

Origins and history of Wirksworth: Lutudarum and the Peak District before the Norman Conquest.

**Anton Shone
2009**



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Preface to the second edition

This history began as an attempt to consider the origins of Wirksworth. The first edition sought to assemble all the potential sources for the early, possibly Roman, origins of the town. In doing so it became apparent that much was missing - a huge gap existed in the academic and popular understanding of both Wirksworth and its role in the history of the Peak District. This gap was due to the weakness of the source material, much of which was conjecture or spurious opinion often endlessly and inaccurately repeated, as well as a lack of archaeological work together with a failure to assemble what was known in a way that would enable it to be properly understood.

This second edition adds to the original by bringing in some of the completed archaeological work achieved since, for example in the assessment of the Peak District's Roman road system, which has resulted in a complete re-writing of the section on communications that appeared in the first edition. In revising the first edition, the chapter which attempted to address the geology and archaeology of Wirksworth has been removed, as this will be the subject of a separate report to be produced shortly. The major addition to the second edition is the inclusion of a new chapter which deals with what is known of Wirksworth and the Peak District in the Mercian and Viking period and which takes this history forward as far as Domesday Book in 1086.

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**“The country was once famous for its twenty-eight noble cities as well as innumerable fortified places equally well guarded by the strongest of walls and towers, gates and locks”
(Bede, speaking of Roman Britain).**

Introduction

The key to understanding the history of Wirksworth is to understand the history of St Mary’s church. St Mary’s is a Minster Church, what this means is that it had a function and role like the Minsters of York, or Beverley or Ripon, it was the mother church of a large district. The Minster churches are important because they represent the continuity of their towns over a very considerable period of time. In many respects the failure of historians to fully understand the implications of this also represents the failure to understand the early history of Wirksworth and of the Peak District itself. So this is a history of a city and its church. Many might say that Wirksworth is not a city, but once, long ago, it was. The reasons for the failure in understanding have varied but there were several contributing factors:

The first stems from an apparent difference of approach by historians to Roman towns such as “lost Lutudarum”: one view tends to be that based on assumed continuity between the Roman and post-Roman in certain areas. Another is that of assumed discontinuity. This latter is all very well south of the Trent, but we are looking for Lutudarum north of the Trent, and, for this reason, and many others, we are looking for somewhere that still exists. Dark (1998) is extremely clear that understanding the fundamental division between those areas of the East Midlands which passed into Saxon occupation and those areas which remained British, during the fifth century, is central to the understanding of the issue of continuity and discontinuity in terms of location.

The second reason appears to be the lack of assessment of all known data taken together. There has been a very haphazard approach to trying to find Lutudarum, which, for example, resulted in the historians of lead mining being pre-occupied with the concept of Lutudarum as a lead mining district rather than as the chief town of its district (Rieuwerts, 1988) and, similarly, the archaeologists of Derbyshire had been so active around Carsington in the 1980s that this appeared to have overwhelmed the coherent assessment of other locations. Many others muddied the waters by claiming Lutudarum for their own, on the most spurious of reasoning. If it was a town, village or some other location, then it might be Ashbourne, Chesterfield, Crich, Carsington, Matlock, Middleton, Rainster Rocks, Youlgrave or even Wilne Ferry (!) or any number of other unlikely and incomprehensible suggestions, but not, apparently, where the considered evidence puts it: Wirksworth. Rahtz noted that evidence of urban continuity in Mercian towns tended to suffer from the inability to assemble and assess data from all possible sources together. This had, at the time when Rahtz wrote (1977) only been undertaken in the study of Worcester and it had not been, until now, attempted in terms of Wirksworth.

Finally, it is fair to say that there has also been a very general weakness of assessment of the upland areas of Britain in archaeological terms (in comparison to the lowland areas) and an almost complete

failure of archaeological assessment of the small towns of the White Peak in particular, a failure which Hodges noted in 1991 and which has barely been addressed since.

The purpose of this study is to consider such documentary research information as is available as a coherent whole for Wirksworth and its immediate hinterland. In conjunction with the documentary research, primary archaeological work began in 2006 to prove (or disprove) the conclusions reached by the documentary research, and a series of reports published by the Wirksworth Roman Project deal with the associated archaeological effort.



The Mayor of Wirksworth with his men-at-arms
in St Mary's churchyard on the occasion
of the 2008 Wirksworth Wapentake

Chapter 1: Evidence of Roman Lutudarum, its history and continuity



The Roman axe and the scales of justice
A bas-relief panel at Wirksworth Moot Hall

The city state of Lutudarum.

The first issue to consider is whether Lutudarum was indeed a town, as opposed to just being a mining company or a geographical district. The answer is given in the late Roman list of towns and fortresses of the empire; a list copied in the seventh century and known as the Ravenna Cosmography. Ravenna gives a number of things, but its chief British list is towns and fortresses. There, next to Derwentio, is Lutudarum (Toco, 2005). However, this is all the information Ravenna provides, it is a list, not a map, and it is in little discernable order, though it is thought to represent a series of road itineraries or quadrants of a lost map. Some have argued that this name might still represent a district not a town, but this is to ignore the normal Roman practice of naming districts after their chief towns anyway. Alternatively, in some cases, naming the chief town after the tribe in the area around it: either way, you still have a town and a district. Dennis (1971) noted: "The occurrence of the name Lutudarum in the Ravenna Cosmography and it being found on all the lead pigs from this area, leads to the conclusion that a place with this name must have existed within the lead mining area of the Peak District". Indeed, it is necessary to bear in mind that the essential unit of Roman civic organisation was the city state, however much these varied in size and importance (Salway, 1997) a view supported by Dark (1998,) who observed that all civitates had their own capitals. So this appears to solve our first problem – was Lutudarum a Roman town? Yes, this is a reasonable conclusion. It also clarifies the issue of the district too: both are normal and necessary in the Roman governmental organisation of that time.

Secondly, there is the question of the function of Lutudarum. Was it a fort, such as Derwentio (Little Chester)? Was it a place of recreation, such as Aquae Arnemetiae (Buxton)? Some evidence for the role of Lutudarum comes from lead ingots, often referred to as Pigs of Lead, many of which have been found down the years and a number of which are inscribed, often with just the weight, but sometimes with more useful inscriptions, Ireland (2008) identifies 17 Lutudarum named ingots. That found at Cromford Nether Moor in 1777 was inscribed IMP CAES HADRIANI AUG MET LVT "Property of Caesar Hadrian Augustus from Lutudarum" (Anderson, 1985). A number of other Pigs of Lead have been found locally with varying inscriptions, including 'Product of the Lutudarensian Partners...' etc. That found at Cave's Inn, Warwickshire - the former Roman settlement of Tripontium, says: SOCIOR LVT BR EX ARG "Property of the Company at Lutudarum British lead without silver". (Turbutt, 1999, gives, in appendix,

a fuller list; Dennis, 1971, also gives a list, as do Rivet and Smith, 1981). Thus, part of the administrative role of Lutudarum is also clear. It was a principal administrative centre for the Roman lead mining industry, and if the inscriptions on the various ingots are viewed as a whole, much of the lead production was taken in tax by the imperial government in Rome, which argues for imperial officials, based locally, to deal with the measurement and approval of the lead being mined and smelted. Equally, not all the lead produced was despatched to the imperial government, although lead production was officially an imperial monopoly. The presence of one or more lead mining contractors (associates or partners) argues for a reasonably successful and profitable industry that was not sending its entire production to Rome, but to other markets as well, which would account for the finds of Lutudarum ingots in other areas of Britain, in addition to the general concentration of "Lut" ingot finds in the south east of the Derbyshire orefield and at Brough on Humber, the Roman port of Peturia.



Roman lead pig fund at Brough on Humber in 1940

Carrying the same inscription as the one from Cave's Inn, Warwickshire

SOC LVT BRIT EX ARG

(Property of the) Company at Lutudarum British Lead without silver

In all the research which has been done in many years about the civic organisation of Roman Britain, it has always been known that there were 28 civitates, or administrative districts, though no scholar has yet succeeded in identifying all of them with complete certainty. In the case of this district, if any other town or fortress were the civitas district capital then the pigs of lead would tell us. They would not say "Lut", they would say "Nav" (Navio - Brough on Noe), or "Rat" (Ratae Corieltavinum - Leicester), but they do not, they say Lut - Lutudarum. If we are content that Lutudarum represents both the town and its district, then Lutudarum is the governing city of the Lutudarenses, which means that those lead pigs inscribed as from the "Lutudarensian Partners" are not simply referring to a company of associates or some vague lead mining district, they are correctly referring to a company of associates in the civitas district of the Lutudarenses. In short, Lutudarum would have provided a market, administration of the local lead industry, and both local and ecclesiastical government for its district. This also means that certain other pieces fall into place. The extensive research carried out by the Barwick-in-Elmet Historical Society (Cox, 2005) which had concluded that the southern boundary of Elmet was the River Sheaf, not the Trent, left a puzzling gap between the Elmetiaco and the Corieltavi: The missing district is that of civitate of Lutudarum (see map on page 19). Apart from a few writers, who have (correctly)

regarded the Peak as not being part of Brigantia (see Simpson, 1964), there has been a persistent view that the Lutudarenses were in some way part of the Brigantes, but the lead pigs also enlighten us to this. Those lead pigs found in the territoria of the Brigantes also bear some inscriptions, such as that from Pately Bridge in Yorkshire (CIL record 1207, 2006) which says it is Brigantian lead. None of the lead pigs found in the Peak say this, they are commonly inscribed "Lut" for Lutudarum, not "Brig" for Brigantia. Indeed it is typical of lead pigs to indicate their district (city state) of origin, for example, those from Flintshire are inscribed "Dec" for Deceangli (Ireland, 2008).

Location

So, being certain enough that Lutudarum genuinely was a town and its chief role was the business of lead mining and the administration of its district, this brings us to the very thorny question of its location. Above all, it has to be within the area in which lead is being mined in the Roman period, otherwise there is no attributable significance to the lead ingot inscriptions or the pattern of finds. The Peak District orefield stretches from Castleton in the north to just below Alstonefield in the south. Lead veins are commonest around Castleton, also east of Tideswell, west of Bakewell and north of Wirksworth. From this information, we can immediately dismiss a number of the possible candidates for Lutudarum, as being beyond the main orefield. Transport in Roman times was slow and expensive (packhorses on the roads and boats on the rivers) and lead is very, very heavy, thus there would be nothing to be gained by transporting it long distances to be assessed, measured or taxed.

The locations to be immediately dismissed as unsuitable because of their distance from the main orefield are Chesterfield and Ashbourne. Both towns are also ruled out by their own local historians. In the case of Chesterfield, Bestall's view (1974) was that Lutudarum should be sought around Matlock or Wirksworth. But we can rule out Matlock as also being relatively inconvenient in transport terms and too late in terms of the known origins of the town (Naylor, 2003), though there was a Mercian royal estate around Matlock, which was associated with those at Wirksworth, Ashbourne, Parwich and Darley. Crich similarly can be ruled out, for much the same reason, and it is too far from the main orefield, although there is some lead locally. Its claim rested on there being lead smelting recorded in Domesday (Bunting, 1998) and that Roman coins were found on Crich Hill (Davis, 2003). However, Roman coins are evidence of Romans, not of Roman lead mining, and in due course, Davis, in his definitive work on the history of Crich, makes no claim for it to be Lutudarum, nor can it be. Rainster Rocks was considered by Dennis (1971) but although it is in the right kind of geographical location in terms of the orefield, the known archaeology is, according to Dennis, of 'too native an origin' and too small for what should have some Roman context or hinterland.

Within the orefield, Middleton by Wirksworth provides little except for the inevitable pig of lead or two. Although mentioned in Domesday (as are all most of the other places discussed here) it shows no signs of any historic importance, except that local tradition (Dodd, 2000) recalls Middleton's existence as the place where Roman convicts resided as a labour force for the lead mines. (A similar tradition exists in relation to convicts at Bradwell kept by the locals of Brough, where a Roman fortress existed). We may simply not have found enough evidence at Middleton, but the basis for it being Lutudarum is

unpromising and tradition points to Wirksworth as the supervising centre (Hackett, 1863). However, if Middleton were the residence of convicts used to mine lead, we may not be able to find substantial building remains, there being a view that the convict 'town' might resemble something more like a current Brazilian shanty town, with convicts scraping a living from mining and being accommodated in assorted shacks. On the other hand, we are dealing with Romans here, not Brazilians, and it is possible that we should be looking for a barracks block.

In many modern texts and journal articles, and in the National Monuments Record, Carsington is confidently stated as being Lutudarum. This is not so, the key reason being that Carsington has no pre-conquest church (an issue to be discussed below) and is described, accurately, in Domesday, as being an "outlier" of Wirksworth. Carsington benefited greatly from much archaeological work associated with the construction of Carsington Water reservoir; as such it received more archaeological attention than many other parts of the county. This naturally gave rise to many interesting finds, amongst them a number of pigs of lead, and evidence of fourth century mining activity from a deep pit containing lead scrap, galena (lead ore), ash and daub (Branigan, 1986); and in addition the nearest thing to a villa so far found in Derbyshire (Ling, 1981; Ling, 1990; Dearne, 1995), upon which some have speculated that this might have been the administrative location of the Procurator Metallorum. But let us be clear, this 'nearest thing to a villa' is, in practice, a building with five rooms, only one of which had rudimentary heating, together with an added-on bath house and a few sheds. Lullingstone it is not. It's a farmhouse, and in fairness it is an improvement on the circular huts thought to be common in the area at this period, and on the small Romano-British farm identified at City Foulds, north of Wirksworth (Greenhough, 1991). Finds in the area have included galena, and lead scrap as well as a selection of knives, agricultural and other tools, lead spindle whorls and the occasional ornamental phallus; phalluses being popular in this period, as they are in many places today.

These finds give proof to the understanding of there being widespread settlement at Carsington not only in the Roman period but afterwards. Lomas in 1960 reported on a Romano-British site at Owslow and place name evidence supports this. Griff Grange was historically known as Britte Griffe: "Farm of the Britons" (Cameron, 1959). Therefore we can see good evidence of Roman and post Roman settlement and activity at Carsington. The area south of Carsington and Wirksworth is also much settled in the period, between there and Derby considerable evidence of Romano-British pottery making ("Derbyware") has been found at Hazlewood and Shottle. However, "extensive settlement" is just that, it is not "an extensive settlement". Thus far Carsington has been the focus of considerable archaeological activity and exploration, but all this work, crucially, has not found a town or a pre-conquest church (St Margaret's at Carsington is twelfth century and Domesday of 1086 records no church at Carsington). This view is supported by Barnatt and Smith (2004) who, describing the Carsington excavations also note that the site (as Lutudarum) is unproven and that other locations should be considered in the Wirksworth and Matlock areas. Matlock we have already eliminated. Indeed, Naylor (2003) in his history of the Matlocks, says it may be Wirksworth or Carsington, but not Matlock.

