ROMAN·ROADS·RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

A Charity registered in England and Wales, no. 1163854

VOL. 1 NEWSLETTER SPRING 2016

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

Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of our quarterly Newsletter, which all our members will now receive, keeping you in touch with recent research, excavation, and events organised by ourselves and by other groups. We are happy to consider any short article or paper for possible inclusion - contact the Editor.

In Brief……..

Roman Roads Research Review

If you know of any recent work related to Roman roads that you think our members should be made aware of, please let us know

R·R·R·A becomes a CIO

What Is A CIO?

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) is a relatively new legal entity created to allow charities to take advantage of the protections to trustees provided by becoming a limited company, without having to deal with Companies House. All regulation is through the Charity Commission. Only Registered Charities can be CIOs. In our case, the advice from the Charity Commission was that we should register as a CIO from the first.

Charity Registration

The members present at the AGM on 31st October 2015 unanimously agreed to wind up the unincorporated body known as RRRA, and transfer all its assets to the new CIO (still known as RRRA).

The process of registration of RRRA as a charity in England and Wales was completed in October 2015, registration number 1163854. This had to be done in something of a hurry in order to ensure that RRRA could receive a sizable bequest of approximately £65,000.

What effect will this have on the Association's activities?

Very little. The Management Committee have now all become Trustees of the new charity, and there are slight changes to the reporting we now have to do every year on behalf of the charity. We aim to recruit additional trustees in due course.

What effect will this have on the members?

None. Subscriptions will remain at the same level as previously, and existing memberships will simply be transferred over; members still having the same voting rights.We are now going to introduce a group membership for other societies and organisations, which will then also have a single vote as if they were an individual member.

What Impact will this have on the Association itself?

Becoming a registered charity gives us credibility, not just with the public but most importantly with potential funding bodies, both in the UK and abroad. It allows us to maximise our income by means of Gift Aid, gaining an additional 25% on donations and subscriptions from UK income Tax payers. It also allows us to access preferential rates for many software and IT products and services, including Paypal.

Excursion to Ribchester

We are planning an excursion to Bremetenacum Veteranorum (Ribchester) in either late June or early July, to coincide with an excavation to be conducted by UCLAN (University of Central Lancashire). There will be a guided tour of the museum, fort and bathhouse, and we hope to be able to arrange permissions to look at the probable bridging point with a view to undertaking a geophysical survey later this year. The tour and museum admission will be free for RRRA members, non-members £4.

If you are interested in going, please contact Mike Turpin and let him know whether you have any preference as to a weekend or weekday visit (and if there any dates you can't make) - we aim to ensure that as many of our members as possible are able to attend.

R·R·R·A members in the news

As many members will be aware, Hugh Toller based in London, David Ratledge in Lancashire, and Bryn Gethin in Warwickshire, have been busy making new discoveries of Roman roads and sites using LiDAR data from the Environment Agency. The Agency recently issued a press release about David and Hugh's work, and as a result an article appeared in the Times on January 1st, and similar articles have cropped up in many places online. It's great that they have received some well deserved publicity for their work.

The Journey So Far

Mike Turpin discusses the progress we have made with our online database

It is now a year since RRRA was first launched (Jan 2015) and just over a year since the idea of creating a database specifically for Roman Road Research was first mooted as an idea. In that time, the idea has developed into a working prototype which is already almost ready for testing. I have been asked to write a short account of the development of the database project over it's first year which is both informative and entertaining.

I don't know who came up with this idea; we are, after all talking about databases and on-line computer applications! The original concept seemed quite straightforward. Create a website, connect it with a database which everybody can access and provide an interface suitable for searching by anybody with an interest in Roman Roads. Having agreed to take on the challenges we are still engaged with 'works in progress' because the project is proving far more complex (Mike Haken says interesting!) than either of us first anticipated.

