

Fig. 2. The flint axe (drawn by Tina Waghorn).

East Sussex (Woodcock and Woolley 1986). Its closest parallel in terms of form comes from relatively close by at Alfriston (Woodcock and Woolley 1986, no. 5) which, interestingly, also appears to have excessive wear on one side of the blade. Although the Plumpton Plain example is not from a secure context, a number of Neolithic axes, particularly those of probable Cornish origin, have been found on Middle and Late Bronze Age sites. Re-use during metal processing and deliberate deposition have both been postulated (Fiona Roe pers. comm.). Also local to Plumpton and Alfriston, although again from an uncertain context, is a serpentinite axe from Blackrock Farm, Westmeston (IPG Sx64) (Weeks 1856; Fiona Roe pers. comm.) probably re-used as a metal smithing stone. A stone axe was found deposited in a Middle Bronze Age water-hole at Terminal 5, Heathrow and, although not thin-sectioned, it is another example of Cornish greenstone and is likely to be Group I (Framework Archaeology 2006, 144–5 and CD), while a portion of a Group I axe had been placed in a pit containing Late Bronze Age pottery at Weston Wood, Albury, Surrey (Field and Woolley 1984, 97).

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Roman road at Bodiam – revised alignment



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INTRODUCTION

The National Trust, owners of Bodiam Castle, commissioned an Archaeological and Historic Landscape Survey of its property (Johnson *et al.* 2000). Recommendations called for a programme of geophysical survey to establish whether the known Roman road actually passes through Dokes Field, north-west of the castle and part of its estates, as it was expected that the western part of this field would be leased to East Sussex County Council for a school sports field, which would entail machine levelling. Several alternative routes have been proposed in the past.

A number of local and professional archaeology groups were invited to carry out surveys independently during 2010, to enable comparison to be made between results from a variety of technologies. Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group (HAARG) was granted a licence and the work was carried out between 17 and 30 April 2010. A more detailed report and discussion appeared in *HAARG Journal New Series* **29** (Summer 2010), 1–9.

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site is within the High Weald, a series of ridges which trend west–east. The underlying sandstones of the Ashdown Beds are capped on most ridges by Wadhurst Clay. The north–south line of the Roman road strikes at right angles to these valleys, following a very undulating line, so long sighting alignments would not have been possible.

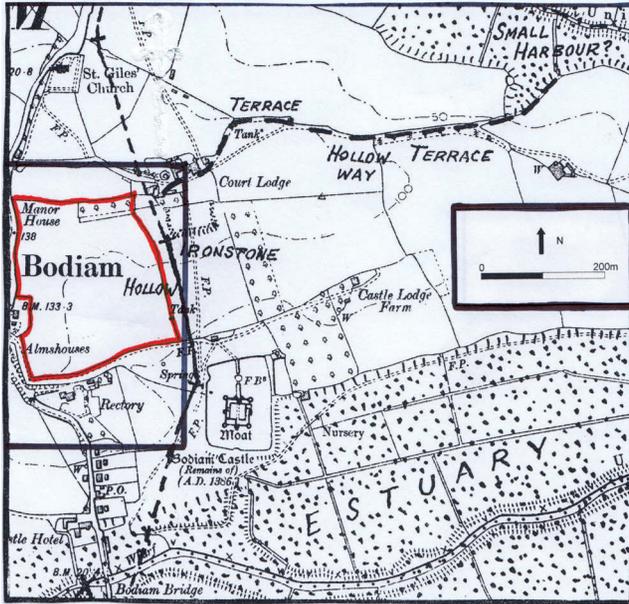


Fig. 1. Line of road through Bodiam proposed by Margary in his 1965 version (p. 225), with Dokes Field indicated in red.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Roman road is usually referred to as the Rochester to Hastings Road, but its line has not been conclusively traced south of Westfield, and it is unlikely that Hastings was the intended destination. None of the itineraries suggests any permanent Roman settlement there to justify such a highway, in contrast with other roads in the South-East which terminated at major military bases such as Dover, Lympe and Richborough. It is now proposed that the principal purpose of this road, which eventually joined Watling Street at Rochester, was the carriage of iron production from the large industry centred on Beauport, and that a number of minor branch tracks will have connected with the many satellite sites.

For the early production period (early 2nd century), export of iron via the newly discovered *Classis Britannica* (CLBR) waterfront at Kitchenham Farm in Ashburnham (Cornwell and Cornwell 2007; 2008) is possible, but Cleere and Crossley (1995) suggest that a port on the River Brede at Sedlescombe may have operated for a time before being superseded or augmented by the known port on the Rother south of Bodiam. The final stage, tentatively dated by Cleere and Crossley to the early 3rd century, was the extension of the road from Bodiam to Rochester (although this dating is in need of revision – see discussion below). A more precise present-day name for this highway, therefore, would be the Beauport to Rochester Road.

Margary in his first detailed report (1947, 23–41) mapped a line swinging far to the east of the modern highway for the section between Sandhurst Cross and Court Lodge, Bodiam, serving a suggested ‘small harbour’ (now discounted) on the Kent Ditch, then passing southward close to the western arm

of the moat of Bodiam Castle. In 1965 Margary (212–28) assigned the route to a line closer to the present main road as far as St Giles Church, but still then running close to the Castle (Fig. 1).