Finally then, this brings us to Wirksworth, and to a predictable problem. If Wirksworth is Roman Lutudarum, where are the Roman remains? The issue of the lack of physical evidence is, at first glance, intractable. In some ways it is more difficult than any of the other locations whose claims we have so readily dismissed. This is because, if Lutudarum exists, it is buried under modern Wirksworth. However, to regard Wirksworth as in any way modern, except perhaps in the outlook of its inhabitants, is to commit a grave error. The town creaks under the antiquity of its buildings, its pedestrian layout, and its mining heritage. Until recently, Wirksworth appeared to be a grim, dusty little quarrying town. A moment's examination of the Derbyshire Archaeological Journal on the subject of Wirksworth indicate that between 1929 and 2009, only twice has any mentionable archaeological interest been shown in the town and both were considerations of the iconography of the "Wirksworth Stone". The other part of this problem has been inadequate recording and analysis of those finds which are known.

There are several reasons why this has happened. First, the amount of professional archaeological effort which has been expended on Wirksworth could be recorded on a postage stamp, the town has hardly attracted the attention of archaeologists and barely registered on the horizons of historians. Only Hilary Dennis is known to have dug a small area within the town precincts, which resulted in some modern pottery finds and a sceatta coin (found by a passing metal detectorist, not the archaeologists), before apparently running out of time to complete the dig. (Editorial, 1986). Eyewitnesses to that dig, for which no report was ever made, note that it got to little over a metre in depth. The pottery in Derby Museum from the dig does not even include the late mediaeval.

For over a century, the town could best be described as grim, dust covered, and overwhelmed by quarrying. It lacked the romance by which other cities and towns of less history but prettier walls behaved themselves to the scholarly. We know all about the Corieltauvi, by comparison, so too about the Elmetiaci and the Lindenses, but the Lutudarenses are almost invisible, only a few pigs of lead have spoken for them down the years. Nevertheless, coins and pottery have been found, there is extensive place name evidence and the great antiquity of the church is central to the issue.

Archaeological work in conjunction with the historical research presented here has been on-going since 2006 and is presented in a series of reports by the Wirksworth Roman Project culminating in a summary of the effort in an associated report "Issues in the archaeology of Wirksworth".

Place names

"Lutudarum" is variously considered to mean "Muddy River" (Rivet and Smith, 1981) or "Lead Water", or possibly "Cindery Oakwood" (Breeze, 2002), but these are essentially unhelpful, as the geographical or physical features to which they refer could be in any number of locations, though Rivet and Smith interestingly state that "a site near Wirksworth seems to be indicated". In terms of the place name, Wirksworth was considered to mean "Weorc's enclosure" (Weorchesuorde): Weorc apparently being a "common" Saxon name. However, this derivation originates in a statement by Stenton (1940) which is repeated by Cameron (1959), who also recorded but dismissed an alternative and earlier proposal by Anderson (1934) that the derivation actually meant "Fortified enclosure".

Modern academics regard the assumption of personal names as being unlikely for those place-names originating before 900 (Stafford, 1985) and regard place names prior to 900 as tending to be the result of references to geographical or physical features. It is therefore necessary to note the Weorchesuorde name appears in a charter of 835 and to observe therefore that Anderson's suggested derivation should possibly be given greater credence.

Importantly, Wirksworth is at the head of the Ecclesbourne Valley. Eccles means church (very old church, that is, a Roman or British church) and Bourne means stream or river (Stafford, 1985 and Brotherton, 2005). So, we have a very old church somewhere in the valley. How old and where? That's easy, the oldest church in the valley, by a very long way indeed, is St Mary's in its quiet precinct in Wirksworth, near the point at which the river rises. Thus the Eccles place name evidence suggests a place of significant antiquity, the name being early, and identifying a feature, the church, that was there at the time and remains there to this day.



Wirksworth looking westwards from Stoney Hill Lane, Bolehill

There are a number of other interesting place name survivals in the immediate area, we have noted Owslow and Britte Griffe already. In Wirksworth there were other hybrid British-Saxon name survivals

(linguistically speaking Celtic-English), including Bannokhill and Brefeld (this latter now corrupted to Breamfield) as field names, together with Barrel Edge, which is a compound of the Celtic "Barr" and the English "Hill": Barrhill>Barrel>Barrel Edge. This is unusual; there are counties in the south east of England where there are no more such survivals in the whole county as there are in this little area of Derbyshire. These names, and most significantly the "Eccles" of Ecclesbourne can only have been transmitted to the incoming Saxons by the existing British population. No Saxon called his own church "Eccles". Indeed these place name hybrids suggest that a sufficient British population survived for enough time to become integrated in the Mercian period and see a few of its placenames survive rather than be completely lost, as happened elsewhere. Later, the Mercians had become sufficiently well established to hold an estate around Derby (Northworthy) and a further place name "Cumberhills" (Hills of the foreigners – if you were a Saxon, the foreigners would be the British of Lutudarum) sits noticeably between the northern edge of Derby and the southern edge of the Ecclesbourne Valley. Roffe's map (1986) of the Northworthy estate shows it going no further north than Quarndon, immediately at the southern edge of the Cumberhills area.

Continuity of government

It is rather common for historians, when considering the period between 400 and 650, to take the view that the invasion of Britain by the Saxons and others resulted in widespread destruction and the consequent loss of continuity between the old and new inhabitants. However, it is a point of some error. It may be correct that there was a loss of continuity south of the Trent as the possession of the former lands of the Corieltauvi by the invaders came relatively early, but it is entirely untrue north of the Trent, where the vestiges of late Romano-British rule survived for two more centuries after southern Britain had fallen to the Saxons. Equally important in looking at the progress of "Saxon" dominance in general is an understanding of the role played by the early Mercians. It is this understanding which informs our judgement of the impact of the Mercians on the area north of the Trent. The early Mercians were allies of the British and did much to contain the more aggressive Northumbrians.

To illustrate the issue of continuity, one of the questions that we might ask if there is to be any consideration of continuity is when did Roman (and post-Roman British) government cease and Mercian government begin, and does this represent an actual break? This is a complicated question to answer, because the written record is slight, fragmented and confusing. However, let us take the often given (and much argued over) "rule of thumb" for Roman withdrawal of 410. What actually happened was that parts of the Roman army were withdrawn from Britain and other provinces to defend Rome: which they failed to do, were annihilated and Rome fell (several times, it might be said). Britain then gets invaded by the Saxons and others, and a long slow war of attrition begins. So slow, that the "Saxons" apparently only reach the south bank of the River Trent by about 600. Indeed it is questionable whether the "Saxons", in this case the Mercians, are an "invading force" - it is entirely possible that the Mercians were originally Roman federates and their role was to defend the Trent Valley and they had been settled there at the initiation of the Romano-British. The Mercians do not make any attempt to take the area north of the Trent while the British still prevail: There are few Mercian cemeteries north

of the Trent dated before 600 (Morris, 1995) and these are in areas apparently away from the areas still inhabited (and ruled at that time) by the British, especially those with "Eccles" place names (Barnatt and Smith, 1997) of which Wirksworth, at the head of the Ecclesbourne Valley, is an example.

The sequence of dating of events in and outside the borders of the Peak therefore deserves attention, as it helps enlighten us to the state of its independence. In 616 the Northumbrians had taken Chester and annexed Elmet, the Peak, Heathfield and probably Lindsey which gave them control of the north, but this had not completely destroyed British power. In 633, the last effective British king, Cadwallon, went with his ally, Penda of the Mercians, and broke the Northumbrians, as Morris reports (1995). So, the British were still able to subdue the Northumbrians and it was done with Mercian help, and with the Mercians as subordinates, because it was Cadwallon who ruled, briefly. A year later this had all been lost, the Northumbrians had regained the supremacy and the British were never able to assert themselves again. It was 634, and it was left to Penda and the Mercians to attempt to expel the Northumbrians, which he did for another 20 years until he himself was killed fighting them in 655.

We must note that the Mercians were not attempting to destroy the British (even if the Northumbrians were), they had been allies, and no Mercian king had, in the early years of the kingdom, made war upon the British, indeed it is possible that the Mercians were sufficiently integrated into what had remained of British political structure and thought by intermarriage or treaty and that they regarded themselves as its proper descendants and guardians: this explanation enables us to understand why the former British states on the borders of Mercia from the Hwicce in the west to the Peak in the north were nominally independent for so long afterwards: they were supposed to be, and this state of affairs shows itself in the Tribal Hidage of 661. Tributaries they may have been, part of Greater Mercia they were not, until much later. At this early stage, there may have been little imposition of Mercian authority or control of the Peak, except a requirement to pay tribute and an obligation of military support. One of the curiosities of this modest imposition, is that the change from Romano-British culture to Anglo-Saxon culture in the Peak is not because the Mercians impose a new aristocracy, but because the existing British aristocracy saw the writing on the wall and gradually adopted the new culture in order to safeguard their position (Loveluck, 1995) and we must remember that "Government" in this period is essentially about the interaction of important families.

Mercia eventually prevailed, partly due to internecine strife amongst the Northumbrian nobility and kings. Wirksworth was one of the royal estates of the Mercians, even though, for a brief period, it was the Northumbrians who had been dominant. By the 680s it was firmly in the Mercian sphere, as the power of the Mercian kingdom had endured, while that of Northumbria had drained away in civil wars (Morris, 1995). Over two centuries of Mercian stability remained before the Vikings began to raid seriously in the late 870s.

The nature of the Pecsæte or Province of the Peak is one which, if anything, has been more difficult to understand, due to lack of research, than even its fellow districts of Elmet or of Lindsey, but various writers, such as Brotherton (2005) and Higham (1993), suggest that the district of the Roman Lutudarenses clearly corresponds to that of the Mercian Pecsæte. This being the case, it would be

reasonable to regard the "continuity" of government as: Romano-British *civitas* of Lutudarenses; Mercian district of the Pecsæte; thereafter, the various Hundreds or Wapentakes which comprised the Province were hived off to create the later shire counties with only the central ones being retained for "Derbyshire". A map of the reconstructed territory of the Pecsæte which this represents can be found in Higham (1993). Higham also notes that, as reconstructed, this territory is sufficiently cohesive that it contains all the known pagan graves of the Pecsæte.

Continuity of Christianity

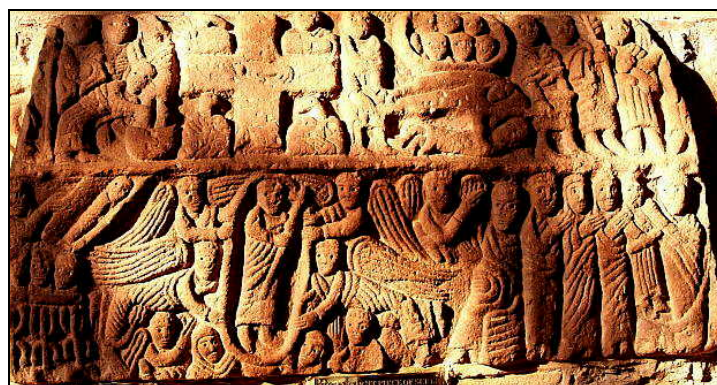
It must be noted that the late Romans and the Romano-British were Christian: remember the Ecclesbourne place name? For a church to exist, there had to be enough money to build it and maintain it and there had to be a congregation to use it. You don't build churches in the middle of nowhere, even though we have a tendency to regard late Roman church building as some kind of 'rural' activity, even that the Christian population worshipped in fields: this does not represent the true picture, churches were in urban areas and specific to the *civitas* capitals. In the Peak, where agriculture is poor and the population spread thinly, the church must be in a town, and one that has a sufficient source of income, such as from lead mining: having enough wealthy Christians in and near it (note the Benty Grange Helmet) to warrant, build and maintain a church. Even accepting the dubious argument that "Eccles" might represent a congregation not a building, the supposition of a town can still hold. The presence of one of the earliest and richest Minster Churches in Mercia (Turbutt, 1999) in this case, its Province of the Pecsæte, can only be because Wirksworth was an important administrative centre, a royal estate, a major source of revenue, and which had a long Christian heritage capable of surviving the decline of Roman rule and the ascendancy of the Mercians.

Let us also bear in mind, in the general matter of continuity of Christianity, Lyttelton-Gell in 1916 had first felt that continuity of Christianity was predictable in Wirksworth from the Roman period onwards, but lacked the convincing case later made by Bassett (1992) about the continuance of Christian church activities in the West Midlands in general, with its implications for the Peak. Bassett laid out the case for the smooth transfer of church authority from the British bishops in the West Midland part of early Mercia to the Mercian bishops and the continuance of the precedence of the former British churches in their original parishes, which he equated, significantly, to the late Roman *civitates*. If this was so there, why should that same transfer of ecclesiastical responsibility and authority not be the case in the Pecsæte? Bassett also noted, from his studies of Worcester, Gloucester and other towns, that even where British administration of a *civitate* had failed and the town declined, the ecclesiastical authority did not fail. Indeed, St Mary's in Wirksworth can only be the mother church of the Pecsæte. Its antiquity and the topographical evidence of the size of its original parish match anything Bassett has found elsewhere. Bonsall, Carsington, Kirk Ireton and Matlock were all apparently parochial chapelries dependent on Wirksworth (Stroud, 2001). Alderwasley was also a parochial chapelry of Wirksworth. Separately, it is known that tithes in Shottle, which included Postern and Windley, were not paid to Duffield, but originally went to Wirksworth, which also implies that Duffield parish, which included Belper and Heage, might also originally have been subservient to Wirksworth. The extent of the original Minster church parish (the "*parochiae*") was discussed by Turbutt (1999) who regarded the *parochiae*

of Wirksworth as certainly including Bonsall; Carsington; Kirk Ireton; Alderwasley; Cromford; Ible; Ivonbrook Grange; Hopton; Biggin; Idridgehay; Alton; Middleton by Wirksworth; Callow; Ashleyhay and possibly Darley; Farley, Cotes, Burley, Wensley; Snitterton; Matlock and Tansley.