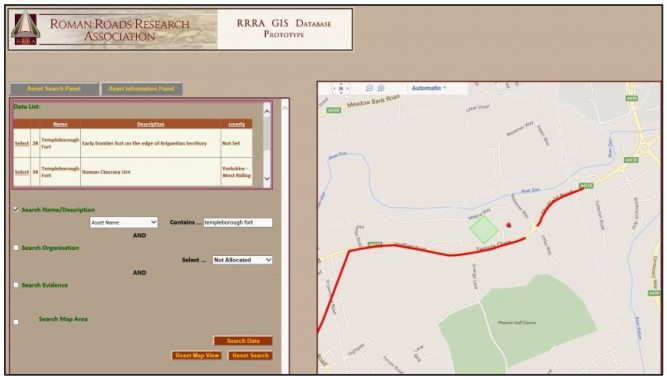
The aim from the beginning was to create a database of not only roads data but also other assets such as Roman sites and finds which can be associated with the road network. In other words we are interested in the interaction between the roads and the wider landscape. It was recognised that there had to be some way of placing these assets within that landscape. We needed to plot the contents of the database graphically on a map.

Mike and I were grateful for the opportunities to visit both the West Yorkshire HER and the South Yorkshire SMR in order to get some initial advice and some idea of how they worked. This immediately raised the issue of finding information and how this might be applied to our data entry system, once it was developed. Sample data sets from both organisations were in different file formats and the amount of detail stored was presented in different ways. Our original intention was to devise some method of bulk transfer of information in which hundreds of individual records could be loaded into our system at the click of a button. Oh that life was that simple! At the moment it is looking very much that we will need to focus on each individual asset and use the most appropriate technique to enter the comprehensive range of information that will make the exercise worthwhile for future research. In many cases we will need to approach information providers who may not be in a position to provide very much in a digital format and we will need to resort to reading individual paper records for each asset.

The next challenge was to look at how the assets could be presented on some kind of mapping system. Both the West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire systems incorporated industry standard GIS (Graphical Information System) software, beyond the financial scope of RRRA. The solution was to look at Quantum GIS (QGIS) which is an Open Source program available to freely download from the internet. The idea was to save the results of a search on our website in a compatible format and then load the file into QGIS in order to study the spatial relationships between various assets. (Have a look where they are on the map!!).

Initial trials with this approach seemed promising; however it meant that anybody wanting to use our system would need to know how to use the QGIS interface. QGIS is relatively straight forward to learn if you are a committed computer buff but an archaeologist researching their subject might find this a barrier to convenient use.

The second model we tried was to directly work with Bing maps. Microsoft provides a developers' tool which allows objects to be plotted on a map object using mapping resources provided by Bing. This is proving a flexible and immediately accessible alternative to QGIS for information retrieval on the website.



This illustration above is taken from a prototype version of the website and shows a search of the Templeborough Fort area between Sheffield and Rotherham.

Most other sites, such as the Welsh Archwilio on-line system, only display assets as points. We have adopted points, lines and areas. The example shows a red dot near the centre of the image representing a Roman finds site. The green quadrangular shape is an indication of where the fort was and the red lines represent sections of the Margary 710 road between Doncaster and Brough, all using data from the South Yorkshire SMR. It was obvious to us that a road must be represented by a line showing its route rather than a single point!

We are now reasonably confident that, together with a facility to provide data for use in other GIS programs such as QGIS, we have now arrived at a technology model which will do the job.

So why isn't the project finished and ready to add data? One of the reasons is time. Working on a voluntary basis, time has to be found to do the programming and certainly

priorities shifted during the summer months when, for instance, geophysics took over at Roman sites such as Aldborough and even looking for Roman forts and roads!

The other major factor which has involved a lot of planning and research has been what information we need to store about each archaeological asset and how this information should be presented. Fortunately (we thought!!) help was at hand. Historic England promotes MIDAS-Heritage and the documentation can be found at

https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/midas-heritage/

Click on the link if you dare!!

