

Abstract:

According to the Environment Agency and David Ratledge, Roman roads were large structures, typically measuring 5-7 metres wide and reaching a height of around 0.5m in the centre. However, nearly two thousand years of weathering mean that they are often very difficult to spot at ground level.

Visit 1 to Downham: We visited the section of concessionary footpath from Town End Croft Wood (NGr. 378534 444507) to Hall Royds Wood (NGr. 378843 444591) to see if there were any observable features which could be considered to be 'Roman'. We were concerned that the frequent 'agger'-like features running roughly WSW-ENE between the woods had more to do with the underlying limestone geology. The nearby quarry exposes Chatburn Limestone strata dipping at 45 degrees to the SE. Surface quarrying or glacial erosion of the strata could have produced the observable upstanding linear features. Other than the Lidar evidence, we found no conclusive evidence of the Roman Road following the presumed route.

Observations and interpretations:

In this article and the accompanying Powerpoint, the fields have been given numbers **in red** by PAG's numbering system. This is because there is repetition of field numbers on the various OS maps as you move from one parish or township to another. The official OS field numbers taken from the 1892 maps are in brackets.

In **Field 07** (28), there is an interesting terrace to the north of the ridge line about 5m wide and bounded to the north by a small bank which could be interpreted as a ditch-like feature. The field to the north showed 'ridge and furrow' running perpendicular to the bank. The terrace is very flat and bounded to the south by a limestone embankment which could be interpreted as either quarried or the results of natural erosional processes. However, this feature disappears where the line of an old wall or hedge-line crosses it at 90 degrees (NGr. 378758 444644).

It is very clear that the bedrock is very close to the surface and is exposed as the footpath passes the south west corner of Hall Royds Wood (NGr. 378843 444591).

The wood was not entered, but the path was followed to the east end of Hall Royds Wood. Along the same alignment, from there to the field gateway at NGr. 379129 444611, runs a distinctive feature that is often described and photographed as an 'agger'. This feature was not accurately measured, but appeared too narrow at 4m and hollow to be the actual surface remains of a Roman Road. Lidar suggests it may have been a meandering double wall at some time and could be interpreted as a track. Barrie said that Roman roads clustered around two widths of 15 and 20 peds with 1 ped = 11.6" (or 295mm) or 4.5 - 6m, but there is a wide spread on each side. The Fosse Way at Radstock was 4.5m across at the base and 2 - 2.5m at the road surface (BGAS 1903 J McMurtrie pp326-338), but see page 4 for English Heritage's opinion. This photo was taken in 2021 and was located at NGr. 379040 444607. This is at the eastern boundary of Hall Royds Wood.



Supposed Roman agger running ENE from Halls Royd Wood, Downham

In conclusion, we believe that the Roman Road passed close to this point in Downham, but we were not convinced that we had seen any features, which proved that this was the actual course of the Roman Road.