If Wirksworth's Minster church originally had a bishop (or abbot, as a monastic type of church) there is now no record. It must be remembered that each Romano-British civitate originally possessed a bishop (Morris, 1995), but the lack of a record of this is not surprising – the chief authority for early ecclesiastical history is Bede, and Bede was disdainful of the work of the British church, in consequence he is invariably silent about it, except occasionally to abuse it. The gap Bassett (1992) argues, which this leaves is almost as instructive as anything Bede actually says. In the case of the conversion of the Mercians, it has been speculated that Peada, returning from Northumberland with four priests in 653, may have despatched one of them (Bette, who does not appear again in the historical record) to the Pecsæte. This is probably not so. The Pecsæte were already Christian, had their own long established churchmen, and had no need for Bette to preach to them, but the Mercians, pagans all, certainly had.

There is also the Wirksworth Stone. In 1820, during building work, a stone grave vault topped with an upside-down but close-fitting lid was found half a metre under the pavement in front of the altar, covering a large skeleton (Cox, 1916). The location close to the altar suggests a person of holy status. The Stone, still in the church, is an extremely rare and fine example of early religious funerary sculpture. Whatever its date, it is Wirksworth's greatest treasure. Cockerton (1962) considered that the Stone dated from between 653 and 692, (having no way of knowing at the time that the church was earlier than 653); Kendrick (1938) had taken the view that its date was before 800; Cramp (1977), thought that it could be associated with the "Bakewell School" of Mercian sculpture of about 820. Sidebottom (1999) associated it with the region's stone crosses of 920. The Wirksworth Stone has been very extensively studied and a useful and comprehensive summary can be found in Rollason (1996), however the repeated wish to compare it with the town crosses represents an analytical failure: the town crosses are not funerary monuments in the way that the Stone is.



The Wirksworth Stone

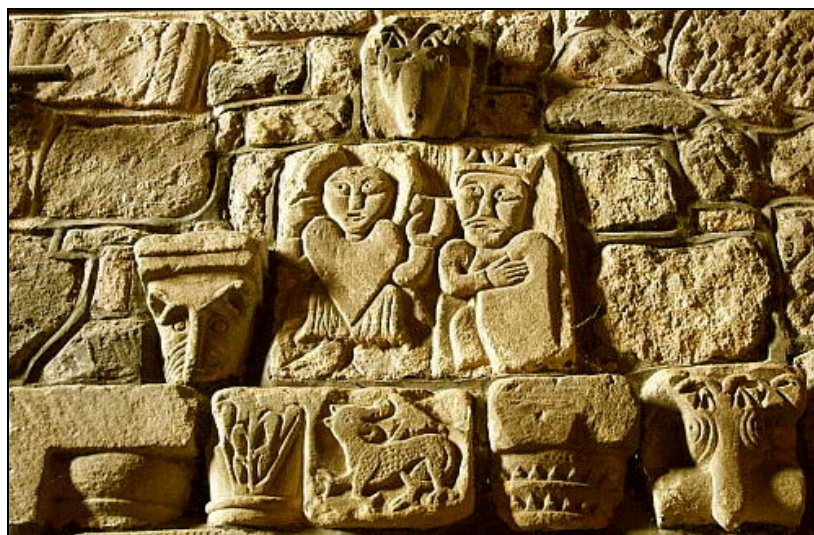
This is a coped stone reliquary lid (sarcophagus lid) from a grave vault tomb buried beneath the altar of St Mary's church, Wirksworth.

It may date from 636 and is likely to be the reliquary lid of a person of holy or saintly status.

In short, we are not presently able to satisfactorily identify the date or the person whose sarcophagus lid this was (note the question of the early bishops or abbots of Wirksworth), however, nothing would

be lost by spending less time comparing it with the "Mercian" sculpture of the Peak and more time possibly comparing it with any comparable known funerary material from other civitas churches, particularly those of the north.

Kurth in 1945 had concluded, of the iconography of the Wirksworth Stone, that: "On the whole, the analogies are so numerous that the slab might well be considered as a late legacy of Roman Britain and a remote descendant of early Christian art." The church at Wirksworth has many other fragments of sculpture built into the church walls. Walker (2000) describes these many remarkable fragments as being "able to stand comparison with any in Mercia".



Fragments of sculpture and column capitals built into the wall of St Mary's church

The "Eccles" place name and the survival of the ceremony of church clypping (from "yclepping", meaning "to embrace", which has lived down the years only in Wirksworth and at Painswick in the Cotswolds), argue for its early beginning, as does the Stone and fragments of sculpture found built into the church walls. This is an early church, how early is (as ever) obscure, but of earlier and greater importance than many, not even excepting Repton or Bakewell. All the civitas churches are difficult to date, but the years between 350 and 400 are their mostly likely foundation, this is because Christianity became the Roman state religion with the accession of the Emperor Constantine in 312, and by 359 we know that a large number of bishops, including 'the British Bishops' attended a conference in Rimini, though it was noted, with some candour, that the British Bishops were rather poor. From historical sources we know that the churches of St Alban in St Albans and St Martin in Canterbury had been founded before 390, and by 400 the whole population of the western empire was considered Christian (Morris, 1995). The British Bishops appear again in 597 when they are recorded as meeting the overbearing Augustine, then appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, who promptly alienated them (Bassett, 1992). One cannot pick a date out of thin air for the foundation of St Mary's in Wirksworth, for we have no specific sources; yet Wirksworth was the civitas capital - the key city of the city-state of the Lutudarenses - it was wealthy from lead revenues and although its first church may be thought (for lack of other evidence) to be small and wooden, thus leaving no archaeological footprint, it is perhaps possible that it existed in the years before 400. It was certainly in existence by the early 600s and still being used as a sacred Christian place when the British population and aristocracy, recognising their

increasing isolation, were beginning to use the Saxon language to rename things. It is likely that its own bishops continued to serve it until 679 when, at last, Archbishop Theodore had enough educated Saxons to appoint them to the reformed sees of the midlands and the north, and it is at this point that it may have been absorbed into the See of the Mercians at Lichfield, though such a change is unrecorded.

Continuity of industry.

Lead production is a very ancient practice which has been carried on in many parts of Britain including the Mendips (Somerset), Flintshire, Yorkshire and Derbyshire since pre-Roman times. Lead was extracted by following a lead vein with bell pits, many of which were found locally when the new road along Porter Lane was constructed in connection with the reservoir at Carsington. Lead was also extracted alluvially, that is, dug out of riverbeds, and through open cast mining. The Roman miners used bronze picks, which leave characteristic marks and one such open cast mine with these marks has been found at Godfrey Hole, at Wirksworth, by historian Tony Holmes (pers comm); the difficulty, though, is that such picks continued to be used down to the twelfth century, so dating proof is difficult without having found coinage or other datable evidence. Lead production would have continued after the Roman army was withdrawn and the imperial government in Rome disrupted. There is no reason to suppose it should not: there are many uses for lead and we have said there is continuity of (British) government until at least 613. Lutudarum would still be there, its miners (who might also be farming as well) producing lead, its townspeople going to market, its government taking the revenues from lead production which might formerly have gone to Rome (Welch, 2001) and continuing to export it to other parts of Britain and elsewhere. Dark (1998) takes a view that industrial production may not have continued on the mass scale it had achieved during the Roman period, but that industry did continue on a lesser scale in all manner of activities from pottery to tin mining; so much so, in the latter case, that merchants from Byzantium are recorded as visiting Britain to trade for tin throughout this period. If this is true of pottery and tin mining, there is no reason to suppose it is any less true of lead mining.



Roman lead tank from Icklingham church cemetery. Derby Racecourse Roman green lead glazed jug

Lead was not only used for obvious things like plumbing, roofing and small tools and artefacts (e.g. spindle whorls), it was also used for the production of pewter (Branigan, 1991), and, significantly, in the Roman period (and also the Saxon period), for salt and brine boiling pans (Philpott, 2004) (Walker,

2000), baptismal tanks (many of which have been found: OS map, 1997) and for coffins (Salway, 1997). One of the frequent difficulties expressed by historians of the lead industry is the inability to find evidence of lead mining activity by way of tools and so on, but this approach, which might be called "supply side" evidence, repeatedly overlooks the presence of "demand side" evidence – we have boiling pans, we have baptismal tanks, we have all manner of lead artefacts from the late Roman and early Saxon periods: that these things exist and have been found in dated contexts is evidence of the activity going on, even if we have not yet found a lead mine with a dead Roman holding a pick on one side and a dead Saxon holding a kibble on the other. Indeed, the history of the church of Durham notes that Abbott Eadberht, Bishop of the Northumbrians, rebuilt the church at Lindisfarne with a roof entirely covered in lead in 688, though its source is not recorded. However, source is reasonably evidenced in 714 when Abbess Ecgburh (Colgrave, 1956) is recorded as sending a coffin of lead for the burial of St Guthlac of Crowland Abbey. This can only have been done from her estates: the only ones in Mercia having lead being those at Wirksworth. Indeed Wirksworth appears again, specifically this time, named in a charter of 835 when Abbess Cynewaru leased land at Wirksworth to Duke Hunberht in which a render of lead was sent to Canterbury Cathedral (Birch, 1885) (Cox, 1916).



"Towd Man" A stone carving of a lead miner from Bonsall, now built into the South transept wall of St Mary's Wirksworth, possible dating to the 13th century.

Thus, Wirksworth has a written record much earlier than many towns whose recorded history only begins with Domesday in 1086, and any "gap" in the historical record of industrial activity in lead mining can be no such thing. Even if all the anecdotal evidence of finds of, say, Romano-British lead mining tools are dismissed, as well as dismissing the clear demand side evidence, support for the continuance of the lead mining industry from the Roman to the Saxon period is still gained from the interpretation of the grave goods found in the Derbyshire barrow burials of the mid seventh century: Loveluck (1995) noted that the wealth associated with these goods could not have been generated from revenues from the poor agriculture of the district alone (only the Ecclesbourne Valley itself is pastoral and verdant, much of the rest is desperate upland), revenues from the lead mining industry must have supported the wealth of the local aristocracy, accounting for the quality and diversity of grave goods found. In addition, Loveluck observed that the expansion in the construction of monastic and ecclesiastical buildings between 650 and 700, co-incided with a high point in the richness of the barrow burials of the Peak, and that at that time, the Peak was the chief lead supplying region of the country.

Communications, rivers and roads.

The River Derwent

We have said that the key economic activity in the district of Lutudarum was lead mining. We have also noted that, in the days of the highest form of transport being a horse, lead was very difficult to move because of its weight. If some of the lead produced was being sent to the imperial government in Rome then Lutudarum must have had the road or river network to despatch it. (A network to collect it would not be required as the small amounts of ore being produced from various mines would be transported by horse or mule along pack horse tracks). To be despatched to Rome, lead from Lutudarum must have reached a point where it could be sent easily by ship. Some have considered (Lane, 1976) that it might have been possible that the Derwent was navigable as far north as Cromford, and this may be the case. It had been thought that the Derwent was not navigable (Priestley, 1831), but the discovery in the translations of the mediaeval Cartulary of Darley Abbey (Darlington, 1945) that the monks of Darley Abbey were licensed to carry wood by water through the Forest of Duffield Frith (meaning by the Derwent) possibly implies navigability in the sense of being able to punt items down river, as opposed to sailing. In addition, there is a cluster of Roman period finds, such as coins and lead pigs, at Cromford, noted in the Sites and Monuments Record and by Dennis (1971) which suggests a possible concentration of Roman activity there. Such activity may, taken with the navigability issue, possibly suggest a river wharf at Cromford. This may prove significant, not only in terms of the movement of lead pigs to the port of Peturia (Brough on Humber) by river, for trans-shipment there, but may also help solve the transport problem raised by the presence of Hopton Wood stone (similar to marble, quarried north west of Wirksworth) found in the baths at Godmanchester in Cambridgeshire (Green, 1960), however, in the absence of both archaeological and greater documentary evidence, it is necessary to be circumspect about the navigability of the Derwent in Roman times, and the balance of probability is that it was not navigable as high as Cromford in any meaningful way and that the transport of goods was indeed by road, as was the case when the trade was eventually documented in the Stuart period (Slack, 2000).

