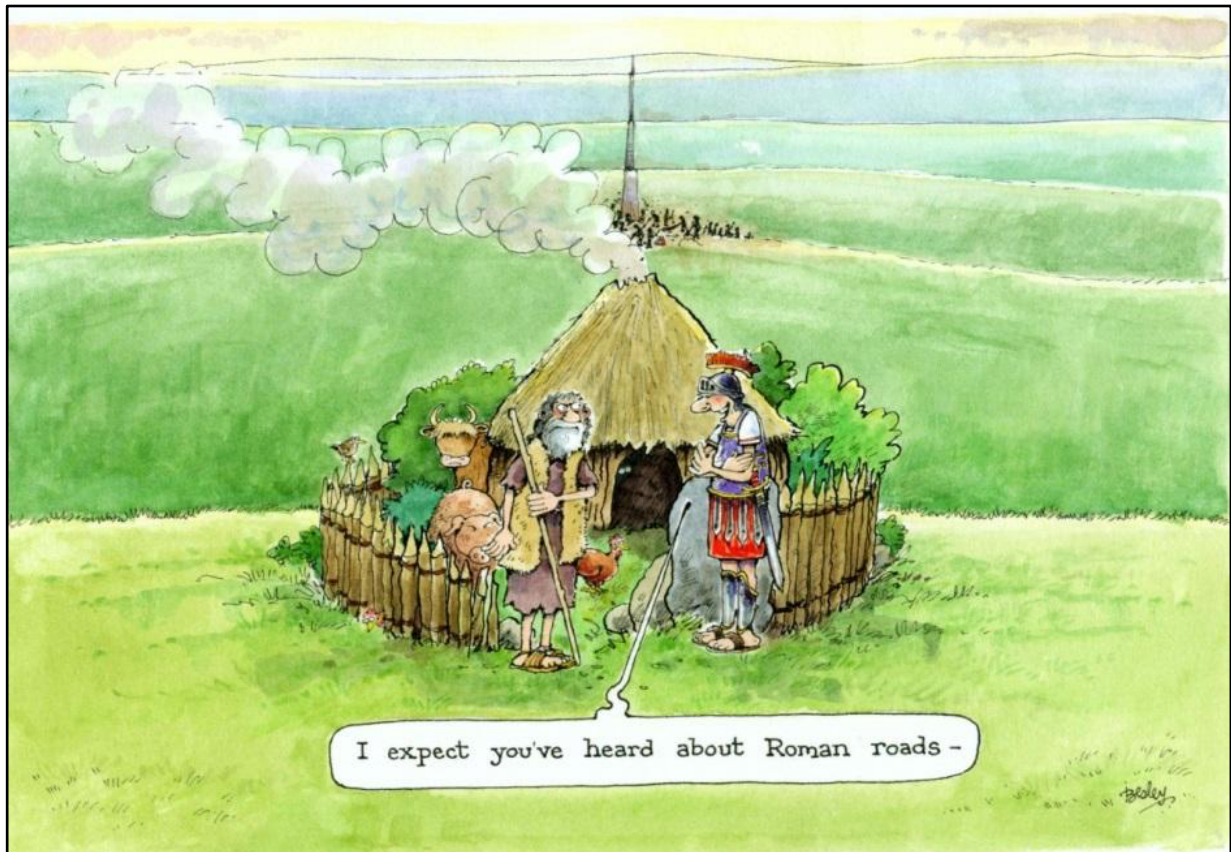


COCWUDU STUDIES 3:

A REVIEW OF THE DEVIL'S CAUSEWAY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON POST-ROMAN SETTLEMENT IN COCWUDU



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BERNICIAN STUDIES GROUP
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INTRODUCTION: ORIGINS AND SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

The *Cocwudu* Historic Landscape Project is a multi-faceted study of historic landscape in Northumberland, between the valley of the river Coquet in the north and that of the Hart-Wansbeck to the south. This area was identified as an ancient woodland zone by the historical geographer, Emeritus Professor Brian Roberts of Durham University, (Roberts 2015). The name *Cocwudu* is an early form of the Coquet name and occurs in the 10th/11th century *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*. One element of study in the project concerns the movement of people through this landscape and the routeways used. Prominent among these is the former Roman road known as the Devil's Causeway.

Deb Haycock has carried out and written this study of the Devil's Causeway with three aims:

- to review the sources of information and the scholarship concerning this road;
- to assess its context within the Roman period;
- to assess its continuing influence on both movement and settlement pattern in later periods of history.

Her study concludes with pointers towards directions for future research on the road and its setting.

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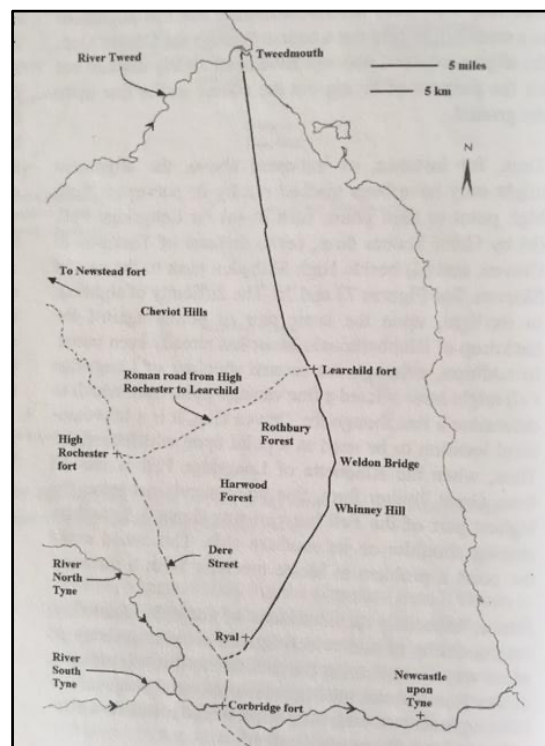
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A review of the Devil's Causeway, Northumberland and its influence on post-Roman settlement in *Cocwudu*

1: WHY THE NAME DEVIL'S CAUSEWAY?

The Devil's Causeway is a Roman road (number 87 in Margary's comprehensive list of Roman Roads in Britain. (Margary 1957, 1967) The road branches off Dere Street (Margary 8) north of Corbridge at Beukley Bank, about 2km north of Portgate where Dere Street passes through Hadrian's Wall, and runs in a north-easterly direction for about 55 miles to just south of Berwick upon Tweed.

Warburton's county map (1716) was the first to depict the road. Today little of the road is identifiable as an actual road or route. The southern section is visible as *Cobb Causeway*, a post-medieval name given to a track crossing marshland south of Ryal, about 4km from Bewclay. MacLauchlan (1864) in his survey of the Devil's Causeway speculated that the name came from "*the cobblestones with which the foundation has been laid*" As the road continues north east it is intermittently defined by tracks, parish boundaries and occasionally as an earthwork. At the northern end its course is more definite, the route being followed by current lanes and roads.



Poulter 2014

Although accentuated by deep heather cutting, the line of the Devil's Causeway is clearly visible running in a straight line over the heather moorland, on Rimside Moor north of the Longframlington parish boundary. The cut area in the foreground shows the raised *agger* of the former road, a ridge constructed from material dug from parallel ditches on each side.



Devil's Causeway crossing Rimside Moor

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John Warburton, the 18th century surveyor and mapper, says this of the Devil's Causeway:

'I Discovered a very intire military way (vulgarly call'd the Devils Cawsway) 22 foot in breadth and paved in stone, to range through this country from north to south'.

Warburton in 1720 in his "New and Correct Map of the County of York in all its Divisions" describes the Roman road from Bainbridge to Ingleton, also known as the Devil's Causeway and claims the satanic attribution stems from the medieval period where Roman roads in remote areas were viewed as almost supernatural due to their engineered straightness. In the centuries after Roman Britain, the Anglo-Saxons, who built mainly in wood, were superstitious of the stone buildings and roads left behind by the vanished Romans. The Anglo-Saxons and their medieval descendants having no idea who had built the strange, straight raised stone bed that crossed their lands for more than 50 miles, or why they had built it, may have named it the Devil's Causeway.

The Oxford English Dictionary definition of "causeway" – a highway; usually a paved way... now historical or forming part of the name of ancient ways, especially Roman roads – causey-way. For example, J Speed in his mapping of Britain in 1612 *"that ancient causey-way which is called Watling-street"*.

A section of the Devil's Causeway in the Hartburn area is known locally as the Harpeth Loaning, in Old English *herepath* or *herewag* is a military road or literally an army path and dates to the 9th C.

2: WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE FOR THE LINE OF THE ROAD DRAWN ON THE OS MAP?

Although much of the Devil's Causeway route is no longer visible, its course is known due to the 19th century surveyor and field archaeologist, Henry MacLauchlan, (Charlton and Day 1985). MacLauchlan began his surveying career with the Royal Corps of Military Surveyors and Draftsmen. The early 1800's saw the beginning of the detailed mapping of the British Isles by the Board of Ordnance, the Ordnance Survey (OS). MacLauchlan's impressive surveying career began in Ireland with the OS. From 1825 to 1844 he worked for the OS and Geological Survey. During this time he became interested in archaeology. The OS had encouraged its officers to take note of antiquities. The earliest evidence of MacLauchlan's archaeology interest is his 2-inch hill sketches (available in the British Museum map room) e.g. Caerleon Roman Fort from OS sheet 36 dated 1826.



Henry MacLauchlan c. 1860

Between 1847 and 1853 MacLauchlan published 6 archaeological papers relating to Cornwall and a survey "On the Roman roads, camps and other earthworks between the Tees and the Swale in the North Riding of the County of York".

In 1850, at the behest of the Duke of Northumberland, he undertook a survey of Watling Street (Dere Street) and this was followed by a survey of the Roman Wall between 1852 -1854, again financed by the Duke of Northumberland. All MacLauchlan's surveys are accompanied by a Memoir giving an insight into his methodology for each survey. Over 100 years later archaeologists still pay tribute to MacLauchlan's skills as a surveyor. Eric Birley in his *Research on Hadrian's Wall* (1961) wrote: "without MacLauchlan's Survey and Memoir, issued in 1857 and 1858 respectively, the detailed researches of later years would have lacked the firm and constructive basis of shrewd observations, careful measurements and methodical hearing of local evidence which still makes the memoir a mine of information."

In 1857 MacLauchlan began a survey of "the Eastern Branch of the Watling Street" – the Devil's Causeway, which took him 3 years and was published in 1864. Interestingly MacLauchlan was convinced that there was a connecting road from the junction of Watling Street (Dere Street) and the Devil's Causeway to the Roman wall at Plane Trees between St Oswald's and Brunton. The Devil's Causeway survey was not without problems, various sections were difficult to trace, for example between Powburn and Percy's Cross and at Burradon.

3: IS THE DEVIL'S CAUSEWAY A ROMAN ROAD?

Several excavations have been conducted along the course of the Devil's Causeway to prove its existence, confirm the route and examine its makeup. R P Wright in 1938 excavated seven sections along the southern stretch of the Devil's Causeway at Bradford Edgehouse, Brandy Well Hall, Mount Huly, Tongues, Kearsley, Ryal and Shellbraes. In 1939 he continued his investigation in the middle sector of the road between Longframlington and the Bridge of Aln (Wright, 1940).

3A: CONSTRUCTION

Wright's work revealed that the width of the road in the above sectors varied between 5.6m and 7.8m with a foundation layer of sandstone blocks laid in a clay subsoil. These sandstone blocks varied in thickness; 14cm in the southern sector, 25cm in the middle sector and in the northern sector 36cm. The surface layer was found to be of good quality and set on a camber to allow drainage into ditches cut alongside. This surface layer was found to be 7.5cm cubes of sandstone in the south and 14cm sandstone blocks in the middle sector. The surface layer was always bounded on either side by kerbstones. A gravel topping was noted at bridge of Aln and on the section from Rimside Moor to the Bridge of Aln there were traces of a central spine. These observations were taken to authenticate the road as diagnostically Roman.

