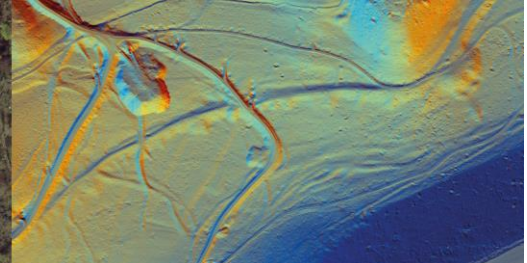




# SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS

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Title: Route of Chichester to Silchester Roman road

Author: Michael Pengelly

Date: February 2017

Summary: Heathbarn Down is situated approximately 14 km NNE from Chichester and lies on a spur of the South Downs between two alluvial coombes that separate it from Bow Hill to the west and St Roche's Hill to the east, both of which contain the MIA hillforts of Goosehill Camp and The Trundle respectively as well as other significant prehistoric features. Aerial photographs revealed a "slight agger 24 feet wide, between ditches 60 feet apart" (Margary 1973, 79) crossing the Down in a NW to SE direction to a prominent chalk pit at SU 84484 12348. The course of the Chichester to Silchester roman road southwards from this point to the north gate of Chichester's roman town has been subject to debate.

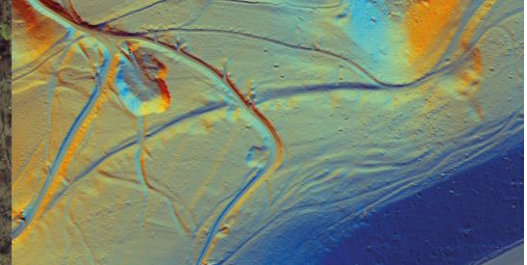
Investigation of the linear feature showed that it was part of a later field system and not a section of the Roman road. Similarly, despite extending the area of study, no other signs of the road were apparent below Heathbarn Down. This aside, the Project provided a useful test of the capability of the Lidar dataset.

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## Independent Research Project

Researcher Name: Michael Pengelly

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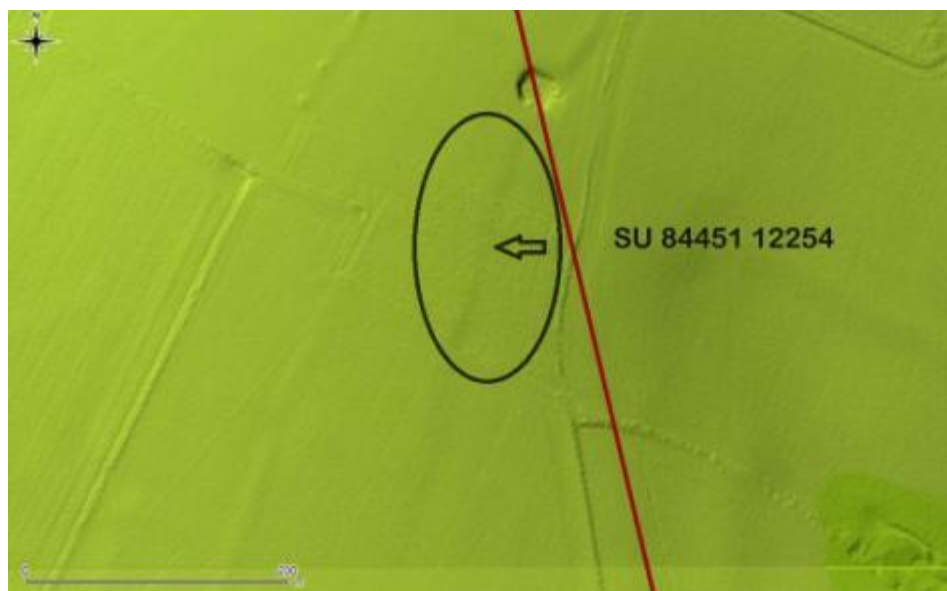
Project Name: Route of Chichester to Silchester Roman road

Project Location: Heathbarn Down, NGR SU 84451 12254

### Project Details:

#### Objective

To investigate a linear feature identified by Lidar image<sup>1</sup> at 1m resolution on Heathbarn Down at OS grid reference SU 84451 12254 (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Linear feature shown in relation to the Heathbarn Down chalk pit and Chichester to Silchester roman road**

This feature is also visible on Bing satellite imagery (Figure 2).