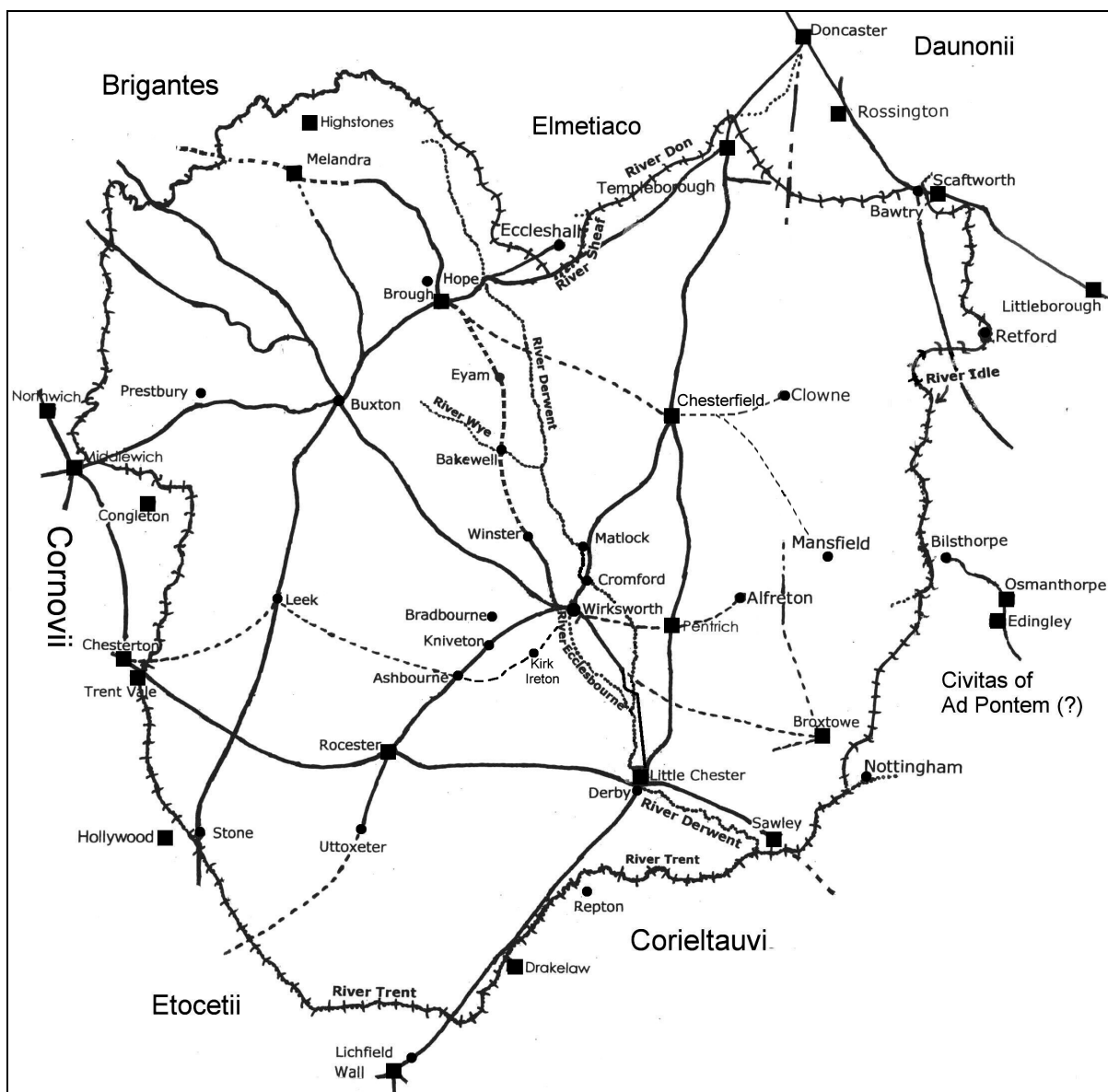
The Roman road network

Chesterfield to Wirksworth and Rocester

In his discussion of the "lost" town of Lutudarum, Branigan (1985) felt that the Ravenna list was based on a known road itinerary of the Roman period and that the failure to find Lutudarum was partly due to the failure to find the road on which it lay. Dennis (1971) felt that a route from Chesterfield to Rocester via Old Matlock, Starkholmes, Cromford and Old Lane to Wirksworth, then Hopton, Carsington, Wall Lands, Hognaston Winn, Kniveton and Ashbourne, but mistakenly named Hereward Street, (Henstock, 1980), would render the itinerary of the Ravenna Cosmography correct. That the Chesterfield and Rocester Road is significant can also be considered from the tendency of lead pigs to be found near it, and the Derbyshire finds of ingots listed in Turbutt, (plus two unlisted finds at Ashbourne), bracket this road very firmly: Matlock Bank finds; Cromford finds; Wirksworth and Middleton finds; Carsington finds and Ashbourne finds, all follow the route.

Hope to Wirksworth and Broxtowe

AE&EM Dodd (2000) wrote extensively about the (Saxon period) Portways and their research found the occurrence of "portway" references in place names in the district to be very prevalent, and also found various remains in terms of boundaries and later guide stones to be common. AE&EM Dodd felt that the main Portway in the district ran from Hope, Brough, Ashford, Bakewell and Winster to Wirksworth, and then possibly via the Gilkin and Street's Rough to Broxtowe and Nottingham on the one hand, and via the Gilkin and the Chevin to Little Chester and Derby on the other. In all, AE&EM Dodd took the view that five portways converged on Wirksworth, more than any other town in the district. As there is almost no new road building after the Roman period, the term Portway may be inferred in some cases as indicating a route which may have been based on a former Roman road. Wroe (1982) observed that little work that had been done on the Hope to Wirksworth (Roman) road. However, he did a little work south of Brough, and found it to be of above average width, suggesting a road of greater importance than many of those better known in the district.



Communications and borders of the Civitas of the Lutudarenses

Not to scale. Known Roman roads – continuous lines; Conjectured Roman roads – dashed lines
 Known Roman forts – square boxes; Other settlements (some for map location) dots.

The nature of the reporting by the Dodds of their work, in their book, (primarily a guide book), has, however, obscured some of its clarity, the manner in which the route between Brough and Wirksworth was described as "the most important portway in the district" obscured the Dodd's comment that the portway was ancient and had been used by the Romans. A road used by the Romans is, well, a Roman road, or to speak plainly, if we consider it the Brough and Wirksworth Roman road, this assists our clarity better than calling it a Portway, no matter how important a portway, because our purpose is to find Lutudarum, and its road network. Given this road linked the major settlements through the Peak from Brough southwards to Wirksworth, it should probably be considered as important as The Street, yet, in the context of its Roman role, it is invariably ignored. Even Wroe, notwithstanding what he had said of its width, (and thus the importance he attached to it), traced it only as far south as Ashford. The nature of road communications around Bakewell in antiquity therefore deserve attention, it is extremely improbable that Edward the Elder should have built a burg there in 920 if Bakewell had inadequate communications.

Buxton to Wirksworth

Wroe made a number of observations about the Roman road network of the Peak, most importantly noting the loss of many of the (conjectured) road courses being due to culvert failure, erosion, diversion, and peat or woodland build up. However, the presumed "loss" of much of The Street (the supposed Buxton to Little Chester Roman road) south of Brassington was not due to these reasons, but was due to persistently looking in the wrong place. The course of The Street was finally confirmed in a wide-ranging and comprehensive report (Shone and Smart, 2008) which identifies it as the Buxton to Wirksworth Roman road: Buxton Market Place, Brierlow Bar, Street Farm at Pomeroy, Bull i' th' Thorn at Hurdlow, End Moor, Middle Street Farm, Benty Grange, Oldhams at Friden, Smerrill Barn, Pike Hall, Minninglow, Straight Knolls at Longcliffe, Peak Quarry Farm, Roundlow Farm, Bee Nest, Brassington Lane, High Street at Enniscloud Meadow Farm, Gallows Knoll, Broxendale, The Dale and Wirksworth Market Place.



The Street: The Wirksworth to Buxton Roman road:
Brassington Lane at Gallows Knoll, Wirksworth, looking westwards

Wirksworth to Duffield and Little Chester

The roads which run south from Wirksworth have been possibly the least researched of any in the Peak. The road thought to run south via Shottle and Blackbrook and then towards Little Chester by Kay (1962), was considered to be Roman, because it was relatively straight in character. However, recent re-assessment by the Wirksworth Roman Project has questioned this conjectured route by the process of the mapping of archaeological finds south east of the town and around the potteries of the Ecclesbourne Valley: at Alport, Shottle Hall, and notably at Lumb Brook at Hazlewood, where a lead smelting hearth was also found, together with roof tiles and two balustrade columns: suggesting a substantial building, possible even a significant villa nearby, has yet to be found (Brassington, 1988). A substantial Roman building is also known in the grounds of Duffield Castle, identified in a magnetometry survey by Bradford University. The mapping of these finds and many others, together with the assessment of remains such as the ford and causeway at Wirksford, indicated that the actual course of the road between Wirksworth and Little Chester to be the ridge-way route: Wirksworth, Wirksford, Broadgate, Alport Triplegate, Coneygreave Hillock, Crowtrees Farm, Knaves Cross (Wilderbrook Lane end), Longwalls Lane (with its substantial road remains and quernstone quarrying site at Starbuck House: Palfreyman, 2007), Farnah Green, Milford (crossing the Derwent), Save Penny Lane, Duffield Bank House, Peckwash Mill, Alfreton Road (south of New Inn Lane) and to Little Chester. A ridge-way route of this kind makes eminent sense in terms of being a dry and defensible link between the two locations.

Roads requiring further investigation

There are a number of roads around Wirksworth which require further investigation in addition to the major task of the Chesterfield – Wirksworth – Rocester road. What might be called a low level route appears to run from Wirksworth to Ashbourne via Miller’s Green, Wapentake Lane, Kirk Ireton, Blackwall and Bradley. In addition there are two other suspected local Roman roads. The first is Summer Lane, which appears to run from Wirksworth to Stainsborough and is referred to as the “Roman Old Road” in old mining maps. The second is the Stonebridge Road, which runs from Stonebridge to Hardhurst Farm where there is a well preserved section of it.



Part of the Stonebridge road looking north towards Hardhurst Farm and a section showing the construction lying just below the modern surface

This road may join the low level Ashbourne route at the Stonebridge end to the Ridge-way route at Hardhurst Farm, and may even represent a connection through Breamfield Farm to the road from Wirksworth to Whatstandwell Bridge via Longway Bank, which is by far the oldest of the three roads which converge on the west bank of the Derwent at Whatstandwell, the others being the Matlock-Belper turnpike (now the A6) and New Road which comes down from Alderwasley.

Trade and commerce.

Although strictly beyond the terms of this study, it must be observed that the tendency of scholars to frame their work within modern county boundaries may result in some failure to consider communication, trade and other issues in a wider context (in our case, particularly bearing in mind that the civitas district does not correspond to the modern county). For example: the historians of Derbyshire writing about roads (such as Dodd and Wroe) observe that the Roman road running west from Buxton probably goes to Northwich. However, the archaeologists of Cheshire (cited by Philpott) identify this road as the Middlewich to Buxton road. Similarly, the road southwest from Buxton is thought (by Derbyshire sources) to run to Leek and apparently no further; but work in Staffordshire by Wardle suggests it runs on from Leek, through Stone and Penkridge. Work by Staffordshire archaeologists and historians about the extensive Roman and British remains in the Manifold Valley should also perhaps be seen in relation to the Manifold being part of the civitas of the Lutudarenses. A similar contextual consideration may be required in the study of the archaeology of the site at Mellor by Marple in the published work by Connelly (2005), which deals with Trans-Pennine trade in the Roman period.

This latter deserves some note here, especially in terms of Connelly's observations about the interpretation of pottery finds, notably Derbyware, also lead finds, the salt trade and agriculture in terms of cattle, beef and leather. Work in the Ecclesbourne Valley has found a number of pottery kilns (see above, Alport, Shottle Hall and Lumb Brook), these kilns, together with those found at Holbrook and Little Chester produced "Derbyware": coarse, rough old stuff, which was at first thought to be poor quality, but which further investigation has found to be purpose-designed for storage, specifically non-porous storage, and very good for it.



Derbyware jars pictured in the display case at Derby Museum

Two types of use have been positively identified: for beans (by Derby Museum) and for linseed oil (by the University of Liverpool). The use for beans suggests the dry storage of foodstuffs in kitchens, shops and carriage for trade (Derbyware would be acceptable in the kitchen, but you wouldn't want it in your dining room). The use for linseed oil indicates the storage of medicines and paint. Roman paint being lead and linseed oil based: for example from the possible paint production site identified at Kniveton, on the Wirksworth to Rocester road, (Connelly, 2005), as well as the seasoning of wood and leather. Connelly concludes that this use of Derbyware and its distribution beyond the immediate area of its production gives an indication of the extent of trade in and around the Peak. Similar interpretations about the extent of trade can be inferred from the ties between the lead industry of the civitas and the salt industry in terms of the production of brine boiling (evaporation) pans. Finally, Trans-Pennine trade also appears to have taken place in cattle, beef and leather, as archaeological work in Nottinghamshire (at Ferry Lane Farm by Cottingham) suggests parts of that district were used for the rearing of cattle: salt was used not only in the preservation of beef but in leather production, after tanning, for the hardening and finishing of leather, the finishing of which also involves linseed oil. Linseed oil being made from flax, grown in parts of the Derwent and Trent Valleys, as possibly recalled by the Flaxholme place-name at Duffield (Watson, 1986). It is no mere observation that the Ecclesbourne Valley's chief agricultural products have been, on the one hand, honey, (noted in Domesday), but on the other, milk. Thus requiring the presence of cattle and providing a source of skins for tanning and bearing in mind that Wirksworth is known to have had tanneries throughout the mediaeval period, some of which survived until the 1860s (Sprenger, 2004).

The lead industry is also one which should be considered when the matter of communications, trade and transport is being scrutinised. There is no record of the routes by which Roman lead was exported from the Wirksworth area, and we can only look to the later trade for a light to shine upon the past. William Woolley, writing in the years from 1712 to 1715 (Glover and Riden, 1981) had observed that lead was carried most on horse-back, and gave an example of it going to Derby on horse-back (we would say by pack-horse), and from Derby by cart or wagon to Wilne (by Shardlow) or Sawley Ferry, and then by barge on the Trent to Gainsborough and from there to London or elsewhere by ship. It is known from other sources that lead was sent from Wirksworth to Bawtry via Chesterfield (note observations on the Rocester-Wirksworth-Chesterfield Roman road above) and from Wirksworth to Nottingham, again for transshipment. In so far as Woolley was writing before the advent of turnpike roads, it may be that these routes were of some antiquity, certainly, in the section between Derby and both Wilne and Sawley, this must be beyond the slightest doubt on the Roman road between Little Chester and Sawley.

The conclusion which one must reach from the consideration of the issue of trade, is that the Peak was no sleepy backwater. It was key to many significant industries in the Roman period, many of which survived through to later periods. Although lead is generally thought of as the principal industry of the civitas district, other industries appear to be pottery, tanning, and agriculture in those areas which could sustain it, as well as the export of certain types of stone for building (we have noted that Hopton Wood stone was found to line the baths at Godmanchester), the localised production of paint, and to

the north west, salt. To the east of Wirksworth, authors such as Knight (2004) observe the nature of the agriculture of that part of the district, but feel that its prosperity and population density is lower than that of the Trent Valley, where a series of small Roman towns along the Fosse way south and east of the Trent, Margidunum (East Bridgford); Ad Pontem (Thorpe); Crococalana (Brough on Fosse) and Vernemetum (Willoughby) point to greater intensity of population. A similar position appears along the line of the Lincoln and Doncaster road with settlements at Segelocum (Littleborough) Bawtry and Rossington. However, like the area in the immediate vicinity of Wirksworth, the apparent lack of Roman activity, except perhaps at Broxtowe and Osmanthorpe, as well as a complete and suspect gap in our knowledge of any Roman road network in the two Nottinghamshire wapentakes of Bassetlaw and Broxtowe, points more probably to a lack of archaeological research and fieldwork rather than a lack of the original activities, populations or communications themselves.

Recent scrutiny, considering the intensity of Roman activity in the Ecclesbourne Valley and the intensity of settlement and agriculture in the area to the west of Wirksworth, as far as Ashbourne and Parwich, also raises a further trade issue. This is about the supply of food and domestic goods: i.e. the location of a market. If Wirksworth is not the capital and centre for trade in this district, where are all these people going to market? AE&EM Dodd (2000) noted the furthest one could reasonably expect to travel to market in the mediaeval period (in our case the early mediaeval) was 11 kilometres, for the morning was spent getting to the market (on foot), a few hours were spent at the market itself, and the afternoon and early evening were spent getting back, before dread night fell. In looking at the known pattern of Roman towns in the Peak, if we exclude Wirksworth, it would in no way be achievable for the population of the district to reach markets at either Buxton or Little Chester and return safe home, with their goods, there and back in a day. This suggests Wirksworth is essential as a Roman market centre, as it continued to be in the mediaeval period.