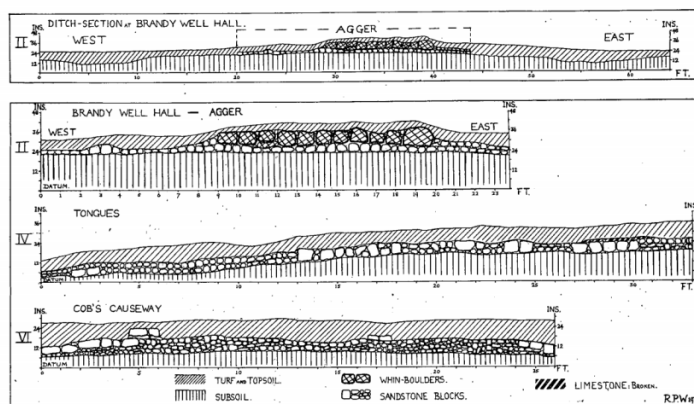


FIG. 2. CROSS-SECTIONS OF THE DEVIL'S CAUSEWAY.

Wright 1938

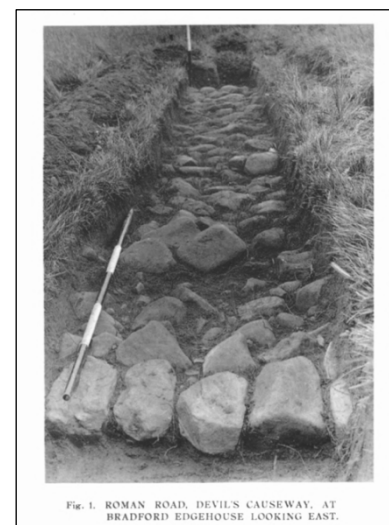


FIG. 1. ROMAN ROAD, DEVIL'S CAUSEWAY, AT BRADFORD EDGEHOUSE LOOKING EAST.

All these features conform to those of a Roman road. However, the Devil's Causeway has features which set it apart from other Roman roads. Wright (1940) in his investigation of the Devil's Causeway south of Edlingham, 5 miles south of the crossing of the river Aln discovered a central rib as part of the road's construction.

This rib feature was also seen in a recent excavation by AAG archaeology, at Kearsley between Matfen and Belsay (Morton D, 2018). The line of a dry-stone wall field boundary on the route of the Devil's Causeway was investigated using drone technology and excavation. The structure was interpreted as the spine of the Devil's Causeway and resembles Roman construction: precision set; stones laid on end and on edge, unlike wall footings; tooling; fitting notches and reinforcing 'ribs'. Similarly, a layer of possible metalling did not appear to be the core of a wall, it seemed too small to be anything other than the metalling of the Devil's Causeway. The "ribs" protruding from the spine were exposed, they appeared to have held the metalling of the road surface in compartments. The bank of material under the spine was reminiscent of the *agger* of a road, the embankment upon which the stone foundations for the road are laid.



AAG Archaeology, 2017, Kearsley: evidence of spine, *agger* and metalling.

Five evaluation trenches excavated in 2001 uncovered the remains of the Devil's Causeway at Netherwitton (TWMS 2001) where the road comprised a central spine of worked blocks in an arrangement similar to the sections excavated by Wright in the 1930s. This central rib feature was also observed in the Roman road over Holystone Moor, the road which links the Devil's Causeway with Dere Street, running from Bridge of Aln to High Rochester, (Carlton and HHAG 2018). The function of this rib is uncertain; a setting out line where stones were laid outward to the kerb line or is the function to control the movement of the metaling on the road surface, (Richmond and Hunter- Blair, 1937).

However, there is an almost total lack of an *agger* along most of the Devil's Causeway, and consequently an absence of parallel ditches and pits along the road from where the earth for the *agger* would have been excavated. For example, along Dere Street the *agger* varies in height from 0.6m to 0.9m. The presence of an *agger* is thought to aid drainage and the Devil's Causeway predominately traverses lowland well drained areas. Also, perhaps the central rib facilitated drainage in the absence of an *agger*.

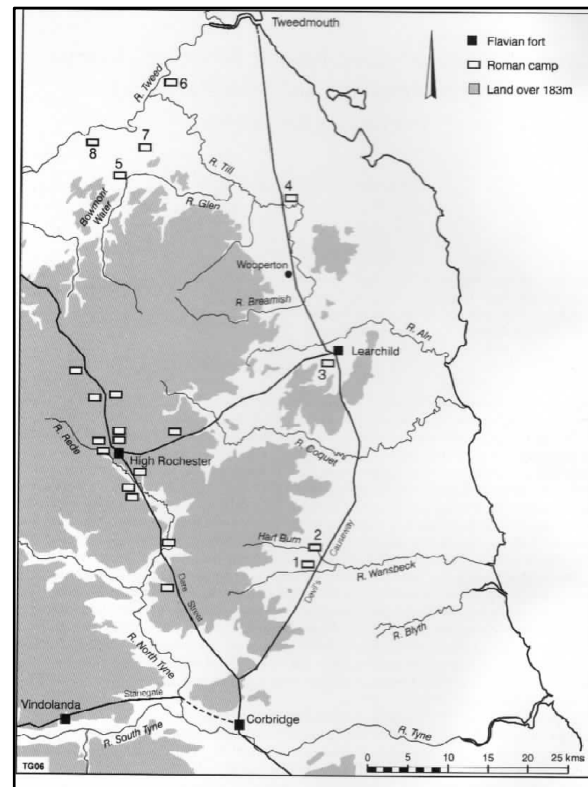
3B: FORTS AND FORTLETS

When compared with Dere Street which has numerous fortlets and temporary camps associated with it, the only known fort on the Devil's Causeway is the fort of ALAVNA at Learchild where the Devil's Causeway crosses the Roman road to Bremennium (High Rochester). Excavation of this fort suggests two phases, Flavian followed by a larger 2nd C phase (Richmond and Crawford, 1949).

This lack of associated forts may reflect the good arable terrain which the Devil's Causeway passes through and the destruction of sites by subsequent ploughing. MacLauchlan in his 1859 survey noted that a large number of sites near to the road had been destroyed by ploughing, planting, draining, quarrying, fencing and stone robbing.

However, in the 1990's several possible new fortlets on the Devil's Causeway were identified by aerial reconnaissance, (Gates and Hewitt 2007). Four sites at West Marlish (1) NZ 074 850, Hartburn (2) NZ 0890 8690, NZ 09008720, Edlingham (3) NU 1045 0945 and East Horton (4) were identified. Interestingly from a tactical point of view, the sites all occur at crossing points of rivers or in the case of Edlingham at the junction of two Roman roads.

West Marlish occupies rising ground overlooking the Wansbeck with a commanding view of the point where the Devil's Causeway crosses the river. The site at Hartburn occupies high ground on the north bank of the Hart Burn close to the only two possible fording places for some distance up or down stream where the Devil's Causeway descends to the river. Edlingham lies very close to the Devil's Causeway and within 1km of the fort at Learchild at the junction of the two Roman roads (associated with different campaigns?). East Horton lies on the north side of the Till and within 0.75km of the point where the Devil's Causeway crosses the river.



Gates and Hewitt 2007.

The spacing of these camps is very regular; approximately 23km and this may indicate the line of advance of a single unit in the course of one particular campaign. If so, the most likely occasion would be during the Roman army's initial push forward into unconquered territory north of the Tyne and are these sites marching/temporary camps rather than more permanent fortlets? (Hartburn is the exception and may be later as the perimeter incorporates the Devil's Causeway.)

In addition, several other possible fortlets / temporary camps / Roman structures have been identified by aerial photography and field observation:

Aerial Photography:

Chatton (NU 0498 2803) (Walford and Cutchley 2003)

Field Observations:

Laverocklaw (NU 0237 3635), Hall Hill (NU131 009) (Ordnance Survey)

Wooperton (NU 049 204) (Ansell 2004)

Todburn West (NZ 117 958) (Bernician Studies Group, in progress)

Ferney Chesters and Edgehouse, Capheaton (Hogg 1947, Keys to the Past)

In response to the increasing number of sites potentially associated with the road, it is suggested that the relative absence of military installations related to the Devil's Causeway could be a factor of archaeological visibility. However, until these "Fortlets" are excavated it cannot categorically be stated that they are Roman. Many of the settlements previously considered to be Roman fortlets have been excavated and found to be Romano-British native settlements, for example Apperley Dene on Dere Street, (Greene 1978). Even those with "Chester" place names, for example the settlement at Chester Houses, Northumberland, (Holbrook 1985).

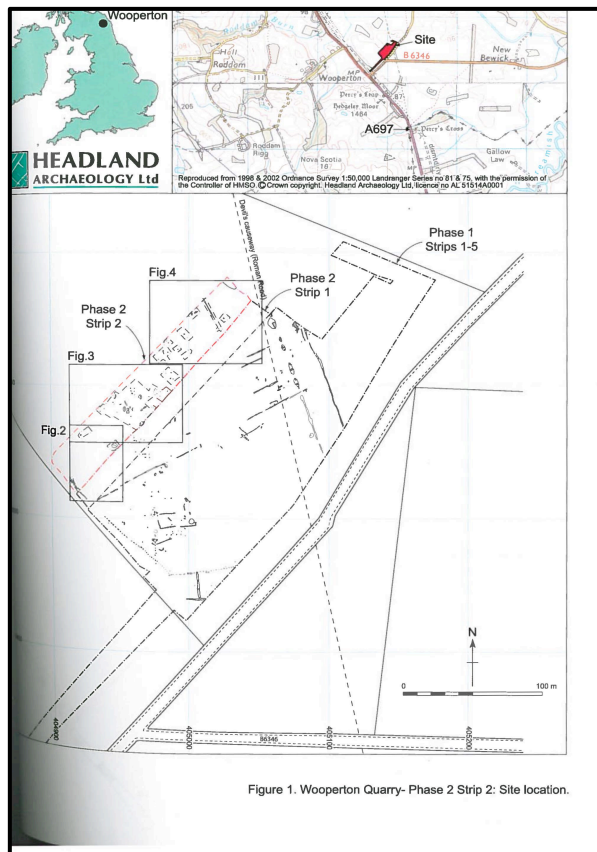
A further fortlet is known at Longshaws on the south bank of the Font some 3km away from the Devil's Causeway, (Welfare 2011). There is no direct evidence for the date of the construction of the fortlet, but a brief survey of broadly analogous sites in northern England and southern Scotland suggests that a late first-century context would be appropriate. Longshaws seems to have been one of a small number of sites across the Border counties that may have been put in place to support a network of patrols during the early phases of the occupation (after the conquest but before the road system was established). Longshaws appears to have had the capacity to control the shallow valley of the upper Font, between the Simonside Hills and the coastal lowlands and its small garrison would have been able to take advantage of the easier, upstream crossings of the deep denes cut by the Font, the Wansbeck and the Hart Burn, and of the lower land on the west side of Beacon Hill to the north.

The nearest fort would have been the earliest fort at Learchild, 23 km away. Learchild does not make any particular use of natural defences, but its overall topographical position is not dissimilar to that at Longshaws (especially in the relationship of the latter to the upper valley of the Font). The position chosen was at the lower end of Whittingham Vale, just upstream of the point where the broad valley of the Aln is constricted as the river cuts through the higher ground of the Fell Sandstone escarpment: Jenny's Lantern to the north, and Abberwick and Brizlee to the south. The fort therefore controlled access down and across the Vale, between the foothills of the Cheviots to the west, and the coastal lowlands to the east – just as Longshaws was well placed to do, farther south.

