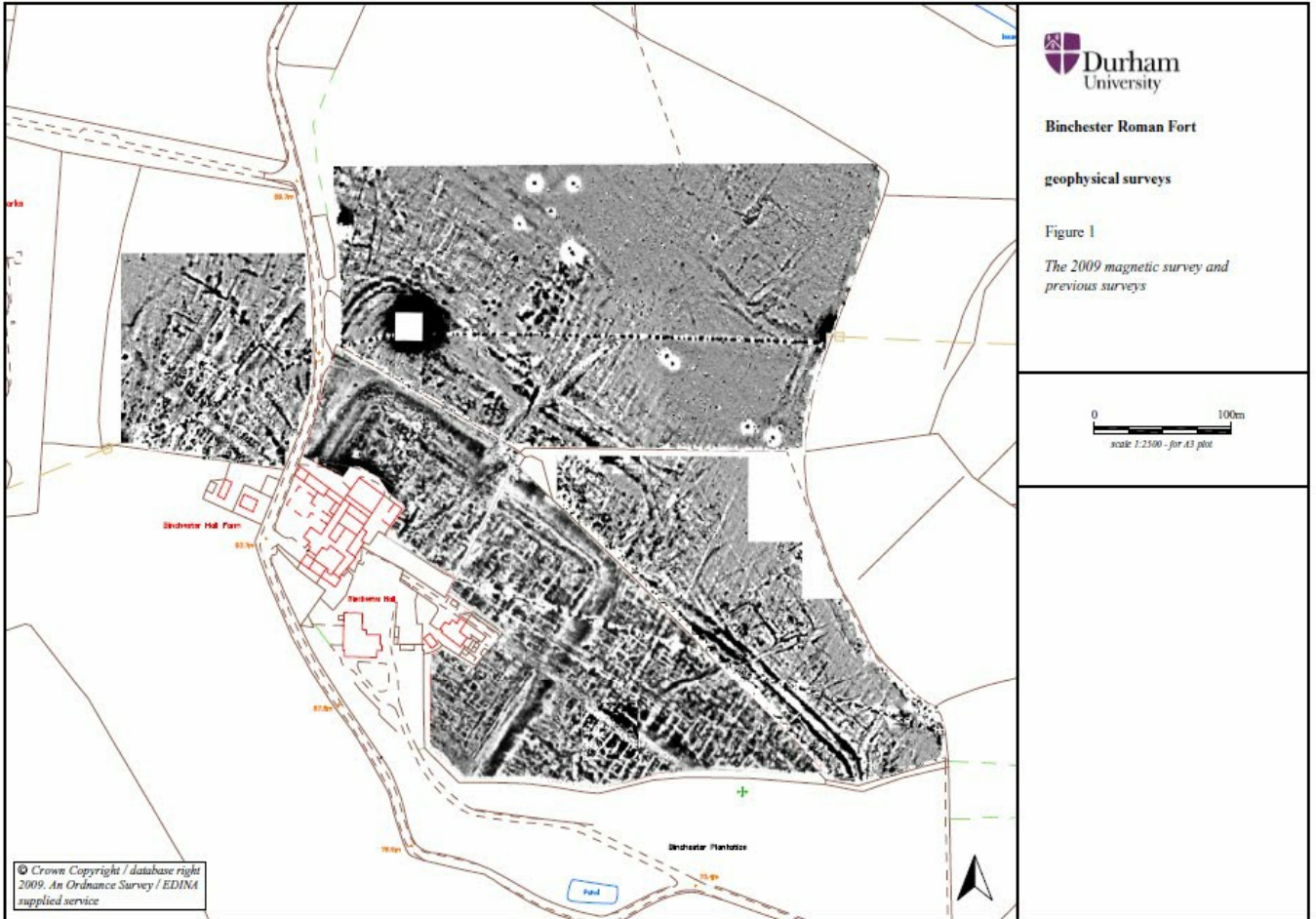
The excavations have confirmed the road heading north eastwards from the fort, already suggested by both geophysics (see image on p.3) and aerial

photography. As in the case of Benwell on p.2, it is unclear how far this road progressed, whether just to the outlying parts of the settlement or perhaps further, although LiDAR does suggest a possible line heading further north east from the known part, but this also seems to peter out about half a mile further north of the fort in the wooded valley of the Bell Burn. Robin Walton found some evidence of a road running from Binchester east towards Hartlepool and it is always possible that this road is the western end of it, although this remains quite speculative.

