

Stay in touch! If you have an interesting topic you'd like to share or a question just get in touch and we'll publish or try to answer.

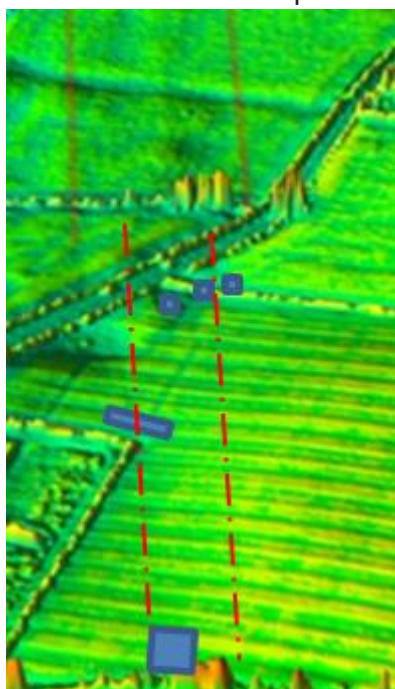
Some interesting and intriguing queries received last month, meanwhile preparations continue for new and ongoing digs.

Dig Update

1 Walton le Dale – Lancaster Road

The dig at Hornby Farm at Forton on Wednesday 17 August continued to pose some questions for the team.

Two trenches were opened in the field while a number of small test-pits were also excavated in an attempt to verify the line of the road.



Left: LiDAR image looking N, shows presumed line of road in red, projected from agger. In blue, trench 1 at bottom, trench 2 centre and test-pits top.

Note ridge & furrow plough-marks running E-W indicate field has been intensively cultivated

in the past. LiDAR Image courtesy of David Ratledge.

In the 2m² trench 1 at the southern end of the field, at a depth of about 15cm, a layer of cobbles was revealed (*Photo below Dave Hampson*).



Since this appeared to lie on the projected line of the road and the apparent non-random distribution and size of the cobbles, it was believed that a road surface had been found.

Meanwhile, a second trench, approximately 1m x 3m was opened half way down the field and slightly off the centre of the line with the hope to locate a possible side ditch, since this was on the down-slope side of the road's presumed line. Again a layer of cobbles was uncovered at a similar depth. However as the trench was extended towards what should have been the centre of the road's *agger*, the layer of cobbles was not present, raising the question as to whether the cobbles were a road surface or possibly a scatter caused by ploughing. Nor was there any obvious evidence of a ditch.

At the bottom of the field, three small 30cm² x 15cm test-pits or *sondages* were dug but no substantial archaeology revealed.



Left: Sondages Viewed to the west(Photo DH)

In the post-dig discussion, a number of questions were considered.

A key question is whether the road had any side ditches. Roman roads

usually had side ditches for drainage, the roads being cambered as modern roads are. Often roads had two sets of ditches as in (left) this Google Earth image of the excavated section of the Ribchester to Walton-le-Dale road at Preston, the outer pair maybe for marking out the route before construction, demarcating separate zones for different types of traffic, or leaving a clear field of fire through hostile territory.



The Hornby road was built on a slight slope so it may be that there would be no ditch on the down-slope side since that would drain naturally. However a ditch would be expected on the up-slope side for obvious reasons.

Answers please!

A couple of mysteries were brought to us over the past few weeks.

Keeping a-head? Firstly, a Blackpool resident emailed to ask if anyone had any ideas about a curious stone dug up when working in the garden. The house was built in 1905; OS maps of around that time show only open fields in an area that probably lay in, or on, the shore of Marton Mere before it was drained from the 18th C and when Main Dyke was cut in the 1850s.



Is it Celtic, Mediaeval or Modern?

Boxing Day? A second query came from a lady whose father Stan Jones wrote a book in the 90s entitled 'White Horses, Red Cats and Buried Treasure'. In the book Stan wrote about a reported find, somewhere around the Preesall/Pilling area of 'the remains of hundreds of compressed wooden boxes'. He writes that there were no contents but only the silver birch wood of which they were made. The find spot or spots were thought to be on the shore of another now-drained body of water, known by the 13th C monks of Cockersand Abbey as 'The Black Lake' but the exact location is not known. There is a theory that this lake was in earlier times open to the sea and was a possible beaching point for Norse traders and of course Vikings and that the boxes were the remains of sea chests lost or jettisoned. An even more interesting theory is that 'Black Lake' is linked to 'Dingesmere' with the inference that the boxes were dumped in panic by the retreating Irish/Norse after their defeat by Æthelstan at the Battle of Brunanburh in 937 CE/AD. **Any ideas as to precise find spot?**

If you can throw any light on either of these queries please email secwya@gmail.com

The line of the road also came under discussion culminating in a tentative decision to return to the site to excavate a longer trench slightly to the east of Trench 2, hopefully with the aid of a mechanical digger.



Mike with a fair impression of 'The Angel of the North' indicates where he believes the centre of the road runs.

We still have vacancies for a Vice chairperson and two committee members.

(There's hardly any work involved but we'd like more member participation and a VC is very useful to run meetings in the absence of the Chairperson).

If you're willing to help please email secwya@gmail.com

If you've had an interesting archaeological experience, a visit to a historical or to a pre-historical site send in a description and photos for inclusion in the newsletter.

WEBSITES WORTH VISITING

Wyre Archaeology: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1091772967850657>
Friends of Hurst Grange Park: www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/The-Friends-of-Hurst-Grange-Park-127722403929150
Lancashire's Roman Roads (David Ratledge): www.twithr.co.uk
Roman Roads Research Association: <http://www.romanroads.org>
Lancashire Archaeological Society: <https://lancsarchaeologicalsociety.wordpress.com>
Wigan Archaeology Society: www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk
University of the 3rd Age: <https://u3asites.org.uk/lytham-st-annes>, <https://u3asites.org.uk/wyre-lancs>, <https://u3asites.org.uk/preston>

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CONTACTS

WEB www.wyresearchaeology.org.uk
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