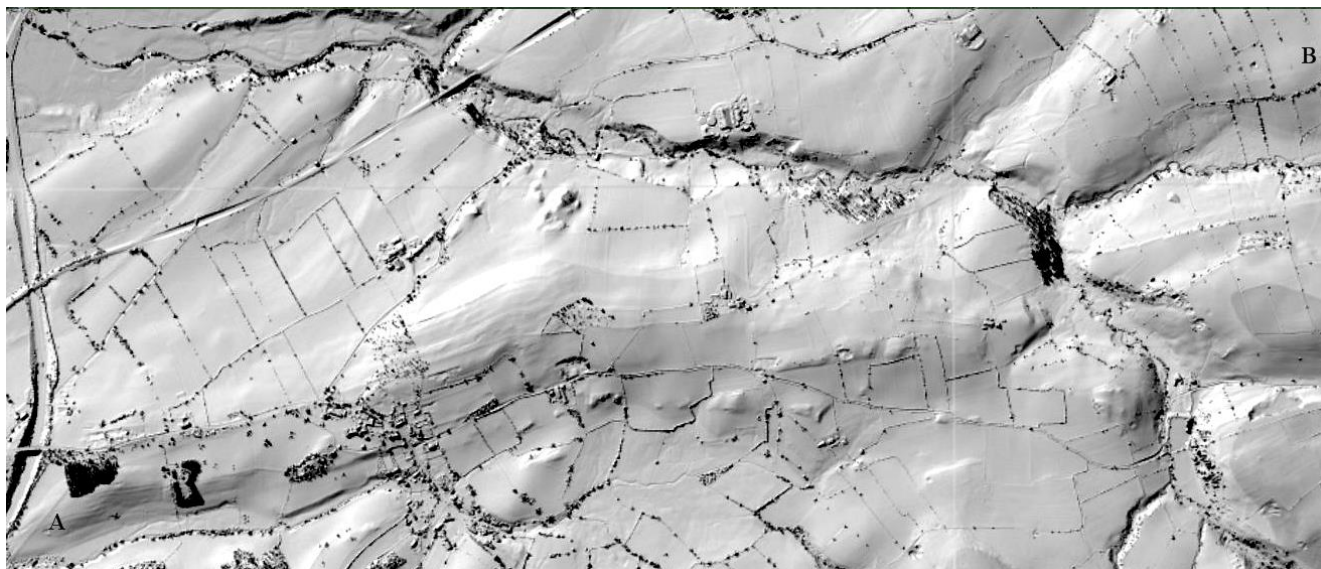
We relocated to look at the road to the north and east of Hollins Farm, Rimington (NGr. 381321 445181) courtesy of the farmer. We had difficulty identifying the line of the road on the ground from Windhill Laithe at NGr. 381140 445390 to the stream at NGr. 381649 445609, but we did observe an anomalous group of flat stones in the stream bed. Returning along the supposed line of the Roman Road via Tewit Hill, we looked at the southern end of Windy Hill Lane. This substantial meandering "green lane" bounded on each side by banks and ditches and with a roadway some 5m wide is a puzzle. It is wide enough to allow two wagons to pass, but after reaching Windhill Laithe, it takes a turn to the WSW and abruptly ends as a track giving access to a field overlooking Ings Beck.

Peter made a good observation that the proposed line of the road west of Ings beck is not aligned with any current or known past field boundaries in stark contrast to the line of the road from Whalley to east of Chatburn. To the east of Howgill (NGr. 382504 445997), the projected line once more starts to align with current and past field boundaries.

Despite the Lidar images, the day did not provide conclusive evidence that the accepted line of the road is wrong, but our lack of findings gave us much cause for thought and discussion.

Barrie Tyrer

Lidar map of the supposed Roman Road from the A59, through Downham (A) to Stubs Wood Farm, Rimington (B)



Lidar map from www.lidarfinder.com

Visits 2 and 3: Return visits to Rimington only on 11 and 21 April 2021

Following Louise's suggestion, Peter and I returned to Rimington to re-check the area of the previous visit. We would like to have a return visit to the adjoining section of the Roman Road at Downham to survey the area in more detail.

Visit 2: April 11 follow-up: Wind Hill Lane and Laithe to Cudber Hill Fields Fields 457 and 490:

Field numbers mentioned in brackets are from the NLS map Yorkshire 25" sheet CLXXXIII.5, which was surveyed in 1893 and published 1894. In **Field 38** (457), east of Stopper Lane, we looked more closely at the suggested route of the Roman Road from NGr. 381497 445529 to the stream at NGr. 381654 445600. The field is of a smooth convex shape, with no mounds or hedge-lines other than that shown on the OS 1844 map. Not surprisingly, the field did steepen in slope angle as it approached the stream. The Roman Road is shown as being next to a hedge-line. The latter had the usual bank and ditch configuration. We found no evidence of any raised area, but did observe a deep ditch below a spring with the remains of an old hawthorn hedge and the base of 2 banks or walls close to the stream, as shown on the 1844 OS map.

The stream bed was investigated for 50m above and below this point. Other than rounded and sub-rounded pebbles and some boulders in the stream-bed, the stream-sides were 2m in height and were made of glacial till. The stream had 2 channels, beyond which, in the field to the east (**Fields 39-42**), there was again no obvious surface features.

We came to no conclusions. If the Roman Road came this way, it would have been easier to cross the stream by the ford approximately 100m further downstream at NGr. 381629 445715.