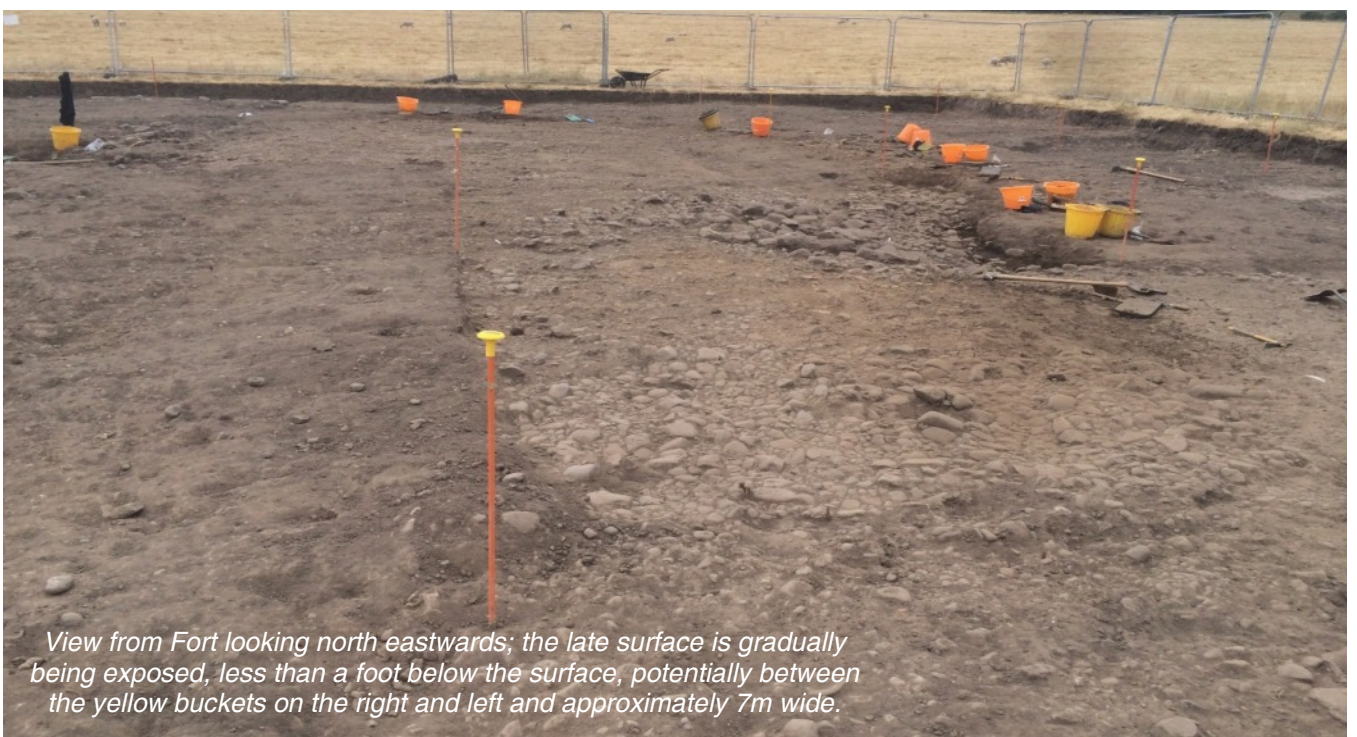
Continued on p.3

Recent Discoveries continued....

Continued from p.2



Composite plot of geophysical surveys at Vinovium from 2009 and previously



Continued on p.4

Recent Discoveries continued...

Continued from p.3

Recent literature on the Binchester site has asserted that this was the most significant location during the late Roman occupation in this region and that it was a hub of roads. However only the Dere Street (RR8) road is established with reasonable certainty, and can be clearly seen on the geophysics (see above) forming the *via principalis* of the fort. It has often been suggested that it seems unlikely that a busy main road would pass through the centre of a fort and that there ought to be have been an a by-pass road skirting around it, a comment that has also been made about the site at Healam Bridge further south, where Dere Street also passes through its centre. To date, no evidence of such a by-pass has been found at either site, which per-

haps begs the question “just how much traffic passed along this road?”

