

**Ryknild Street section RR18c. Wall to Little Chester, East of Letocetum to Derwentio – 24½ miles  
(39.4 km)**

**Lez Watson**

Ryknild Street is a Roman road in England, 112 miles long (180 km), with a route roughly southwest to north-east. It runs from the Fosse Way at Bourton on the Water in Gloucestershire to Templeborough in South Yorkshire, and passes through Alcester, Studley, Redditch, Metchley (Birmingham), Sutton Coldfield, Lichfield, Burton upon Trent, Derby and Chesterfield.

Much of the Midlands route of the Icknield Street is used by modern roads, most notably the A38 from Lichfield to Derby; and many sections retain the name "Icknield Street", but not always accurately as in Hockley, Birmingham and in Redditch, Worcestershire where there is also a road called Icknield Street Drive' which stands near the course of the Roman road. "Ryknild Street" is still in use in Lichfield and "Ryknild Road" in Derby.

This Roman road has been described a number of times; firstly, by Stukeley. In more modern times by Codrington in his [Roman Roads in Britain](#). Margary gave his own summary of the route in his similarly named book

[Roman Roads in Britain](#), commenting '*and is a fine highway, very straight and well raised, generally by 1-3 feet at first, and the more noticeably, by 2-3 feet beyond Alrewas*'. A more recent description of the route has been made available on the [SABRE website](#) by this author.

**A new description and commentary**

The section of the road from the Roman forts and settlement at Wall near Lichfield to those at Little Chester in Derby is known by modern commentators as RR18c after the number assigned by Ivan D Margary. In this study it is divided up into six segments as shown in figure 0.1. Segment 4 is described here in detail; the others are still work in progress.

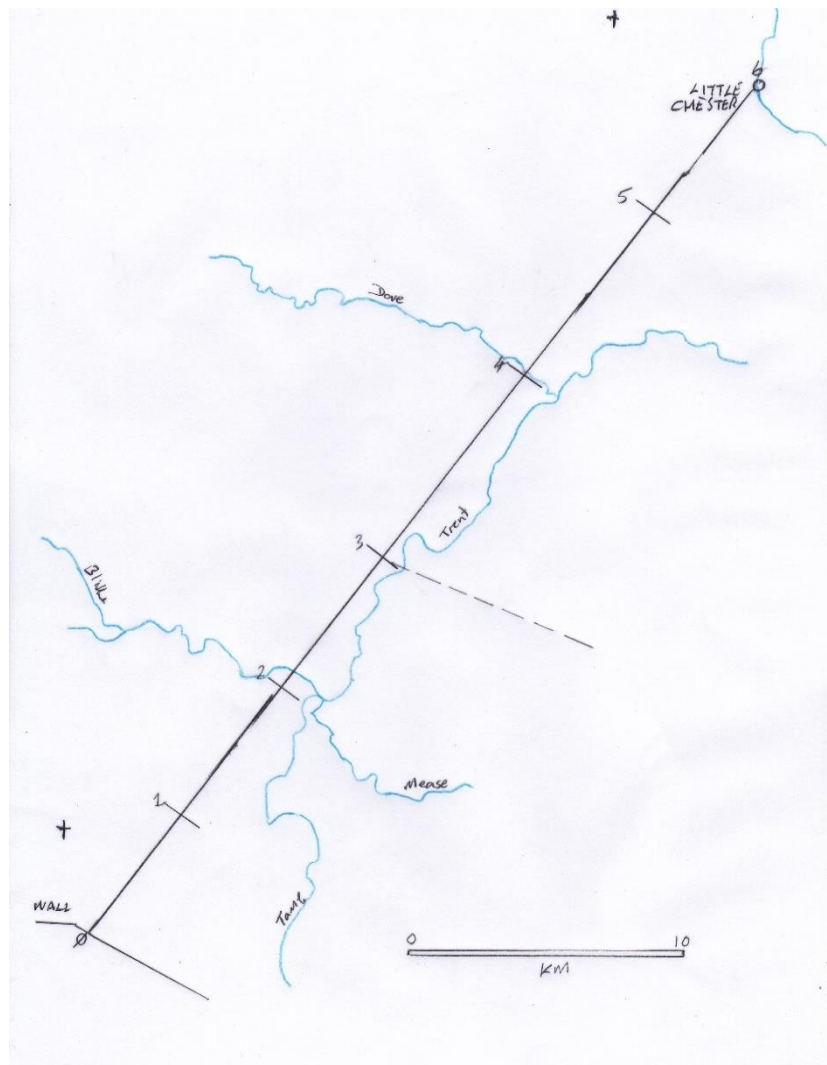


Figure 0.1

## Sources

There are a number of sources available for the study of Roman roads, other than those published, including Ordnance Survey data. That for section 'c' is available [here](#). Information from this file is added to the text below. Other 'grey' literature will exist for RR18c.