Returning along the supposed line of the Roman Road in **Fields 29-37**, via Tewit Hill, we could not see any surface clues. We looked at the western end of Windy Hill Lane, for which we had permission, but which is not a public footpath. It is a straight sunken track about 5m wide, with slightly raised banks colonised by old hawthorn trees. The 1844 OS map shows the Roman Road in the field to the north, but no surface features were observed there. This field is underlain by the Worston Shale Group which is largely composed of calcareous mudstones and thin limestones. The 1844 OS map shows a limestone quarry and a line of these quarries can be traced along the outcrop westwards to beyond Stubs Wood Farm.

Visit 3: April 21: Stub's Wood to Ings Beck ford:

Field numbers mentioned are from the NLS map Yorkshire 25" sheet CLXXXIII.5, which was surveyed in 1893 and published 1894. Following a discussion with the farmers at Hollins Farm, we decided on 2 aims. One was to look for the physical evidence of natural processes and to map any signs of human activity in **Fields 28-32** (Fields 31, 32, 34, 35 and 38, but particularly in **Field 18** (Field 34)). The second aim was to survey the supposed Roman Road on the OS 1844 map from the **Field 20** (Field 38) boundary to the possible river ford in **Field 18** (Field 31) by recording GPS readings at known points and at significant locations. All of these are shown on PAG3 pages 3 and 4.

On the farmer's advice, we went to look at the section of the supposed route of the Roman Road from Stubs Farm to the Ings Beck ford where tightly-folded Clitheroe Limestone Formation limestones (with crinoids) and mudstones form the bed of Ings Beck and, according to the farmer, a 'weir', or waterfall.

An initial survey of **Field 18** (Field 34) revealed a field of 12.4 acres (or 5.02 ha) with an old quarry, 2 tracks incised into steepening slopes, 3 public footpaths, evidence of old fence-lines and drainage lines. 'Ridge and furrow' lines cross the route of the supposed Roman Road at right-angles.

One incised and embanked track appears to go from the Stubs Farm area to the Ings Beck footbridge at NGr. 380314 444932. The 2nd track appears to leave the disused quarry at NGr. 380117 445034 and proceed unsatisfactorily past Point 2 in a long curve into Field 35. This hollow terminates before the boundary between Fields 35 and 38 suggesting a possible spring. This feature could be water management with the quarry track possibly switching to and following the firmer surface of the supposed Roman Road from Point 2 to 1 and beyond.

Using the concessionary path through **Field 19** (Field 35) to NGr. 380352 445219, we could see no obvious features in **Field 20** (Field 38) from the path near Stub Wood Farm at NGr. 380514 445240 in a south-western direction through **Fields 17-20** (Fields 38, 35 and 34). However, when at the fence -line at Point 1 at NGr. 345143 480243, there was the impression of a raised linear feature about 5m wide running ENE-WSW to Point 2 (a shallow ditch which could have been a fence-line on the 1844 map) at NGr. 380104 445101.

Between Point 2 and the supposed ford at NGr. 380027 445027, the field steepens. The 1844 map suggests a straight approach for the Roman Road from there to the potential ford, but the track to the disused quarry also appears to start from this point. The latter develops a distinct gully and then a narrow track to the old quarry.

The Roman Road could have run out onto a 'bund' (Points 9-8 at NGr. 380054 445045 to 380048 445038), which approaches Ings Beck at 90 degrees. This bund reaches a height of 3m above river level and is, at the top, about 1m in width. It is composed of soil with rounded river stones. On the opposite bank and about 3m upstream is an angled wall of large stones topped with hard mortar about 1m in height, which appears to be diverting the river flow away from the wall. Just downstream the wall is built to below water-level and there is evidence of river erosion and wall collapse. Downstream and parallel to the stream for 50m is another bund (Points 5-7). Taken together, we thought these features could be related to flood or water management, but for no apparent reason. At this point we are downstream of Twiston Mill and 1km upstream of Downham Mill. The wall forms the boundary between Downham and Rimington. The river banks appear to be made of river deposits for 50m either side of the bund.

Between the 2 bunds at Points 7 to 8, **Field 17** (Field 31) showed no obvious features. This lack of distinctive surface features appeared to continue beyond the river wall and on the far west bank into and across **Field 17** (Field 32).



Looking into Field 32 at the supposed site of the Roman Road ford at Ings Beck, Rimington

Field 17 (Field 32), which is west of Ings Beck, was not visited, but Hey House Farm was visible on the skyline at a distance of 700m. The supposed straight route of the Roman Road would have begun on a gentle incline for 200m before steepening rapidly for the last 500m from an altitude of 123 to 163m at an average gradient of 1:12.5 or 7.2 degrees.