The new protective housing over the bath house at Binchester has been completed and is now open. Internally it is decorated in colours and style typical of bath house wall plaster. Well worth a visit if you are in the area.

Unusually dry and hot weather has baked the ground hard and excavation is probably behind schedule with maybe the earlier layers not being reached in the time available. Excavations are thought to be ongoing until the 4th August.

A probable Roman road and fort near Chester *Information from David Ratledge*



As part of the assessment of Roman roads in Cheshire for the RRRRA gazetteer, David Ratledge and Neil Buckley were looking at the probable Roman road heading south from Chester to the east of the river Dee, approximately on the course of the modern B5130 and roughly parallel to RR6 which is on the western side of the river.

During analysis of lidar imagery just south of Huntington, they spotted what looks clearly like the

classic playing card shaped rampart of a Roman fort, measuring about 170m x 130m externally. The fort respects David and Neil’s proposed road alignment and is only about 1.5 miles from Chester’s legionary fortress. Little is known about military occupation in the area prior to the fortress’s foundation in c.75 A.D., and it has to be considered highly likely that this fort pre-dates the fortress, perhaps being pre-Flavian. The site has been added to Cheshire HER.

News items

GDPR - Data Protection

Dave Armstrong, Membership Secretary

From other organisations you interact with you'll have heard about the implementation of GDPR legislation regarding the control of personal data. We too have taken steps to ensure your data is secure. Through the membership form new members now have to confirm that they're happy for RRRRA to hold their personal details, and send out mailings to them. Daft as it sounds, we actually need to be sure we have your permission to use your details to send you a newsletter, although it would be pretty pointless being a member if you didn't! As you renew your membership I'm now confirming with you that you're still happy to continue on that basis.

Be assured your data is safe and not shared with anyone outside of RRRRA. Within RRRRA, as membership secretary I securely retain a master database and Mike as Chairman gets a copy of that each month to use as an email address list to send out newsletters and other mailings. Your data goes no further. If a member is wanting to contact others in their area I mail those asking if they want their email address passing on. For those who do not renew their membership, their details are retained for a three-month period of grace after which their data is deleted and they will no longer receive newsletters or other RRRRA information.

Robin Walton: 1st August 1923 - 14th September 2017

Jean Woodward, RRRRA Member

RRRA member Robin Walton was a Coxhoe, County Durham man. His first job after school was as an office clerk, working for West Cornforth Tar Works; then for the National Coal Board until retire-

ment, working at Bowburn, Trimdon Colliery and Tursdale workshops.

Robin was a keen amateur archaeologist, and until the last days of his life, would go out exploring most days when dry, looking for Roman roads, deserted mediaeval villages, and the traces of many other facets of life in former days, such as watermills, with which he was particularly fascinated. When it was wet he would go and do research in the library in Durham. He was very much a family man and did much research over the years to produce a comprehensive family tree as well his other historical investigations.

Robin's two greatest contributions to the archaeological record were the listing of Garmondsway deserted mediaeval village, in 1957; and the tracing and recording of the Roman road from Binchester to Hartlepool.

But Robin had many other talents and interests also. He was a very gifted artist, and worked in many artistic media, including pencil drawings, watercolours and oil paintings. He produced large paintings. His book *Durham Churches*, now sadly out of print, which he illustrated with pencil drawings is an absolute gem.

Best of all, maybe, he was a great companion, great fun, and always very young at heart, and is sadly missed by many close friends as well as by his family.





The Ordnance Survey Roman Road Files Digitisation Project - Update

Mike Haken

The Historic England Archive in Swindon hold a collection of files on Roman roads in England, created by the Ordnance Survey's Archaeology Division between c.1947 and 1983 (some files were updated by RCHME & English Heritage after this date). These files remain one of the major sources of baseline data for Roman roads in Britain. As most members will be aware Historic England are currently digitising these files for the exclusive use of RRRRA members for research purposes and I am pleased to announce that the first batch, the so called RRX roads, has now been completed. These are the roads which had no Margary number, either because they were discovered after Margary's death, or because Margary was not convinced by the evidence. The Ordnance Survey allocated RRX numbers to these roads consecutively as they were recorded, bearing no relationship to Margary's system of numbering, a confusing and unsatisfactory state of affairs. As the work on the gazetteer progresses, RRX roads that are proven to be Roman (unfortunately most of them aren't!) will be awarded a new number according to Margary's system, the number being followed by (x) to denote one awarded by RRRRA, and not Margary himself. This process has already started in Yorkshire, for example RRX135, the road heading ENE from Petuaria, has been renumbered RR290(x).