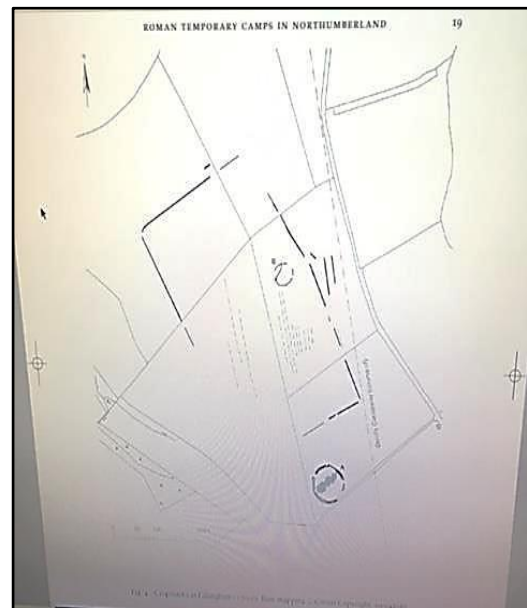
4: DATING THE DEVIL'S CAUSEWAY

The width and straight course of the Devil's Causeway place it in the category of a Roman military trunk road and the bulk of military roads were built from AD 43 to AD 90s. Agricola was in the region AD 79 – 80 pushing into Scotland and the trunk roads into Scotland were probably in existence or under construction by then. The only known fort on the Devil's Causeway is at Learchild at the cross roads of the Devil's Causeway and the Bremenium road running to the west. These two roads are the fort's only communication route to the south and therefore it is likely that these roads were built at the same time as the fort or before. Therefore the date of the first occupation of Learchild may give a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the Devil's Causeway.

Low Learchild, was first excavated by Sir Walter Aitchison in 1945–6 and then by Ian Richmond in 1956 (Wright 1957). Two successive forts were identified, of which the earliest was defended by two ditches and is said to have measured at least 76m by 40m. The later fort, defended by a single ditch and clay rampart, was significantly larger, measuring at least 232m by 76m. No finds from these excavations are mentioned in Richmond's brief note, though first and second-century pottery was said to have been recovered from the site by Sir Walter Aitchison in 1946-7. Unfortunately, none of this material is extant but the Museum of Antiquities collection does contain a decorative bronze earflap from a Roman parade helmet which, though not mentioned by Richmond, is believed to have come from Learchild and this too is likely to be of second century date (information Lindsay Allason-Jones).



Wooperton Quarry Phase 2: Ansell 2004



Edlingham Temporary Roman Camp
Gates, T, & Hewitt, R, 2007

If pottery from the 1st and early 2nd century was found at Learchild and if the latter of the two forts on this site did not continue to be occupied after the establishment of the Hadrianic frontier then the later fort would be of the Flavian period (AD 69 – 96) and the early fort is most likely to date to the advance of Agricola. In 2004 an excavation in association with phase 2 of the Wooperton gravel quarry, 12km north of Learchild and on the Devil's Causeway, produced 600 sherds of Roman pottery dating to Flavian and Trajanic period (pre-Hadrianic). This site is a possible *mansio* or military run staging post with similar dating to Learchild (Ansell 2004).

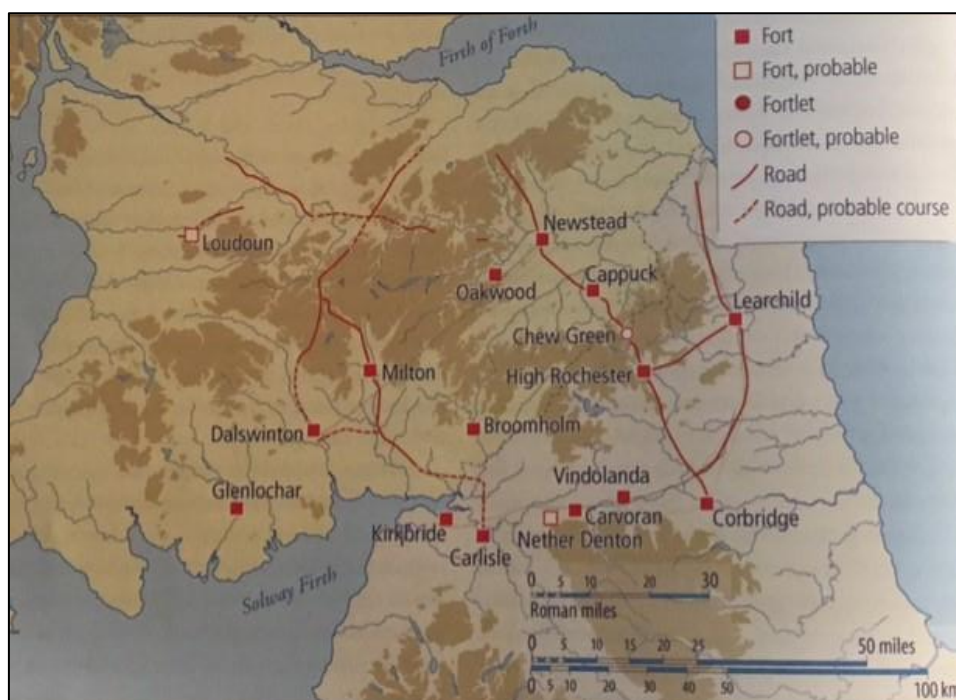
Interestingly, the width of the Devil's Causeway in the Wooperton /Learchild area seems to be much wider than further south. At Edlingham just south of Learchild, the air photographs taken in 1995 show what seem to be a pair of parallel ditches, each about 100m long and set 15–18m apart, which lie immediately to the East of the camp and coincide almost precisely with the expected line of the Devil's Causeway, (Gates and Hewitt 2007). This compares with the 20m spacing between the side ditches

of the road more recently recorded at Wooperton gravel quarry (Ansell 2004). Does this imply activity of a similar date along this corridor of the Devil's Causeway?

Based on the previous evidence it would seem that the Devil's Causeway dates from the mid-first century to the early-second century, the pre-Hadrianic period.

5: THE PURPOSE OF THE DEVIL'S CAUSEWAY

Initially the Devil's Causeway, along with Dere Street, may have been part of Agricola's incursions into Scotland (77–84AD). After these were halted due to problems on the Danube and a redeployment of troops, all forts north of Newstead were evacuated and the army drew back to a frontline aligned between Newstead and Dalswinton in Dumfries, AD 92 – 105. With Emperor Trajan's second Dacian war more troops left Britain and the Scottish forts were abandoned with the remaining troops concentrated in a linear arrangement of forts on the Tyne-Solway isthmus along the route of the Stanegate. Excavations at Corbridge, Vindolanda and Carlisle indicate rebuilding around AD105.



Hodgson, N, 2017.

In addition to full-sized forts at Carvoran and Old Church, Brampton, there were fortlets at Haltwhistle Burn, Throp and Castle Hill, Boothby, all constructed from stone indicating permanence and intensification of surveillance along the route of the Stanegate. And in the west, forts at Kirkbride on the coast and Burgh on Sands provide a possible westward extension of this frontier. However, a continuation of the Stanegate has never been found further east of Corbridge and no forts apart from the undated Washing Well at Whickham and the early occupation at South Shields. Since the 1930s there have been suggestions that the Trajanic/ Stanegate frontier may have run north east along the Devil's Causeway to Berwick on the coast, (Hodgson 2017, 33). The fort at Learchild was occupied until the building of Hadrian's Wall and was enlarged in its second and final phase just as Corbridge, Vindolanda and Carlisle were. Therefore, the Trajanic frontier may have included and protected the Northumberland coastal plain which was intensively settled and farmed by pre-Roman Iron Age peoples. The course of the Devil's Causeway seems to be dictated by the line separating the fertile

coastal plain from the less hospitable uplands of North Tynedale, Redesdale and the Cheviots. If the possible fortlets at Ferney Chesters, Marlish, Hartburn, Todburn West, Edlingham, Chatton and East Horton are included, the Devil's Causeway becomes a plausible frontier.

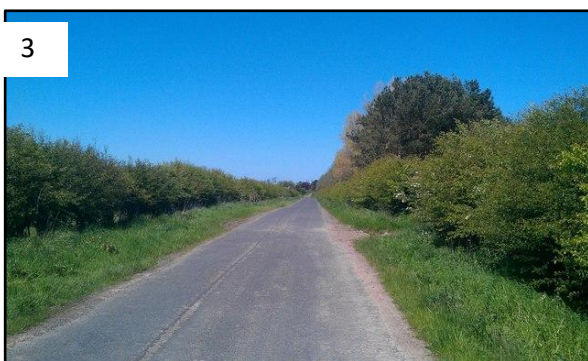
So what impact would this "frontier" have upon the settlements on the coastal plain. A series of excavations of rectilinear settlements on the coastal plain show a settled farming community, some dating to the pre- Roman period and with limited interaction with the later Roman occupiers. (Jobey 1960, 1973, 1982). However, most of these settlements ceased to prosper after the 2nd century, so is this a direct effect of the building of Hadrian's Wall and the fact that they are now on the wrong side of the frontier and are in a military zone?

An exception to this is Huckhoe a palisaded settlement near Bolam, which was occupied through the 3rd C with finds dating to the 5th /6th C and also 9th – 12th C pottery, and possibly has an importance beyond the individual homestead level (Jobey 1959). Huckhoe is very close to the Devil's Causeway and only 16km from Hadrian's Wall. Is this a centre of native authority? It is also surrounded by a group of other settlements and it would be interesting to know if they were also occupied at the same time as Huckhoe. Compare with Trapain Law Hillfort and its contemporary sites on the plain around it (Haselgrove 2009).

Once the frontier moved to Hadrian's Wall does the Devil's Causeway revert to a military / supply road? It has been suggested that the use of the Devil's Causeway was largely restricted to cavalry patrols rather than legionary or commercial traffic. The fort at Halton Chesters (Roman name *Onnum*) and built in the early 2nd C, has been suggested as the cavalry base for these patrols (Carlton, HHAG, 2018). The only regiment attested at the site is the Sabinus' Cavalry Regiment of Pannonians, recorded in the *Notitia Dignitatum* as the *ala Sabiniana*. A tombstone erected by Messonius Magnus, a *duplicarius* (junior officer) in the *ala Sabiniana*, gives a 3rd-C date for the occupation of *Onnum* by this cavalry regiment. In the early 3rd C, the fort at Halton was extended from 1.74ha to 1.94ha probably to accommodate this 500-strong cavalry regiment (Breeze 2006). The *ala Sabiniana* would have been ideally placed to patrol along Dere Street and the Devil's Causeway to the north.

6: THE INFLUENCE OF THE DEVIL'S CAUSEWAY ON SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN THE POST-ROMAN PERIODS

In the previous sections of this report, we have seen that the Devil's Causeway starts off as a military campaign road in the mid-1st C, Flavian Period, then by the early 2nd C, in the Trajanic Period, it becomes a frontier and then with the building of Hadrian's Wall it reverts back to a military/supply route through a military zone. Looking at the route now, it is hard to envisage it as an important route north to the coast and Scotland. Barely 25% of the route is currently a road suitable for motor traffic or even footpath or bridleway and this is mainly in the northern section of the road where the Devil's Causeway bears away in a north westerly direction coinciding with the modern A697 route.



1 The Devil's Causeway north of Thornton Moor (farm) heading north-east into Oldpark Wood. NZ0988

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2. Devil's Causeway heading for Hartburn ford. NZ0986

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3. The road to Lowick near Brownridge. NU0713

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4 The A697 following the line of the Devil's Causeway, heading for Wooler. NU0518

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In order to determine what influence, if any, the Devil's causeway had on settlement patterns firstly we need to ascertain how long it remained in use as a viable route.