Dating the Roman origins of the district

It is salient to examine the dating evidence which exists from the various forts and other appropriate sources in order to establish when the district became Roman. Brassington (1982) deals with Strutts Park (the first fort or Roman settlement in Derby prior to Little Chester, located on the west bank of the Derwent, on the high ground around Belper Road) and notes evidence of occupation from the Neronian and Claudian periods, this gives a date of about AD 55 in the governorship of Aulus Didius Gallus. Toco (2005) records archaeological finds from the same period at Templeborough and at Trent Vale. A report of excavations at Strutts Park in 1974, given by Dool (1985) concurs. Ellis (1989) records the dating evidence found at the fort at Chesterfield to be of the 60s. Thus the south and east of the district appears to be in Roman control from about AD 55 / 60. (The first datable metal working evidence comes from the cross-referencing the inscriptions on a lead pig found at Matlock Bank in 1783, which states it as the property of Tiberius Claudius Triferia, lead from Lutudarum: a lead pig found at Charterhouse in Somerset also refers to Tiberius Claudius Triferia and that ingot states its owner as the Emperor Vespasian Augustus, giving it a date of between AD 69 and AD 79) (CIL record 1215, 2006). The archaeological dating evidence from the north and west of the Peak at Middlewich (Philpott, 2004), Brough and Melandra forts (Dearne, 1991) suggest their foundation to be around AD 70 or a

little later, in the governorship of Quintus Petilius Cerialis whom we also know (from Tacitus) progressed into the territory of the Brigantes to the north at this time. Thus the dating evidence from the forts suggests that the Lutudarenses probably became part of the Roman province about AD 55 or soon after, (especially as the Strutts Park fort is west of the Derwent, thus within the district rather than beyond its southern or eastern boundaries), and that the forts to the north and west were constructed later, as part of the campaigns to subdue the Brigantes from AD 70 onwards by Agricola. This approach to the building of forts is fairly consistent, the conquest of the midlands and the north of Britain, district by district, tended to result in district boundaries being defined by the geographical pattern of forts, as the Romans progressed north and westwards.



Picture reconstruction of Melandra near Glossop

One or two oddities emerge from the mapping of the forts and boundaries; the first is that Buxton commands the only road southwards within the district which is unguarded, but no fort has been found at Buxton as yet, as Myers (2000) notes. Consequently, either the fort is still to be found, or Manchester represents the border fort, this latter is unlikely because the gap between the known forts at Little Chester and Manchester represents two days march, whereas Buxton is only a day's march, the normal maximum distance gap between forts in the north. However, Burnham and Wachter (1990) feel that we should not expect to find a fort at Buxton and that Buxton was merely a place of recreation. Secondly, the fortlet at Pentrich appears to guard nothing. It may be that the road which descends from Wirksworth Moor to the bridge at Whatstandwell, and then Crich, deserves attention, if this road were found to be Roman then the role of Pentrich would be explained, as it would be guarding Wirksworth's eastern approach and the crossing of the Derwent. On the other hand, Pentrich may simply be a signal station, between Chesterfield and Little Chester: the fort area is very small.

Some writers have expected to find a fort at Carsington, but from the Roman perspective it would serve no purpose and given that Wirksworth was the district's capital, should there be any other fort still to be found, it is to Wirksworth that we must look. One view has been that the town was sufficiently well guarded that it may have had no fort, this, though, would be untypical, not least because of the view, noted by Salway and others, that one should always expect to find evidence of a

military presence in locations where mining operations are taking place. In considering where a fort at Wirksworth might be, a footprint not unlike that of Brough on Noe may be realistic: i.e. relatively small: the Brough fort is only sufficient, at 2 acres, (approx 100 metres by 85 metres) to accommodate half a cohort of infantry (about 250 men) and is characterised by an unusually large strongroom, which may possibly represent the need to keep quantities of lead ingots collected together for onward despatch. In the case of Brough, we know from inscriptions that it lodged part of the first Cohort of the Aquitanians, who rebuilt it in a smaller size than its first phase, perhaps about 158 AD (Simpson, 1964), and that there were other detachments of the Aquitanians in the district, as an altar stone recording them was found in the grounds of Haddon Hall (Collingwood, 1965), where there is no evidence of a fort.

A tour of the border of the Lutudarenses

It is considered that the boundaries of Roman *civitas* districts were often rivers or sometimes roads or other "fixed" features, and occasionally we find ancient parish boundaries running along former Roman roads (Turbutt, 1999). However, in looking systematically at the extent of the lands of the *civitas* district of the Lutudarenses our evidence is in the first case largely based on work carried out by researchers in counties and districts around the Peak where they been seeking their own boundaries and this is the first time work has taken place to assemble that knowledge in the context of the Peak. We have to recognise the limitations of this, and the borders and extents of the district often have to be taken from later evidence such as the border of Mercia or from a given wapentake, for example; thus reconstructing such a border should not be inferred as being an entirely accurate exercise. On the other hand, in many locations this does at least give us a documented boundary to consider as a starting place.

Dennis (1971) observes the Roman historian Tacitus, who recorded that when districts surrendered to the Romans they were "surrounded by garrisons and forts". If we consider the Ordnance Survey Map of Roman Britain (1997), as well as Higham's excellent work on the Cheshire Hundreds, we find that forts and camps do, to some extent, march around the Peak.

Starting at Brough on Noe in the north and working clockwise, the boundary with Elmet may have run along the line of the road north east from Brough then the River Sheaf and River Don to the fort at Templeborough by Rotherham (Cox 2005); The River Sheaf has long been considered the boundary between Mercia and Northumbria. Then we move east from Templeborough to Bawtry, which was in the middle ages a major inland port on the River Idle, intimately connected with the transport of lead from the Peak. Investigation and understanding of the Roman road network of Nottinghamshire is, if anything, worse than that in Derbyshire. If the same routes tended to be used in the middle ages to transport lead as had been used in the Roman period, then the possibilities of the Roman roads connecting Bawtry and the nearby fort at Scaftworth with Chesterfield and Templeborough require a consideration they do not yet appear to have received. Margery notes a section of road running east-west at Catcliffe south of Templeborough (Margery 1967) and running on the north side of the Firbeck to Oldcoates road, which may represent the Templeborough route and may conceivably represent the

border with the Daunonii (i.e. the conjectured but unexamined civitas of the district of Doncaster, discussed haphazardly as "Hatfield Chase" or as the "Heathfield Land" of the Tribal Hidage) (Foot, 1993).

Moving on, Bede (quoted in Brooks, 1989) says that the River Idle was the border of Mercia. Leahy (1993) maps the borders of Lindsey as being the Trent to the west of Lincoln and the Witham to the south west. This perhaps suggests the Daunonii occupied the land between the Idle and the Trent, consequently the whole of the later Nottinghamshire wapentake of Bassetlaw west of the Idle, must have been originally part of the Peak and that for this border to continue with any integrity as being that of later Mercia, the same has to be applied to the wapentake of Broxtowe. Although these wapentakes are now in Nottinghamshire, it must be remembered that Nottinghamshire is a purely new administrative device created by Edward the Elder in 930 or so.

From where the old border of the wapentake of Broxtowe joins the Trent, we then continue south and west to where Rykniel Street also follows the Trent, past Findern (the etymology of which is the Celtic: Findre meaning "boundary hamlet") and as far as Alrewas: this section was probably the boundary with the Corieltauvi. At Alrewas the Trent turns north-west and runs in that direction through Rugeley and Stone, south of the Trent being the civitas district of Etocetum (Wall) as noted by Bassett (1992). Forts continue along the line of the Trent at Trent Vale (Stoke) and again at Chesterton by Newcastle under Lyme, south west of which would be the Cornovii. North from Chesterton we rely on Higham's hundred boundary map, which suggests the boundary ran west of Henbury and Prestbury, and noting the camp at Wallhill by Congleton and the forts at Middlewich and Northwich are close to this boundary. The boundary then runs north and west of Marple, northwards to the fort at Melandra Castle by Mottram, then in a north-easterly direction to Tintwistle and its fort at Highstones, north of which would be the Brigantes. The boundary then appears to return in a south-easterly direction to Brough, in practice it may have run along the upper Derwent rather to the north and east of the road which is known between Melandra Castle and Brough. The Elmetiaco (the district of Leeds) would be north east of this boundary, which in more recent times is the boundary between Derbyshire and Sheffield.

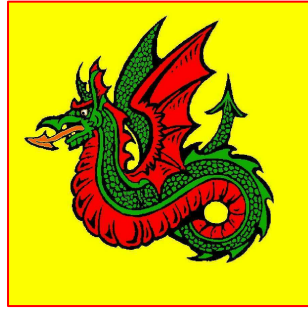
The end of Roman rule

The Roman history of the Peak District did not end abruptly in 410 when much of the Roman army was withdrawn from Britain. Simply because there is no army does not mean the immediate breakdown of a civil society: if the modern British army were destroyed by some terrible mischance, you would still go to Tesco's and do your shopping on a Saturday and wash your car on a Sunday – civil routine would still continue, at least for a while, because there would be no reason to suppose the event could not be coped with, and this appears to be the case in antiquity. However, the event could not be coped with and gradually the western Roman empire disintegrated. (Collins, 1999, gives a readable account of this disintegration). As it did so, the position of civil society became more parlous, there was no demand from the remnants of the Roman military for goods and this in turn resulted in the collapse of a number of those parts of the Roman economy of Britain which depended on it, such as the pottery industry and

large sections of the agricultural industry whose purpose had been to supply the army with grain. Coupled with this were increasing attacks from initially small groups of invaders, pirates and rebels which began to disrupt the rest of the Romano-British society. The response in Britain to this is thought to have been a tolerably effective re-organisation of the few remnants of the Roman army left in Britain (because the army was expected to come back, a little military organisation remained such as the castellans, storekeepers, retired officers and men and so on) and so by some effort and by adding federates (paid mercenaries) to deal with military emergencies, a short period of Romano-British control remained. In the end, however, this re-organisation could not stop the loss of the south and east of Britain to the Saxons and the takeover of parts of the north of Britain by a number of groups which eventually resulted in the establishment of the Northumbrian kingdom.

The Peak District appears to carry on quietly as a Romano-British province from 410. It is geographically central and the long drawn out "invasion" which had taken over the south and east of the country did not reach it. Nor, until 616 or so, was there any threat to it from the north. In that year (though possibly 613, there is some academic debate about the year) the Northumbrians attacked parts of the north and this move was apparently so unexpected that they weren't brought to battle before they reached Chester, and at Chester the response by the British was so lax that the British were roundly defeated and a large number of their clergy (who were nearby) were slaughtered. This defeat brought late Romano-British rule to an end, and was the root cause of nearly 60 years of political turmoil in and around the Peak District.

Chapter 2: The Pecsæte



The heraldic beast of Mercia – the Wyvern
Adopted as the Wirksworth town flag

The Mercian Province

Before the battle of Chester, the British were tolerably secure, even after their defeat they still appeared to be capable of subduing the Northumbrians and with the help of their junior partners and federates, the Mercians, (whom the British may have originally established on the east and south border of the Peak to guard the Rossington Gap and the Trent Valley) did so in 633. However, this was the last victory for the British and a year later it was all over. The Northumbrians had the supremacy and only the Mercians stood between the Northumbrians and the loss of the Peak District and a number of other provinces, such as Lindsey (Foot, 1993) to a greater Northumbria. There then followed a long drawn out struggle between the Mercians and the Northumbrians.

The timeline below identifies some of the key points in the conflict between Mercia and Northumbria in the years 616 to 679 as it relates to the Peak:

A timeline of the Mercian – Northumbrian War

c616	The Battle of Chester takes place in 616 at which the Northumbrians defeat the British, slaughter a large number of their clergy and monks who are close by, and gain control of a region as far south as the Trent including the Peak; Elmet (the district of Leeds), Heathfield (the district of Doncaster) and also Lindsey (the district of Lincoln). Northumbrian rule of the Peak begins.
616	The Battle of the River Idle. The Northumbrians are defeated by King Raedwald of East Anglia. King Aethelfrith of Northumbria is killed, but this doesn't reduce Northumbrian power. The following year Edwin becomes King of Northumbria (Brooks, 1989).
626	(King) Penda "succeeds to Mercia" and reigns until 655, but is weakened between 635 and 642 when the Northumbrians apparently attempt to install Eowa as King of Mercia (Brooks, 1989).
633	King Edwin of Northumbria is overthrown in 632. A year later Northumbria is defeated by Cadwallon of Gwynedd and Penda of Mercia at the Battle of Hatfield Moor near Doncaster. Cadwallon briefly becomes the last British king. The Northumbrians take Oswald as their king, strike back and kill Cadwallon in 634 (Collins, 1999).
635	Northumbrians attempt to establish Eowa (Penda's brother) as King of Mercia under Northumbrian control. The Northumbrians do not seem to have taken Lichfield, Repton or Tamworth. This implies their "Mercia" is the part north of the Trent (The Peak) and Mercia is divided between the part the Northumbrians control and the part Penda still controls (Brooks, 1989).