The individual elements to each file have been photographed at very high resolution by a specialist team, and the original 'tiff' files will be made available to members only on request by means of DVD, simply because of large file sizes. A typical reproduction of an RAF aerial photo is, for example, 200MB, and trying to build an online means of downloading these large files is probably not realistic, at least for the time being. However, to make access more viable, the individual images have also been collated as lower resolution pdfs, usually one for each road, although some larger files will be split. The largest of these so far is 143 MB.

How to access the pdf versions

These pdfs will be made available on a members-only web page in due course, although as a tempo-

rary measure I have made them available online by clicking the links on the next three pages. For some reason the links are extremely slow to register once clicked, so just be patient and wait for the hourglass mouse icon to appear, after which the file should appear as a web page, from which you can download the pdf if you wish. You may get a warning box asking you if you trust the website, just click yes. You should then get a login box appear, enter these details

Login details removed from open-access newsletter- access is for RRRRA members only

The eagle eyed amongst you will notice that there are gaps in the list – this is because the missing road files are all in Wales and Scotland and were sent to the respective Royal Commissions when the OS Archaeology Division was closed in 1983. Despite this theoretical distribution of the files, Historic England have still managed to end up with some of the files for Welsh RRX roads such as RRX74, Pantglas to Castell Collen.

One puzzle that has arisen from this work is RRX83. The contents of the file for RRX83 turned out to be a single item that should have been in the file for RR83, Binchester to Chester-le-Street. Whilst there was an index at one time, only part of it survives and that does not include the entry for RRX83 (see last file in list), so if anyone knows what RRX83 should be, please let us know!

Copyright

Since most of this material is still in copyright, a condition set by Historic England is that these files are to be used by RRRRA members only and cannot be passed on to other parties, or published, without further permissions being sought. If you do wish to share any of this material with others, please contact Mike Haken first.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

It has become clear that copies of many of the aerial photographs that have been used to identify Roman roads are not in these files, even if the photographs form part of the Historic England Archive. This issue occurs particularly when the pho-

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The Ordnance Survey Roman Road Files Digitisation Project - Update

Mike Haken

Continued from p.6

tographs are relatively recent, and taken after the files were still being updated. For example, the photographs that told us that the Roman crossing of the River Derwent near Stamford Bridge (East Riding) was a mile downstream from its traditional location, are not (as far as we know) in any OS road file, but we still need copies for our archive.

Historic England have agreed to copy these images for us, once the task of copied the OS files is complete, unfortunately there appears to be no way of identifying these photographs by searching the HE Archive index. This leaves no other alternative but to check through references to them in the files held on Roman roads in each local Historic Environment Record, and compile lists of reference numbers for each road. These lists can then be checked off against each OS road file as it is digitised, leaving a list of the additional aerial photographs that need to be digitised.

There are currently 84 HERs in England, and we are therefore looking for volunteers from across the

country who would be willing to visit their nearby HERs and compile the necessary lists. In some HERs this task may only take a couple of hours, in others it might take a day or two. The task would ordinarily be part of the programme of data gathering from HERs that has already started, being undertaken in Durham by Dave Armstrong and in Cheshire by Neil Buckley, something we intended to progress across the country very gradually over the coming years. However this part of that bigger exercise (see update on p.10) has now moved to the top of the priority list, and we need to get as much done as possible before the end of September.

So, to paraphrase the famous Field Marshall Haig poster; **Your Association Needs YOU!**

If you think this is something that you might be able to help with, contact Mike Haken - mike@romanroads.org

The RRX Files for England - with a few strays!

