

PENDLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

Notes on a probable

Roman Road from Barnoldswick to Long Preston

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Description

During 1989-92 the Friends of Pendle Heritage Archaeological Group (the forerunners of PAG) undertook a survey of the line of a probable Roman road between Barnoldswick and Long Preston. As part of the survey several sections were cut across the line of the road.

The road is followed north from the Ribchester to Elslack Roman road (Margery 72a), at a point below Banks Hill, adjacent to the sewage works SD 876478. There is no evidence of the road at this point and the line north to the deserted medieval village of Stock is assumed. The probable line is to the east of Banks Hill, passing to the west of Gilbeber Hill and Gilbeber Laithe, crossing Stock Beck at a position slightly to the east of the present footbridge. This section of the road is over low-lying land and has often been subject to flooding. There is evidence of rig and furrow and of former field boundaries around Gilbeber Laithe. An earthwork can be seen on Gilbeber Hill comprising a low square enclosure. This was excavated in the 1980's by Mr N Martin but no evidence of any use or occupation was found (personal communication). It is recognised as a Civil War fortification.

From the beck the road is aligned on the skyline at the lowest point between Hawber and Grazenber by Stock Green Farm. There is evidence of a ditch in the field to the right of the footpath leading up the hill. It is not possible to say whether this relates to the road. Near the top of the rise the line of the road passes out into a paved lane leading to Stock Green. The field boundary running up the hill contains many building stones from the former village. An earthwork can be seen on Hawber comprising a low bank approx. 22 metres square. An estate map of Stock dated to the late 18th century (ref. DDX/160 Lancs. Record Office) shows that the strip method of farming was still practised at that time. There are many holloways, house platforms, crofts and enclosures clearly visible, together with several out-lying features including a lime kiln. The field systems were mainly to the east of the village. From Stock Green the alignment of the road is on Stock Hill to the north of Stock House. There is little evidence of the road at Stock.

Proceeding north, the road is now aligned on Beanland Hill on the north side of the A59. (Note. The road had not been increased to its present width at this time).

A field on the Stock Estate map adjoining the main road by Croft House was called Street. Street is a place name, nearly always associated with a Roman road and is usually found on it or close by. The field in this instance is close to the assumed line of the road. Midway between these two points of alignment the road crosses Street Brow, and Street Laithe can be found a little way to the east of this point. Streetland Hill lies approximately half a km to the north east. There

is no evidence of the road between these two alignments. The place names north of Stock are some of the strongest evidence which has been found for the road. The assumed line of the road from Beanland Hill south is based on the fact that the road would pass from that point over Street Brow and by interpolation then pass through Stock. From Beanland Hill the road runs in a straight line to the tributary of Horton Beck. A section of the agger can be seen to the west side of the field on the crown of the hill. To the northern slope down to the beck the road can be made out due to differences in the vegetation on the line of the road. No evidence can be seen as the road passes in the valley bottom to the beck where a change in alignment is made.

Following flooding in the winter of 1989, a portion of the bank to the beck was brought down to expose three stunted posts driven into a stream bed and a plank resting alongside. It was thought that these timbers could possibly form a simple bridge abutment for the stream as they were on the alignment of the road. Samples of a post and a portion of the plank were sent to Sheffield University for dendro-chronological dating, but unfortunately no result could be obtained due to the minimum number of rings not being present; the timbers were identified as ash. It is possible when facing south, to make out a possible outline of the road in the exposed bank of the beck. However, such evidence should be treated with a certain amount of caution as subsequent deposits of alluvial gravel have been laid in such a way as to give the impression of a road surface. During excavation some 10 metres to the south of the beck possible evidence of the road was seen.

The road is then aligned on the shoulder of an unnamed drumlin to the south west of Yoredale. A section was cut on the northern slope above the beck and the abraded remains of the road seen. The slope down to the beck reflected much water scouring and this was seen in the condition of the road. Evidence of the ditch and agger were seen where the road crossed the field boundary north of the beck. The field boundary running across the next field runs parallel to the road on its left hand side and some evidence of the agger can be seen. Crossing Racks Lane, the agger can clearly be seen running parallel to the south west of the field boundary for some distance. The road then proceeds in a straight line to the Horton Beck.