MIDAS provides a set of guidelines for the recording of archaeological data. A decision was made, in common with the work of other organisations and websites, that we should be 'MIDAS compatible' so that RRRA can be seen to be adopting a thoroughly professional approach. MIDAS is very comprehensive but tries not to be prescriptive. Consequently, we (and others) have found that the results are sometimes confusing, often open to interpretation, and not ideally suited to the way that relational databases actually work. We have done our best to ensure compatibility however, and are confident that our system will be no less MiDAS compatible than Historic Englands own systems. We would appreciate any comments or observations about this issue.

So where are we at the moment on our journey?

What was a road curving with many blind bends, is beginning to straighten out and we can see the way ahead. (Does that sound like a Roman Road??)

The database still needs some work on it to provide all the categories of information which we think will be necessary. This area has also provided challenges. Mike Haken has spent a lot of time analysing terms such as 'evidence' and 'type' of asset. (More than 40 types of evidence can be identified and over 650 asset types!)

We will shortly be at a point where 'beta' testing can start. In essence, this means testing the database in action, both in terms of data input and search output. This will involve two key areas of skill. We need volunteers who are prepared to pull together all the necessary information about particular assets, whether a road, fort, villa or any other of the 670 odd site types! The second key area will be volunteers who are prepared to enter this information in a coherent and consistent manner, so it can be accessed easily by the wider users of the system for research. Ideally the same volunteer might find the information and add it to the database.

We will soon be running a workshop to introduce the skills and techniques required and to identify a volunteer group to start loading information to the system. If you think you might be interested please contact Mike Turpin. When we have a group identified we can then decide where and when to run the workshop.

Mike Turpin February 2016

Other Opportunities for R·R·R·A members

Apart from the Database and Archive (page 5), there will soon be many other activities and opportunities for members to get involved.

Geophysics

Just a year ago, our newly formed geophysics team had little or no experience, yet they soon had a couple of surveys under their belts and by the summer were being asked to conduct work at Aldborough for the University of Cambridge.

There is much to do this year, with permission already having been obtained for two new sites, including the probable bridging point and possible settlement at Helperby. Crucially, we will be purchasing new equipment, both resistivity and magnetometry, which will enable us to have more than one team working at once, and in different areas. If you fancy getting involved with either survey or interpretation (or both) and learning a new set of skills, please contact Mike Turpin. Even if your only previous knowledge of geophysics is from watching it on Timeteam, you will be more than welcome!

Working Groups

We are now beginning to form working groups across Yorkshire to look at specific roads or features. Whilst we anticipate that these groups will largely comprise our own members, we always welcome public involvement and are especially keen to involve existing local groups. Briefly, the work involved within each group will include

Antiquarian and archaeological work - Identifying all previous writing and work on the road, and preparing a concise summary**Map regression** - analysing old maps to determine any possible road features

Aerial Photography - studying ALL available aerial photos, especially older ones, for suggestive cropmarks / soilmarks

LiDAR analysis - studying LiDAR data along the likely route

Field name study - using Tithe and Estate maps to locate suggestive field and place names.

Fieldwalking - examining any likely features on the ground, and identifying those which might merit further investigation

Geophysical survey - to determine an alignment of the road, and sometimes to identify features along it

Excavation - the final stage, to investigate selected probable road features

We always welcome member involvement and will be holding a series of training days for those who are interested in getting involved. Each training day will focus on one of the above areas; dates and venues to be announced shortly. The timescales for each road group will be largely determined by its members, and scheduled to suit as many as possible.

These groups will be the first, and more will follow when we have sufficient members and volunteers. We are especially keen to see our numbers grow, particularly in the East Riding where there is so much potential for discovery and recording; before it is too late.

The groups we intend to form first in the west and centre of the county are listed below, however to date only the Aldborough eastwards group has a leader. To lead one of these groups you would need to be well organised, have a scientific approach, be good at working as part of a team, and able to work to a standardised (but flexible) RRRA protocol. If you think you could lead one of these groups, please contact Mike Haken.