File name	Counties	Route
RRX001.pdf	Norfolk	Billingford to Toftrees
RRX002.pdf	South Yorkshire	Conisbrough to Shelbrooke
RRX003.pdf	Devon	Windwhistle Hill to Honiton
RRX004.pdf	Northamptonshire, Leicestershire	Northampton to Leicester
RRX005.pdf	Shropshire	Wroxeter to Rushton & The Wrekin
RRX006.pdf	Dorset, Devon	Grimstone to Exeter
RRX007.pdf	Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire	Little Chester to Stanton-le-Dale
RRX008.pdf	Northamptonshire	Kettering to Corby
RRX009.pdf	Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire	East Bridgeford (Margidunum) to Chesterfield
RRX010.pdf	Hampshire	Winchester to London
RRX011.pdf	Gwent	Bryn to Sirhowy
RRX012.pdf	Cumbria	Bowness to Maryport
RRX014.pdf	Nottinghamshire	Ollerton to Blyth
RRX015.pdf	Isle of Wight	Gurnard Bay to Gatcombe?
RRX016.pdf	East Sussex	Brighton to Glyndebourne Crossway
RRX017.pdf	Essex	Elmstead Market to St Osyth
RRX018.pdf	Avon	Rangeworthy to Redwick (Severn Estuary)
RRX019.pdf	Bristol, Somerset	Sea Mills to Hornblotton

Continued on p.8



The Ordnance Survey Roman Road Files Digitisation Project The RRX Files for England - with a few strays!

Continued from p.7

File name	Counties	Route
RRX020.pdf	Shropshire	Ruckley to Longnor Green
RRX021.pdf	London, Buckinghamshire	London to Stokenchurch
RRX022.pdf	Norfolk	Saham Toney to Venta Icenorum
RRX023.pdf	Suffolk	several minor claimed roads in Suffolk
RRX024.pdf	Shropshire, Staffordshire	Chesterton to Wroxeter
RRX025.pdf	North Yorkshire	Overborough to Bainbridge
RRX026.pdf	Kent	Penshurst to Cowden
RRX027.pdf	Cheshire, Derbyshire, Greater Manchester	Stockport to Melandra
RRX028.pdf	Cheshire, Staffordshire	Chesterton to Chester
RRX029.pdf	York, North Yorkshire, East Riding of Yorkshire	York to Stamford Bridge
RRX030.pdf	East Riding of Yorkshire	York to Throlam
RRX031.pdf	North Yorkshire	Girsby to Huntcliffe
RRX032.pdf	Norfolk, Lincolnshire	Brisley to Cowbit
RRX033.pdf	Somerset	Charterhouse to Uphill
RRX034.pdf	Lincolnshire	Sleaford to Lincoln
RRX037.pdf	Dorset, Wiltshire	Semley to Penpits
RRX038.pdf	Northumberland	Housesteads to Stanegate
RRX039.pdf	buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire	Harmondsworth to Fleet Marston
RRX043.pdf	Monmouthshire	Pontypool to Aberdare
RRX045.pdf	Cheshire	Stretton to Appleton
RRX046.pdf	Devon	Broadoak to Woodbury Common
RRX047.pdf	Devon	Three Horseshoes to ?
RRX049.pdf	Gloucestershire	Dymock to
RRX050.pdf	Herefordshire	Blackwardine to Tedstone Wafer
RRX051.pdf	Herefordshire	Tedstone Wafer to Hanley William
RRX052.pdf	Herefordshire, Worcestershire	Kenchester to Worcester
RRX053.pdf	Cornwall	Ludgven to Porthleven
RRX054_1.pdf	Suffolk	Ixworth to Icklingham (2 pdf files)
RRX054_2.pdf	Suffolk	
RRX055.pdf	Worcestershire	Grimley to
RRX056.pdf	Northumberland	Chesters to
RRX057.pdf	Shropshire	Greensforge to Uxacona or Wroxeter
RRX059.pdf	Norfolk	North Pickenbarn, R33b to Toftrees and RR39
RRX060.pdf	Devon	Okehampton to Stratton
RRX062.pdf	Norfolk	Several unauthenticated roads in Norfolk
RRX066.pdf	Bristol	5 postulated roads in Bristol
RRX071.pdf	Somerset	Bath to Street
RRX073.pdf	Shropshire, Gwynnedd	Lydham to Dolgellau
RRX074.pdf	Powys, Gwynnedd	Pantglas to Castell Collen
RRX076.pdf	Powys, Herefordshire	Castell Collen to Leintwardine
RRX082.pdf	Powys, Shropshire	Unauthenticated Roman roads in Powys
RRX083.pdf	?	Part of RR83 file - Brancepeth to Durham
RRX090.pdf	Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire	Manchester to Melandra

Continued on p.9



The Ordnance Survey Roman Road Files Digitisation Project The RRX Files for England - with a few strays!

