

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

This is the second of the new monthly newsletters and it's a very special edition. David Ratledge describes the route of a newly discovered Roman bypass and its links with the Quaker Movement! Newer members may not be familiar with David's researches into the Roman road network and the LiDAR imagery that lets us visualise these lost routes. Established members (avoiding the word 'older') will of course be aware of our successful excavation of the previously 'lost' road from Ribchester to Catterall that owed its discovery to David's researches.

A second Roman Road into the Lune Gorge

Introduction

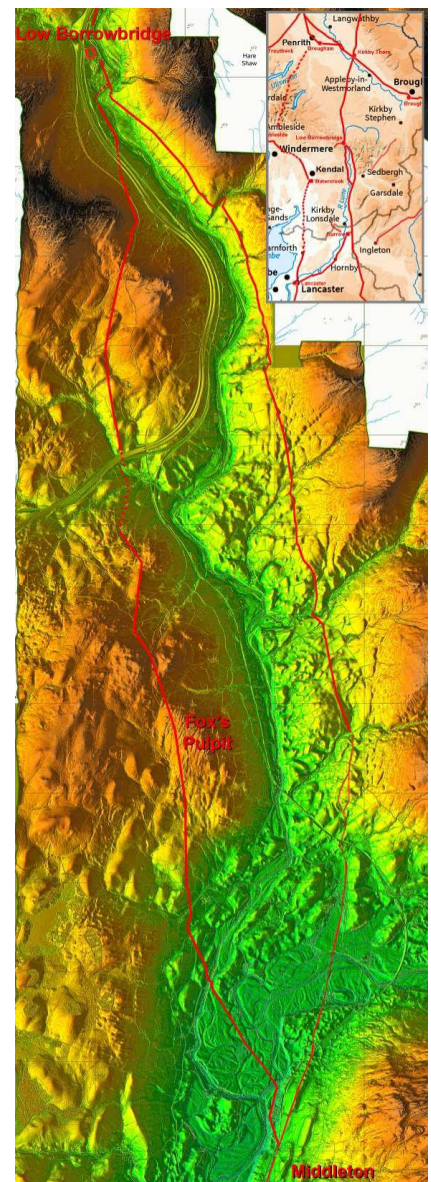
The known Roman road from Burrow (in Lancashire) to Low Borrowbridge Fort, near Tebay, is well recorded. Its course sticks to the east bank of the River Lune virtually all the way. Only immediately south of the fort does it finally cross over the river. But was this the final Roman route into the Lune Gorge? You just have to think how often we have upgraded roads or built bypasses in the last 70 years or so. The Romans were here for over 300 years so surely they too must have carried out upgrades and bypasses for their roads. It would now seem they did just that for their main north road up the Lune valley. A previously unknown duplicate Roman road has been discovered heading up the Lune valley but this time on the west bank. It runs from Middleton into the Lune Gorge and on to Low Borrowbridge fort, near Tebay.

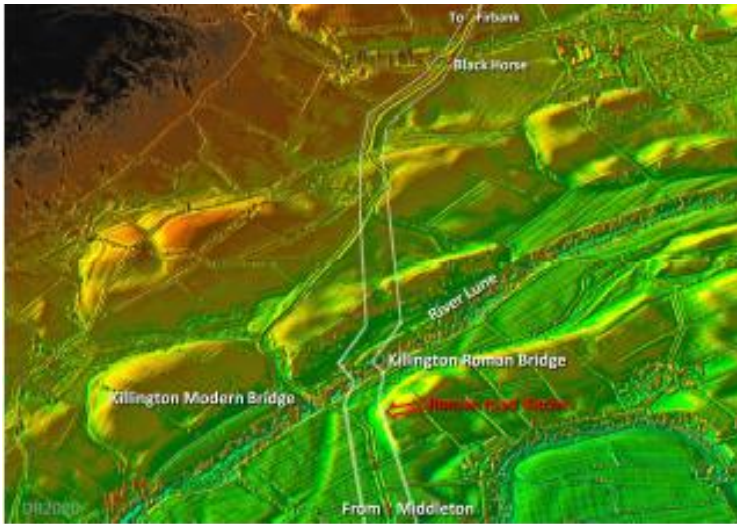
The Discovery

I had spotted in LiDAR imagery several years ago an agger running south from the fort at Low Borrowbridge heading over Grayrigg. In my ignorance I had assumed it must be a road to Watercrock at Kendal. However, all my attempts to extend its course towards Watercrock had met with failure. Roll forward 3 years or so and I received an email from John Scott saying there looked to be an agger near Fox's Pulpit on Firbank. Firbank is on the Lune's west bank, roughly opposite Sedbergh.