Margary 72a, Skipton to Addingham section. We already have permissions for access on part of this route - Contact Mike Haken

Bainbridge to Bowes (?) Whilst a good deal of work has been carried out already by Hugh Toller, there is much to do, including efforts to fill in the gaps in our knowl.edge of its route, and excavation of features identified on LiDAR. Contact Mike Haken

Wensley. Permission to undertake a geophysical survey adjacent to Wensley fort is currently being sought. There is also the probability of a small excavation a little further north where there may be evidence of an East West road between Bainbridge and Catterick - Contact Mike Haken

Aldborough north eastwards. Now we know this road existed (thanks to the University of Cambridge), we need to determine where it went, and this group will seek to determine that. We have permission for geophysical survey in the park west of Helperby Hall, at the probable crossing of the R. Swale, and we hope that this survey will give us the alignment of the road from this point. There is also a strong possibility of a settlement. Contact Laurie Reed.

Work Starts on Online Archive

Mike Haken outlines what we aim to achieve

The main aim of RRRA, as stated in our constitution, is "to advance the education of the public in general about the Roman Road Network in Britain and promote the study of Roman roads and Roman heritage more generally". There are many methods we can employ to satisfy this aim, however they all depend on the ability to store and convey information, and that cannot be done without a repository of data. Unfortunately, Roman roads research over the 40 years since the death of Ivan Margary has been conducted largely by disparate local groups, and with little co-ordination between them. When relevant reports and research has been published, that has tended to happen on an ad hoc basis, satisfying the needs of the group or project concerned, but without regard to the bigger picture. Consequently, whilst a mass of data exists there is no single point where a corpus of data-sets relating to Roman roads has been accumulated or been collated, and no attempt to catalogue the disparate data has so far been made. RRRA intends to change that. We will collate all existing disparate data relating to Roman roads (and selectively for all other Roman period sites in Britain), enabling us to construct an accurate and up to date picture of our understanding. The repository has two fundamental parts.

The Online RRRA Roads Database.

This will eventually hold selected key data about every Roman road in Britain, along with key data concerning potentially related Roman sites (e.g. forts, settlements, villas etc.). This data will, of course, be extracted from documents such as reports, journals etc. Crucially, it will be publicly accessible online enabling any researcher anywhere in the world to access core data that has simply not been available before. The database, whilst referencing

the archive, is a separate entity and progress in its construction is discussed on p.3.

The RRRA Archive. Whilst the database holds key searchable data, the publications and other documents from which the data is drawn, along with other items such as photographs, must be stored somewhere. The archive, partly searchable through the database interface, will then provide a major resource for any researcher of the Roman period in Britain, whether that be an interested member of the public or experienced archaeological professional.

There are many documents and types of works which we will need to acquire for the Archive . In short, if it adds to our knowledge base then we need to acquire it. The kinds of data we need are wide ranging, for example

OS Linear Files

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 6 inches to the mile maps for the courses of known/putative roads

Other Historic mapping

Research Reports, published and unpublished

Articles from archaeological journals and other publications

Excavation Reports, published and unpublished

Researcher's Notes and Personal Archives

Photographic records

Topographic and Geophysical Surveys, both RRRA and external

Once collated, material will be digitised wherever possible (provided copyright permissions have been gained). Hard copy material such as books and journals that cannot be digitised will eventually be housed in a library accessible to members and the public, although that is some way off. Crucially, the archive will be catalogued online, and where possible its contents made freely available to all, both through the catalogue and the database.