Continued from p.8

File name	Counties	Route
RRX091.pdf	Derbyshire, Cheshire	Buxton to Stockport
RRX092.pdf	Derbyshire	Melandra to Disley
RRX097.pdf	Norfolk	Cawston to Bacton/Mundesley
RRX098.pdf	Lincolnshire	Sleaford to Tattershall
RRX099.pdf	Lincolnshire	Weston to Gedney
RRX100.pdf	Lincolnshire	Halmer Gate to
RRX101.pdf	Norfolk	Barwick or RR33b to Great Walsingham
RRX102.pdf	Essex	Radwinter to Braintree
RRX103.pdf	Essex	Chelmsford to Ongar
RRX104.pdf	Essex, London	Chelmsford to London
RRX105.pdf	Essex	Chelmsford to Heybridge
RRX106.pdf	Essex	Chelmsford to Canvey Island
RRX107.pdf	Essex	Heybridge to
RRX108.pdf	North Yorkshire	Green Hammerton to Copgrove & Markington
RRX110.pdf	Northumberland	Newcastle to Netherwitton
RRX111.pdf	Norfolk	Gooderstone to Shipdham
RRX112.pdf	Essex	Stanway to Great Braxted
RRX113.pdf	Essex	Colchester to Mistley & a road at Little Bromley
RRX114.pdf	Essex	Colchester to Beaumont Quay
RRX115.pdf	Essex	Elmstead to Alresford
RRX116.pdf	Essex	Colchester to Mersea Island
RRX119.pdf	Essex	Miscellaneous and dubious roads
RRX120.pdf	Durham	Lanchester to Chester-le-Street
RRX122.pdf	Cumbria	Carlisle to Kirkbride
RRX123.pdf	Cumbria	Dean to Moresby
RRX124.pdf	Oxfordshire	Through Swalcliffe Lea to
RRX125.pdf	Derbyshire, South Yorkshire	Hathersage to Sheffield
RRX126.pdf	West Yorkshire	Unauthenticated Roman roads in West Yorkshire
RRX127.pdf	Northamptonshire	Unauthenticated Roman roads in Northamptonshire
RRX128.pdf	Somerset	Ilchester to Ham Hill
RRX129.pdf	Oxfordshire	Unauthenticated Roman roads in Oxfordshire
RRX130.pdf	Derbyshire	Unauthenticated Roman roads in Derbyshire
RRX131.pdf	Staffordshire, Derbyshire	Unauthenticated Roman roads in Staffordshire
RRX132.pdf	Durham	Unauthenticated Roman roads in Durham
RRX133.pdf	Cumbria	Unauthenticated Roman roads in Cumbria
RRX134.pdf	West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire	Bradford to Doncaster
RRX135.pdf	East Riding of Yorkshire	Brough to River Hull (now RR290(x))
RRX136.pdf	East Riding of Yorkshire	Bishop Burton to South Newbald
RRX140.pdf	Cheshire	Chester to Middlewich
RRX141.pdf	Cheshire	Farndon to Tilsdon
RRXindex.pdf	INDEX	Incomplete

This project is expected to continue for at least another three months, and files will be released in monthly batches. If you have any questions regarding these files, or difficulties accessing them, please contact Mike Haken - mike@romanroads.org

The RRRA Geophysics Programme - an update and how we need your help.