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**Part 1. Watling Street to Streethay.** 4 miles From OS Grid Reference SK 1061 0620, 100m above sea level [OS data nos. 13, 30]

This part was described by JW Whiston, and published (1978). Recent investigations are summarised in the Lichfield Historic Character Assessment (Langley 2011).

The route from the junction with Watling Street to London Road is little changed. It should be noted though, that since Whiston undertook his study in 1971 there has been extensive housing development surrounding the road from London Road to Cappers Lane, with commercial development north to the mainline railway at SK 1377 0982. This has destroyed evidence of the berms and ditches which would have accompanied the road. The modern road layout at Gorse Lane has changed to suit the redevelopment. Otherwise, the route along Knowle Lane, Cricket Lane and Quarry Hills Lane display the route well.

[location by location description]

*Part 1 location points - south to north*

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*Part 1 Monument Record sources*

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**Part 2. Streethay to River Trent.** 4.25 miles From OS Grid Reference SK 1427 1047, 75m above sea level [OS data nos. 29, 30]

From Streethay the Roman road is joined by the A38 Primary Route dual carriageway. It lies under the southbound carriage way of the modern road. Little archaeological investigation appears to have been carried out on this part of the road as it would largely have been disturbed by the creation of the Lichfield to Burton turnpike in 1729 (Phillips and Turton, 1988). Further improvements as a trunk road, including duelling of carriageways in the 1960s, have no doubt destroyed any evidence of the Roman road.

[location by location description]

*Part 2 location points - south to north*

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*Part 2 Monument Record sources*

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**Part 3. River Trent to Newbold Farm.** 3.07 miles From OS Grid Reference SK 183 158, 54m above sea level [OS data no. 28]

[intro]

[location by location description]

*Part 3 location points - south to north*

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*Part 3 Monument Record sources*

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A road from Leicester to Ryknild Street at Tatenhill Brook was postulated by Liddle and Hartley (1994) along with an extension into the Needwood forest.

**Part 4. Newbold Farm to River Dove.** 5.68 miles. From OS Grid Reference SK 2138 1967, 49m above sea level [OS data nos. 14 to 16, 17 to 21]

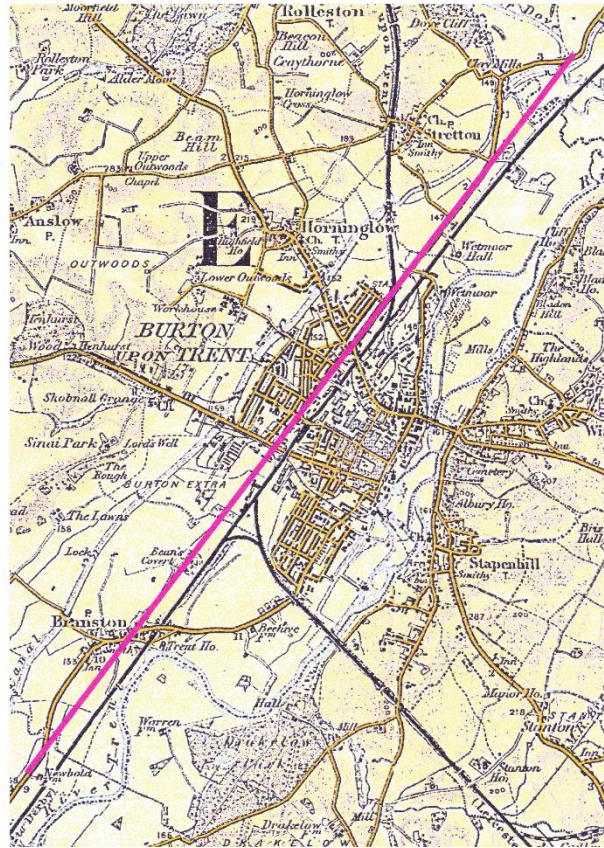


Figure 4.1

If you are fortunate enough to have a copy of Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 245 'The National Forest' (West sheet) in front of you, you'll see Ryknild Street entering the sheet at Streethay, by Lichfield and exiting south of Derby at the A38/A50 interchange. This provides a good overview of street's route as it travels through the Trent valley. You can also see the line of the ancient road is perfectly straight across the map. See figure 4.1.

Although greatly improved over time, the northbound carriageway of the modern A38 south of Burton rests on the Roman agger. Raised on a broad causeway the Roman road would have stood above all but the highest river flooding.

The approach to Burton, and the starting point of our study, is a turnpike milestone (Lichfield 9, Burton 3¼) beside the A38 southbound carriageway at location 'B' (fig.4.2). The post was originally approximately 300 metres further south (A) but moved at least twice to accommodate the trunk road and large scale 'Burton Gateway' commercial development. The northbound carriageway of the milestone's former position is close to the Roman road alignment. After a short distance the modern road veers away west from the Roman alignment and crosses Tatenhill Brook at Gallow Bridge. The Roman road would have crossed the brook a little to the east (C). There is no record of the bridge's structure, no doubt due to extensive gravel extraction and drainage management.