More recently Johnson, Martin and Whittick (2000) proposed a line further west, avoiding the castle grounds, but passing through its adjacent property known as Dokes Field, resulting in the present researches. Dokes Field is first named in 1730 (ESRO AMS.6454/6/1). The place-name has been interpreted by Paul Cullen as the early Modern English word *doke* meaning a small hollow or depression, and also occurs in Eastry (Kent) from 1545 (Johnson *et al.* 2000, 83).

SURVEYS CARRIED OUT BY HAARG, APRIL 2010

METHODOLOGY

A transect W–E across Dokes field was surveyed from TQ78202580, using HAARG’s Geoscan FM256 Magnetometer and Geoscan RM4 Resistivity equipment. The method is detailed in the *HAARG Journal* report. Features were identified on both surveys, and from this point further magnetometer surveys were conducted north and south to cover the length of the field.

RESULTS

The initial transect of 225m × 10m across the field indicated two parallel features running north to south at a distance of 70m east of the original starting point. These were clear on the magnetometer survey (Fig. 2) but were also present on the resistivity survey as an area of higher resistance, although not as clearly defined.

The magnetometer survey, extended to include the complete length of the features N–S across the field, shows that they are most likely to represent a road/trackway, bordered on both sides with a ditch, while the remains of the road surface were also highlighted by higher responses.

The results indicate that the alignment of the road may have been altered at the northern and southern points where there are fainter features that diverge from the main trackway (Fig. 2). There is also an indication at the southern end that there may have been a branch off the road heading in a north-westerly direction.

DISCUSSION

THE REVISED LINE OF THE ROAD

The results of these geophysical surveys indicate the presence of a double-ditched road or trackway. It is proposed that this is the true line of the Roman road designated Route I by Margary.

The newly revealed road aligns southward on to the present Bodiam main street, meeting it at TQ78302556. It passes under the Old Rectory, very close to the site of the cremation burials found in 1902 (Whistler 1940), down the main street towards the present bridge across the Rother. Northward of Dokes Field the projected road runs under the tennis court of ‘Longacre’ (previously Justin’s Hotel). If it continues on this

alignment, it would rejoin Margary's route to the east of St Giles Church, Bodiam.

EVIDENCE FOR THE DATING OF THE ROAD

The extension northward from the port on the Rother at Bodiam to Rochester was tentatively dated by Cleere and Crossley (1995) to early 3rd century; it can now be proposed that this section is earlier, because it also served Cranbrook, where iron production appears to have ceased by the second half of the 2nd century (Aldridge 2001, 155).

CLBR-stamped *imbrices* of the same stamp type have been found at Cranbrook and in the Bodiam road, but not on any other sites. Brodrigg (1969, 111) reported on a complete *imbrex* bearing a *Classis* stamp (his type 4) 'discovered just below the surface of the Roman road some 1700 yards north of the Bodiam site' [the *Classis Britannica* Harbour] – i.e. approximately 1km north of Dokes Field. Among those found on the iron production site at Little Farningham Farm, Cranbrook TQ802354 in 1955–7 were six of this type, presumably carried there along the road. These *imbrices* are very unlikely to have been made later than the mid 2nd century.

The dating of the road extension northward from the river crossing at Bodiam at least as far as Cranbrook should be advanced in the light of this evidence. Also, less than 2km south of the Cranbrook site, at Hempsted, is the junction with Margary route III to Lympe via Westhawk (Ashford), a site now known to be early. This would provide the shortest dry-land route between Beauport and the *Classis* base at Lympe. No evidence is known for the dating of the northward extension of the road to Maidstone, from where Ashford and Lympe were more directly accessible by Margary's route II, but iron production centred on Beauport appears to have ceased by AD 235 (Brodrigg and Cleere 1988, 243), rendering the road redundant.

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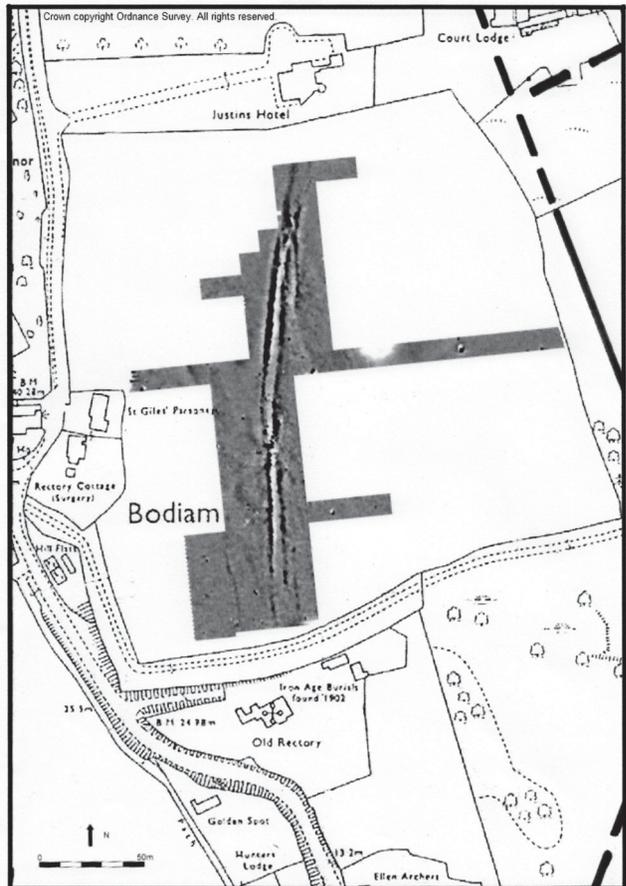


Fig. 2. Fluxgate magnetometer results showing line of Roman road through Dokes Field.

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