Mike Haken

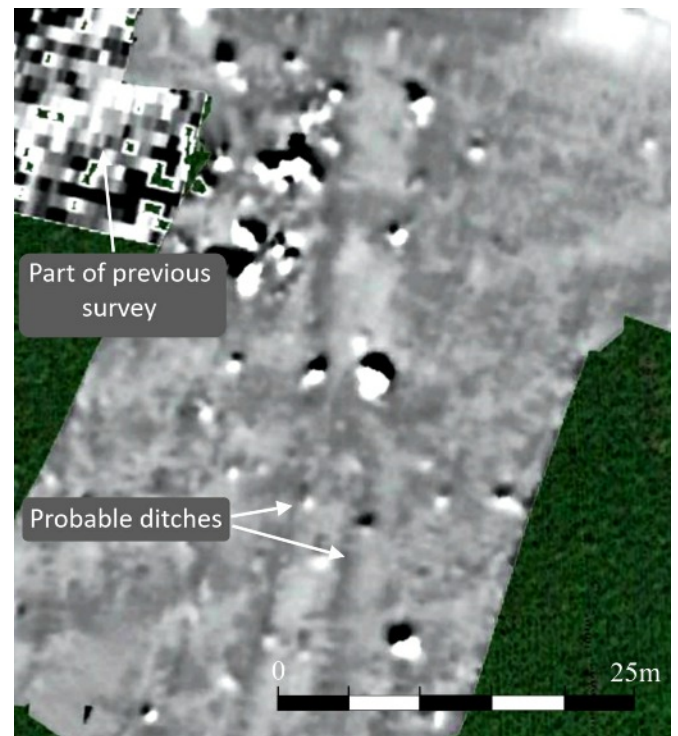
It is now over two years since RRRA received a substantial bequest with the specific condition that it be used to purchase survey equipment to help identify and understand Roman roads and other Roman sites. The original intention was to purchase a twin probe magnetometer which could later be upgraded to a four probe cart. Unfortunately, the specific product we intended to purchase never actually went into production, resulting in a long delay whilst we determined what best to do. We are extremely fortunate to have been helped by James Lyall, of Geophys.biz, who has 25 years of experience in archaeological geophysics, and over the last twelve months James has helped us research available equipment so that we could select the most suitable to our needs. Given that the quickest and most efficient method of conducting a geophysical survey of a large area is a gradiometer array mounted on a cart, that is the route we decid-



James Lyall trialling our magnetometer

ed to take, although we needed a unit that would be as easy as possible for volunteers to use. Finally, the wait is over! We are now the proud owners of a Sensys Magneto MXPDA 5 channel system. This German made unit is equipped with its own GPS, so there is no need to lay out a grid. It can be set with its five probes at 25cm intervals,

for greater resolution, or at 50cm intervals where its five probes make each pass 2.5m wide, not the 2m of most of its rivals. It can also be extended and upgraded to be towed behind a vehicle. Over the last couple of weeks James has put it through a series of trials. The results are excellent and have confirmed that it is much more flexible in use than many of the other units on the market.



Two weeks ago we used it on the Londesborough Estate in the East Riding to assess a feature on the supposed line of RR29, a road that is believed to run from Petuaria (Brough on Humber) to Malton, yet with very little tangible evidence. The feature is thought to be the one found in the early 18th century which, thanks to the antiquarian Francis Drake, became the foundation for the idea that such a road existed. The possible agger is easily visible as a ridge on the ground, and runs beneath rig and furrow, but we needed to know the feature's original width, before ploughing has distorted it, and whether or not it originally had ditches. As you can see from the image above, the results are of much greater resolution than that of previous work nearby and two clear linear features are visible, almost

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The RRRA Geophysics Programme - an update and how we need your help.

Mike Haken

Continued from p.10

certainly ditches. Unfortunately, they are only 4m apart at the southern end of the plot, and just under 5m at the northern end, rather irregular. What's more, many modern researchers, David Ratledge and the late Hugh Toller included, have been highly sceptical about any road less than 5m. So is this a part of Roman road? This was just a trial, and from a survey of such a small area it is still impossible to determine, one way or the other. Clearly, we need to try to track the feature both northwards and southwards, which we hope to do at some point in the near future.

How You Can Help

Of course, RR29 is only one of many roads across the country where further research is required, not to mention the numerous Roman sites along the roads that have never been surveyed, all of which are potential transport nodes. The number of these unsurveyed sites is actually quite staggering.

Dave Armstrong's article in this volume on recent survey work and excavations at Binchester in Co. Durham (p.2) is an example of the potential value to us of geophysical surveys of forts and other Roman sites, not to mention their value to the wider archaeological community. To this end, we have begun compiling a list of potential survey sites right across the country, and one of our members, Albert Hills, has volunteered to maintain it.

Give us your suggestions

We are sure that every one of our members can think of at least one site for potential survey, whether it is an unproven length of road, or an important settlements or fort that has never had a geophysical survey or much excavation. Whilst we will eventually need more information about each site, such as the landowner and likelihood of getting permission, at this stage all we need is its location (including OS grid reference) and what might be learned from such a survey. Albert can be contacted on hills39a60@yahoo.co.uk.

