

Aim:

To support the PHLP/PAG Roman Road project, it was thought essential to look at the evidence for the Roman Road between Ribchester and the western end of Downham. Professional excavations have taken place at four locations and these, plus field-walking, were the focus of the investigations. Working from west to east, the first was at Marles Wood at Salesbury by OAN, the second at Fence Gate Farm, Dinckley by AA White, the third on Barrow-in-Pendle Common by P Graystone and the fourth at Downham by Greenlane Archaeology for PHLP.

Compared to the generally accepted view of the kerbed, drained and cambered cross-sectional composition of a Roman Road, local examples appear to be built on highly consolidated, but cambered, local yellow clay with a top-dressing of pebbles with no apparent kerb-stones or drainage ditches.

Objective:

To visit and record visible evidence of the Roman Road along sections of its route as shown on the 1844 OS map, on David Ratledge's website and in Philip Graystone's book. We chose to visit the areas around 1) Hacking Hall, 2) on Barrow-in-Pendle Common and along 3) Worston Brook.

Methodology:

Before the above dates, the 3 sites were subjected to a desk-based study, which consisted of a detailed look at historical documents, 19-20C maps and modern aerial photographs, including Lidar. On the field-visits, we looked for evidence of an 'agger' and took photographs we felt showed something significant.

Observations:

1. Billington: Brockhole Housing Estate to Hacking Hall Barn

We followed the public footpaths suggested by Philip Graystone on page 68. The RR route, as indicated on the 1844 OS map, runs through 3 meadows and crosses 2 small streams from to NGr 370532 436589 to 371076 436805 where it meets the Hacking Hall track. East of the new houses, the field is mainly flat, but did slope gently downwards at the eastern end. It showed no sign of a continuous raised area or 'agger'. It was firstly occupied by an old fence line with some trees, then a deeply dug ditch with the spoil heaped irregularly next to it, before crossing a small culvert. Alongside it is a hedge-line through which passes the public footpath into the second meadow.

In the next field, Philip Graystone had photographed a raised feature and he used a 'lone holly bush' as a marker. The grass in May was by now deep and the holly bush no longer alone. This alignment crosses the second small stream and does link to another raised feature in the third meadow and to the first part of the Hacking Hall Barn track. Beyond that, no trace of the road can be seen on Lidar. Philip Graystone assumed that it followed the OS map route, while more recently David Ratledge using Lidar, suggested that it curved to the NNW slightly before approaching the River Calder crossing. We thought that the curve could have been used by the RR, but also appears to be a meander scar. Lidar does not show a RR route beyond the Hacking Hall track at NGr 371174 436892.

North of the River Calder, Lidar shows 2 short sections of elongated 'agger'-like humps at NGr 371569 437337, but the initial slope is very steep at 1:5. Peter thought that this was improbable and wondered why the nearby 'Potters Ford' at NGr371473 436825 was not used to access the 'Old Bridle Road' (now known as 'Turkey Lane'), which reaches the Whalley Moor plateau on a slope of 1:12.

*'There is a 15-degree dip arrow marked on the drift and solid geology maps in the river at Potter Ford, which must mean bedrock is exposed at the ford. That means it most probably will have been a ford since Roman times, even allowing for a bit of meandering, since if it had found a softer route through it would have incised and never returned to a 'higher' hard rock river floor.*

*The landslip along the supposed line of the Roman Road a couple of hundred metres to the north-west, as shown on Lidar, suggests to me that the bedrock is deeper there and the river has incised and undercut the till.*

*Peter's money is on Potter Ford for the location where the Roman road crossed the Calder.'*

The 'Old Bridle Lane' lane eventually meets the supposed RR route near to Hardell Cross on Barrow Common at NGr 372782 438659. Between the River Calder and Barrow Common, the supposed RR route on the 1844 OS map has only 3 short sections of 'embankment' with the rest conjecture. Lidar shows little, if any, evidence at all.

Conclusion: We would not maintain that the route as shown was wrong, but, in the absence of known excavation data, we were not convinced by the 1844 OS map route and the Lidar evidence.

2. Barrow-in-Pendle Common and Hardell Cross

We took the public footpath, known as 'Monks' Gate' from the end of 'Turkey Lane' at NGr 372427 438070 to Hardell Cross. At this point, it is joined by the Monks' Path over Whalley Moor, which originated from Broad Lane and Whalley Abbey. 'Turkey Lane' originated at Potters Ford and on the 1844 OS map is called the 'Old Bridle Way'.