6A: WRITTEN SOURCES

i) Pre-Conquest

There is little written evidence for the Devil's Causeway, the only pre-Conquest written evidence is from the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto (HSC)* and is as follows:

HSC, section 8, which deals with a grant of King Ceolwulf, has a boundary description which includes 'from the Aln to the middle of the road between Coquet and Aln'. In a commentary on an edition of the HSC text, Ted Johnson South writes 'A Roman road known as the Devil's Causeway crosses the Coquet less than a mile east of Brinkburn and proceeds north past Edlingham to cross the Aln near Whittingham. If this is the *viam* referred to, the *Historia* is laying claim to a huge territory which includes virtually all the viable farmland (ie. land below 200m) between the rivers Aln and Coquet and extends south of the Coquet as far as the Lyne (Johnson South (ed.) 2000, 82-3).

Ted Johnson South suggests that the boundary described runs along the Devil's Causeway however in a more recent study, O'Brien, Adams and Whaley (2018) suggest a marker point upon the road for the boundary running across it. However, despite the difference of interpretation, both concur in interpreting the *via* in the *HSC* as being the Devil's Causeway therefore providing evidence of the road being in use in the 8th C.

ii) Devil's Causeway in the Medieval Period:

In the medieval period charters and itineraries provide evidence of the movement of individual people and by implication the existence of roads and well-known routes.

Charter evidence

Henry (son of King David of Scots), Earl of Northumberland, 1139 – 1152, issued a charter of confirmation to Brinkburn Priory, at Corbridge, for which Ranulf de Merlay of Morpeth was one of the witnesses. (Page, 1895).

[Note: Henry's confirmation charter is undated but he held the earldom between 1139 and 1152. The date of Ranulf's death is not known; first mention of his successor William is 1158 (Gubbins 2018, 15).]

The following route is proposed for Ranulf de Merlay's trip to Corbridge:

'Ranulf de Merlay and his men took the twenty-mile route west through Bolam, and then south along the Roman road, the most direct way to Corbridge.' (Gubbins 2018, 8).

A reconstruction of this route is as follows:

- cross the Wansbeck at Mitford, then via Molsden and Meldon to Bolam and then to the Devil's Causeway just west of Bolam. On present day maps (OS Explorer 325, 2015 1: 25000) this transcribes to a footpath from the southern neck of the Mitford loop of the river Wansbeck to within 1km of East Molesden; then a minor road to Meldon; south of Meldon on to a (suspiciously) straight road to the edge of Bolam Lake, then a left and right (or right then left) to Bolam West House and the Devil's Causeway. Then the Devil's Causeway to the junction with Dere Street south to Corbridge.

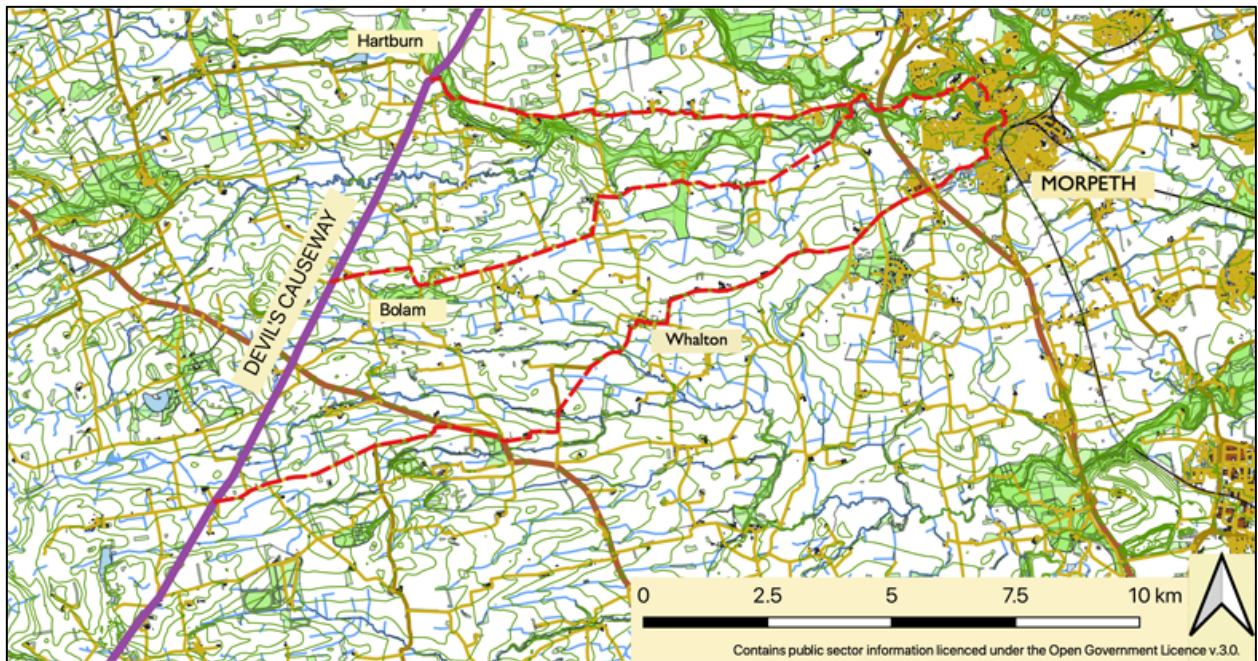
It might be that the straight road to Bolam is a later rationalising of an earlier routeway; it makes for high ground at Lane House and Bolam Crofts. Also, the direct route to the Devil's Causeway may have been disrupted by the building of Bolam Hall, lake and grounds 1810-1816. Note that the settlement at Huckhoe is very close to the intersection of this route with the Devil's Causeway.

Other possible variants on this route are:

i) Along the north side of Wansbeck-Hart valley to cross the Hart at Hartburn Bridge (now B6343) to pick up Devil's Causeway immediately west of Hartburn.

ii) South out of Morpeth on the Great North Road for 1km, the South West to Whalton (a baronial centre) on the now B6524 to Belsay (in part footpath cutting out a right angle on the road to Trewick) Then keeping to north side of Belsay Burn (Coal Burn) to the Devil's Causeway approximately 3km west.

All three of these routes use the Devil's Causeway; it would be difficult to propose a plausible route that did not use Devil's Causeway.



— de Merlay routes to Corbridge

Itineraries

The most complete itineraries are those compiled posthumously for Kings who travelled widely visiting castles, manors and towns.

Early in 1201 King John was in Northumberland.

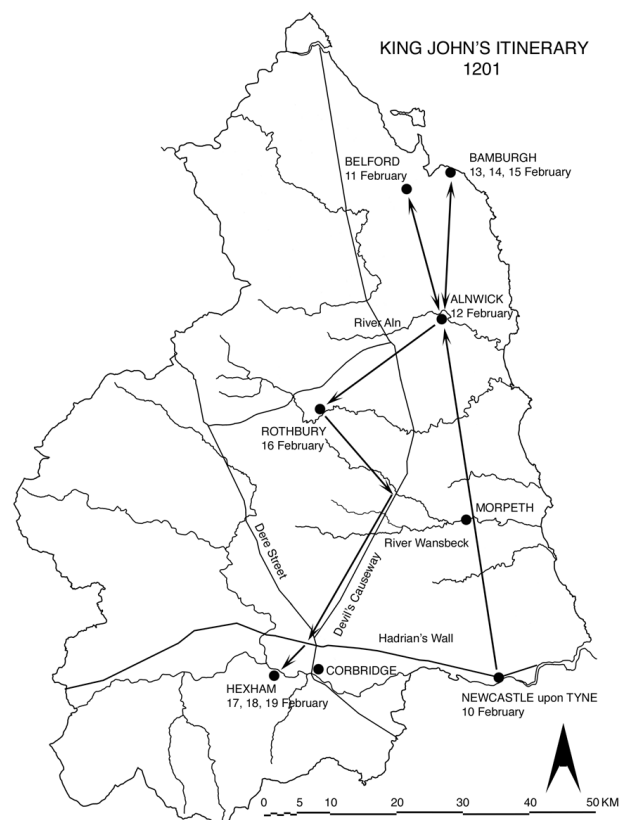
King John's Itinerary February 1201 –

- 13, 14, 15 Bamburgh,
- 16 Rothbury-Hexham,
- 17, 18, 19 Hexham.

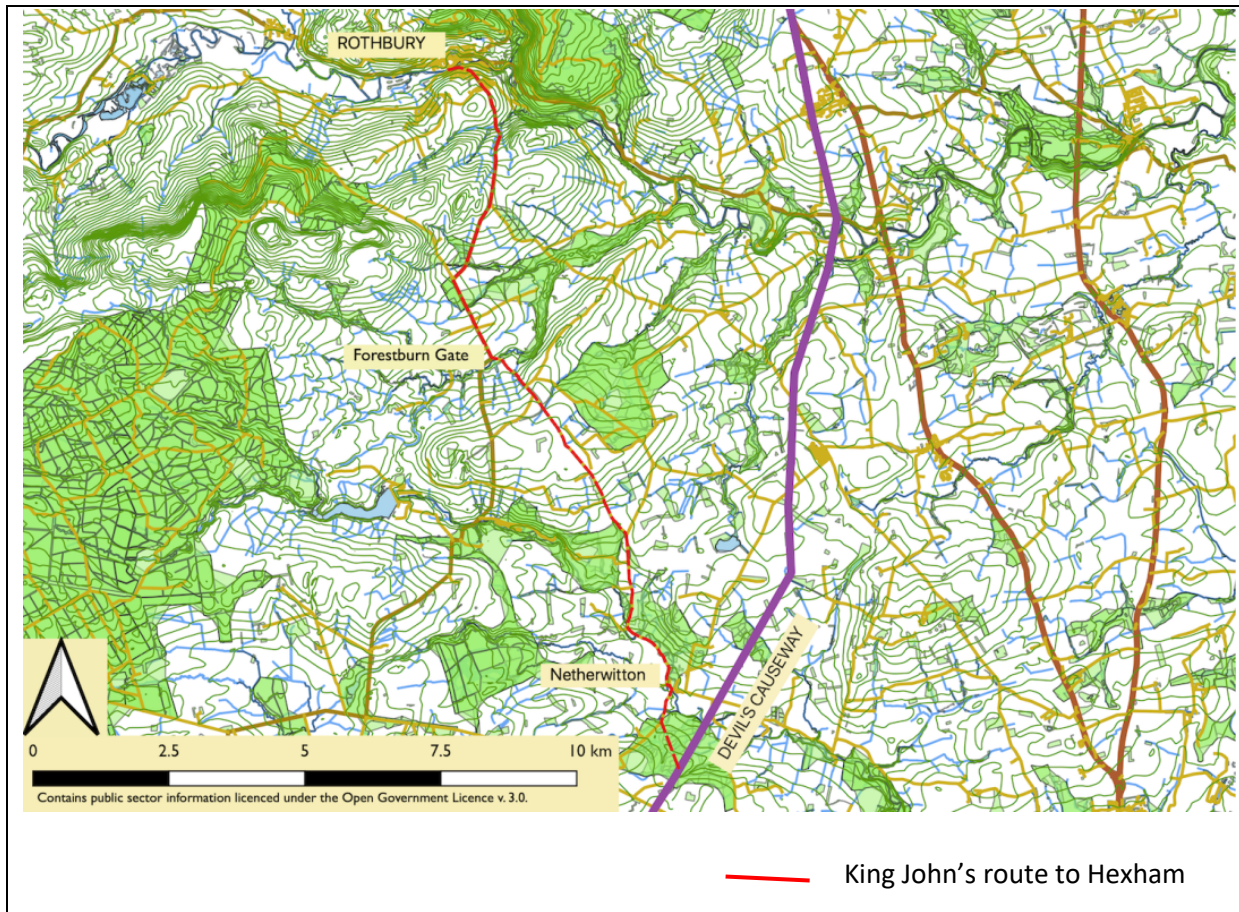
(Hardy (ed) 1835.)

