

Roman Road Excavation - Summary

In September and October 2021 Northern Archaeological Associates delivered an archaeological excavation along a short section of Roman road between Clitheroe and Worston. This work was funded as part of the Community Archaeology project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund within the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership.

The Roman road between Ribchester and Elslack (Margary 72a) has been identified as running through between Clitheroe and A59, into Chatburn, Downham and Rimington before crossing into Pendle along Brogden Lane. It has been mapped using LiDAR, but little further research has been done to investigate the road in this area.

Local volunteers were interested in discovering more about how the road was built on the local area. Ribble Valley Archaeology Group have done a great job starting investigations of the road in areas across Rimington and will continue to do this.

The aims of the excavation led by NAA was to develop more of an insight into how the Roman road was built in the area, and also to give volunteers practical excavation experience.

Community Archaeology Co-Ordinator Rebecca supported a group of volunteers in a topographical survey on a section of proposed road. The excavation was then carried out over a 2 week period on a slightly different section of road about 50m further along the road in the Ribchester direction.



The two archaeologists from NAA, Craig and Al, dealt with some particularly rainy days but managed to stay on site for 9 of the 10 days. On 4 of those days they were joined by a group of volunteers, who were able to develop a better understanding and get involved in the excavation process.

The excavation confirmed the presence and course of the road and provided evidence for the nature of its construction, however also raised other questions. The lack of finds (just one piece of roman pottery) are insufficient to prove the date of the road as Roman. There is clear evidence for the presence of a level road surface made of small pieces of stone (metalled road) which has then been resurfaced with sandy clay.

The edge of a possible roadside ditch, which could be eroded from the road surface was identified on one side of the road however, more excavation would be needed to understand more about this feature. There are also some indications that some materials may have been taken from the road to be used for construction material, though there is no evidence of its reuse.



The undated later surface of the road, along with the historical features in the area suggest that the maintenance and use of the road continued beyond the Roman period. The results of the excavation and the topographic survey strongly suggest that the Roman road was present in the location indicated by LiDar.

We would like to thank the landowner, Hanson UK and in particular Sam Wrathall, for allowing us to deliver this project, involve local volunteers and for assisting with digging out the initial trench and backfilling at the end of the excavation. Another huge thanks to the volunteers who got involved with the excavation and Ribble Valley Archaeology Group. Finally, a big thanks to Peter Del Strother. Without Peter, this project would not have gone ahead.