

Update January 2018

## Professional Report on a Roman Road at Duffield Bank

In February 2017 Archaeological Research Services of Bakewell were undertaking a watching brief on the east bank of the Derwent in Duffield (Makeney side of the river), just north of the Bridge Inn pub and in the grounds of the Rolls Royce Conference Centre at Duffield Bank House, SK 3512 4338. This watching brief was to oversee the construction of a small sewage treatment plant and its outfall to the Derwent. These grounds are private.

The watching brief included the survey of a 51 metre pipe trench which ran from the plant to the river outfall. At the point at which the pipe trench crossed a modern tarmac path, in the trench it was found that the path overlay various contexts of previous paths and tracks the exposure of which, working gradually down, reached the metalling of a road at just short of a metre depth. Archaeological Research Services held the view that the construction of this road was “strongly reminiscent of Roman construction techniques”, with small rounded stones in a clay matrix overlaying medium large sandstone pitching and some edging. (The detail of this is indeed similar to the Portway at Ivonbrook Grange). The total width of the road from edge to edge was 4.5 metres, with the running surface being 2.9 metres containing two ruts 1.3 metres apart. The road was running in an approximate north south alignment and appeared to be a continuation of Save Penny Lane, a lane which appears on early maps including the 1791 Township of Duffield Enclosure Map, running from Duffield Bridge to Makeney Hall.

### Existing knowledge

Save Penny Lane has one archaeological examination associated with it, that by William Smithard in 1913 and reported in the Derbyshire Archaeological Journal (DAJ) of that year pages 133-134. Smithard found a road he regarded as Roman. His section diagram for this road, being over 100 years old, is not wonderfully accurate by modern standards but gives an edge to edge measurement of 17 feet (about 5 metres) composed of small stone over sandstone pitching.

Smithard in writing up his examination said that it was part of the Roman road from Little Chester to Buxton. “represented by old roads and field-paths along the 200 foot contour through Breadsall, Little Eaton and Duffield Bank to Milford, where it crossed the Derwent and proceeded along the Chevin” (North Lane). His predecessor John Charles Cox (in DAJ 1886 p214) had taken the view that from the Chevin the route to Buxton was via Wirksworth.

### Our fieldwork

The only recent fieldwork which we have undertaken in direct relation to this question was an examination of North Lane on the Chevin in August and September 2012 at SK 3381 4623. We were not able to date the road section there at the time. However, the road is composed of two periods of construction, the first represented by a wide 10 metre spread of stone which had slumped down the valley side. The second phase built over the first, was 4.5 metres wide including a turf revetted edge whose purpose was to prevent the roadstone spreading down the hill as the first phase had done. What we did not know at the time of that examination was that turf revetting was a Roman military construction technique. The continuation of North Lane would appear to be Dalley Lane towards Belper Lane End but a short section is missing which is in the grounds of Chevin Mount House and its continuation was destroyed by the former roadstone quarry immediately north of the house.



North Lane looking southward towards Milford: Site of our 2012 examination.

#### Conclusion.

Where we have been most successful in identifying Roman routes this has been due to our building on the fieldwork of colleagues and in identifying relevant documents. For example, it would not have been possible to identify the course of The Street from Buxton to Wirksworth without the discovery of the 1723 map of Brassington Moor, which showed The Street turning to the east when no later map of its course existed.

Equally, where we alone have done fieldwork on a possible Roman road but no other workers have, such as in our examinations last year of Old Lane and Dark Lane, and where the supporting evidence be it in maps or documents is not strong, it will be for future workers to judge our correctness or otherwise. The fear of being wrong should not deter us in presenting what work we have done for comparison by colleagues, by their own fieldwork, or by the discovery of new evidence.

So, therefore, if our colleagues at Archaeological Research Services are correct and their work does indeed support that of Smithard 100 years ago at Save Penny Lane and ours of 2012 at North Lane, then this is the most secure (missing Roman) connection between Wirksworth and Little Chester identified to date.

I will, in due course, put together everything we know about this route for the benefit of future workers.