The path is a distinctive, but boggy, tree-lined 'hollow' until the footbridge over Barrow Brook. The stream-sides are a mixture of till with boulders and sheets of gravel with no obvious signs of bridge abutments or metalling. Given 1400 years of erosion, this is not surprising.

In the open common, beyond the bridge, the poor pasture is evidenced by the large amount of rush cover. Near the western hedge, there is a long, but undulating, low ridge that is crossed by a number of drainage ditches. Just 40m before the next stream and footbridge, a small copse of trees shows a lot of small stones around their roots. Across the footbridge, the next 100m has been cut by the Haweswater Aqueduct. Immediately at that point is a distinctive ridge about 5m wide which has large stones and clay in its make-up. The Hardell Cross base is 50m further to the NE.

About 1958, Philip Graystone excavated 2 sections between Barrow Brook and Hardell Cross and his x-sections, notes and photos are shown in his book on pages 72-6.

Conclusion: We would not maintain that the route as shown on the 1844 OS map was wrong, but, in the absence of professional excavation data, we were not convinced by the 1844 OS map route. The absence of convincing Lidar evidence and with an alternative theoretical lower-angled route from 'Potters Ford' along 'Old Bridle way and Turkey Lane', leaves us undecided. However, the 'agger' along the stretch to the NE of Hardell Cross looks convincing. It was dry, pebbly and raised and corresponded with the LIDAR. We couldn't see it continue to the SW (at an angle to Monks' Gate).

### 3. Worston Brook

Based on information from Hanson's quarry manager, Sam, we followed the public footpaths to examine the suggested route of the RR where it crosses Worston Brook and the A671 'Link Road' between NGr 376215 442530 and 376171 442491. On the SW side of the A671, the suggested route of the RR is marked by a fence-line, which has a distinct low ridge of about 4m width on its south-eastern side.

Across the A671, a similar profile is obvious where crossed by the public footpath, but it soon slopes down to Worston Brook. This potential archaeological site has been spoilt by the sinking of an 11,000v electric cable to cross the stream and north of the stream there is a sewer running E-W and an overflow from the Bellman Quarry settlement lagoon.

Worston Brook is well-known as a flash-flood stream. Its source on Pendle Hill has a tributary known as 'Burst Clough' and past floods have been recorded in historical documents. In the 17C, Worston Corn Mill was completely destroyed by flooding and never replaced.

While the stream flows in a narrow valley at this point, there is plentiful evidence of past flood events and the normal river-tendency to meander. These valley-wide meanders, plus exposures of large boulder and pebble beds, thick river alluvium and grey-blue till with rounded boulders give first-hand evidence of both glacial and fluvial deposition. Philip Graystone's photo apparently asserting that there is RR metalling in the stream-side is considered by the present authors to be just natural stream deposition of sands, gravels and cobbles.

Conclusion:

This is the most convincing section of the RR that we have seen. While the Roman river crossing has very likely been removed by river erosion, the 2 areas to the south of the A671 and within the quarry area, seem to suggest that they have the most potential for archaeological investigations.

#### Sources of information:

1. OS maps and aerial photographs from Lancs CC Mario, National Library of Scotland, Bing and Google Earth;
2. Lidar from [www.lidarfinder.com](http://www.lidarfinder.com);
3. Geology maps from British Geological Survey at [www.bgsportal](http://www.bgsportal);
4. Victoria County History, Lancashire vol 6 online: Townships of Billington, Clitheroe, Dinckley, Downham, Whalley, Wiswell with Barrow and Worston. The VCH of Yorkshire is unfinished.
5. Whitaker's Histories of Craven and of Whalley online;
6. 'Walking Roman Roads in the Fylde and the Ribble Valley' by Philip Graystone 1996, Centre for North-West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster (details of 2 digs in Barrow in the late 1950's);
7. 'Marles Wood Car-park Excavation' by OAN (LRO DDX);
8. 'Fence Gate Farm excavation, Dinckley' by AA White in the 1970's (see Roman Roads Association and David Ratledge for the story from Ribchester to Elslack in Ratledge, D, 2018 *The Roman Road from Ribchester to Elslack*, <http://www.romanroads.org/gazetteer/M72a.htm>);
9. 'Chatburn Road, Downham – an Archaeological Watching Brief' by Greenlane Archaeology Ltd, for PHLP, Feb 2020;
10. 'Land at Higher Standen Farm, Clitheroe – an archaeological desk-based assessment' 2011 by Durham University. Report for Barrie Tyrer by Peter and Brian 29 May 2021.