	King Oswald of Northumbria establishes Aiden as Bishop of his kingdom and its provinces (Bede). From 635 many monks from Iona come into Britain at Aiden's request and preach "to those provinces over which King Oswald reigned". The Peak is a province of Northumbria at this time.
c636	<p>Morfael, a British leader, attacks Caer Lwytgoed, takes the movable wealth of that city in tribute and kills a bishop and a number of monks. The received wisdom is that Morfael raided Lichfield. This is based on Henry Bradley's 1886 interpretation of the "Caer Lwytgoed" place name as equating to "Letocetum" - Wall by Lichfield (Greenslade, 1990). However Bradley created the name Letocetum from separate sources: he made it up.</p> <p>Bradley's Lichfield fiction might have been adequate in 1886 but it does not stand up to modern knowledge of early Mercia and its struggle with Northumbria. Lichfield is in Penda's Mercia, Penda is an ally of the British, why attack your allies? There is no evidence in Lichfield of the killing of a bishop. The Mercians are not converted to Christianity until 653 and until Chad establishes his see in Lichfield in 669 there is no church there either (Gelling, 1992). No Mercian bishop was ever killed in Lichfield, they are all known. It is the Northumbrians who represent the major threat to both the British and Penda's Mercians, so the attack must have been aimed at something Northumbrian. Morris (1973) observed that in 636 "the English rose against Oswald". In practice this can only have been Morfael and Penda, (the British and the Mercians) there appears to be no other known rising against Oswald.</p> <p>So, if Henry Bradley made up the Lichfield story, where is "Caer Lwytgoed"? The raid may have been against Lutudarum - Northumbrian Wirksworth. A bishop (or abbot) and his monks were killed in the raid, possibly to remind the Northumbrians about their actions in slaughtering the British clergy at Chester twenty years before. In St Mary's Church in Wirksworth is a unique early Christian sarcophagus lid, found during building work under the altar pavement. The location and the style of the sculpture of the sarcophagus lid suggests a person of holy status such as a bishop was buried there.</p>
642	<p>Penda kills King Oswald of Northumbria and Eowa at the Battle of Maserfelth/Cocboy (Bede/Halsall, 1998), strategically the River Cock at Aberford near Tadcaster, and "separates" Mercia from Northumbria (Bede).</p> <p>This results in the establishment of Mercian rule of the Peak.</p>
653	Conversion of Mercians to Christianity begins (Bede).
655	<p>King Penda is killed at the Battle of the River Winwaed/Winwidfelda (Bede/Anglo-Saxon Chronicle - See Jebson 2006), strategically the River Rother near Wingfield on Rykniel Street. The Mercians and their allies are defeated by the Northumbrians under Oswiu. Northumbrian rule of the Peak and overlordship of Mercia in general is briefly restored.</p> <p>Oswiu sets up Peada as King of Mercia under Northumbrian control.</p>
658	Peada is murdered by Mercian nobility in 658 who make his brother Wulfhere King of the Mercians. Northumbrian rule collapses due to Mercian rebellion. The Mercians become dominant under Wulfhere (Brooks, 1989) and Mercian rule of the Peak is re-established.
669	Chad establishes the Mercian Bishopric at Lichfield (Gelling, 1992).
674	<p>Northumbrian domination is briefly re-imposed by their new king, Ecgferth (Foot, 1993). There follows the death of King Wulfhere and Ethelred becomes King of the Mercians (Colgrave, 1927).</p> <p>Northumbrian rule of the Peak is again briefly restored.</p>
679	<p>Battle of the River Trent. The Mercians, under King Ethelred, are victorious.</p> <p>This battle marks the final resolution of the Mercian - Northumbrian conflict.</p> <p>The northern bishoprics are re-organised by Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury (Foot, 1993) and Mercian rule of the Peak is finally secure.</p>

One of the most interesting features of this long drawn out conflict is that there is no peace between the Mercians and the Northumbrians until the Mercians have recovered the Peak. Indeed Penda, Wulfhere and Ethelred repeatedly throw themselves at the Northumbrians until they succeed in

securing the Peak. This possibly implies they were fulfilling an originally appointed role and that having done so were then the dominant power. This also explains why relations between early Mercia and the British (we would now call them the Welsh) were entirely peaceful at this time: they were supposed to be and may have been the result of inter-marriage (one of Penda's sons is called Merewalh – it means "famous Welshman"). On the other hand, it may also be reasonably argued that the Mercians were fighting for the Peak because it contained valuable resources such as lead. Whatever the case, the Peak is finally secure as a Mercian province in 679. This province is known in the Mercian period as the "Pecsaete", one of the "Anglo-Saxon" kingdoms or districts listed in the Tribal Hidage, a document whose purpose is possibly to identify areas for tribute payments, often thought to be Mercian in origin, but in so far as it apparently identifies a Mercian tribute area itself, may well be Northumbrian and there is some academic debate about this. The Peak is listed as having 1,200 hides, one of eight areas in the list having more than 1,000 hides; there being a further 16 having less than 1,000 hides.

Many, perhaps all, the Romano-British civitas districts appear later to have become small Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, a few of which, such as the Hwicce, (which also appears in the Tribal Hidage), are tolerably well documented (Bassett, 1989) but the vast majority are not, and have neither extant regnal nor ecclesiastical lists (that is lists of kings or bishops). However, the absence of such a list for the Pecsaete does not mean the province may have had no ruling dynasty, only that the documentary evidence is not present. In the case of the Peak, Yorke (1990) cites archaeological evidence: "A separate dynasty among the Pecsaete might be assumed from the series of rich burials in barrows, including that at Benty Grange which produced the only other "kingly" helmet found in an "Anglo-Saxon" burial besides that of Sutton Hoo". Benty Grange is about half way between Wirksworth and Buxton on The Street, the Roman road between those two places and there is no more guarded and remote a place from the "Anglians" (we might argue this could be regarded as being the Northumbrians) as Benty Grange is in the Peak. It is certainly not Mercian, being both too early and in the wrong location: the Mercian royal burial ground being on the bluff overlooking the Trent at Repton.



The Benty Grange helmet and its example reconstruction
Sheffield Museum

The helmet, in Sheffield Museum is considered to date to about 650. The helmet is on a par in standards with the royal helmet found at Sutton Hoo. It was constructed of iron with horn plates,

fastened with silver rivets, with a boar crest being of bronze and silver gilt; with garnets for the eyes. The nose guard of the helmet had a silver Latin cross bracketed by silver studding. The grave goods also contained a silver cross ornamented wooden cup; two enamelled bronze escutcheon discs; fine wire and braiding attached to what once was a silk garment, noting that silk had to be imported and was a "princely" fabric (Stafford, 1986); a wool cloak and a weight of chain material which was interpreted by Bateman in 1848 as chain mail, but which may equally have been for some other function, such as chain bowl hangings (Sheffield Museum, 2008).

Once the Peak becomes a settled part of Mercia from 679 we begin to find a more fragments of evidence of its development. The richness of eighth century Peak District barrow burials in general is often discussed in terms of the revenues to be had from the lead industry, and in 714 it is known that Abbess Ecgburg (thought to be of Repton) sent a lead coffin and a linen sheet for St Guthlac to Crowland Abbey (Colgrave, 1956). The only place where lead was being produced in Mercia at this time was The Peak. From this period in Wirksworth itself a Sceatta coin dating of 750 was found in Church Street, implying the continuation of trade at a time when coinage is comparatively rare.



A Sceat (penny) of Eadberht of 750 (9mm diameter) the RH picture is the Wirksworth Sceat

Sokes and Hundreds

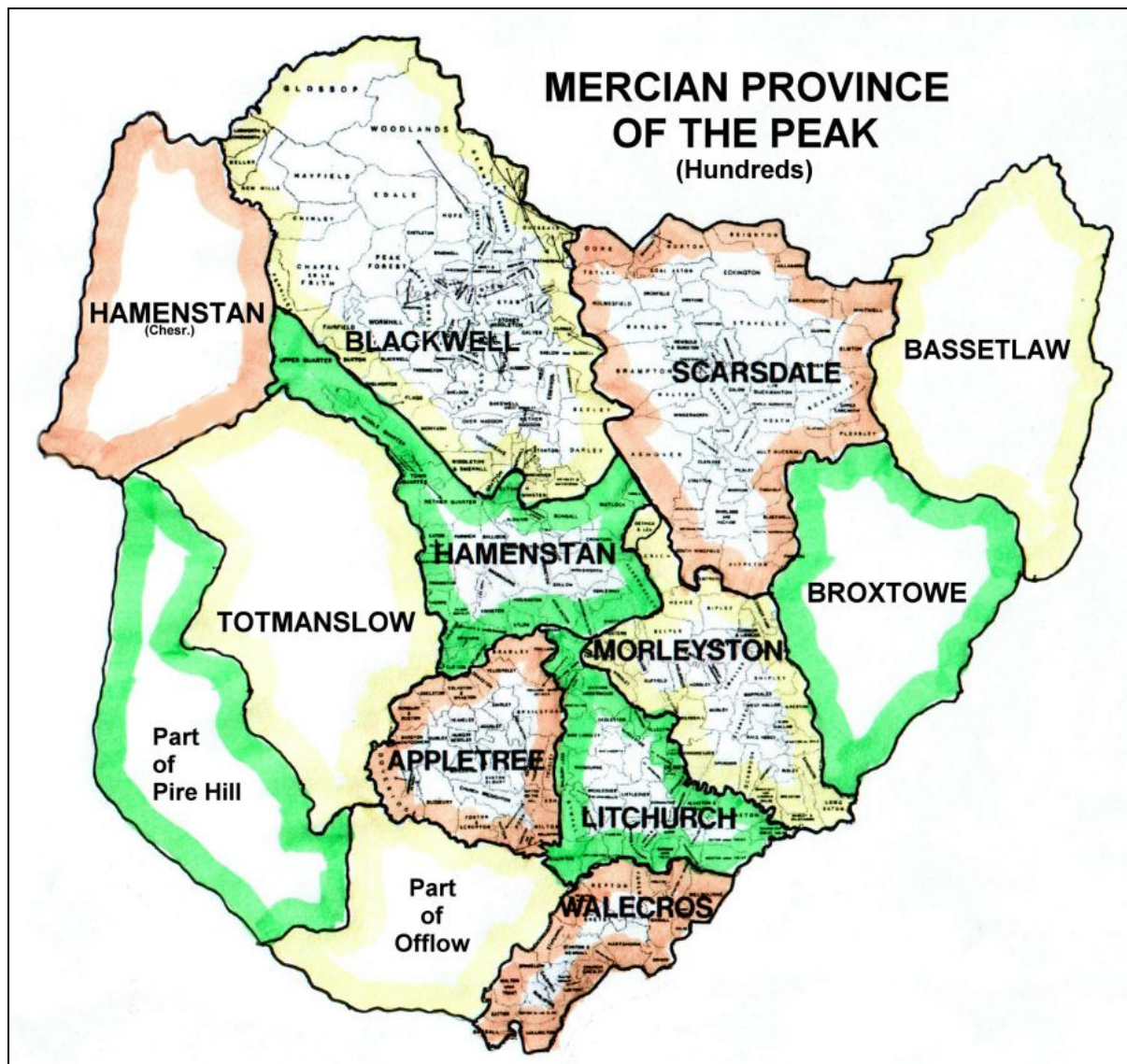
The structure of Mercian administration is rather under-researched, but two forms of organisation deserve to receive more academic attention. The first are the Sokes. A Soke is a large estate or an area of jurisdiction dependant on a secular or ecclesiastical governor, sometimes called "small shires". It might be thought that the geographical area of the Soke of Wirksworth would match that of the Hundred (or Wapentake) of Wirksworth, but this is not the case because the Sokes were effectively single large estates and a Wapentake could be made up of more than one of them. The Soke would have a central town or settlement to which outlying settlements were attached as Sokeland or "berewicks". A berewick is an outlier or home farm where the lord's special needs for food were met, and sokelands were hamlets or villages occupied by men and women who owed particular services and tributes to the lord (for example a render of lead), but typical demands from the sokelands included material provision for the lord and his followers, forced hospitality, provision for his hunting and the maintenance of the structures of his hall and court.

Within the Soke there were different types of social status: such as Villeins, that is peasant farmers who could subsist on the land they owned - normally about 30 acres each. There were Bordars, that is

smallholders, who could not subsist on their small ownership, but had to work for someone else. There were also Sokemen, the size of their landholding doesn't seem to be the issue, it varied. The key issue was that they owed less service to the lord and were freer than the Villeins. The origins of this were that the Sokemen were the inhabitants of the great estates. Soke means jurisdiction – it describes the lands and the inhabitants of the lands attached to and paying the dues or tribute to the central hall of the lord. This, then, is the nature of the Soke of Wirksworth - it is the area which supports the central hall of the lord of Wirksworth. This begs the question, of course, who was the lord of Wirksworth, (to which the provisional answer appears to be the King of Mercia) and begs a second question, even more intractable, does this imply there is a royal Mercian building somewhere to be found in or near Wirksworth? The Soke may also equate to the later Royal manor of Wirksworth.

A Hundred or Wapentake is an administrative division of a province. In Mercian times all the divisions of the Province of the Peak were originally called Hundreds, but when the Vikings invaded the Kingdom of Mercia and settled, creating the "Danelaw", they are considered to have taken over the previously existing administrative system (easier than bringing in a new one) and simply changed the name to Wapentakes (Stafford, 1985). Because the Mercians (in the person of Aethelflaed, Lady of the Mercians) eventually overcame and integrated the Vikings, the terminology the Vikings had used didn't entirely survive, so that in much of the Mercian Province of The Peak the administrative divisions mostly reverted to their hundred names e.g. The Hundred of Scarsdale, Hundred of Litchurch etc. But the Wirksworth division retained the only Wapentake title in Derbyshire, and was often just called "The Wapentake" right until the very end of the system in the late 1800s.

The Wapentake of Wirksworth was originally called the Hundred of Hamenstan. It's in the very middle of the Mercian province. Hamenstan probably means "carved stone". The carved stone was probably a marker for the assembly ground at Hamston Hill. This map shows the Mercian Province of the Pecsæte in terms of its possible constituent hundreds, before the creation of the shire counties. In the middle, almost at the very centre, is Wirksworth. There is also a Hundred of Hamenstan around Prestbury and Macclesfield in what is now Cheshire, it was also part of the Province. Then in what is now Staffordshire is the Hundred of Totmanslow around Leek, and those parts of the Staffordshire Hundreds of Pire Hill and Offlow which lie north of the River Trent. All the hundreds of what is now Derbyshire were in the Province (shown in rather more detail in the map), and two hundreds in what is now Nottinghamshire, the Hundred of Broxtowe and the Hundred of Bassetlow as far as the River Idle were as well. One of the reasons why the understanding of this is so poor is because the Province now spans four different counties and this has made the study of the Province very difficult because many histories tend to be based on county areas. The Wapentakes had an assembly which met once a year or so, usually at the same place, but sometimes elsewhere. The assembly of the Wirksworth Wapentake probably met at a site near Topshill Farm at Wapentake Lane in Wirksworth, but before that the Hundred Assembly of Hamenstan (it's the same thing remember) may have met at Hamston Hill near Thorpe Cloud, where there is a saucer shaped arena at the top of the hill.



A reconstruction of the Mercian Province of the Pecsæte

There are several Mercian charters dealing with locations in the Peak and these throw a little light on its existence as a province and of the ensuing invasion of the area by the Vikings and its final recovery from the Vikings by the Mercians and the West Saxons.

In a charter of 835 Abbess Cynewaru made a grant to Duke Hunberht, Prince of the Tomsæte (Tamworth) of land from her estate, or possibly the whole of the estate at Wirksworth (British Academy, 2007; Sawyer charter S1624). This land grant may be the origin of the later Royal manor of Wirksworth, it is known from Domesday book that Edward the Confessor held the manor of Wirksworth and there is no particular reason to suppose that this manor had come from any other source other than by its inheritance through the Kings of Mercia. A render of lead to Canterbury cathedral mentioned in the charter indicates that the activity of lead mining and the lead industry had continued throughout the period, and a key reason for the continuity of the royal holding of these estates was probably the income to be had from them. However, the nature of the origin of the royal holding from the charter is also of interest.