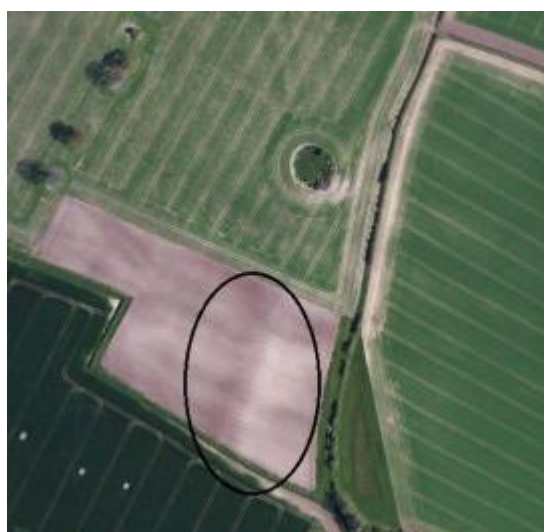
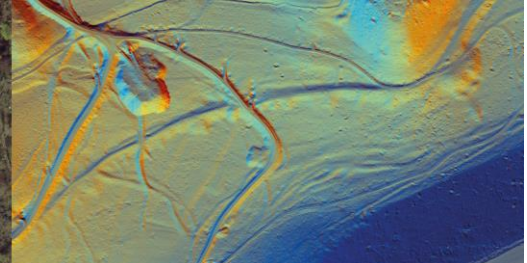
<sup>1</sup> Department of Environment, [www.geometric-group.co.uk](http://www.geometric-group.co.uk)





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**Figure 2: Linear feature highlighted**

## Background

Heathbarn Down is situated approximately 14 km NNE from Chichester and lies on a spur of the South Downs between two alluvial coombes that separate it from Bow Hill to the west and St Roche's Hill to the east, both of which contain the MIA hillforts of Goosehill Camp and The Trundle respectively as well as other significant prehistoric features. Aerial photographs revealed a *"slight agger 24 feet wide, between ditches 60 feet apart"* (Margary 1973, 79) crossing the Down in a NW to SE direction to a prominent chalk pit at SU 84484 12348. The course of the Chichester to Silchester roman road southwards from this point to the north gate of Chichester's roman town has been subject to debate.

Margary proposed the following route:

*"Beyond this Down, a hedgerow, with parish boundary continues the exact alignment to the west end of Hangbush Copse, a half-mile north of Binderton House, after which no traces of the road have been found. If the alignment were still followed, however, it would pass just east of Langford Farm buildings and then pick up exactly the north-south portion of Two Barns Lane leading into West Lavant. If it continued on this line it would meet at East Broyle Copse the old track-way, now Old Broyle Road, leading from Bow Hill and Stoke Down into Chichester by the North Gate. This trackway is pre-Roman and its use in this route would have saved a mile or so of road-making, so the supposition is quite a likely one."* (Margary 1953, 12).

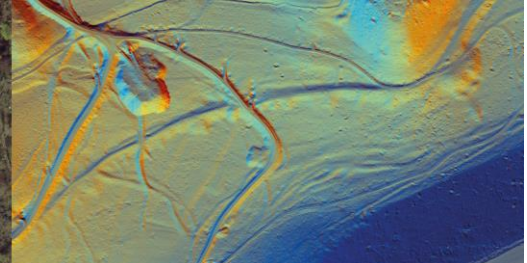
Significantly this route would have cut through two sections of the Chichester Entrenchments (E-Wa(ii) and E-Wb respectively). However excavations at the points of intersection revealed no evidence to support this and an alternative point of intersection 400 m to the east at SU 8552 0816 was proposed based on field and documentary evidence (Bradley 1971, 29) – this is the alignment used on current OS maps but importantly, no material evidence to support this has yet been found. Similarly, an excavation of a possible IA enclosure at Rummages Barn (SU 8474 1120), where aerial photographs suggested an intersection with the Roman road could not locate any evidence to support this. The excavator assumed that these had been ploughed out and made the following comments:





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*“It is now clear that the line of the road was adjusted on the crest of Heathbarn Down by an angle of 6° east to bring the alignment to Chichester. The precise point of realignment appears to be at SU 8445312495. The new position for the centre line of the road from Heathbarn Down is 5 metres west of that published on the SU8412 (1977 edn.) on Heathbarn Down...Further south the road has not been traced but it can be assumed that it continued in a straight line to the north gate of Chichester.” (Kenny 1985, 72)*

The identified route above corresponds with that of Bradley’s and is the one reflected on the current OS map. Significantly no evidence other than aerial photography has been offered in support of this hypothesis.

There is of course the possibility that both the original proposition by Margary and the subsequent one by Bradley (which is the route depicted on current OS maps) are both correct in as much as it could be conceivable that the road was originally built as a military road in support of the Conquest and that its route was subsequently modified once the town of *Noviomagus Reginorum* was built. Whilst unproven, this hypothesis could also give rise to other possible routes south, hence the need to investigate the linear feature described in the opening paragraph. Interestingly if the feature is projected on the same alignment it heads directly to Bosham which seems an obvious embarking point for a roman landing. The three alternative routes are shown in Figure 3.



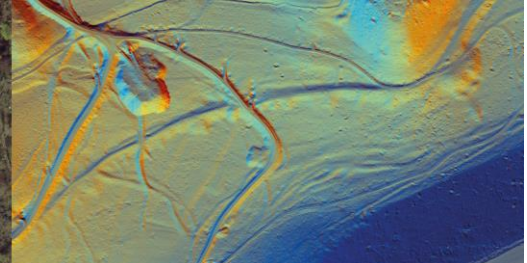
**Figure 3: Comparison of alternative routes of the roman road. Current OS representation shown by solid red line; Margary’s route in dotted red and linear projection in dotted black.**





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## Investigation

Access to the SDNPA Lidar data revealed that the linear was part of a large field system that straddled across Heathbarn Down as shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: LRM image of the linear shown by the arrow, revealing it as part of large field system.**

It was difficult to determine the relative dating sequence of the field system to the Roman road from the Lidar image, however subsequent analysis of aerial photographs clearly show that the field system cuts over the Roman road and is therefore later (Figure 5).



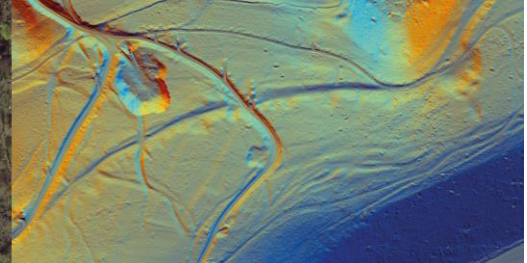
**Figure 5: Field system appears to cut over the line of the roman road above the chalk pit feature which suggests it was later.**

(NMR 2135/0069 dated 26/4/1983)



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## Conclusion

Investigation of the linear feature showed that it was part of a later field system and not a section of the Roman road. Similarly, despite extending the area of study, no other signs of the road were apparent below Heathbarn Down. This aside, the Project provided a useful test of the capability of the Lidar dataset. The granularity of the SDNPA data is clearly much better than that held by the Department of Environment in that it exposed the field system. It also provided an invaluable tool for carrying out fast archaeological prospection of a large area. Used in conjunction with other tools such as aerial photography and satellite imagery it provides a means of enhancing the quality of desk based surveys.

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MRes Archaeology

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Margary, I. D. 1953. Recent Discoveries by the Ordnance Survey of Roman Roads in Sussex. Sussex Archaeological Collections 91, 1-19.

Margary, I. D. 1973. Roman Roads in Britain. Third Edition. London: John Baker.