The proposed route of the one-day journey from Rothbury to Hexham is as follows:

From Rothbury south across the moors to Forestburn Gate, at Forestburn Gate on to Ritton Bank to Netherwitton. At Netherwitton cross the Font on road south and after 500m on to the footpath leading SSE through Oldpark Wood. This intersects with Devil's Causeway at the southern edge of Oldpark Wood. Then take the Devil's causeway to the Dere Street intersection. At Dere Street take either Dere Street to Corbridge and along the Tyne valley



After Gubbins 2018, 50



Notes:

i) At Forestburn Gate, the modern route is south by the B6342 via Rothley, Cambo and Wallington. However this makes use of the Alnmouth Corn Road, which is not a medieval routeway. Ritton Bank, by contrast, is identified from C13 charters as *Throkestnewaie*. In 1268 there is grant of pasture on Hesleyhurst to Newminster by Robert son of Roger (Fowler (ed) 1876):

- *within these boundaries, that is:*

as TROKESTANEWAIE runs between YLIEBURNE and MAGGILD.

And by the same road as YLIBURNE and MAGGLID flow into COKET

Magglid is identified as Maglin Burn, a Coquet tributary and there is strong evidence that Ylieburne is the present-day Forest Burn also a Coquet tributary. The Trokestanewaie ran between these two burns and led onto modern day Ritton Bank. (Bernician Studies Group, 2020 and O'Brien 2020 (forthcoming))

ii) The route south out of Netherwitton, a road for the first 500m and then on to footpath, is a N-S route, still traceable mostly as footpath or bridleway, via Belsay, Stamfordham and Horsley, to the Tyne between Ovingham and Wylam, unbroken except for where the former Nesbit airfield intrudes.

In August 1306 Edward I was in Northumberland:

Edward I Itinerary August 1306 (Gough 1900, 264):

14 Corbridge, 15 Hexham, 16 Hexham - Morpeth, 17 Newbrough.

The possible route of the one-day journey from Hexham to Morpeth is:

Hexham to Dere St, as a reverse of the King John options above. Then Dere Street to the Devil's Causeway and thence to Morpeth as per the Ranulf de Merlay options (east at Bolam, Hartburn or Belsay).

Additional Medieval evidence

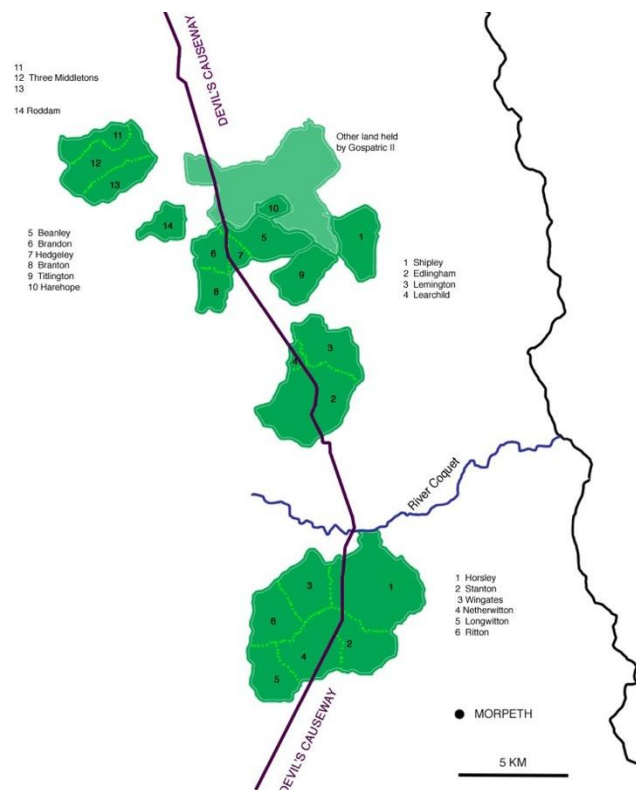
Around 1110 Gospatric II negotiated lands in Northumberland. There is no record of the original land charter but one from the Percy Cartulary made at York in 1135 by King Stephen describes three blocks of land:

1. Brandon, Branton, Beanley, Hedgeley, Tritlington, Harhope.
2. The Three Middletons with Roddam
3. Horsley (Longhorsley), Stanton, Wingates, Wooton, Witton (Longwitton and Netherwitton) and Ritton

Also the land of Edmund, comprising Shipley, Edlinhgam, Leminton and Learchild (Martin (ed) 1911, 333). These lands were known collectively as the *serjeanty* of Beanley and Henry 1 had placed particular conditions on the grant. Gospatric II was required to control the roads passing between England and Scotland. Gospatric held the sergeanty of Beanley by the service of *inborwe et utborwe inter Angliam et Scociam* (as expressed in *Liber Feudorum* 1242).

- *The owner of the land should act as insurety and outsurety for the peaceful and honest intention of persons passing to and fro between the two countries, who would not be allowed to travel therein without permission from the holder of Beanley to do so* (Greenwell 1904, 30-31).

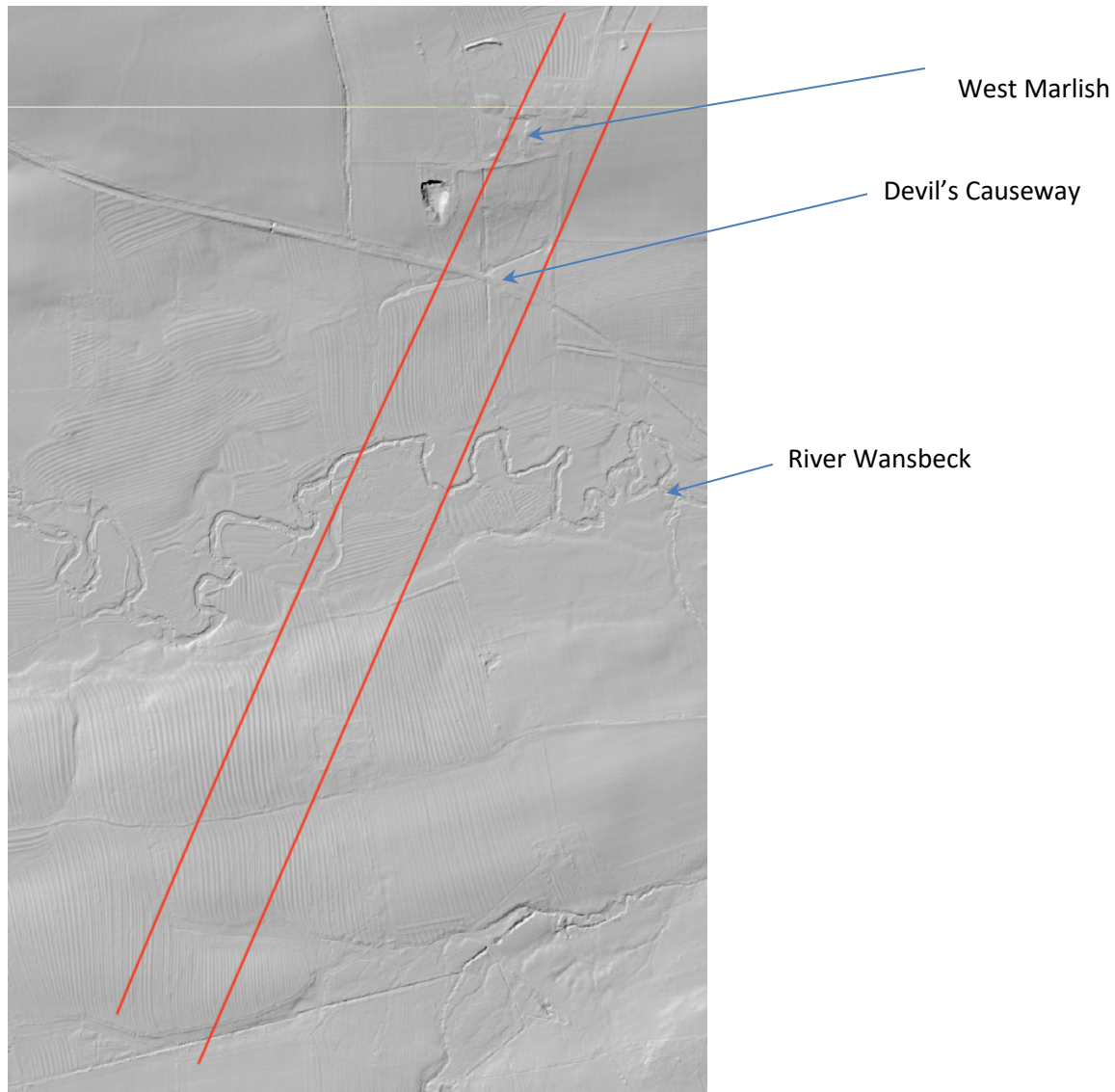
Gospatric II in his castle at Dunbar and with lands in Northumberland, would be in an ideal position to control the route between the two countries and the following map shows that the Devil's Causeway passes through all three blocks of Gospatric land and northwards to Berwick and Dunbar. From this, it is possible to argue that Gospatric received this commission in connection with cross-border travel because he controlled lengths of the Devil's Causeway, and this implies that it was a recognised and earlier route than the Great North Road.



Lands of Gospatric II, early 1100s. After Gubbins 2016, 53

However, sections of the road appear to fall into disuse after the medieval period. LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is now a technique widely used in the field of Archaeology. The method uses

light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure variable distances from earth and generates precise, three-dimensional information. Information using this technique reveals that sections of the Devil's Causeway are obliterated by ridge and furrow cultivation at an undetermined date. (Members of the Bernician Studies Group are currently working on the distribution of ridge and furrow in the *Cocwudu* area as an element of settlement patterns in the area). If the ridge and furrow could be dated, then this would help determine when sections of the Devil's Causeway fell out of use.



LiDAR showing the river Wansbeck near West Marlish, NZ 079850. Environment Agency.

Extensive ridge and furrow cultivation can be seen around the river Wansbeck overlaying but not respecting the orientation of the line of the Devil's Causeway. Recent research exploring the extent to which antecedent rural landscapes features endured into the later periods in southeast Northumberland confirmed that for most of its route through the study area (from the junction with Dere Street to the river Wansbeck), the Devil's Causeway runs oblique to field boundaries and evidence of ridge and furrow (Astbury 2020).

6B: KEY SETTLEMENT AREAS

It would seem from these written sources that the Devil's Causeway was a recognised route in the Early Medieval Period (8th C) and was probably still in use in the early 1100's through to the early 1300's. However, did the road have any influence in determining the position of settlement sites post Roman through to the medieval period?

When the route of the Devil's Causeway is closely examined there are some key areas of settlement close to it. B K Roberts in his paper entitled "Northumbrian origins and post-Roman continuity" uses a multidisciplinary approach to assess the impact of Roman occupation on the settlement patterns of the post-Roman period (Roberts 2010). The following section discusses some of these key settlement areas using archaeological reports, place-name and routeway information, using the Historic Environment Record (HER) which gives information on the location of settlements by type and period (rectilinear enclosures, Deserted Medieval Villages (DMV) and hillforts etc) along with the source of the information; excavation, aerial photography/cropmarks and field walking. The location of pieces of Anglo-Saxon sculpture can also give an indication of activity in that period. The following references are used for Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture / settlements:

The Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, Vol 1. A Gazetteer of Anglo-Saxon and Viking sites (Points 2012).

Other sources used are:

Beresford and Hurst, 1971 *Lost Villages in Northumberland*. Jobey 1965, *Hill Forts and settlements in Northumberland*. Keys to the Past. Historic Environment Record.

The following key sites are presented in a south /north order. Note the list is by no means complete and the information for each site is not fully comprehensive.

Great Whittington NZ 4005 5708 – lies less than 1km south-east of the junction of the Devil's Causeway with Dere Street. Objects found through hobby metal-detecting and reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme have provided significant evidence for long-term settlement in Whittington parish (Collins and Biggins 2013). The artefacts range in date from the Mesolithic to the present day, with a significant proportion attributed to the Roman and medieval periods, and a small but significant presence of late Iron Age and Early Medieval activity. Objects dating to the Early Medieval period are limited, but are present: a wrought-iron knife dating to the fifth-eleventh centuries; a copper-alloy annular brooch of Anglo-Saxon type 5th / 6th C is the only evidence of early Anglian activity; and copper-alloy strap end and copper-alloy buckle both dating to the tenth-eleventh century.