The road then rises up over Horton pasture, continuing in a straight line and crossing over the metalled track leading from Horton to Varley Field. The road in this section is ill-defined, although it is possible, particularly in the lower section, to make out parts of the agger. In certain lighting conditions, it is possible to see the road clearly defined. It then follows a very well defined line around Stoop Hill where the agger and ditch are clearly visible. The road is aligned in three short lengths as the line follows the contours around the drumlin rather than going over the top. There is no doubt that this section of the road was used as a medieval track to Nappa and the road has been increased in width and the ditches re-cut several times. This increase in width was apparent in the two sections cut on this length. On the last section the road passes through a field where the agger is clearly visible. This continues in a straight line but fades away before reaching a stone wall on the crest of a rise.

At this point the trackway to Nappa, Needless Hall Lane, descends to the left into the valley. The road at this point swings north east and is aligned on a point on the ridge between two small rises. There is evidence of the road to the side of a

stone field boundary as it rises up to this alignment. The road at this point is very disturbed and it is difficult to make out a continuous section of the agger. There is no evidence where it drops down to this feature.

A section was cut to the west of a field boundary to the south of the road leading to Gargrave and evidence of the road was seen.

The section between Swinden and Goosemire Height is well defined with an agger and is sunk approximately 300 mm below the surrounding ground with a parallel bank to each side. This is described by Gregory¹ who thought that there was a 'Roman camp' at Swinden. It is significant that this section of the road is built off an outcrop of limestone, which had been levelled to take the road base,

From Goosemire Height the Road is considered to follow the line of the classified road into Long Preston.

Sections

Six sections were cut through the road, five of them are indicated on the plan ref. S1-S5. The sixth section was cut south of the beck which is a tributary to Horton Beck. Due to the natural shaping of alluvial grounds at this point, it was considered that the road could not be proven and so this section has not been included. The sections are described below:

S1

This section was cut on the line of the road approximately 26 m north of the beck, although no evidence of agger or ditch could be seen. The road at this point is rising up a gradual slope from the beck. A spread of stone considered to be the bed of the road was seen to average 200 mm thick. The width was approximately 3.200 m and well defined. There was no surface to the road and it is considered that the road has deteriorated considerably due to it being on a slope and also affected by flooding from the beck. The stone surface is set in dense clay and charcoal fragments were seen in the clay below the road. Evidence of a ditch was seen to the west and a tree branch was seen lying NE-SW. There were also timber fragments seen below the ditch. There was no evidence seen of a ditch to the east. From the evidence, it would seem that woodland existed at the time the road was formed, resulting in the cutting and burning of trees on its line.

S2

This section was cut on a well-defined section of the road with the agger being very prominent. The construction of the road bed is of irregular limestone pieces and sandstone pebbles some 200 mm thick and on dense brown clay. From the make up of the road it would appear to have been extended to each side, the original width was approximately 3.800 m. There was no evidence seen of the original ditches, the present ones being of recent date. A dark blue melon bead was found in the road surface.

S3

A further section was cut on the well-defined length some 500 m to the north. The road bed was seen to be largely made up of irregular pieces of limestone, approximately 3.200 mm wide on a base of dense yellow clay. The camber was

very pronounced being 400-450 mm. An interface was seen between the yellow clay and natural. There was some evidence of ditches to the west. This section was not cut the full width of the road, which had been extended in width to the west.

S4

A section was cut some metres south of the lane leading to Goosemire Heights where the road was 600 mm below the natural levels. The road was seen to be in very good condition and be made up of between 180-280 mm graded stone set on dense yellow clay on a bed of levelled natural limestone. The width of the road was approximately 5.500 m. Evidence of two ruts having been repaired was seen. The ruts were approximately 1750 mm apart. A William IV sixpence was found to the west side of the road.

S5

A further incomplete section was cut close to the road leading to Goosemire Heights. A bed of irregular limestone pieces with some river-worn sandstone pebbles was seen to overlay dense yellow clay and stone laid over the natural black limestone. The limestone had been broken in order to provide a level base and the broken stone used in the road construction. No ditches were seen.