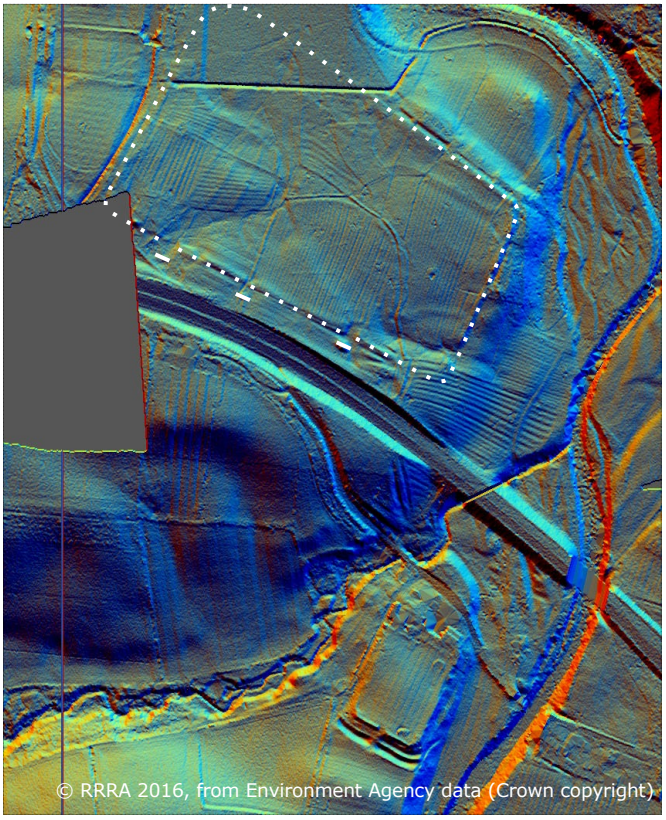
Your Association Needs You!

We have developed a protocol to ensure that material relating to each road is researched systematically and thoroughly. Whilst some material can be gathered online, we will also visit County Record Offices, HER archives, Local Studies Libraries, Museum Archives, the Historic England archive in Swindon, and many others. However, no matter how good our systems may be, nothing happens without someone to gather, organise, and digitise the data. The biggest problem in gathering such data is that it's far too interesting a task, and you tend to spend far too much time reading and learning rather than being a hyper-efficient researcher. We therefore need as many helpers as possible, which is where you, our membership, come in. So, if you fancy getting involved in any part of this fascinating and rewarding project, please contact Mike Haken. A 40 plus page document detailing the processes and protocols involved is currently being prepared and will be available within the next few weeks, and will then be distributed to members.

Roman Roads Research review

Newly Discovered Marching Camp on Margary 82 near Greta Bridge

Bryn Gethin (Warwickshire Archaeology) has identified using LiDAR a previously unrecognised temporary camp in Rokeby Park, Co. Durham, just north of Margary 82 (A66) and fairly close to the fort at Greta Bridge. It has three gates protected by tituli on it's SW side facing the road, suggesting that the road was already in existence when it was constructed. The LiDAR image shows the feature clearly to the north of the modern road, as well as Greta

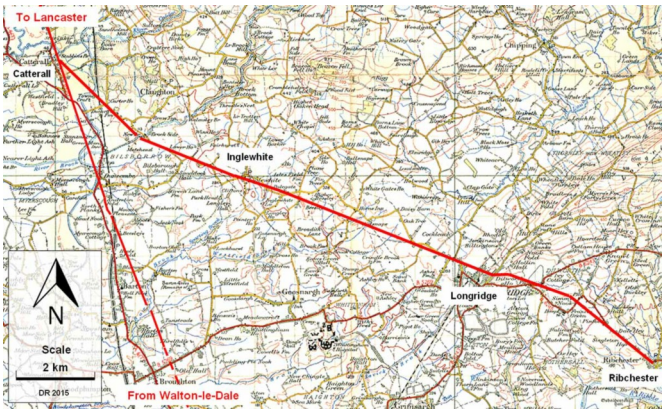


Bridge fort to the south of the Morritt Arms Hotel.

The camp is approximately 520m long, with indications that it may have once been even larger. Historic England and Durham HER have been informed.