The method by which these artefacts were discovered, through use of a metal detector, and their position in the plough soil, diminishes their value because they lack an exact archaeological context; however, the large number of artefacts, the diversity of object-types discovered, and their distribution all point to the fact that an important archaeological site where there was Iron Age, Roman, and Early Medieval activity in the vicinity of the present village and the Devil's Causeway.

A possible explanation for the relatively high incidence of artefacts is that the settlement at Whittington acted as a trade depot or market. This idea is supported by the frequency of precious metal Roman coinage found relative to base-metal coins. The proximity to the Devil's Causeway, the fort at Halton Chesters and the easy access from Corbridge via Dere Street, would make this plausible.

Huckhoe NZ 073 828– the palisaded settlement at Huckhoe was occupied through the Roman period and into the 5th/6th Century, (Jobey 1959). Huckhoe is situated just 0.5 km east of the Devil's Causeway near to Bolam. St Andrew's Church Bolam retains an 11C tower and Anglo-Saxon fabric in the south

porch, tower, western end and northern wall of the nave. The remaining part of the church dates to the 12C, 13C and 14C.

Huckhoe is within a cluster of enclosed settlements / hillforts around Bolam: Bolam House (NZ 086 824) and Slate Hill (NZ078 822) plus, to the west on the other side of the Devil's Causeway, Shaftoe Crag (NZ052 877) and Salters Nick.

Bolam and Huckhoe are also situated where the east/west route from Morpeth joins the Devil's Causeway (section 6A, ii) and there is evidence of deserted and shrunken medieval villages at Bolam, Shortflatt, Harnham and East Shaftoe all within 1km of each other.

Hartburn NZ086 865 – is situated on the Devil's Causeway where the Causeway crosses the Hartburn. Hartburn lies at a river crossing and on one of the possible medieval east/west routes from Morpeth to the Devil's Causeway. (see section 6A, ii, above) The Devil's Causeway just north of the Hartburn crossing is known as the Harpeth Loaning, the "army path".

There is some considerable archaeological evidence of settlement at Hartburn from the Roman period through the Early Medieval period to the Conquest. To the north of the burn aerial photography has revealed a possible Roman fortlet. (Gates and Hewitt 2007). A site at NZ 081867, previously identified as a Roman fortlet, was excavated in 1971 and found to be a native settlement, (Jobey 1973). St Andrew's Church, Hartburn has a pre-Conquest core with a tower and chancel that was rebuilt in the 1200's (Ryder 2001). An archaeological investigation at St Andrew's in 2011, prior to the installation of services for a new heating system, found remains of stonework due west of the church tower possibly dating to the Roman or Early Medieval period, (Carlton 2011). In 1966, when the vestry was repaired, a line of skeletons was found buried beneath the floor within the walls of the church tower. They are reported to have been dated by 'forensic experts from Northumberland County Constabulary' to 966-1166 A.D. However, this dating sounds suspiciously like a literal interpretation of someone saying 'a century or so on either side of the Norman Conquest', (Ryder 2001).

Netherwitton NZ100 902 - situated 1km west of the Devil's Causeway in the Gospatric township of Witton, close to the Devil's Causeway crossing of the river Font. Inside St Giles' Church, Netherwitton, is a section of Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft on the floor of the chancel. The church dates from the 15th C.

In the immediate vicinity of Netherwitton there is a DMV, NZ 100 904 and two further DMVs at Longwitton NZ 071 890, South Witton NZ067 879. All three of these sites are on roads / trackways leading eastwards to the Devils Causeway and further east towards Morpeth. Netherwitton is also on the Rothbury/ Ritton Bank route to the Devil's Causeway (section 6A, ii, above)

The road east from Netherwitton to Morpeth follows the river Font to Stanton Mill NZ 890 129 where the route either crosses the Font and heads south on tracks to join the Hartburn / Mitford route (also section 6 A, ii, above) or it crosses the Fenceburn 0.75km further east, heading for Pigdon and then on tracks south to Mitford. Both routes cross the Font in the vicinity of Longshaws Roman Camp, an early Flavian type fort (1st C) probably linked to the early incursions into Scotland, (Welfare 2011).

Due east of Netherwitton and 0.5km east of the Devil's causeway is the enclosure at Gallowshaw. The site includes the remains of two defended settlements of Iron Age date situated on the south eastern slope of Gallowshaw Hill overlooking the valley of the River Font to the west, south and east. The western settlement is roughly oval in shape and measures 78m by 42m north within a slight earthen bank. The eastern settlement, situated 28m away, is roughly circular in shape and measures 64m 74m within the slight remains of a rampart and a ditch. Gallowshaw West NZ116 904, Gallowshaw East NZ117 904.

Todburn - situated on the Wingates / Horsley (Long) township boundary and now comprised of Todburn West NZ120 957, Todburn East and 1.5km to the south Todburn Moor NZ122 943. Todburn appears in documentary sources from the early 15th century. The earliest reference is in an *inquisitio post mortem* for John Heron of Thrunton who held an enclosure at Whitfield by Todburn. From an early plan in 1756 Todburn West, known as Young's Farm is evident plus another holding to the south west; Carnaby's Farm. This can be seen as a series of earthworks in the field immediately west and south of the farmhouse and includes ridge and furrow cultivation, a possible hollow way and possible house platforms. The ridge and furrow survives in several fields to the west of the present farmhouse and includes some long sweeping reverse S-shaped examples. Todburn East is a later addition appearing on the 1st edition OS. (Wingates Village Atlas, 2007).

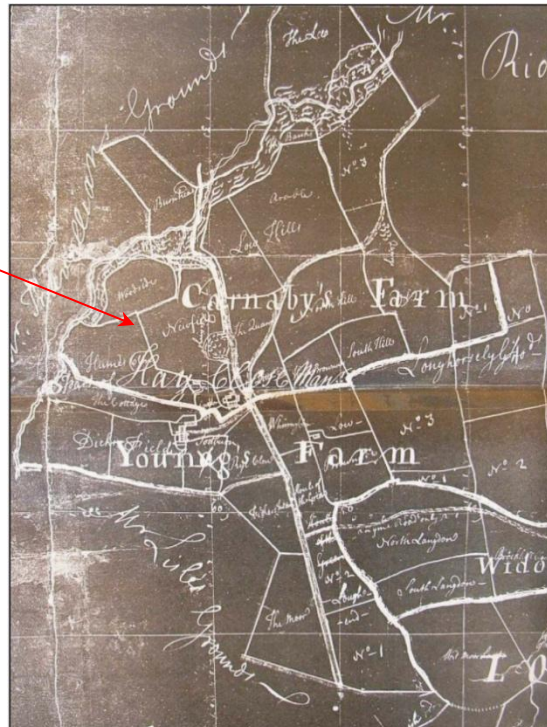
Todburn West is situated on the Devil's Causeway where several roads and trackways cross it. The trackway and hollow way from Todburn West to Wingates crosses the Devil's Causeway and heads east to Longhorsley. A road from Rothbury also crosses the Devil's Causeway here heading south east to the crossing of the Font and Wansbeck at Mitford. It has been suggested that this route continues south from Mitford to cross the Tyne at either Newburn or Newcastle.

Todburn Moor is on the Devils causeway and a series of circular and curvilinear features have been noted to the south west and north west of the current farm. (Historic Environment Records 23699 – 23709)

Note: in Section 3b a possible Roman Fortlet was identified at Todburn West from aerial photographs (Bernician Studies Group, unpublished).

Todburn
"Playing card" shape feature





Brinkburn NZ117 984 – lies on the north bank of the River Coquet between Rothbury and Felton, at a point where the river loops southwards creating a narrow, steep-sided peninsula of land.



Henry MacLauchlan, Survey of Brinkburn, published 1864

Three crossings of the River Coquet are close to Brinkburn:

- The Devil's Causeway crosses 2 kilometres to the east.
- A road, named in the mid-C19 by Henry MacLauchlan as an Ancient Way, diverges from the Devils' Causeway some 400 metres south of the river on a course to Brinkheugh, from there it crosses on to the east side of the peninsula; traces of a pier can be seen in the river bed when the water is low.
- Half a kilometre upstream is a ford below the farm of Middleheugh.

A large earthen rampart across the neck of the loop in the river, some 450 metres from the tip, creates a promontory fort, presumed, to be of prehistoric date. At the southern tip of the promontory, below the fort, are sited the remains of Brinkburn Priory, a house of Augustinian Canons, founded around 1135 AD, and a post-Dissolution manor house built on the priory site. In the 1990's excavations found no evidence of Roman occupation at Brinkburn, (Anderson 1991). It is however worth noting that the possible fortlets at Longframlington and Todburn West (section 3b above) are 2km north and 2.75km south of the crossing of the Coquet near Brinkburn respectively.

The *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* cites a grant of land made by King Ceolwulf of Northumbria (729–737) when he resigned the throne and entered Lindisfarne monastery as a monk:

Et sancto Cuthberto villam nomine Werceworthe cum suis appendiciis dedit. Et hii sunt termini istius villae: ab aqua quae vocatur Lina usque ad Cocwuda, et inde usque ad civitatem que vocatur Brincewele, et a Cocwuda usque ad Hafodscelfe versus orientem, et ab Alna usque in dimidiam viam inter Cocwud et Alna.

The following translation identifies the place-names. (O'Brien, Adams, Whaley 2018).

And he gave to St Cuthbert the vill named Warkworth with its appendages. And these are the bounds of this vill: from the river which is called Lyne as far as Coquet, and thence to the *civitas* that is called Brinkburn, and from Coquet as far as Hauxley towards the east; and from the Aln to the mid-point of the road between Coquet and Aln.

The status of *civitas* ascribed to *Brincewele* in *HSC* is unusual, applied elsewhere in this text only to Carlisle and York, suggesting a place of some prominence in the Roman period. This suggestion is given added force by an earlier text, the *Ravenna Cosmography*, compiled in about AD 700, (Richmond and Crawford 1949). The British section of the *Cosmography* gives the earliest known form of the modern river name of Coquet, applying it to both a river (*flumen*) and to a *civitas*, (O'Brien, Adams and Whaley 2018). Without the text of *HSC*, the *Cosmography* text might be thought to be corrupt at this point, but this later use of *civitas* allows the possibility that the *civitas* of the river Coquet and the *civitas* of *Brincewele* are one and the same place.

Taken with the fact that there is a putative promontory fort at Brinkburn, O'Brien, Adams, Whaley 2018 put forward the following hypothesis:

- At some time during the late prehistoric period, Brinkburn emerged as a prominent place with high status in mid-Coquetdale: the promontory fort.
- It maintained prominence and status during the Roman period and beyond; it came to be recognised as a *civitas*.
- This status came through into the 8th century, when Brinkburn came into the ownership of King Ceolwulf.
- Ceolwulf placed Brinkburn under the stewardship of the Lindisfarne monastery.
- Lindisfarne exercised territorial lordship here, established a minster church and provided pastoral care within the shire territory of Felton. Note: a recent excavation at Felton has revealed a previously unknown early medieval settlement. (Muncaster 2019).

If the hypothesis is correct, then there should be archaeological evidence of activity within the promontory fort during the late prehistoric and Roman periods and there should be evidence of an early medieval church, possibly with associated structures, either at the site of the medieval priory or on the plateau above. The Bernician Studies Group have already started to investigate these propositions with a Geophysical survey in 2017 (unpublished) where the results were broadly consistent with the features shown in MacLauchlan's site plan of 1864. There is a presumption that the outer embankment and the entrance to the promontory fort should be of prehistoric date, but that has never been confirmed by excavation. A further geophysical survey and excavation could answer some of these questions.