Right:

*The route of the newly discovered Roman road on the west bank of the River Lune. The well-known east bank road is also shown.
Inset: Location Plan*





Oblique LiDAR image showing the route of the road at Killington. The Roman bridge over the Lune was 100 metres upstream of the current bridge.

He was correct – it was unambiguously a Roman road agger. Then the penny suddenly dropped – the road I had been following didn't go to Watercrock at all. Instead, there was a Roman road along the west bank of the River Lune. Further studies of the LiDAR data extended the Firbank section north to my section at Grayrigg and also south to cross the Rivers Lune and Rawthey to where it would join the known road at Middleton

The Route Described

This previously unknown road left the known road at Middleton and crossed the River Rawthey at Middleton Bridge (SD63009 89750) before crossing the River Lune, 100 metres north of Killington Bridge (SD62273 90903) – the modern bridge is on a turnpike era upgrade. This may seem strange crossing two rivers close together but the east route also had to cross both these rivers, although not in close proximity. Both crossing sites on the west bank route are located at rock outcrops so would provide solid foundations for the bridge builders.

After crossing the A684 at the former Black Horse pub, the road partially follows the minor road to Firbank. Initially it straight-lines the modern bends but approaching Fox's Pulpit is typically Roman – dead straight and on a prominent agger. Fox's Pulpit could be considered the birth place of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Here, on 13 June 1652, George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, preached to his followers. I had always wondered why Fox chose this spot - today it is in the middle of nowhere, on a road to nowhere. We now know it was alongside the

main Roman road to the north. So it was actually a very sensible spot to which followers from north and south could travel to easily.

Just beyond Fox's Pulpit, the modern road swings off line and a particular fine stretch of agger is detectable on the ground (SD61827 93897). This is the section brought to my attention by John Scott. The route then passes High House (SD61280 95917) but is somewhat less certain for a short section passing to the west of Lowgill.

Certainty resumes again north of the motorway, where it then passes under Graining Field Farm (SD61205 97233). It continues on to the west of Dillicar Knott, Grayrigg and again there is fine surviving agger visible on the ground (SD61147 98175). This is no doubt the best surviving agger on this road. It measures 9 metres over the ditches so it was no minor supply road but a *bona-fide* major Roman highway.



It does look typically Roman, the road approaching Fox's Pulpit, Firbank. On the rock to the left is a plaque marking the famous spot where George Fox preached to his followers.

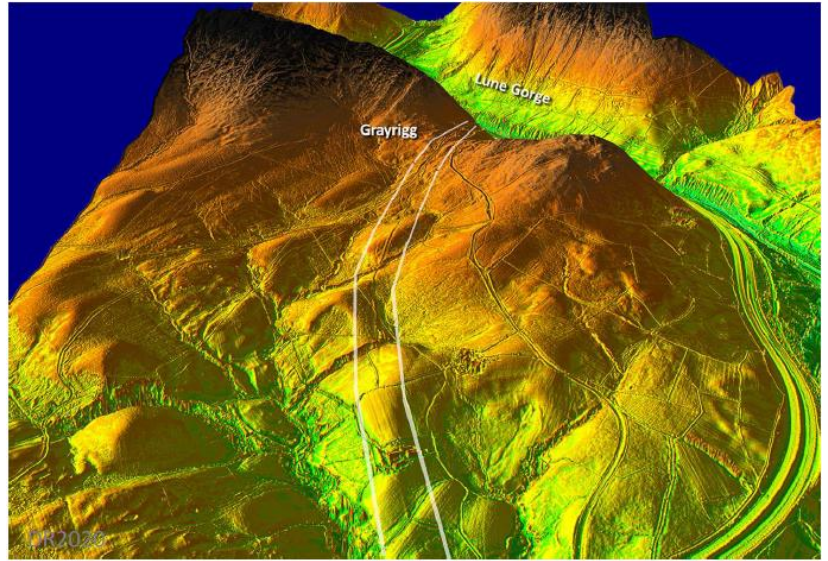
After climbing over Grayrigg, the road descends into the Lune Gorge and, although the route is partly destroyed by the motorway and railway, sufficient survives to confirm its course. The final length to the fort is down by the river (NY61240 00327), which it then follows closely to the fort.