This information will then enable us to prioritise the suggested sites and develop a programme of work across the country. Which begs the question, "who will do all these surveys?"

Take part!

Our aim is to create and train small groups of volunteers spread across the country to carry them out. This is your chance to get involved in what may well be the country's largest ever coordinated programme of archaeological geophysical survey, certainly the largest carried out entirely by volunteers. Just think of what you might find in the process, not just new lengths of road but the layout and features of Roman sites that no-one else has seen for over a millenium.

At this stage, we are looking for volunteers who might be prepared to lead one of these groups. You will need to be reasonably fit, willing to look after the equipment for perhaps a couple of months at a time, and have a vehicle suitable for transporting the equipment (most medium to large cars are big enough, as it all disassembles).

We will be organising training sessions for our volunteers as soon as we can, although we can't make any firm plans about this until we know how many volunteers we have, where they live, and their availability.

If you think you might be interested in getting involved, either as a volunteer or a group leader, contact Albert Hills (hills39a60@yahoo.co.uk) or Mike Haken (mike@romanroads.org).



The Roads of Roman Britain Gazetteer.

A summary of what's been achieved so far

Mike Haken

Since the gazetteer was launched with Yorkshire earlier this year, you would be forgiven for thinking that there had been no further progress, except the addition of David Ratledge's Cumbria pages in a temporary form. Appearances are definitely deceptive!

For almost a year now, Dave Armstrong (henceforth to be known as The Guinea Pig), has been gradually assimilating ALL the known data and previously published material in Durham and he recounts his experiences in the piece below. He has now just about finished and we will soon be ready to input the accumulated data into our GIS and start preparing the individual web pages. He'll then be ready to tackle Northumberland (I haven't told him yet!) slightly ahead of schedule.

Earlier this year, Neil Buckley, working closely with David Ratledge, started to tackle Cheshire, with the aim of getting the North West Region fully online by

early next year. As Dave found in Durham, whilst the "accepted" map is almost right, there are a few tweaks to be made to it, along with a couple of additions, not least of which being the probable fort they discovered near Chester (see p.4).

The plan is to gradually expand our completed area, building on the experiences of existing volunteers as we recruit new ones, expanding coverage into Scotland and the Midlands by 2020. Having said that, it is important that we soon begin a second area of coverage in the southern half of England. Much work in Wales has already been completed by the various Welsh Archaeological Trusts, and our approach will of necessity be slightly different - more about that in due course.

If after you've read Dave's piece below you think that this project is one you would like to make a contribution to, please do get in touch. mike@romanroads.org

Experiences of a new Data Gatherer

Dave Armstrong

When Mike invited me to summarise the Durham roads for inclusion in the Gazetteer I thought; no problem, I've already got all the information - what else could there be? However, once I got into it (and it is infectious once you get going) it has been an eye opener for me. Working as a volunteer in the County Durham Archaeology Office gave me access to the HER. I found that there's been quite a few watching briefs, pre-construction geophysical surveys and trial trenching as well as other more random discoveries, none of which I had previously been aware of.

While the Durham map hasn't changed very much so far, credibility and confidence in the accuracy of the alignments has improved significantly. Systematically working from one end of a road to the other has also thrown up some apparent anomalies. For example; the well-established Roman road RR820 between Bowes and Binchester is mostly made up of two long straight alignments, but then suddenly for its last few north-eastern miles, and for no obvious topographical reason, it is said to deviate off to one side along the approximate course of a less than direct modern trackway. It just doesn't feel right and is something to work on in the future.

I'm also finding that where Dere Street (RR8) has actually been precisely located it is not always on the lines surveyed by Henry MacLauchlan in the 1850s or the Ordnance survey, can be a significant distance off to one side. These may seem like details but are intriguing none the less and important to our understanding of alignments and the accuracy with which they were set out.

I've had a lot of satisfaction out of collating the Durham pages. The map of the Roman roads has been clarified and extra data points added. The RRRA's members and the wider public, are getting the Gazetteer pages, I'm now much better informed than before and the County Office are getting the benefit of my joining the dots on their information with the extra things they weren't aware of also being blended in. Winners all round. You do have to approach this in a very systematic manner to avoid repeating and doubling back while working through the processes, but the results are well worth the effort. You don't have to take on a full county, you can start with just one road. Get in touch with Mike and have a go, you will find it extremely rewarding.