Note: In the recent review of the Ravenna Cosmography there is no mention of *Cocwudu* as the *civitas* but suggests the *civitas* ought to be a site either close to where Route 88 (Dere Street) crosses the Coquet between Holystone and Sharperton or where Route 87 (Devil's Causeway) crosses it south of Longframlington, that is near Brinkburn, (Fitzpatrick-Matthews 2020).

Edlingham NU 114 090 – lies close to the Devil's Causeway about 2.5 km south of the fort at Learchild where the Roman road to Bremenium meets the Devil's Causeway and the Causeway crosses the river Aln. A newly identified Roman fortlet lies on the Devil's Causeway between Edlingham and Learchild, NU 105 095, (Gates and Hewitt 2007).

The church of St John the Baptist at Edlingham dates to the 11th C but there may have been an earlier wooden church there, (*HSC*). The earliest part of the church is probably the nave which dates to the mid-11thC. It was partly rebuilt in the 12thC and a tower was added in the 14th century. Internally Anglo-Saxon fabric survives in the west wall of the knave, a grave cover in the north aisle and part of a crosshead in a recess of the south aisle. Externally the south west quoins of the nave may be Anglo-Saxon (re- used grave covers?) and in the churchyard near to the south porch there is a cross-base.



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To the north east of Edlingham there is the multivallate settlement at Corby's Crags NU128 102 overlooking the Aln valley and to the south west two enclosures at Rough Castles NU088 082, one multivallate.

Breamish Valley NU058 171 (river crossing) - Immediately north of the village of Powburn and some 13km SSE of Wooler, the Devil's Causeway crosses the River Breamish. The Breamish Valley, rising 16km to the west in the shadow of Cheviot Hill, formerly enjoyed rich brown-earth volcanic soils on well-drained, easily cultivated slopes. The Breamish gorge opens out at Ingram, from where low-lying gravel terraces allow for easy communication with the Roman road. It contains the upstanding remains of many archaeological settlements and widespread cultivation dating from the Neolithic period onwards. Excavations by George Tate in the 19th century, and by George Jobey and A H A Hogg in the 20th, established the vibrancy of the communities here during the late Iron Age to Early Medieval periods. A sustained campaign of excavation in the late 1990s by the University of Durham and Northumberland Archaeology Group has filled in some of the gaps. There is evidence that an expansion in cultivation occurred in the valley during the Roman period, with six-row barley being grown, stored and processed at the large rectilinear Ingram South enclosure, dated to 90-200 BC (O'Brien and Adams 2016). Hogg (1956) dated a circular enclosure with small rectangular huts on Ingram Hill to the Early Medieval period; and a date of c.500 BC was obtained from a secondary hearth in the tri-radial Turf Knowe cairn. O'Brien and Adams have suggested that when the Breamish (then *Bromic*) valley came into the possession of the Lindisfarne community in the 7th century, they may have intensively pastured cattle on the hills above Ingram. It seems likely that the Devil's Causeway facilitated contact and trade with both the Roman military and the Lindisfarne community during and after the establishment of the Hadrianic frontier.

Wooperton NU040 205 - is situated on the western edge of the Till valley, 1.5km west of the river. The Wooperton place-name may be an *Ofer* name, a place-name associated with a landmark in the landscape (see Wooler below). Bewick Hill, 700' and the landmass of Bewick Moor lie to the east with hillforts at Blawearie and Old Bewick.

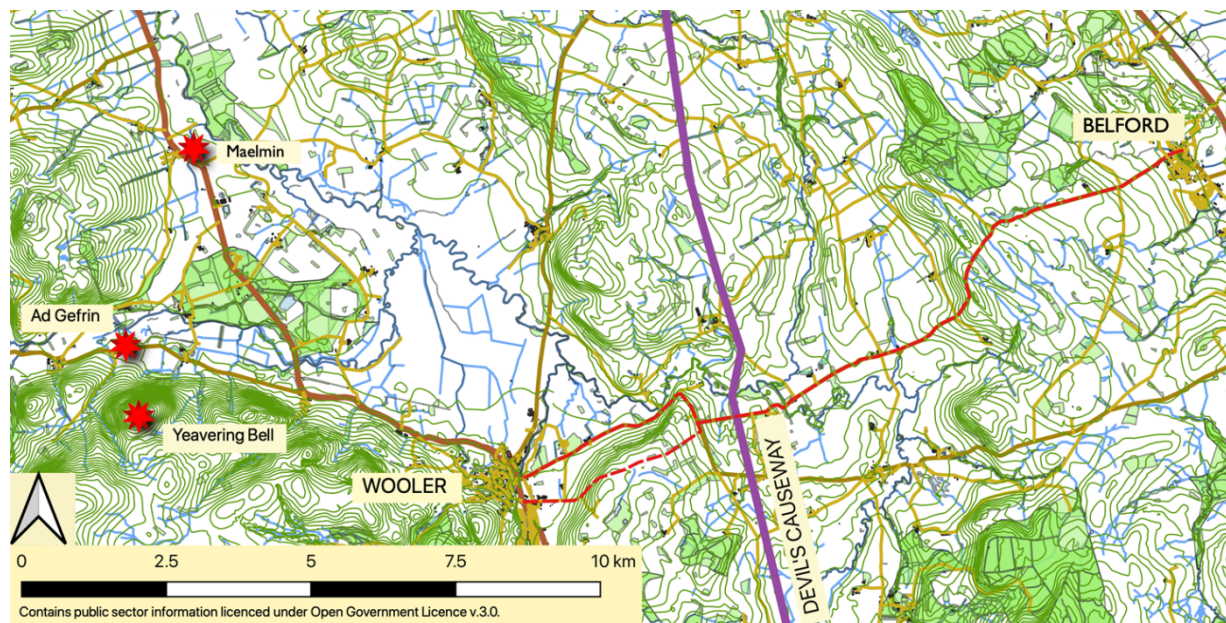
There is also some evidence of Early Medieval settlement in the vicinity with the discovery of a series of Anglo-Saxon grubenhaus at New Bewick, (Gates and O'Brien 1988, Glover 2010). New Bewick lies on a route east from the Devil's Causeway which follows the Eglingham Burn toward Alnwick. Also a 9th-century, late Saxon, bronze strap-end was found by a metal detectorist at Wooperton (Bailey, 1993).

In 2004 an excavation in association with phase 2 of the Wooperton gravel quarry, 12km north of Learchild and on the Devil's Causeway, produced 600 sherds of Roman pottery dating to Flavian and Trajan period (Pre-Hadrianic) this site is a possible *mansio* or military run staging post with similar dating to Learchild, (Ansell 2004).

Wooler NT990 285- is situated 3.5 km directly west of the Devil's Causeway. An Anglo-Saxon cross-head was found near the railway station in 1884 when the Alnwick to Cornhill railway was under construction. Also, there is a part of a cross-slab or shaft outside of St Mary's Church, Wooler, 10th/11th C.

The Wooler place-name is an *Ofer* name, a name associated with a landmark in the landscape. It lies beside the Wooler Water which joins the River Till to the north and at the western foot of Weetwood Moor one of the few ridge shaped hills in the vicinity. The name means Hill of the Springs which nourish Coldmartin Loughs (from *Mere tun* which derives from a watering place/ overnight halt for travellers). The Devil's Causeway passes 2km to the east of Weetwood Moor. So Weetwood Moor may have been a watering place near to the Devil's Causeway and a significant landmark in the area (from the Wooler *ofer* name). Placename information from Cole 2011, 2013.

7km west of Wooler are *Gefrin* (Yeavering) and *Maelmin* (Millfield) Early Medieval 7th C sites and the hillfort on Yeavering Bell.



Weetwood Moor would be a good point to leave the Devil's Causeway and bear west around the southern edge of the marshy areas of the confluence of the Till, Glen and Wooler Water to Yeavering. Alternatively, you could turn east through Belford to Bamburgh. Possible routes from Wooler would be to head east on footpaths/trackways up onto Weetwood Moor to Drythropple where there is confluence of paths and then north east for about 1km to cross the Devil's Causeway and on to Belford. Or the route of the B6348 skirts north east along the foot of the scarp of Weetwood Moor then turns sharply south east around the base of the hillfort on Weetwood Moor (NU022 294) to pick up the road to Belford. This demonstrates how the Devil's Causeway may be key to Early Medieval route ways with other routes linking to it. The road from Wooler to Belford/ Bamburgh may be an Early Medieval route way and likewise the road from Wooler to Yeavering.

Heading north from Wooler, the Devil's causeway runs along the course of a C road from East Horton to Lowick. East Horton is the site of a Roman Fortlet NU034304 overlooking the river Till crossing (Gates and Hewitt 2007). Just north of East Horton and to the west of the Devil's Causeway are two Hill forts/enclosures at Horton Moor NU014 318 and East Dod Law NU008 316.

There is a possible Roman Fortlet at Laverocklaw, NU024 364, 4.5 km south of Lowick, overlooking the crossing of the Hetton Burn, (Field Observations by Ordnance Survey). The Devil's Causeway then continues on minor roads and trackways straight towards Berwick.

Whilst the data for each of the key areas of settlement is not exhaustive it allows speculation about the general pattern of settlement and the role of the Devil's Causeway in this.

These key areas are all located at either where the Devil's Causeway crosses a river or burn or where route ways cross it and often near to a significant landmark or a combination of all these. Most of the areas of settlement show a continuity of settlement from Iron Age Hillforts, Roman forts/fortlets, sculptural and archaeological evidence of Early Medieval settlement to the Medieval period and through to present day.

7: SUMMARY

The Devil's Causeway is a Roman road, Margary's number 87, and follows a south west / north east direction from Dere Street to just south of Berwick upon Tweed. Its construction conforms to those of a Roman road although a central rib feature is different. Excavations during the 20thC have shown the route, as depicted on the OS maps (based on MacLauchlan's survey work of 1857) to be reasonably accurate. The only known fort is at Leachild at the junction of the Devil's Causeway with the road west to Bremenium. This dates to the late 1st C / early 2nd C. Several possible fortlets have been identified by aerial photography and field surveys: West Marlish, Hartburn, Edlingham, East Horton, Chatton, Laverocklaw, Hall Hill, Wooperton, Todburn East, Capheaton (Ferney Chesters and Edgehouse). However, none of these sites have been excavated and many sites previously thought to be Roman fortlets have been reclassified as Romano British rectilinear settlements.

The Devil's Causeway dates from the mid 1stC (Flavian period) to the early 2nd C (Trajan) that is pre-Hadrianic. It was probably constructed as part of Agricola's incursions into Scotland AD 77–84. It is speculated that it was part of the Trajanic Stanegate frontier protecting the fertile coastal plain north of the Tyne from the hostile uplands of North Tynedale, Redesdale and Cheviot. Once the new frontier of Hadrian's Wall was completed it would have reverted to a military/supply route.

Nowadays barely 25% of the route is currently suitable for motor traffic or even footpath or bridleway. However, there is evidence that the route was in use in the Early Medieval period. Section 8, of the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, (HSC) which deals with a grant of King Ceolwulf, has a boundary description which includes 'from the Aln to the middle of the road between Coquet and Aln'. It is suggested that the boundary described runs along the Devil's Causeway or the boundary runs across it, (Johnson South 2000; O'Brien, Adams M and Whaley 2018) Despite this difference of interpretation both sources agree that the road described in the HSC is the Devil's Causeway therefore providing evidence of the road being in use in the 8thC.

In the Medieval period charters and Itineraries provide evidence that the road was in use in this period. In the mid 1100's Ranulf de Merlay travelled from Morpeth to Corbridge to witness Henry, Earl of Northumberland's charter of Confirmation to Brinkburn Priory. Three routes have been proposed all of which join the Devil's Causeway and from there head south west to Dere Street and south to Corbridge.