The received wisdom (for example by Birch, 1885) about the charter of 835 was that Abbess Cynewaru was abbess of Repton, but the charter does not say this, and in so far as St Mary's church in Wirksworth is considered to be a Minster church it is no less sound an argument to say that Cynewaru may have been Abbess of Wirksworth: Wirksworth is named in the charter and Repton is not. The supposed earlier charters which refer to Repton are both forgeries - British Academy, 2007. Also, it may be questionable whether an Abbess of Repton would be able to grant away Repton lands, as these were apparently lands of the Mercian kings anyway. Indeed at this time there is a tendency of the nobles and kings to be acquisitive of church land and in so far as Cynewaru appears to receive no direct payment and the charter contains some pretty damning wording about failure to pay (the lead render is to Canterbury not to her abbey) then we may be seeing such acquisitiveness at work.

The wording of the Wirksworth charter of 835 in its original Latin

*Anno dominice Incarnationis. DCCC.XXXV. Ego CYNEUARA
abbatissa concedo HUNBERTO duci terram juris mei nomine.
WYRCESUUYRTHĒ. ea condicione ut omni anno det ecclesie Christie in
DOROBERNIA pro gablo. plumbum. Trecentorum solidorum ad
opus ejusdem ecclesie. archiepiscopo CEOLNOTHO. et successoribus
ejus. Hoc donum meum de predicta villa praefata ecclesia imper-
petuum omni anno habeat. Si quis hanc meam donacionem
Christi ecclesie in Dorobernia abstulerit: perpetuo anathemate
percussus. diabolus eum possideat in societate suorum.*

"In the year of the Incarnation 835, I Cynewaru, Abbess; grant to Hunberht, Duke; jurisdiction of land in my possession at Wirksworth, on condition that he shall give an annual render of lead to the value of 300 shillings to Ceolnoth, Archbishop, his successors and to Christ Church, Canterbury. The above-named church should have this gift of mine from my aforesaid township every year. But if anyone should take away this my gift from Christ Church, Canterbury, may he be smitten with perpetual anathema, and may the devil possess him as one of his own."

That an abbey or monastery is archaeologically unknown to us at Wirksworth at the moment may be due to the weakness of archaeological assessment of Wirksworth, but that St Mary's church itself apparently survived throughout the Viking period is not necessarily unusual or impossible. The issue is highlighted by Hadley (1986) who notes that: "In some parts of the Danelaw there is a striking correlation between the sites of middle-Saxon (period) monasteries and the locations of later mother churches serving large parishes. Examples include Repton, Wirksworth... Southwell... Ripon... and Beverley. A significant characteristic of many of the major churches in the region is that they consistently coincide with the great estate centres of Domesday Book".

We have earlier considered the question of the relative state of the nominal independence of the Pecsæte in terms of the possibility of its having its own ruling dynasty. It was common in the early stages of the formation of the Mercian kingdom for dynastic estates of the subservient or component kingdoms to be handed down through the female line as church or monastic property. By the 790s King Offa and later King Coenwulf had sought to strengthen their positions by seizing the ownership of these lands. Cubitt (1995) observes that Mercian royal seizures were "not examples of random royal cupidity, but rather represent a consistent policy aimed at the consolidation of royal power in newly subordinated kingdoms." The comparative lateness of the seizure of the Wirksworth estates from Cynewaru may be because of fluctuations in the dominance of the various royal lines after the death of Offa, or it may be that the lands of the Pecsæte were in some way better protected (in the sense of family ties) and the late seizure in 835 in the reign of King Wiglaf was a result of the death of some protector of Cynewaru's abbey, whether we regard that abbey as being in Wirksworth itself, or Repton or another place.

The Danelaw

In 842 the first Viking attack took place on the coast of Mercia in the province of Lindsey (Lincolnshire). Viking attacks increased in frequency and strength with the Vikings attacking London (a Mercian city) and in due course routed King Beorhtwulf and the Mercian army in 851 in the south. Burgred became king of Mercia in 852 and is thought to have beaten off Viking attacks for many years, for example, Leicester resisted the Vikings for 12 years before finally falling to them. However, the Viking invasion and the consequent creation of the Danelaw had several effects as well as the conquest and settlement of northern Mercia by the Danes.

The Danelaw resulted from the inability of the Mercians to expel the Danish army from Repton during the winter of 873-874, the kingdom being split in 877 between the pro-Danish Mercian king, Ceolwulf along the line of Watling Street, with Ceolwulf having that part to the south-west and the Danes having the rest (Brooks, 1989 and 2000), Burgred being deposed and fleeing to Rome in 875. There then followed a period of about thirty years when the Danes were dominant and settling the area. We also see the emergence of Derby as a settlement: it becomes established as a Danelaw town some time after 877 when part of the army of Halfdan settled in Northumbria and the rest are known to have settled in north Mercia (Stafford, 1985) presumably decamping to the Mercian estate at Northworthy and establishing a defended settlement in the confluence of the Derwent and the Markeaton Brook. The reason for this choice of the confluence is that it is the best defensible position against an attack from the Mercians coming up Ryknield Street. This may explain why Derby never had its own Wapentake, apparently being mainly in Litchurch and partly in Morleystone, the Wapentakes as an administrative form were probably based on the Mercian Hundreds and Derby was not in existence at the time the Hundreds had originated, this also supports the view that the Vikings simply adopted the Mercian administrative structure.

In due course however, Aethelred, Lord of the Mercians, began a campaign to recover Mercia from the Danes in conjunction with Alfred of Wessex and the Danes were first defeated at the battle of

Tettenhall in 910. This appeared to cause or exacerbate a disintegration of overall Viking control and the various small Viking armies such as those at Northampton and Leicester took to aggression and looting across Watling Street. This in turn appeared to have been a catalyst for Aethelflead (Aethelred having died) wishing to recover Mercia from the Danes once and for all and for the creation of an apparent strategy in conjunction with Edward of Wessex to do so, which included several features. Firstly, there appears to be a continuing church effort to convert the pagan Vikings, which was sufficiently successful that they mostly became Christian in relatively short order. Secondly, there was the military and political campaign involving both the Mercian army and the West Saxon army, to ensure the gradual recovery of Mercia as far as the old border with Northumbria. Thirdly, following the military effort, attempts were made to integrate the Danes, such as by the provision of charter status to towns such as Derby, as well as the purchase of estates from them (as opposed to simply taking land back by force of arms).

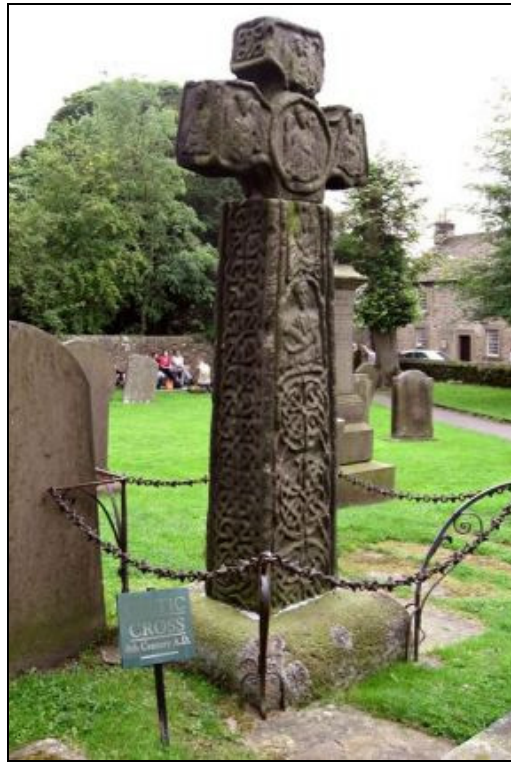
Militarily, the Danes were defeated again at Towcester in 917 and Aethelflaed, Lady of the Mercians captured Derby in 917. Considering Derby as an example of the "integration" policy, Aethelflaed found it of sufficient political expediency to confirm it as a borough, in order to attempt to ensure its integration and loyalty to Mercia. Leicester followed peacefully in 918 and then did Stamford and Nottingham.



In 920 Edward came to Bakewell and ordered a burg (fort) to be built (Rollason, 2003). At a casual glance Bakewell is an odd choice, it is neither on the old border between Mercia and Northumbria, as Dore is, nor is it obviously strategic on a major road such as Rykniel Street. However, it stands on the crossing of the Wye and is therefore between the Vikings of York and the valuable lead mining district and the Mercian Royal estates around Wirksworth. Setting aside the rather curious strategic choice Edward may simply have ordered the construction of a burg because this is the location he had chosen to meet the northern kings and he is hardly likely to do this without having a defensible position to occupy if something went wrong. However, in order to secure northern Mercia once and for all, Edward also built a fortress at Thelwall and a Mercian army occupied the former Northumbrian fortress in Manchester in 922. This has the appearance of fortifying the former Mercian frontier against Viking attacks not only from York but also from across the Irish Sea.

A charter of 926 to Duke Uhtred (Sawyer charter 397) confirms the purchase of land at Hope and Ashford from the Danes. This is a follow on to the military approach and is also part of the process to secure the province again, this time by recovering key estates (especially those west of the Derwent). The result of all this activity on the part of Aethelflaed and Edward and their ealdormen was to secure the Peak and the northern Mercian border. It is curious, and perhaps worthy of further assessment that, in addition to place-name evidence from Domesday Book, the personal name evidence also appears to confirm the density of the settlement pattern of the Danish Vikings east of the Derwent. It may be therefore, that the Mercians succeeded in securing the Wirksworth and High Peak areas against longer term Danish influence by treaty, land purchase and military means, and thus confined the Danes to the Northworthy (Derby) estate and the areas east of the Derwent. This would explain why the lead mining district appears to remain in Mercian royal hands and is inherited by the later Saxon kings, and also why Derby (being proximate to both Wirksworth and Repton) and not Leicester, was apparently the first major target of Aethelflaed's campaign.

Sidebotham (1999) takes the view that the "Mercian" town crosses found in the Peak district's principal towns date from this time and are political monuments stating Saxon supremacy. The primary monuments being those at Bakewell, Eyam, Hope, Bradbourne and Wirksworth, though the cross at Wirksworth only survives as a fragment built into the church wall. Sidebotham incorrectly includes the Wirksworth Stone in this group, ignoring that it is a funerary monument, not a political one, and of greater antiquity.



The Mercian cross at Eyam

For about 20 years matters remained fairly stable but the efforts to integrate the Danes into Mercia were not particularly successful. In 939 there was another flurry of Viking activity and Olaf Guthfrithsson, coming from York, overran northern Mercia again, with no resistance from Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, Stamford and Lincoln, which Aethelflaed and Edward had attempted to integrate. Only at Northampton and Tamworth did the Vikings meet determined resistance and the border once again briefly became Watling Street, but Guthfrithsson died a couple of years later and the Mercians and West Saxons re-took the whole of northern Mercia once and for all. The boroughs of Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, Stamford and Lincoln retained some of their Danish identity in the form of a slightly different law structure, such as the "Court of the five boroughs", and while this is taken into account in various law codes it is clear that the overlordship is in the hands of the Saxons.

The place-name evidence for Viking settlement (Stafford, 1985) outside Derby is relatively limited and the pattern of Viking place-names suggests that most settlement was along the eastern boundary of what is now Derbyshire in Scarsdale and Morleystone Wapentakes and to some extent in northern Derbyshire, and this is reflected in personal name survivals which occur later in these areas in Domesday book. However there are almost no locations anywhere in the East Midlands in general where Scandinavian place-names account for more than 50% of the place-names and none of these are in Derbyshire.

Around Wirksworth there are a very few Scandinavian place-names and the vast majority are English. There are no end of English "tuns" around Wirksworth – Carsington, Hopton, Ireton, Middleton, but there are no Danish "bys", only Derby and its surrounds have these, Denby for example. This suggests that while the Vikings, specifically the Danes here, formed a briefly dominant group, which had implications for the administrative and legal structure of the old Mercian province of the Peak, (e.g.

Hundreds being called Wapentakes, and there being a "court of the five boroughs") that these were only one contributing factor in the change from Mercian Province to the shire counties of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and that more of this change was due to the increasing West Saxon dominance of Mercia and the gradual unification of Mercia, Northumbria and Wessex which resulted in the kingdom of England.

Province and shire

Dating from about 920, the West Saxons, in the form of Edward the Elder, had attempted to impose a new administrative device on the Province of the Peak with the creation of shires such as "Derbyshire". The purpose of this, on the face of it, was to provide a tax and manpower structure to support the burghal fortresses being built to deal with the Viking Danelaw and to contain the Vikings of York, though this device did not immediately result in the Mercian Province of the Peak District being dismembered. (But given West Saxon policies towards Mercia this may be regarded just as much a mechanism to weaken Mercian allegiances as to support the fortresses). In practice, the Peak continued as province of Mercia, until we last hear of it in that role in 963 in a charter of King Edgar and the Mercian Witan (council) regarding Ballidon (Brooks, 2000; Sawyer charter S712A). King Edgar was the last king of a nominally separate Mercia from 955 to 959, when, on the death of his brother Edwig, King of Wessex, he became King of all England and reigned until 977. Brooks notes that the Ballidon charter is unusual in that it retains the styling of Mercian charters and also, most importantly, records The Peak under its Mercian province title of the Pecsæte. Without this written evidence it had been formerly thought (the charter was only rediscovered in 1985) that the Pecsæte has ceased to exist before this time, and that "Derbyshire" had been created but simply not mentioned until 1048. However, the charter confirms that the Pecsæte was still regarded by the Mercian council as a functioning entity, and that this position must have prevailed at least while King Edgar reigned.

There also appeared to be a West Saxon policy of maintaining the weakness of the Mercian ecclesiastical structure and its sees (Barrow, 1994) again for political reasons, to undermine Mercian allegiances. In the days before St Mary's became part of the Dean of Lincoln's jurisdiction in the later Norman period it is thought that Wirksworth had been part of the See of Winchester, whether this later move was knowingly to restore the status quo of the Mercian period is not clear, but West Saxon policy had been to move or keep vacant many of the Sees of the East and the Midlands (Rollason, 2003). The original attachment may equally have been because the West Saxon kings had acquired the former Mercian Royal estates around Wirksworth at some point (bearing in mind these estates were in the later holding of Edward the Confessor) and the parishes of those manors were therefore made subservient to Winchester as part of that process.