Maps, photos and Lidar show evidence of water features in **Field 17** (Field 32), but no obvious 'agger'.

Brian and Peter 11 and 21 April 2021.

Visit 4: Preparation for a potential further visit to Downham and the Roman Road known as Margery 72a:

The Romans ruled most of Britain between 43CE and 410CE. After conquering most of Southern Britain, south of the Fosse Way by the late 40's, the Romans signed a treaty with a Celtic tribe, known as the Brigantes, which guaranteed their neutrality. For decades after the 43CE invasion, a large region of the North (including Lancashire, Yorkshire and Cumbria) was still controlled by the Brigantes. Tacitus writes that it was the collapse of the marriage between Queen Cartimandua of the Brigantes, a Roman ally, and her husband Venetius that led to a showdown with Rome. Following their divorce, Venetius organised a revolt in 69CE and Cartimandua fled. The Emperor Vespasian then sent a force under Britain's new governor, Quintus Petilius Cerialis, to put down the rebellion and conquer northern England. Building roads to link up forts and settlements across this rugged landscape was a vital part of this decades-long conquest of the North.

Ribchester's earliest buildings have been dated to 72CE and the road from Ribchester to Ilkeley via Elslack, while undated, was built probably in the period between 50-75CE, as QPC left Britain in 71CE (Ribchester Museum).

'This Roman road is clearly targeted on linking Ribchester to York and it goes via the forts of Elslack and Ilkeley. The direct line to the first, Elslack, is blocked by Pendle Hill, so a route skirting around its northern slopes was devised.

Its initial route as far as Chatburn keeps to the south side of the River Ribble, but doglegs at the River Calder crossing. GIS analysis has shown the Romans knew the extent of the Ribble floodplain and sensibly kept well above it.

'Pendle Hill really dictated the route - direct was never an option. Downham seems to have been the key setting out point where the road changed direction. From Downham onwards the road had to adjust to contours rather than being perfectly straight' (David Ratledge: www.twithr.co.uk).

According to English Heritage, the structure of Roman roads varied greatly, but a typical form was an agger, or bank, forming the road's core, built of layers of stone or gravel (depending on what was available locally). In areas of soft ground, the road might be built over timber piles and layers of brushwood. The core of the agger would be covered with a layer of larger stones, if available, with the upper surface being formed from layers of smaller stones or gravel.

The full 'road zone' could be defined by ditches set some distance from the road, providing drainage and possibly space for pedestrians and animals.

The width of roads varied from about 5 metres to more than 10 metres. Some were far less well constructed than roads of the type described above. Less than half a mile south of the Roman town of Cataractonium (Catterick, North Yorkshire), the main Roman road north to Hadrian's Wall, Dere Street, consisted of nothing more than successively wider spreads of gravel over a shallow *agger* (English Heritage).

The excavation of the road from Ribchester to York (Margery 72a) at Fence Gate Farm, Dinckley in the 1970's by AA White revealed an 8m wide cambered roadway surface made of pebbles on yellow clay with no side-stones or top paving stones found. Ditches were filled with sand (see David Ratledge and page 7 below).

Preliminary survey of part of Field 28, Downham Green on 12 April 2021



Map extract from NLS: OS map 25" of Lancashire Sheet XLVII.8 surveyed 1884 and published 1886

Downham Green or Field 17 (Field 28) was traversed along the route of the supposed Roman Road from the gate into Town End Croft Wood, past Hall Royds Wood to the stile at the corner of Fields 10-11 (Fields 48 and 61). In Field 07, other traverses were followed to the NW and parallel to the assumed route of the Roman Road. Most of the observations centred around a) exposures of limestone layers, b) a number of small, shallow and often linear quarries, including a possible small lime clamp-kiln, and c) the 50-55cm wide base remains of a demolished stone wall. No OS maps show such a wall, but aerial photos show it, especially the Lancs CC Mario 1960's B/W photo. On Lidar, the wall forms a rectangle by crossing Town End Close Wood from north to south. The reason for the wall is unknown, but could be the perimeter wall

for the land leased for quarrying. The wall appears to have a gap where the supposed Roman road cuts it on the Lidar image. From that gap in the wall to the gate into Town End Croft Wood, the road would follow a magnetic bearing of 258 degrees magnetic, but no surface features were observed. The full survey details are recorded on Powerpoint PAG 3 pages 2-5.