In sections S4 and S5, the road was formed by removing the soil overlying the natural limestone ridge and then breaking up the limestone to form an approximately level surface. Dense yellow clay and pebbles were then laid on the natural limestone and the road was made up of mainly broken limestone and some sandstone pebbles with a good camber. No ditches were seen at this point. This form of construction has the great benefit of excellent drainage and drainage ditches are not required due to the porosity of the limestone. There is no doubt that the road has been extended in width and repaired at this point. Heavy rain occurred overnight during the excavation and there was no trace of standing water on the following morning.

This section of the road was almost certainly used as a route from Long Preston to Swinden and Nappa prior to the construction of the Gisburn-Long Preston turnpike road in 1804.

Discussion

Whilst there is good evidence for the Roman road north of Long Preston passing through Gargrave to join the main Ribchester to York road east of Elslack, the evidence for the present route is less certain.

The line of the road has been traced from Long Preston to a point to the east of Barnoldswick on the Ribchester-Elslack road. If the road stopped at that point, it implies that there must have been a site of particular importance for it to do so or else the road proceeded further. Some preliminary fieldwork has been undertaken and it is suggested that the road ran south-east from Barnoldswick along the approximate line of Salterforth Lane to Kelbrook. Some evidence can be seen of an agger in the field at the north-east end of Salterforth Lane and there is some evidence of a ditch to the north-east end of Salterforth Lane. It is suggested that the route now rises up approximately on the line of Broad Lane, Kelbrook and then follows the line of Cob Lane going forward towards Near Salter Syke and Far Salter Syke on the Skipton Old Road. Colne was an

important centre for the saltways from the Cheshire works. Salt came to Colne via Bacup, Deerplay, Holmes Chapel and Worsthorne.

From Colne there were two main routes forward to Salterforth, Earby, Thornton, Skipton, Harrogate to Knaresborough or cut to Saltersyke, Laneshawbridge, Wycoller, Causeway, Oakworth, Keighley, Otley to Wetherby. There are many important instances of later saltways following Roman roads and it is suggested that the road followed the latter route to Oakworth and Keighley. This is further substantiated by the presence of Street Head Farm near West House Farm, east of Oldfield, a hamlet to the west of Oakworth, close to the line of the projected road. This farm is not marked on the current edition of the OS map. From Oakworth it is but a little way forward to join the Littleborough-Sowerby-Ilkley road (Margery 720a) at the crossing of the Aire near East Riddlesden.

It is suggested that the road as described ran from Long Preston to Settle and Ingleton to join the road to Bainbridge (Margery 73) or else up the Lune valley to Tebay (Margery 7c).

The evidence for a Roman road north of Barnoldswick is quite strong. The alignments for the road are consistent with the Roman military mind and the road clearly uses the natural features. Four 'street' names adjacent to the A59 give some of the strongest evidence. As sections of the road were clearly re-made and widened at some later date after construction, it is difficult to establish the original road construction in some areas. However, Section 2 with a very definite level of yellow clay with a strong camber topped with the stone road bed is in the Roman tradition. Similarly, the section of the road south of Goosemire Heights, cut into the top of the ridge, is indicative of the military mind. It reflects the Roman military system which had the resources to excavate the line of the road down to bedrock, break up the rock where it stood too high, remove the rock, lay a levelling bed of yellow clay and then lay the broken stone to form the road bed. Again, they would appreciate the benefit of siting the road directly onto the natural rock with its excellent drainage properties.

To conclude however, until further research is undertaken the status of the road should be taken as unproven.

Notes

1. E. E. Gregory, 1910, 'Unrecorded Roman Road and Camp at Swinden, near Hellifield', *Journal of the Bradford Scientific Association*, vol. 3, 11-15.