Figure 4.2

For the next 1.3km all trace of the road is lost due to extensive gravel extraction. There is no reason to believe the Roman road diverged from its alignment as the modern dual carriageway does. The Ordnance Survey map of 'Roman Britain' Third Edition (1956) depicted a kink in the road in this area, but the following edition (1979) straightened it out.



The road leaves the modern floodplain to cross Branston Brook (D) and Green. The alignment crosses Old Road, Branston (E) and then Main Street at point location 'F' (near The Blacksmiths Arms) and is re-joined a short distance along Clays Lane (G). The road is accompanied by the lane to the southern end of the recreation ground (H). At his point it can be seen as a low ridge running under a tennis court and a car park. After crossing the corner of the ground, it enters Bean's Covert (I) alongside the unmade footpath. After a short distance the Roman road's agger can be seen to the left (west) for about 250 metres, averaging 18 metres wide and 0.3 metres high (figs. 4.3 and 4.4).



Figure 4.3

On leaving the covert the road is lost among modern commercial development for a considerable distance to Shobnall Brook (P). However, 18th and 19th century mapping provides considerable detail of the area prior to the road's destruction by modern works (fig. 4.5). The line is then taken up along the backs of properties on the east side of Wellington Street (Q to R). The road is lost as it passes through the Town Hall area, to be joined by the south end of Derby Street (S). Both Derby Street and Debry road are on the alignment all the way to where the modern 'A' road diverges to Clay Mills (W). Before here the road crosses an ancient trackway at Derby Turn, before crossing Horninglow (U) and Stretton brooks (V). The ancient trackway from Tutbury to the Trent rover crossing meets the Roman road not at the modern road junction but a little south at Little Burton West (T). From the divergence near Hillfield Lane, the Roman road continued on to cross the river Dove at point X.

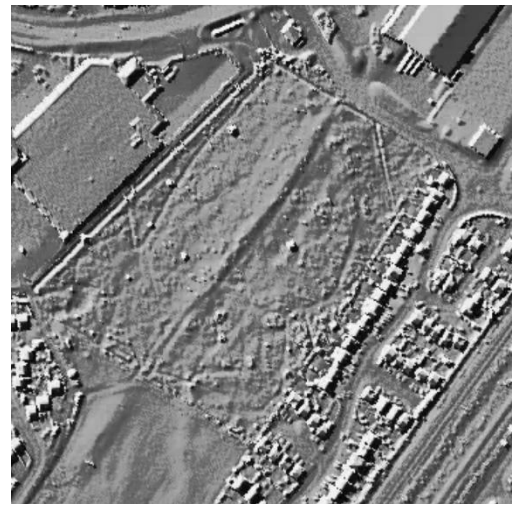


Figure 4.4 - Lidar image

*Part 4 location points - south to north*

- A. Original Turnpike milestone position SK 2121 1960
- B. Current Turnpike milestone position SK 2146 1988 (correct grid ref SK 21548 19911 according to the Milestone Society database)
- C. Tatenhill Brook SK 2162 2014
- D. Branston Brook SK 2304 2104
- E. Old Road SK 2362 2111
- F. Main Street SK 2240 2118
- G. Clays Lane begin SK 2261 2145
- H. Clays Lane end SK 2278 2166

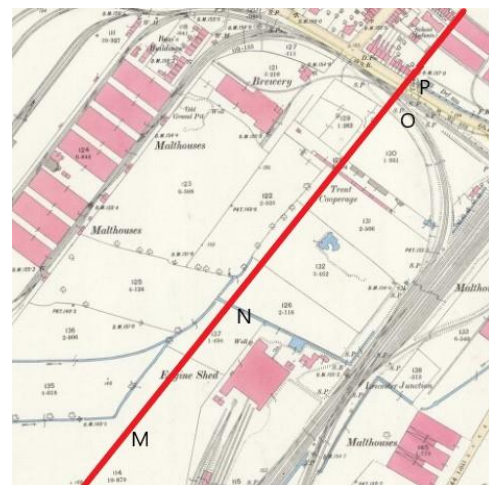


Figure 4.5

- I. Bean's Covert begin SK 2286 2177
- J. Bean's Covert end SK 2300 2196
- K. Ordish Covert SK 2321 2222
- L. Brook and Parish boundary SK 2327 2229
- M. Watercourse SK 2357 2268
- N. Old field boundaries begin SK 2349 2270
- O. Old field boundaries end SK 2382 2301
- P. Shobnall Brook SK 2386 2305
- Q. Boundaries at rear of properties begin SK 2387 2307
- R. Boundaries at rear of properties end SK 2410 2334
- S. Alignment with Derby Street SK 2421 2349
- T. Alignment with Derby Road (old Derby Turn location) SK 2461 2401
- U. Horninglow Brook (Hornbrook) and Parish boundary SK 2451 2504
- V. Stretton Brook SK 2568 2539
- W. Modern road diverges SK 2601 2581
- X. River Dove Bridge SK 2689 2695

*Part 4 Monument Record sources*

Monument Number: 929354. Location: SK 2283 2170.