Along the supposed line of the Roman Road, there was little convincing evidence with two exceptions. The supposed 'agger' between Hall Royds Wood and the stile into **Field 10** (Field 61) runs on the high point of the ridge. It was recorded at a width of 4m and it appeared to be built up above the surrounding field surface. It looked like 2 demolished wall bases with a shallow hollow between them.

At the western end of Hall Royds Wood is an outcrop of limestone, which dips steeply south. This rock area forms a slightly raised feature which has a trend of 265 degrees magnetic and is about 5m wide. This would take it through the demolished wall at the supposed gateway. With a turn onto 258 degrees, this would align with the gate into Town End Croft Wood. This would appear to align itself with the Lidar image as shown on PHLP Lidar map 1b. Could this be just an old track between Hey House Farm and the Downham Estate's carpenter's yard at the Rimington road junction?

On Lidar, there is a curving line from Green Lane (the lane to Rimington) to the north and east of Hey House Farm? According to the BGS, this is the upper line of glacial till. It appears to be exactly that, as green fields are superseded by steep slopes of steeply dipping limestones. Google Earth (Historic Images 2012) has an intriguing image from Town End Croft Wood in an ENE direction from NGr. 378471 444607 (Pt 17) to 378866 444747 (Pt 18) and beyond, but this turns out to be a step where the solid geology has been quarried. Adjacent Lidar images of this area showing this 'line' can be seen below on page 6 and the Google Earth 2002 on page 5.

Two alternative suggested Roman road routes at Downham proved to be false:



West end of PAG's Field 07 (OS map field 28) between Town End Croft Wood and Hall Royds Wood showing the quarried scarp of the exposed Worston Shale Group's limestone beds in 2002. From this locality in a NE direction and beyond B can be seen 6 small 'Kittycaul' mud-mound exposures (see Sheet 68 Memoir Fig 4 page 39 and Plate 5 photo B facing page 62).

In Philip Graystone's book on 'Walking Roman Roads in the Fylde and Ribble Valley', he has a photo on page 78 taken close to Hall Royd Wood in c1995. The wood has been extended westward since then. The photo and Lidar would suggest that the road turned to the NE at this point and exited the wood on its NE corner before resuming an easterly course to Hey House Farm. **This is a possible minor deviation from the accepted route.**

Despite the Lidar images, the day did not provide conclusive evidence that the accepted line of the road is wrong, but our lack of findings gave us much to discuss. For our surveyed location details on Lidar maps see PAG3 pages 2-5. Lidar images can be accessed on www.lidarfinder.com

Peter and Brian 12-28 April and 22 May 2021.

Appendix 1: The Roman Road route on Lidar from Downham to Rimington; for more detail see PAG 3a

'The section between Downham and Rimington is one of the finest in the County. The engineering is superb as it angles down to cross the valley of Ings Beck and the route shows up very clearly in the Lidar data' (David Ratledge).



Downham Green: west map

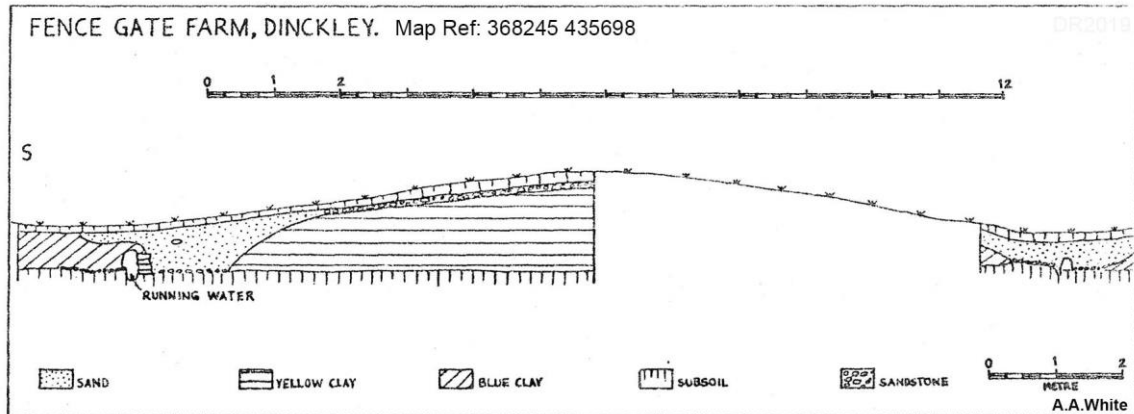


Hey House Farm: east map. The curving feature north of the farm is the glacial till to solid limestone junction.