Ribchester to Catterall (Lancashire)

After only 45 years of searching, David Ratledge has at long last found the Roman Road from Ribchester to Lancaster, making existence of the accepted road Margary 704 appear to be highly improbable. The road takes a very logical and economical route to join the main north-south road at Catterall and hence on to Lancaster. Years of looking for a road via Priest Hill, White Chapel, Beacon Fell, Oakenclough and Street proved to be time spent in the wrong place! The road is remarkably clear in several sections - one stretch of prominent agger is even visible in Google Streetview. How nobody spotted it (including David) is a mystery. The distance to Lancaster from Ribchester by this "new" road is around 23 miles.



Full details on our website

http://www.romanroads.org/gazetteer/rib-catt.htm

Margary 700 (Shropshire/Cheshire)

Whitchurch to Middlewich

The course of this road, whilst well known in places, was not well defined in others. Recent work by Bryn Gethin has firmed things up considerably, and the details have now been supplied to the Cheshire West and Chester HER. Speculation that the road eventually joins the road from Chester to Manchester (Margary 7a) has not yet been confirmed.

Housesteads (Northumberland)

As part of the work on the extended car park at Housesteads early this year, a section of probable Roman road was discovered cutting across and beneath the line of the B6318 Military Road, proposed by General Wade in the 1740s during the Jacobite rebellion, and built in the 1750s after his death in 1748. As John Poulter pointed out, MacLaughlan claimed to have identified a link to the Stanegate in the 19th century, however this is in a different position.

Interpretation of the site is not as straighforward as might at first appear. Whilst it seems most likely that this is part of a road linking Housesteads fort to the Stanegate, and indeed can be traced on the ground all the way to the fort, there is no LiDAR coverage beyond the car park, and

therefore it's link with the Stanegate is, at this stage, mere speculation.

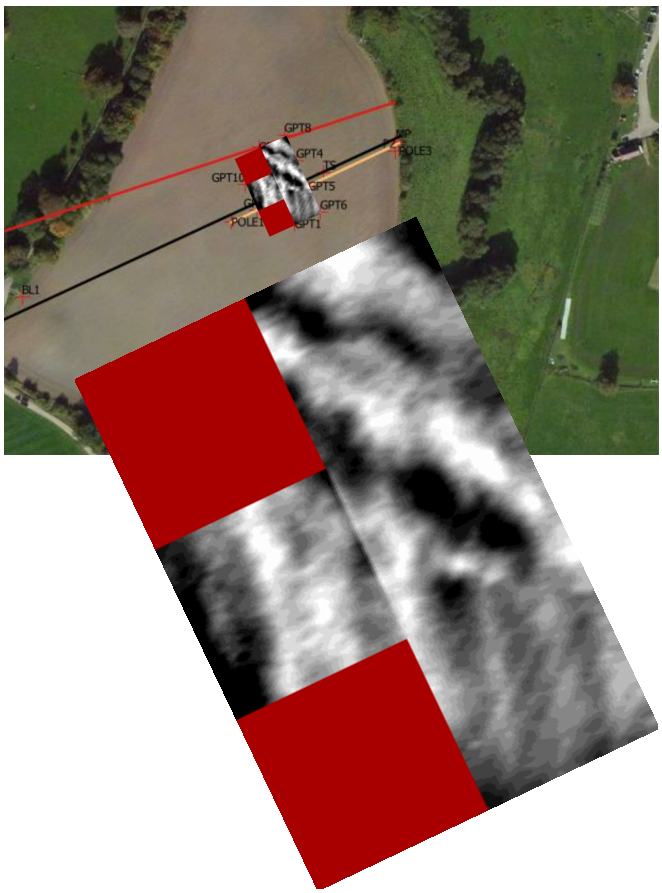

Road surface revealed, showing kerb formed from boulders

It is well constructed, with kerbs, although at the time of our visit no ditches had been discovered. Various Roman pottery sherds of a range of dates were recovered from the surface and within the matrix of the road metalling. The original width is unknown, as the camber is still rising when it disappears beneath the modern road, but indications are that it could be in excess of 10m at this point. Bearing in mind that as it ascends to the fort it seems to be less than 5m wide, various suggestions have been made by the excavators to explain the excess width, including a road junction, a lay-by, a widening of unknown function, and even a parade ground! What appears to be the original metalling survives incredibly well in places beneath more recent material. Thanks are due to Northumberland National Park for allowing us to visit and photograph the site.


