

Section examinations of North Lane on the Chevin between Milford and Farnah Green.

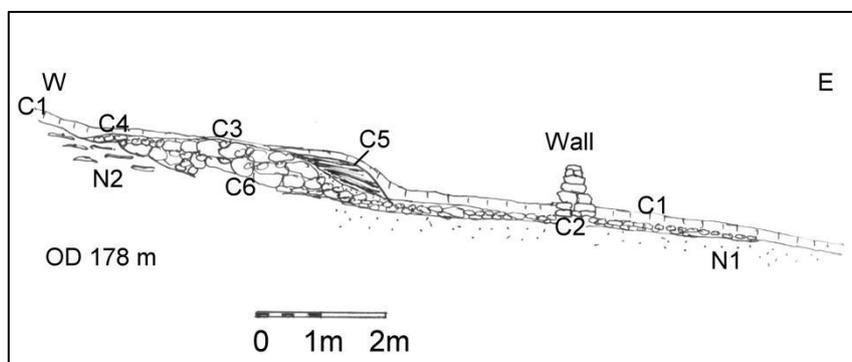
The purpose of this archaeological examination was to determine when North Lane, the road between Milford and Farnah Green was built. I am most grateful to Dean Smart, Ivan Wain, Chris Hills and Fiona Drake for their assistance with the examinations and to Joan D'Arcy (Derbyshire Archaeological Society) and David Budge (Mercian Archaeological Services) for their assistance with the pottery finds.



North Lane on the Chevin at Firestone Hill looking towards Farnah Green

Two examinations have been carried out on the road along the Chevin between Milford and Farnah Green. The first was in October 2012 at SK 3378 4633, which is towards Farnah Green. The second was in June 2018 at SK 3395 4566, which is towards Milford. The large time gap between the two examinations was due to the first examination being inconclusive, we found no dating evidence at the time or finds of any kind and felt that more effort would be unproductive. However, in 2016, professional archaeologists working at Duffield Bank House on the east bank of the Derwent found what they believed to be a Roman road (Cobbold and Thorpe, 2017) heading in the direction of Milford, this being the same road as had been examined and thought to be Roman by Smithard over 100 years ago. Smithard (1913) considered that it crossed the river at Milford and proceeded along the Chevin. Here are the examination sections:

Section 1: Towards the Farnah Green end:



The section diagram for North Lane, Farnah Green.

C1 Turf

C2 Wide loose stoning 10-15 cm gritstones, this appears to be why the road had to be repaired or rebuilt. The spread of stones, assumed to be the first road, appears to have slipped down the hill.

C3 Black, almost ashlike thin hard surfacing, which carries on over the west side agger and also lies beneath C4 and C5, suggests the road was rebuilt and was then in use for a period before the abutment was built to stop it slipping down the hill again.

C4 Narrow (30cm) single layer of smaller stoning which appears to denote the west edge where the natural bedrock rises up to meet it, may represent a kerb at this point.

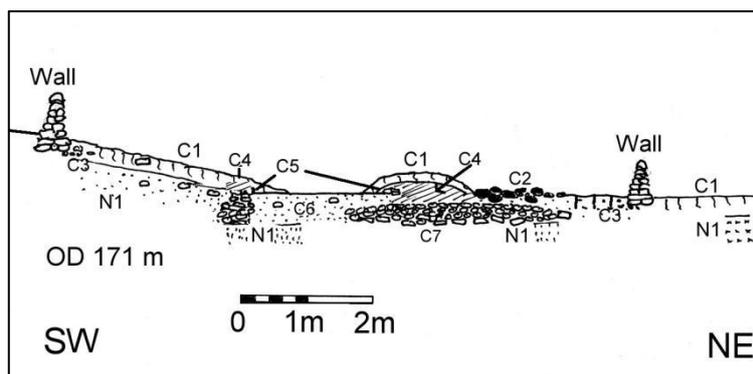
C5 A layer of very sandy grey striated soil, apparently of cut turf. This appears to form an abutment to hold the stoning in place, which lies on top of C3, so is likely to be the result of a further repair.

C6 The core of the road rebuild, comprised of very large stones (up to 30cm), some of which protrude through C3, but which are worn smooth on their upper (road) surface.

N1 Natural substrate of fawn sandy loam

N2 Natural bedrock of fawn brown gritstone

Section 2: Towards the Milford end:



The section diagram for North Lane, Milford.

C1 Turf

C2 Rough very loose stoning 10-15 cm gritstones in black organic fill perhaps tipped as if it were a parish repair.