Appendix 2: Four other Roman Road reports:

1. The Roman Road at Dinckley between Ribchester and Whalley:

The road was excavated by A. A. White at Fence Gate Farm, map ref 368245/435698, probably in the 1970s judging by the van, but his report is undated. The agger was found to be 13.5 metres wide and 0.85 metres thick. Somewhat unusually the foundation was yellow clay and the ditches were filled with sand. The yellow clay was topped with round sandstone cobble stones, which was 8m wide. Presumably a layer of flagstones (not surviving) would have formed the surfacing. However, there is no evidence of a robust top surface either at Bellman, but only round sandstone pebbles of c4-7cm diameter. It is this regularity that is so striking.



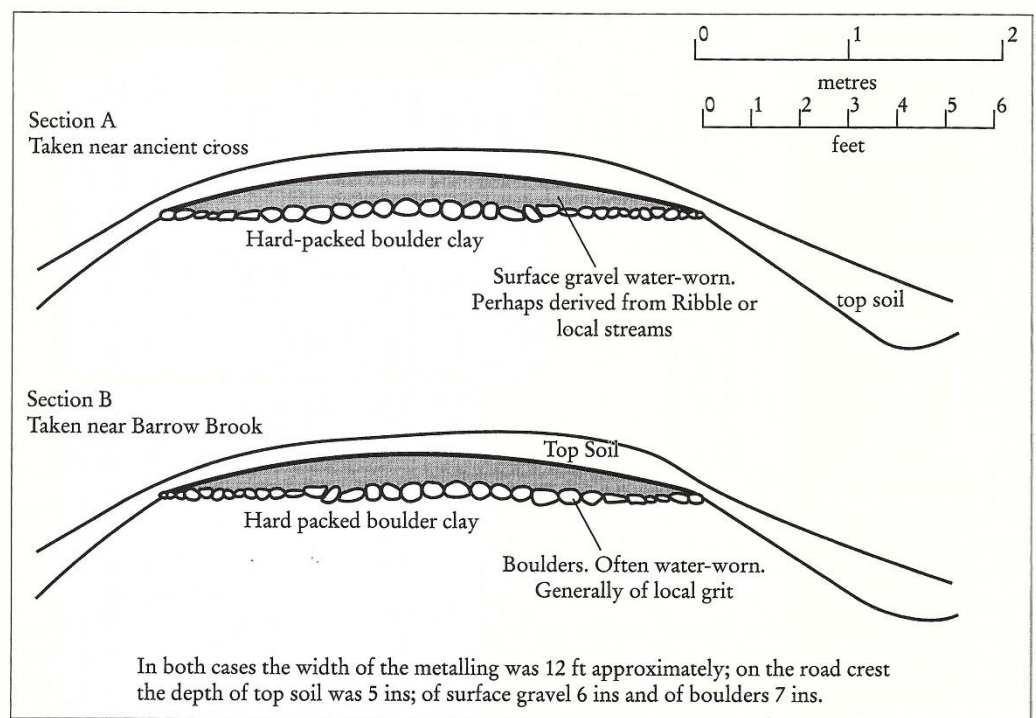
2. The Roman Road route at Bellman Quarry, Clitheroe

Interestingly, in publications, there is a strong emphasis on a raised 'agger', as above. The Calder crossing on Lidar at Whalley has a raised agger on the south. The northern bank is much steeper and is likely to have had a cutting. Where the road leaves Pendleton Brook to the north on the Standen Hall Estate, the road is in a shallow cutting. North of Worston Brook, as we saw yesterday, the road is also in a shallow cutting until it reaches the Worston 'medieval strip-fields' where it appears to be raised above ground level.



The Roman Road: the Worston Brook cutting compared with the more raised road by the 'medieval strip-fields'.

3-4. Two sections from near Hardell Cross in Barrow-in-Pendle by Philip Graystone c1958 (1996 page 74)



Document revised 23 May 2021 by Peter and Brian.