

Roman Roads Research Part 2

Introduction

Bob Whitaker

In the last edition of *Camerton*, I reported the current research on Roman roads and indicated that further research was being carried out not only on the Poole to Bath road, but on other Roman roads. In this year's *Camerton*, two Society members, Tim Lunt and John Matthews, are reporting work carried out on, (a) The Poole to Bath Road, and (b) The Roman road from the Lox Yeo Valley to Charterhouse.

Bath to Poole Road (Margary No 46)

South from Hinton Charterhouse

Tim Lunt

The route over the first 10 miles south from Bath is marked in two sections on Ordnance Survey (OS) maps, firstly between Midford and Hinton Charterhouse and then to the south of Norton St Philip heading towards Lullington. The first section running to Hinton through Abbey Farm is on an alignment of 166° and is generally accepted as Roman. Although ploughed down in recent years it has been well-defined as a hollow way. The second section continues on a similar alignment and follows an existing field track. It was shown by the BACAS geophysics survey carried out over the winter of 2003-4 that this track was of probable Medieval origin, as it would have passed directly through a Roman villa. This raises the question of the likely route of the Roman road south of Hinton.

Examination of the current Google Earth satellite images of the area taken in March 2006 show a distinct diagonal mark across two fields at Norwood Farm near Hinton centred on grid ref ST781566 with an alignment of 154° (see *Figure 1* route marked by Xs).

The Norwood Farm alignment is not apparent at any other points on Google but, when extended, would continue north-west to the Hinton playing field to meet the alignment coming through Abbey Farm. To the south-east it goes directly to Cley Hill, 13 miles away (see *Figure 2*, heavy white line).

Figure 1
Possible route of the road marked by X



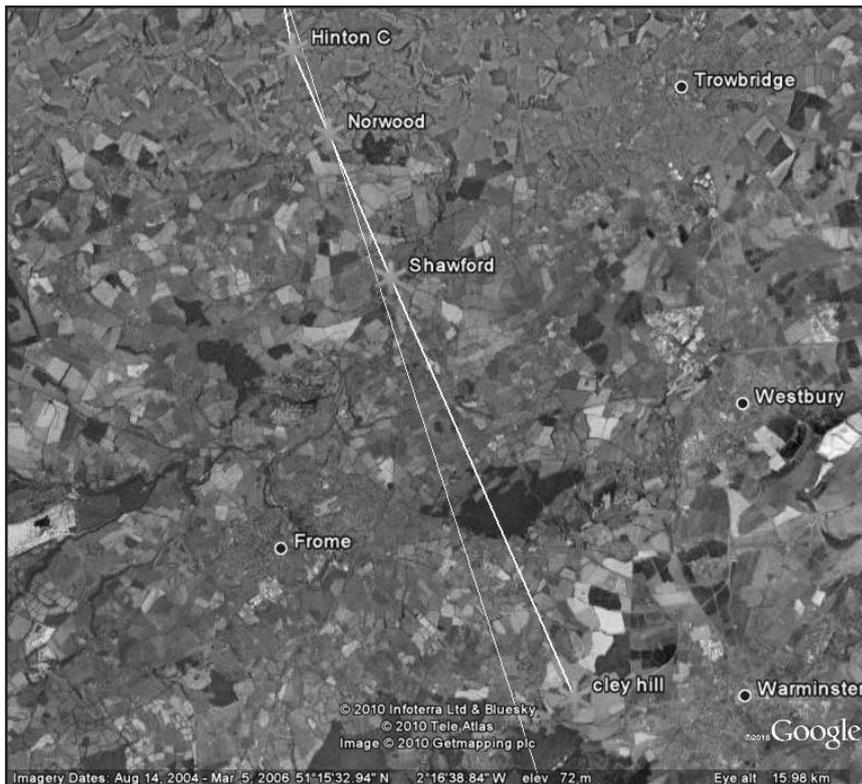


Figure 2
Possible road line
between Hinton and
Cley Hill. Light line
shows direct bearing
between Bath and Poole

Given the construction method for Roman roads, with straight lengths surveyed between high points, there is some merit in considering that Cley Hill would have been used as a sighting point for the route south from Hinton. It is very distinctive on the horizon and is clearly visible from the high ground at Hinton near the point of contact with the Abbey Farm alignment. The direction towards Cley Hill also moves the route eastwards from the previous 166° alignment back over the direct alignment of the Bath to Poole route of approximately 160° (see Figure 2, lighter white line).

There would have been a crossing point for the River Frome at Shawford, the name suggesting an ancient function, which is very close to the line and may have been the point where the road made another change of direction towards the heights beyond Longleat.

On the ground at Norwood Farm the only evidence of the road is at ST780569, just to the north of a small wooded spring that rises in the centre of the field. Here the ground dips and a hollow way is visible for approximately 30 yards. There are also possible signs of embankment by the stream below the spring. Following the line south there is no further surface evidence but a BWW (Bristol Water Works) concrete marker post is placed in a fence at ST782566 on the line.

Details from Bristol Water show a mains water pipe running east/west through this point with no connection to any other pipes. Norwood Farm is not aware of any other pipes laid below these fields. If another pipe did exist and was the cause of the mark it is likely that the hollow way noted above would not be present, as backfilling would have been complete. However the BWW post directly on the line is a curious coincidence!

In an effort to find further evidence of the road at the site, four areas along the mark at Norwood Farm were surveyed by resistivity. It was hoped that the survey would show evidence of the road in the form of ditches or metalled surfaces but nothing was apparent. The survey did confirm the location and bearing of the BWW water pipe where expected. Some ground features were also identified close to the hollow way by the spring which may be of interest.

Acknowledgements

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