C3 Understoning of field walls, small stone mixed with soil

C4 A layer of sandy mid grey soil. This is an abutment similar to that in the first examination. There is a slighter version on the upside (south west side) which overlays the kerbing and might represent work to prevent the road getting wet from wash-down on that side. Oddly the abutment at this point appears to overlay the running surface of the second phase road, perhaps due to it having been weathered down over time.

C5 Bedded kerb or edge very pronounced on the south west side.

C6 The road rebuild comprised of rammed reddish fawn gritty sand which appears to be the fill of a trench over 50 cm deep cut into the substrate of N1. This is comparable to context 6 of the first examination, just a different form of aggregate.

C7 The core of the first constructed road, comprised of very large stones (up to 30cm). The base stones of this context are thinner and flatter, and there is some similarity between this context and the bottom of the kerb, which is strangely deep for a kerb and which also has thin flat stones at its base.

N1 Natural substrate of fawn sand with grit and occasional fawn yellow micaceous small gritstone. Note in the field on the north east side, the sand is very red immediately below the turf and soil, which is 30cm deep.



Section trench in progress

The two sections of road, although they are constructed on different steepnesses of slope are the same. Both have alike features, that is two phases of road building, a kerb or edge on the west side and an abutment on the other. The only difference is in the material used in the second phase, where at Farnah Green it is fawn gritstone and at Milford it is rammed sand. The edge or kerb on the west side of the road would appear, from the Milford section examination, to be integral to the construction of the second phase road and the abutment on the east side of the second phase would appear, from the Farnah Green section examination, to have been added at a later date to prevent the road agger slipping away down the hill.



Section trench showing kerb

The total width of the whole feature, both roads and their edges, where it hasn't slipped down the hill, is 5 metres 45 cm. The road in the first examination has slipped down the hill so its width is not representative of its original state. In the second examination the running surface of the original road is 2 metres 80 cm and the surface of the rebuilt road is 3 metres including the kerb. In the first examination the running surface of the original road cannot be determined due to slippage, but the rebuild is 3 metres 10 cm including the kerb. The width of the running surface of the road found by Cobbold and Thorpe at Duffield Bank House was 2 metres 90 cm. The Street, at Minninglow, is 2 metres 80 cm on dead level ground.

The work on this road gives every impression of engineering. It has two phases, perhaps comprised of an original rapid build (which is why it slipped down the hill) and a rebuild which was itself followed relatively quickly with an abutment to stop it moving once and for all. This is three activities. If we agree with Smithard, and the road is Roman, then its possible date of first construction may be some time around the late 70s AD, as this is when the Romans are pushing north through the Peak District.

Finds



Post-medieval finds from the second section examination (C1 and C3)

- 1. Grey hand made tile shard 2. Shard of plant pot 3. Shard of brown glazed ware 4. Shard of Nottingham Stoneware
- 5. Core of a golf ball 6. Machine made china cup 7. Two golf balls.



Roman finds from the surface of North Lane

- 1-2 Derbyshireware; 3 Greyware; 4 Rim shard (Shottle); 5 Body shard (Lumb Brook).

Finally we come to finds. In 2012 we had no finds. In 2018 we had various post-medieval finds from the examination and this time we fieldwalked the road from the Milford end to the Rifle Butts and have five shards of Roman pottery from on the surface in different places. Of these, two are from within 50 metres of our examination site and they are both definitive pieces. The first is a rim shard of Roman Derbyshireware, which is identifiable by its shape with those from the Shottle kiln. This kiln operated from the late second century to the early third century, or to speak plainly, perhaps approximately 175 AD to 225 AD. The second shard is a (jar) body shard from the Lumb Brook kiln site. These kilns operated from the mid to late second century to the late third century, or to speak plainly, perhaps approximately 150 AD to 275 AD. As these shards lay on the top of the second running surface this tells us that the earliest date

at which there could have been a rebuild of this road is perhaps 150 AD. Indeed it might not be working the evidence too hard to consider that the road might have been rebuilt because of the presence of the Roman pottery kilns near here - bad roads between your kilns and your markets equals broken pottery and less income.

We will follow this examination up by a field walk of North Lane from the rifle butts to Farnah Green and by looking at the documentary evidence for its continuation north from Farnah Green. It does not run into Longwalls Lane, that lane is medieval. Perhaps it runs into Dalley Lane, but Dalley Lane and the rest of the 1756 Wirksworth Turnpike is in use: there are no examination opportunities, therefore the assessment will depend on documents.

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