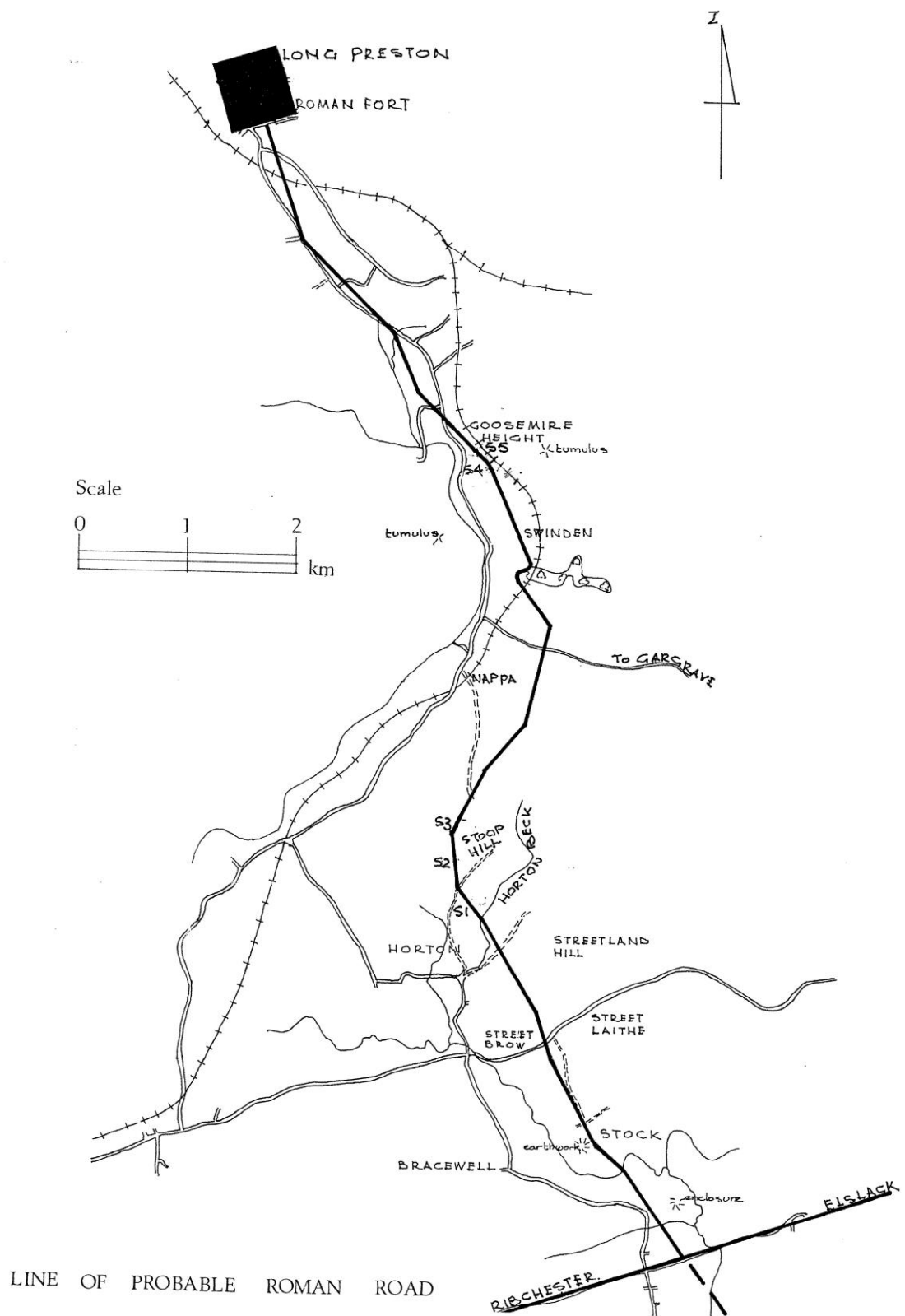
References

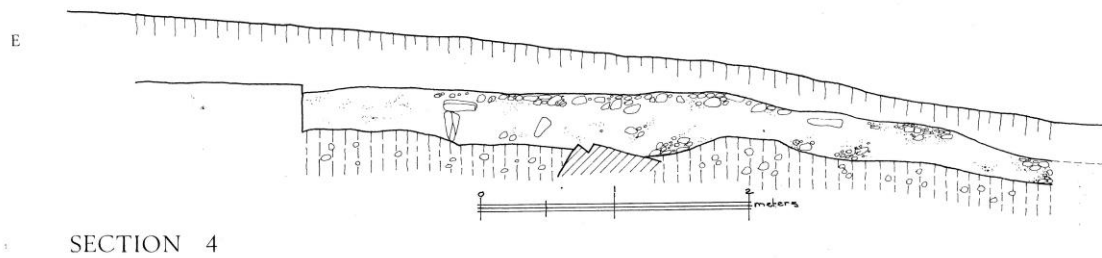
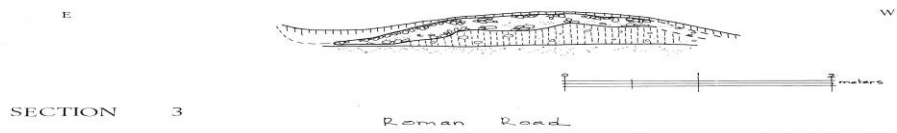
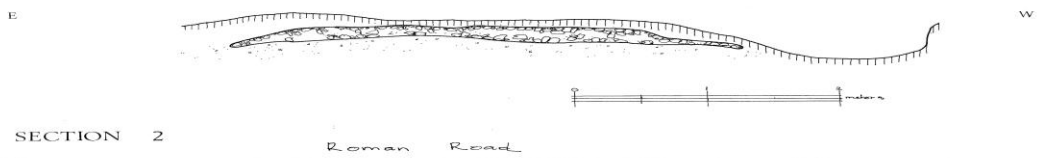
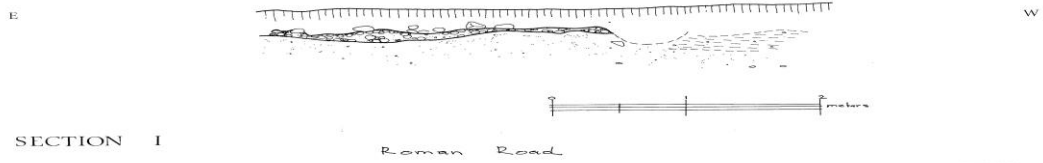
Margery, Ivan D., 1967, *Roman Roads in Britain*. Baker.

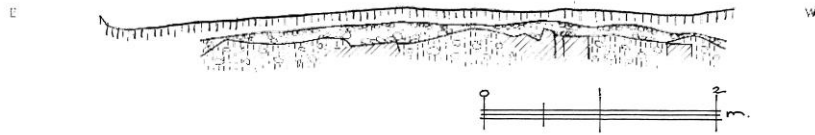
Acknowledgements

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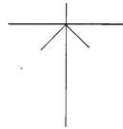




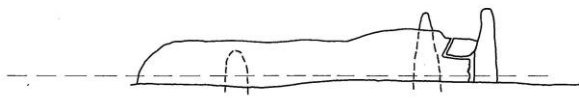
SECTION 5

Roman Road

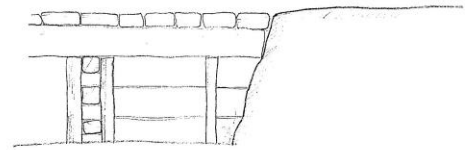
top of bank



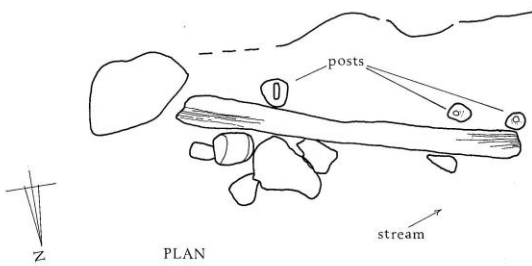
A RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE BRIDGE ABUTMENT



ELEVATION



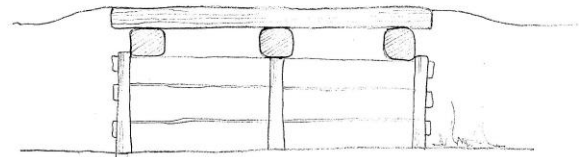
Side Elevation



PLAN



TIMBERWORK IN STREAM BED HORTON



Section Thro' Bridge Facing Bank



Timberwork in the stream bed at Horton Beck.



The road to the north of Horton Beck looking south, note how the flowers stop short of the edge of the road.



The road by Section 2 near Varley Field by Stoop Hill.



Section 2. Note the degree of camber.



Road to the north of Varley Field.



The road to the east of Nappa looking to the north.



The road to the east of Nappa looking to the south



The road at Goosemire Height.