The Puzzle

Why two roads? The western route appears to branch off the east bank road, which would suggest it was the later. However, this west bank route is hillier, and not just slightly, but dramatically so. Admittedly it is a little bit shorter (0.5 miles) but it would have needed an important reason to build 8 miles of new road with two bridges. So can it be regarded as a later replacement of the east bank road? In its favour

are the bridges. The west bank route bridges are where the rivers are constrained by rock and building bridges would be relatively easy. On the other hand for the east bank route, the River Rawthey crossing, west of Sedbergh, is where the river is unconstrained. A study of the LiDAR imagery reveals an active river with numerous old abandoned channels and meanders. Realistically it is only suitable for a fording point.

So my guess is that it was the bridges that clinched it for the west bank route. The east bank route, with almost certainly a ford, was later to be abandoned. The west bank route would become the main route north for the Romansand George Fox.



Oblique LiDAR image of the final climb over Grayrigg, before the road descends into the Lune Gorge. The M6 Motorway takes a much easier but longer route.

A LiDAR flyover video of the “new” route is available at: <https://youtu.be/KhbfPVwpw-c>

David Ratledge
www.twithr.co.uk

David, in his younger days, was a bridge engineer. His claim to fame is that although the IRA blew up his bridge in city centre Manchester, they didn't bring it down!

David has now created a dedicated website:



This covers Roman roads in Cheshire, Lancashire & Greater Manchester and Cumbria and has struck out down south in Norfolk and Suffolk. Find it at www.twithr.co.uk

In response to Government advice regarding measures to mitigate against the spread of Coronavirus, Wyre Archaeology has cancelled future meetings until further notice. Digs are also suspended for the time being. News will be circulated to members by e-mail, the website and the newsletter.

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We're always on the lookout for new projects so if you have a view about potential sites – especially if you have a contact – get in touch. Come to our meeting (**when re-instated**) or email: [secwya@gmail.com](mailto:secwya@gmail.com)

We still have vacancies on our Executive Committee. If you'd like to contribute to planning our activities and steering the society just get in touch.

**We're always happy to have new members, so, if you know of anyone that might be interested, get them to email: [secwya@gmail.com](mailto:secwya@gmail.com)**

**WEBSITES WORTH VISITING**

|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lancashire Archaeological Society          | <a href="https://lancsarchaeologicalsociety.wordpress.com/">https://lancsarchaeologicalsociety.wordpress.com/</a>                                                                                                                                                         |
| Lancashire's Roman Roads (David Ratledge): | <a href="http://www.twithr.co.uk">www.twithr.co.uk</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Roman Road Research Association:           | <a href="http://www.romanroads.org">www.romanroads.org</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Wigan Archaeology Society:                 | <a href="http://www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk">www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| University of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Age      | <a href="https://u3asites.org.uk/lytham-st-annes">https://u3asites.org.uk/lytham-st-annes</a> ,<br><a href="https://u3asites.org.uk/wyre-lancs">https://u3asites.org.uk/wyre-lancs</a> ,<br><a href="https://u3asites.org.uk/preston">https://u3asites.org.uk/preston</a> |

**Membership Benefits: Full Membership:** 10 meetings with voting rights, group membership of CBA and CBA(NW), free training, participation in digs, basic kit loan, personal dig insurance, WA Newsletter, Wigan AS and Lancashire Local History Federation newsletters, Lancaster Uni's Centre for Regional Studies circulars. (*£12 individuals, £18 two family members at same address, full-time students up to age 21 free*). **Associate Members:** participation in digs, basic dig training, loan of kit, dig insurance, newsletter and circulars as above (*£5*).

**If YOU have any articles, news or views, send them to the NEW gmail address at the end of this newsletter. Check us out on Facebook too!**

**WYRE ARCHAEOLOGY OFFICERS & COMMITTEE**

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| Immediate Past Chair | Chris Clayton                          |
| Treasurer            | Simon Millward-Hopkins                 |
| Secretary            | Dave Hampson                           |
| Committee Members    | Mike Edwards, Dave Berry, Peter Scott. |

**CONTACTS**

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**Please forward this newsletter to anyone you think may be interested.**