The itinerary for King John in February 1201 shows a journey from Rothbury to Hexham. The most plausible route for the time is from Rothbury south across the moors to Forestburn Gate and Netherwitton, intersecting with the Devil's Causeway south east of Netherwitton at the edge of Oldpark Wood. Then take the Devil's Causeway to the Dere Street intersection. At Dere Street take either Dere Street to Corbridge and along the Tyne valley to Hexham or from Stagshaw Bank south west to Hexham. Edward I was in Northumberland in August 1306 and travelled from Hexham to Morpeth. The possible route from Hexham to Morpeth is: Hexham to Dere St, as a reverse of the King John options above. Then Dere Street to the Devil's Causeway and thence to Morpeth as per the Ranulf de Merlay options.

Around 1110 Gospatric II negotiated lands in Northumberland. Three blocks of land are described in the Percy Cartulary made at York in 1135 by King Stephen. The Devil's Causeway passes through the middle of these blocks of land, known collectively as the *serjeanty* of Beanley. Conditions placed on the grant by Henry I required Gospatric II to control the roads passing between England and Scotland. It is possible to argue that the Devil's Causeway was one of the cross-border roads as Gospatric II controlled lengths of it, and this implies that it was a recognised route between the two countries.

It would seem from the written sources that the Devil's Causeway was a recognised route in the Early Medieval Period (8th C) and was probably still in use in the early 1100's through to the early 1300's. Sections of the Devil's Causeway seem to have fallen out of use after this period as there is evidence from LiDAR and aerial photography that lengths of the road are obscured by ridge and furrow cultivation.

However, did the road have any influence in determining the position of settlement sites post Roman through to the medieval period? Examination of key settlement sites along the route show clusters of settlement at where the Devil's Causeway crosses a river for example Hartburn, the Font at Netherwitton, the Coquet at Brinkburn, and the Till at Wooperton and Wooler. There are also clusters of settlement where other roadways cross the Devil's Causeway – Bolam, Hartburn, Todburn, Netherwitton, Wooperton and Wooler. At the major junction of the Devil's Causeway with Dere Street there is a possible *Emporium* at Great Whittington.

8: DISCUSSION

This report is part of a project that is still a work in progress and therefore this section should be taken as the foundations for further research.

Routeways and river crossing seem to be the key when examining the settlement patterns. The question is which came first the route ways or the settlements – a chicken and egg question? Most of the settlement clusters on the line of the Devil's Causeway show a continuity of settlement from Iron Age Hillforts, Roman forts/fortlets, sculptural and archaeological evidence of Early Medieval settlement through to the medieval period and present day.

The Devil's Causeway runs noticeably southwest/ northeast as it skirts the lowland coastal plain on the edge of the uplands, in sharp contrast to the overall topography of the area and the current road and field systems which run east/west or southeast/ northwest. Recent research demonstrates that the road shows little conformity in terms of orientation to surrounding field boundary orientation and this could be evidence of the Devil's Causeway being inserted into a pre-existing layout of settlement, route ways and boundaries which are orientated on a different axis, (Astbury 2020).

It is hypothesised that the east/west routes are older than the Devil's Causeway, formed as people moved between the coast and fertile coastal plain to the summer upland pastures – transhumance. The east/west routes either follow the river valleys or keep to the ridges between the river watersheds. As we have seen from the itineraries of King John and Edward I, the Devil's Causeway would have provided a useful link road between these east/west routes and a more direct route to the Tyne Valley and routes further west.

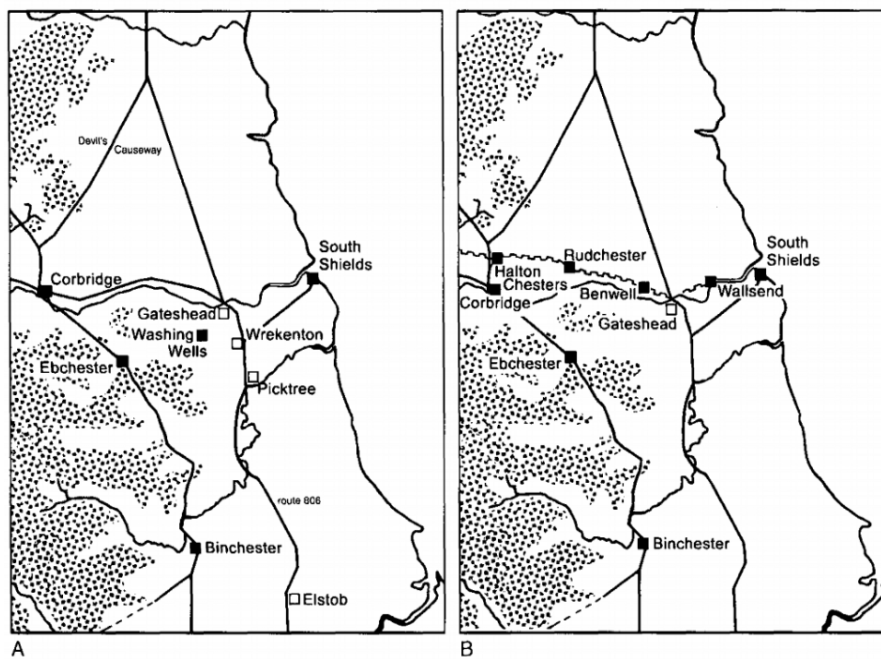
Therefore, these other routeways running through the *Cocwudu* area also need to be assessed to ascertain the overall impact on settlement patterns. Examples are (map p.27):

- a. NNW/SSE route from Rothbury through Netherwitton and south to ford the Tyne somewhere near Wylam (Bernician Studies Group, work in progress)
- b. NW/SE route from the upper reaches of the Coquet, crossing the Devil's Causeway at Todburn and then SE to a major junction of route ways and boundaries at Sandy Letch (Bernician Studies Group, work in progress). Then across the confluence of the Font and Wansbeck at Mitford and south towards the Tyne crossing at Newburn or picking up the old route of the Great North Road (GNR), crossing the Tyne at Newcastle.



Possible routeways. Adams/BSG in progress

There is much speculation about other possible Roman roads in this area and given a possible Roman fortlet at Mitford and the place name Stannington (*stan-weg-tun*, stone way (Cole 2011)) on the old A1 (GNR) just north of Newcastle does this give some credence to the argument that there was a Roman road leading north from Newcastle. Morpeth is 28km from Newcastle, and also 28km from the fort at Leachild on the Devil's Causeway, a day's march away.

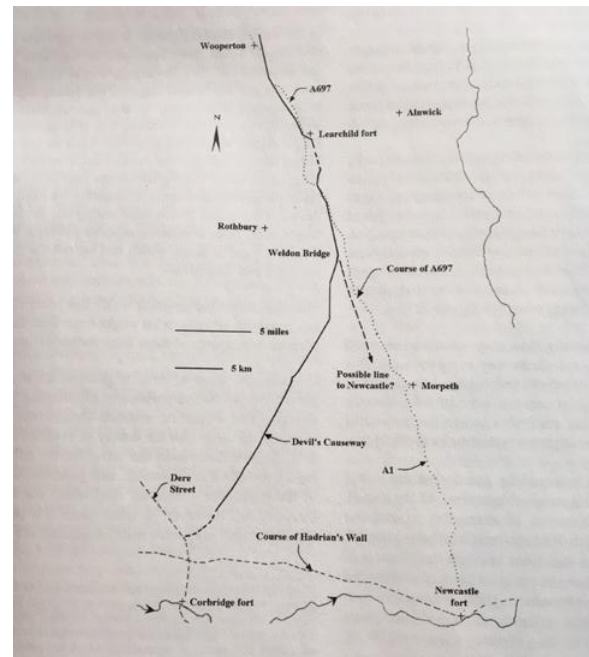


Pre-Hadrianic routes

Hadrianic routes

Bidwell and Snape, 2002

Prior to the building of Hadrian's Wall there was no secure route from the mouth of the Tyne to Dere Street, the Stanegate and the rest of the Northern frontier. The Tyne is the safest haven for shipping between the Humber and the Firth of Forth and it is suggested that there was an early supply fort at South Shields with a link road (the Wrekendyke, Margary 809) to Margary's 806 route and to an early crossing of the Tyne at Newcastle / Gateshead. This road then headed north on the line of the GNR to join the Devil's Causeway a little north of the Coquet. An early crossing at Newcastle must have had a fort defending it and the fort at Newcastle was later by almost a century but there is a potential fort site at Bottle Bank, Gateshead (Bidwell and Snape 2002).



Poulter J. Course of the Roman road from Weldon Bridge towards Newcastle.

Poulter in his British Archaeology report on the surveying and planning of the Devil's Causeway also suggests that the northern part of the road is aligned with Newcastle and there may have been a road west of the current A697 from Weldon Bridge to Newcastle (Poulter 2014). Coddington (1918) also thought there was a Roman road leading out of Newcastle and veering northwest near Morpeth to join the Devil's Causeway effectively following the route of the A697.

Just as royal itineraries have been used to identify medieval routes so can the movements of armies and the position of battle sites. A North East England case study demonstrates the use of previously unidentified ancient routes in medieval and post medieval warfare (Bishop 2014). Bishop's route from Newcastle to Tweedmouth again follows the route described above to Morpeth but carries on up the coast via Felton, Alnwick and Belford (the route of the GNR). Bishop also proposes a link road between the Newcastle/Tweedmouth route from just north of Morpeth to join the Devil's Causeway north of Longframlington at Besom Barn.

All four of the writers above propose a route from Newcastle to the Devil's Causeway. So is this another Roman road running through *Cocwudu* and does the proposed route (**b** page 27) from Rothbury through Netherwitton and down to Mitford join this proposed Roman road to Newcastle?

The route of this road from Newcastle to the Devil's Causeway is still very much in existence under modern roads and lanes. Does this reflect the importance of the crossing of the Tyne at Newcastle in later periods and explain why the south-western section of the Devil's Causeway falls out of use as the A697 route and coastal route become the preferred link to Scotland? Once this section of Devil's Causeway had ceased to be of importance elements of pre-existing systems of boundaries around the line of the road were re-used in the construction of medieval open fields and furlongs containing broad ridge and furrow which are still visible as earthworks and cropmarks.

9: FURTHER RESEARCH

- If the Devil's Causeway remained in use in the post Roman period, and indeed through to the medieval period, it must have influenced settlement patterns in the area. Settlement density along the road needs to be examined statistically to test the hypothesis that there are settlement clusters around where the road crosses the rivers in the *Cocwudu* area. However, the Devil's Causeway is not the sole route way to have a bearing on settlement patterns in *Cocwudu*, settlement along the east/west and NW/SE routes through the area needs examining along with the proposed Roman road from Newcastle.
- It is also suggested that the main settlement of each township within the *Cocwudu* area should be researched in terms of HER data, Anglo-Saxon Sculpture and place-name information to ascertain whether there is any evidence of occupation in the post Roman period. The routeways in and out of the settlements with early occupation need to be examined in relation to the Devil's Causeway and to the routes mentioned above.
- The distribution of early rig and furrow may also give an indication of settlement although there are issues of dating this feature type. Research to look at criteria for dating rig and furrow is planned and this would be very useful to ascertain when the Devil's Causeway fell out of use as several sectors of the Devil's Causeway are obliterated by rig and furrow.
- Finally, Brinkburn is situated very close to both the Devil's Causeway (1.5km east) and the proposed Roman road linking Newcastle to the Devil's Causeway (2.5km east) as they cross the Coquet. Was the promontory fort on the Brinkburn peninsular in the late prehistoric period a high-status centre which carried through to the Roman period when it was recognised as a *civitas*. This status is still evident when in the 8th C Brinkburn came into the ownership of King Ceolwulf and was placed under the stewardship of Lindisfarne. Subsequently a minster church was established and pastoral care was provided within the shire of Felton, (O'Brien, Adams and Whaley 2018). In view of the *civitas* status of Brinkburn and its location, the site merits further research – excavation, geophysical survey etc.

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