Roman metalling revealed beneath later crude structure. from
© Mike Haken, 2016

Margary 720b, Ripley (North Yorkshire)

In spring 2015, the RRRA geophysics team undertook a resistivity survey along the probable course of Margary 720b, just west of the car park in Ripley, Harrogate as it descends to cross Ripley Beck. Unfortunately, no trace of the road or its ditches could be found, although we have an excellent image of what appear to be large pre-historic banks overlain by medieval rig and furrow overlain by 19th century steam ploughing! Permissions are currently being sought for further work on this road this year.



Aldborough Northeastwards (North Yorkshire).

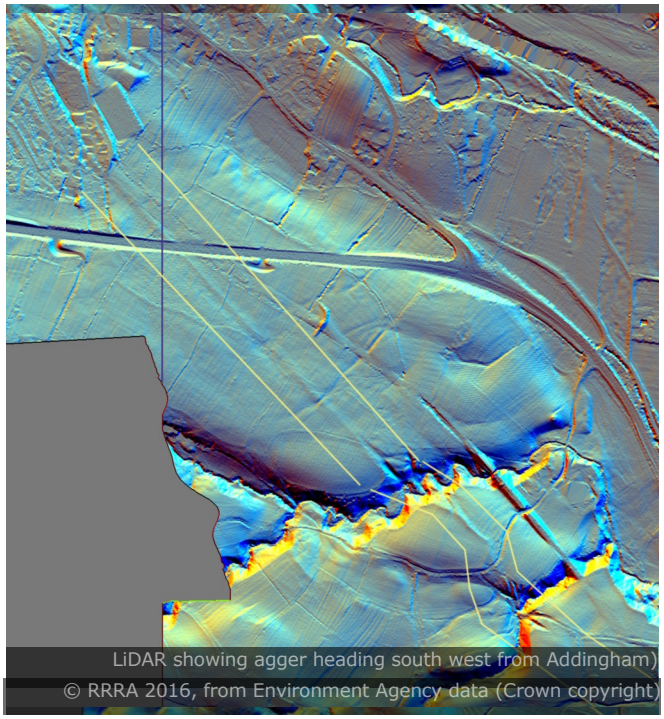
In September 2015, further geophysics was carried out on the North bank of the R. Ure at Aldborough by James Lyall as part of the ongoing survey by the University of Cambridge. WE are not yet permitted to publish the image, however we can report that the postulated route of Dere Street past Milby has now been confirmed. More importantly however, a small settlement was discovered around the bridgehead, along with a second road heading in the general direction of Easingwold, and very closely aligned with the road from Ilkley. This road could well be fundamental to understanding why the bridge at Aldborough is sited where it is, rather than being directly on the line of Dere Street. It may be heading to Malton, and could prove to be the western end of either Margary 814 or 815.

The alignment heads through the park at Helperby, and later this year our geophysics team will be conducting a geophysical survey to hopefully determine the alignment of the road north east of the R. Swale. An RRRA working group,

led by Laurie Reed and Pandora Thoresby, is being formed to try to identify the course of the road beyond Helperby. Anyone interested in joining the working group or getting involved with the geophysics should contact Mike Turpin , who will put you in touch with Laurie and Pandora.