Ryknild Street at Bean's Covert. (Taken from annotations on large scale map strips with Linear Archive File RR 18c). (SK 2284 2170 - SK 2287 2175) "Ploughed down agger as gravelly ridge 18m wide and 0.3m high across ploughed field." V J Burton/19-MARCH-1958/Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division Field Investigator.

(SK 2294 2183 - SK 2301 2193) "Agger survives through copse averaging 10m wide and 0.5m high." Surveyed at 1:2500. D J Chapman/22-JAN-1975/Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division Field Investigator. (SK 2284 2170 - SK 2287 2175) Slight ridge across playing field. (SK 2294 2183 - SK 2301 2193) No change. D J Chapman/22-JAN-1975/Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division Field Investigator.

The agger (between SK 2284 2170 - SK 2287 2175) described by authorities 1 and 2 was not seen on good quality APs. However, cropmarks of four ditches on slightly different alignments (with a maximum length of 142m) were seen. These probably represent flanking ditches of the road which may have been recut, hence the differing alignments. (Morph No. FR.86.19.1). Antonia Kershaw/21-APR-1993/RCHME: National Forest Project

Monument Number: 929355. Location: SK 2317 2212 Potential cropmark ditch of Roman date seen as a single linear feature defined by one ditch, with a maximum length of 68m. This is probably a flanking ditch belonging to Ryknild Street. Mapped using good quality AP's. (Morph No. FR.86.20.1). Antonia Kershaw/21-APR1993/RCHME: National Forest Project

## Derbyshire

The route is described beyond the Staffordshire border by M. Brassington (1981).

**Part 5. River Dove to Littleover.** 4.79 miles From OS Grid Reference SK 2689 2695, 47m above sea level [OS data nos. 26, 27]

[intro]

[location by location description]

*Part 5 location points - south to north*

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*Part 5 Monument Record sources*

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The road continues along the line made from Burton to just south of Staker Lane where the A38 veers off to the north. The line is picked up again at Micklemeadow and, gaining height, continues to Littleover.

**Part 6. Littleover to Little Chester.** 3.68 miles From OS Grid Reference SK 3117 3250, 70m above sea level; to SK 3536 3459, 49m above sea level. [OS data no. 25]

[intro]

[location by location description]

*Part 6 location points - south to north*

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*Part 6 Monument Record sources*

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## Discussion

### Appendix: Ordnance Survey data

Page	Parish	Latest Correct Description	Publication	Remarks	Authority	Abbr.
1	Auth.	RR, Wall to Derby. Wall to Newbold Farm section	[several]		[several]	[several]
2					[several]	[several]
3	Derby C1, etc	RR, Wall to Derby. Wall to Newbold Farm section	2		2	
4	Main Record Unit	RR, Wall to Derby.	2		2	
5-7	Sub, Record Unit	Letter from John W Whiston				
8	Sub, Record Unit	Ryknild Street RR – Staffordshire - <b>section</b>		Y	1	
9	Auth.	RR, Wall to Derby. Stretton to Derby			[several]	[several]
10	Auth.	RR, Wall to Derby. Stretton to Derby	1		1	
11	Sub, Record Unit	Ryknild Street RR – Staffordshire - <b>section</b>		Y	1	
12		"L.S. Strips"				
13		OS 6" County Series extract. 011.TIF SK1309				
14		Strip map: 012.TIF				
15		Strip map: 013.TIF				
16		Strip map: 014.TIF				
17		Strip map: 015.TIF				
18		Strip map: 016.TIF				
19		Strip map: 017.TIF				
20		Strip map: 017.TIF				
21		Strip map: 019.TIF				
22		Pencil notes.				
23		Strip map: 020.TIF				

24	Strip map: 021.TIF "M.S. Strips"
25	Strip map: 022.TIF
26	Strip map: 023.TIF
27	Strip map: 024.TIF
28	Strip map: 025.TIF
29	Strip map: 026.TIF
30	Strip map: 027.TIF
31	RAF A/P's CPE/UK/2555 4105-7 27-3-48
32	Arial photograph: 029.TIF
33	Pencil notes.
34	Arial photograph: 030.TIF
35	Pencil notes.
36	Arial photograph: 031.TIF
37	Pencil notes.

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