Margary 72a – probable course correction between Skipton and Ilkley (N.Yorkshire & West Yorkshire)

Mike Haken has identified from LiDAR and old aerial photos what appears to be a new length of road in Yorkshire, which casts serious doubt on the accepted line of the road (Margary 72a) between Skipton and Addingham. The agger of a road shows clearly on LiDAR past Addingham, until



LiDAR showing agger heading south west from Addingham)

coverage is lost, and takes a much more sensible route close to the A65 avoiding the extremely steep climb out of Skipton. The "accepted" route was utilised by the 1755 turnpike, and observations by John Poulter suggest that there was an earlier road along this route, but no direct evidence that it was Roman. It is noteworthy that nothing shows on LiDAR at the Addingham end, but we cannot rule out the possibility of two Roman routes just yet. A working Group is being formed to examine this new length in detail; contact Mike Haken. Thanks to John Poulter and Paul White for information regarding this road.

Possible Road at Wensley (North Yorkshire)

A feature which appears to be a Roman road has been identified on an old aerial photo running roughly north south just to the east of the fort at Wensley. It's purpose is unclear, although one possibility is that it is linking the fort to the putative road from Bainbridge to Catterick. Southwards, it may just go as far as the R. Ure. Permissions to investigate the site are currently being sought. Anyone interested in forming a working group to look at this road, and the putative Bainbridge to Catterick road, should contact Mike Haken .

Manchester to York at Marsden, Margary 712.(West Yorkshire)

Huddersfield and District Archaeological Society have been

Monumental ditch on the SE side of Margary 712, Marsden

continuing their four decades of work on this road with an excavation last autumn on the road descending to Marsden near Manor Farm. The excavation shows that the road was heading for what is now the centre of Marsden and a crossing of the R. Colne, and is presumably responsible for the siting of the settlement in the medieval period. Much more important however was the discovery of unusually large side ditches, some 5m across and 1.2m deep. They are flat bottomed, and stone lined, with well cut 45° sloping sides that in places showed what appear to be marks left by the use of spades. At the time of discovery, such huge side ditches were thought to be unique (see below Brough-on-Noe to Templeborough).

Brough-on-Noe to Templeborough (?) Margary 710b (Derbyshire & South Yorkshire)

In early December 2015, a team from the University of Sheffield and from Timetravellers, a Sheffield based local archaeology and history group excavated a site at Sheephill Farm, near Ringinglow, Sheffield. The site has been known for a long time, and whilst the traditional idea of the road heading along Long Causeway and past Stanedge Pole is hard to shift, most serious researchers are recognising that something close to the line proposed by Tom Welsh is probably the right one, especially with considerable LiDAR evidence.

The excavation did confirm a road of approx. 5m width, apparently of Roman construction, however it was flanked by ditches over 5m wide, flat bottomed, and over a metre deep. Sound familiar? It could easily be argued that the situation of both sites is very similar, coming downhill from high moorland and at points that can be seen from a great distance. The idea of roads making a statement of Imperial intent in the landscape is not a new one, however it has always been assumed that this was achieved by the construction of a high agger, as with the Roman Ridge (Margary 28) through South and West Yorkshire. Perhaps it was felt that in hilly areas, two dark scars down a hillside would have a greater impact.

The interim report by David Inglis can be found online at http//:www.romanroads.org/archive/road_folders/710b/sites/sheephill/710b_sheephill_2015_interim.pdf

This site, and the one on Margary 712 above Marsden, are the first instances where monumental roadside ditches have, to the best of our knowledge, ever been identified. Earlier this year, two further sites where aerial photos suggest there may be short lengths of similar ditches, have been identified in Saddleworth on the Manchester to York road. It would be interesting to see if any others can be identified in similar locations.

And finally……

We hope that you have enjoyed reading this newsletter. Our aim is to use each quarterly edition as a means of reporting on anything new that relates to Roman roads in Britain, not simply work carries out by ourselves. To achieve this however, we need to be kept informed. If you have carried out research yourself and would like to have a piece considered for inclusion, or if you hear of any excavations, research, talks, exhibitions, discoveries etc, please contact The Editor.