So it has to be remembered that the shire counties were a West Saxon creation, and they did not become a significant administrative device while the kingdom (later the Earldom) of Mercia still existed, and despite this West Saxon interference the Province continued for some time with the shires presumably acting as a kind of administrative shadow. Consequently it is not surprising that we don't hear of "Derbyshire" until 1048, in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (which is, after all, a West Saxon view of

events). In terms of the purpose of the shire county having been a mechanism to support the burghal fortresses, in the first case this did not work. The burghal fortresses of the north apparently provided no resistance to the Vikings of York when they overran northern Mercia again in 939. This would explain why in the 963 Ballidon charter we are still dealing with the Mercian province, not the shire county. Mercia appears, then, to flicker on and off throughout the late Saxon period and retained its own Earl up to the Norman conquest in 1066. One other issue occurs, related to the 1048 Chronicle entry, in that it refers to an earthquake in Derby followed by disease and wildfire throughout Derbyshire. This earthquake might possibly account for the condition of the Wirksworth Stone, upside down and partly broken, when found in 1821.

At some point the shire counties were re-organised (presumably after Edgar's reign) and these then gradually became the dominant structure and the Wapentakes or hundred divisions ceased to be structures of the Province of the Peak and a smaller number of them became Derbyshire, with the rest of the Province's wapentakes being lost to Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire. For example, Higham (1993) noted that apparently half of the Peak district's wapentake of Hamenstan was given to Cheshire as part of the process, and Totmanslow to Staffordshire.

Wirksworth and Domesday Book

This uncertainty about the administrative structure still resonated when Domesday book was written in 1086. When the sequencing of Domesday book is considered we find that in almost all cases the shire town appears at the beginning of its shire chapter, but in the case of Derbyshire, this is not so. Derby is at the end of the Derbyshire chapter next to Nottingham. This odd juxtaposition is because these two counties were originally both part of the Mercian province, the Peak District, and this is why they shared a number of institutions even during the Norman period, such as the post of Sheriff. A similar unease between the new shires and the older sokes and multiple estates is noted in Yorkshire by Rollason (2003), where the vast and then new county of Yorkshire sat rather badly with the former Northumbrian kingdom's administrative arrangements.

It is commonly thought that Derby is the only town identified in Domesday book for Derbyshire. This is, of course, not correct. Derby has a separate listing as the "shire town". In all other cases except one, Derbyshire locations identify a total population for any given manor, a very few also identify a small number of people associated with a church and its priests, such as at Ashbourne and Bakewell. However the Derbyshire Domesday book listings for any given place invariably identify the number of "villains" and "bordars" (villagers and smallholders if you like) in the whole manor including any berewicks. The one exception is, not surprisingly, the old Mercian capital of the Peak, Wirksworth. The Domesday listing for Wirksworth is the only one in Derbyshire which provides two population figures. The figure for Wirksworth itself, as opposed to the separate figure for its manorial outliers, can only refer to the townsfolk. Here is a translation from the original Latin (Thorn, 2007):

The King's land:

M In WIRKSWORTH 3 carucates of land taxable. Land for 4 ploughs. A priest and a church; 16 villains and 9 bordars who have 4 ploughs.
--

3 plumbariae; meadow, 26 acres; pasturable woodland 2 leagues long and 2 leagues wide.
Berewicks in this manor
In CROMFORD 2 carucates; MIDDLETON(-by-Wirksworth) 2 carucates;
HOPTON 4 carucates; (WELLEDENE) 2 carucates; CARSINGTON 2 carucates;
CALLOW 2 carucates; (Kirk) IRETON 4 carucates.
18 carucates of land taxable. Land for as many ploughs. In these
36 villains and 13 bordars who have 14 ½ ploughs.
Meadow, 14 acres; pasturable woodland and underwood 3 leagues long and 2 wide.
(With Darley, Matlock, Ashbourne and Parwich, with their outliers,
it paid £32 and 6½ sesters of honey before 1066; now £40 of pure silver)
(Land of the King. King William holds it. King Edward held it)

Ralph, son of Hubert's land:

In WIRKSWORTH, LEA and TANSLEY 4 bovates of land taxable. Land for 1 plough.
Now 3 villains and 7 borders have 1 plough
And meadow, 2½ acres. Pasturable woodland ½ league long and as wide.
Value before 1066, 10s; now 7s.
This land lies in the lands of Crich, but it pays tax in Hamston Wapentake.
Leofric and his brother Leofnoth had it.
(Land of Ralph son of Hubert)

Unlike many areas of Derbyshire, Wirksworth is not described as "waste" which was an after-effect of the "Harrying of the North" by William the Conqueror following the rebellion of the Saxon earls of Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex. It can only be assumed from this that Wirksworth received a measure of protection due to it being part of William's own landholdings. Nevertheless, the Normans having taken all the lands of the former Saxon earls were pre-occupied by keeping down the Saxon population and it may be that the construction of the castle at Duffield by Henry Ferrers was to ensure the two main centres of Derbyshire's population, Wirksworth and Derby, were kept apart.

Interpreting Wirksworth's Domesday book entry:

The King's land:

"In Wirksworth there are 360 taxable acres of land. Land for 4 ploughs.
A priest and a church there, and 16 villagers and 9 small holders having 4 ploughs.
There are 3 lead works and 26 acres of meadow.
Wood, pasturable, 3 miles in length and 3 miles in breadth.
Outliers in this Manor.

In Cromford 240 acres, Middleton by Wirksworth 240 acres, Hopton 480 acres, Welledene (Willow Dean Farm) 240 acres, Carsington 240 acres, Callow 240 acres, Kirk Ireton 480 acres; 2160 taxable acres of land. Land for as many ploughs.

In these there are 36 villagers, and 13 smallholders, having 14 ploughs and a half.
There 14 acres of meadow.

Wood, pasturable, and under-wood, 4½ miles in length and 3 in breadth.

With Darley, Matlock, Ashbourne and Parwich, with their outliers, it paid £32 and 6½ sesters of honey before 1066; now £40 of pure silver"

The manor at Wirksworth was sufficiently large that not only did the King own most of it, but Ralph Hubert owned some. He owned the part of Wirksworth manor which lay east of the Derwent in Lea and Tansley and although this was attached to his main lands in Crich, the clue to its correct status is in the statement that it pays tax in Wirksworth Wapentake (Crich is in Morleystone Wapentake).

Ralph Hubert's land:

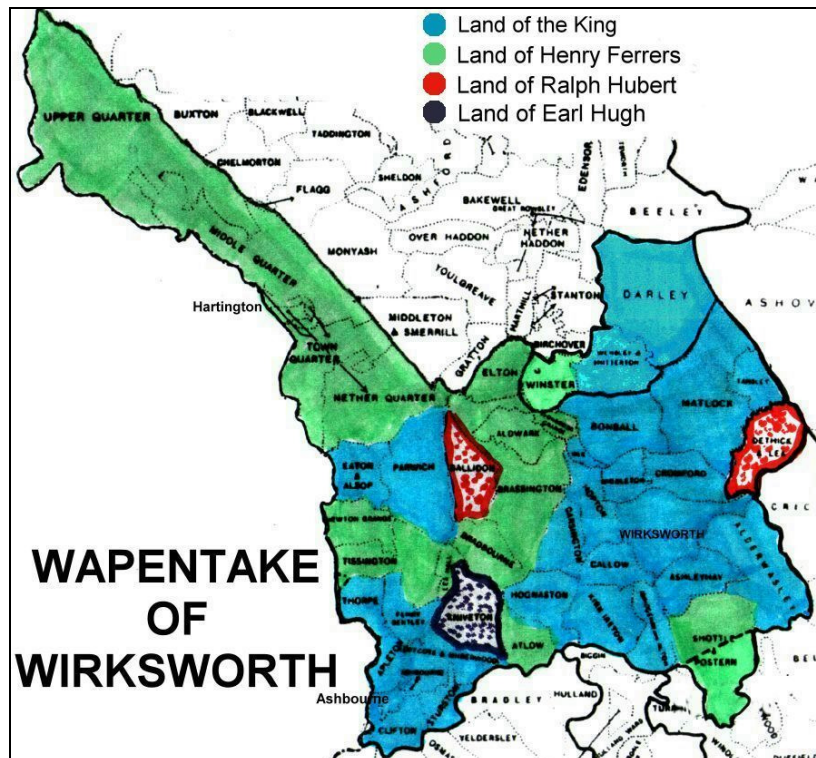
In Wirksworth, Lea and Tansley there are 60 taxable acres of land. Land for 1 plough. Now there are 3 villagers and 7 smallholders have 1 plough. There is 2½ acres of meadow.

Pasturable woodland ¾ mile long and as wide.

Value before 1066, 10s; now 7s.

This land lies in the lands of Crich, but it pays tax in Hamston (Wirksworth) Wapentake.

You will note the main Wirksworth entry begins with an "M" denoting manor and but Ralph's land does not, as it is not a manor in its own right. Consequently the figures for "Wirksworth, Lea and Tansley" should be seen as part of the manor of Wirksworth as well.



The Wapentake of Wirksworth ("Hamstan Wapentake") with its manors and landowners identified from Domesday book 1086

In terms of population there is a vast weight of argument to be had about the implications for calculating population from Domesday, which was not a population survey, the best that can be done is to calculate a multiplier for the number of people given. We will try an example multiplier of 6 and then add 5% for slaves. The six being the villager or smallholder, his wife, say three offspring and one elderly parent.

This would give some nominal figures for Derbyshire manors, taking those locations which were later considered to be the chief towns: Thorn (2007) takes the view that Wirksworth was one of six ancient boroughs of Derbyshire, the others being Ashbourne, Bakewell, Castleton, Chesterfield and Derby, but notes that the evidence for burgage for Wirksworth (a guide to borough status) is limited to a single reference in the cartulary of Tutbury Priory. However, taking these locations in terms of their possible manorial populations in Domesday, using the multiplier example, we find in Derby a population

estimate of 1,027; Wirksworth 536; Bakewell 340; Newbold (inc the hamlet of Chesterfield) 258; Ashbourne 208; Castleton had no population associated with it being listed only as a castle. These populations may seem a little low, Domesday notes that Derby "before 1066" had 243 burgesses but records only 100 in 1086. It is possible that the "before 1066" statement means just that, at some point before 1066 the population was much greater and it may be that the apparent collapse in population might be a result of the 1048 earthquake and the disease which followed, which, if it were the case, would possibly have implications for the population of Derbyshire generally, including Wirksworth.

Wirksworth's population may also be technically under-represented in Domesday, for example Wirksworth is supposed to have a Soke (the manor may represent the Soke), but Domesday records no Sokemen in Wirksworth. This is because Domesday is recording only those people responsible for paying dues, especially Royal dues, and omits many groups who did not have such responsibilities: in the Derbyshire section of Domesday Sokemen only appear intermittently and in some, not all, Wapentakes. Sokemen are a kind of rent payer and thus may well be partially omitted, as Stafford (1985) observes. Thorn noted of Derbyshire in Domesday that it was one of the first shires to be undertaken, and because of this it is less well organised than later examples such as Cheshire.

Roffe (2007) took the view that the population multipliers typically used for Domesday, might in fact, be serious underestimates, that the total population of the country should be considered as nearer 5 million not 1.75-2.25 million. If this were correct, then we should not be using a multiplier of 6 and 5% for slaves, but something nearer 15. This would give the population of Wirksworth in 1086 as perhaps 1,270 rather than the 536 noted above. Such assessments may now depend on further academic assessment of Domesday and other documents.

Conclusions of this report

Rahtz (1977), as noted in the introduction, made the most salient point in his work on the (West) Mercian towns. He said that, with the then exception of Worcester, no survey had been made which attempted to bring together the historical, topographical, numismatic or other sources and relate them to what archaeological evidence existed. If this was true for such great cities as Chester and Gloucester or ancient towns such as Shrewsbury and Tamworth, how much the more is it the case for Wirksworth? One of the recurrent phrases found when considering almost any article written about 'lost Lutudarum' is "the interminable search". In reality, this should better be described as the "interminable speculation" as there had been no systematic search whatsoever, and this is more than regrettable, but perhaps inevitable. Hodges (1991) noted: "As in most upland parts of Britain this period (in the Peak) has not been studied in any systematic way".

The case against Wirksworth being a Roman city long rested on the narrow pillar of the shortage of physical evidence from within the town itself, but to date little such evidence had been sought or analysed: For example, in the 130 years of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society, not one test pit, barely one trench, had been dug in Wirksworth, not one field walked, not one wall considered and precious few finds recorded officially. One often heard of old quarrymen telling of all kinds of 'ancient' artefacts they found while quarrying, but not one of these is known to have been recorded. The purpose of the Wirksworth Roman Project was to attempt to address the uncertainty of Wirksworth's early history and the archaeological gap.

This study has sought to synthesise what is known, and in some cases that had been precious little. Only when it is all gathered can we consider its significance. There is sufficient evidence for Wirksworth to be considered 'lost Lutudarum'. Originally the oppida of a British tribe with a modest industrial activity smelting lead in the woods; the Romans, over a 300 years period, made it one of their "noble cities" and when they declined, it survived their demise. Its aristocracy became accustomed to their different world, as a Province of the kingdom of Mercia and changed the name of their capital to Wirksworth, not the 'enclosure' of some Saxon called 'Weorc', but possibly signifying in Anderson's view: "fortified enclosure" or "City of the Fortress".

Lutudarum is a recorded Roman town intimately involved in the production of lead and in the administration of its production, as well as the administration of its surrounding district. Of the many candidates for Lutudarum, only Wirksworth sufficiently speaks its case, the indicators of this case are: the local place names, both in Wirksworth and nearby; the situation of government in the district at the time of early Mercia; continuity of Christianity established in a location with a big enough population to sustain it; continuity of the lead mining industry due to the revenues to be gained from maintaining it; the longevity and importance of Wirksworth in the written historical record; and that Wirksworth lies at the route centre of three known Roman Roads: the Rocester and Chesterfield Road; the Wirksworth and Little Chester Ridge way, and the Buxton and Wirksworth road, "The Street".

Above all, it is the matter of the antiquity and importance of St Mary's Church in Wirksworth which, when taken into consideration alongside Bassett's work on St Helen's in Worcester and the ancient churches and their parishes of Gloucester, Lichfield and Wroxeter, leads to the inescapable conclusion that the presence of such a church is representative only of those found in the late Roman civitas capitals (Dark, 1994). The presence of the Wirksworth Stone, an early Christian sarcophagus lid found below the church floor near the altar, and originating from well before the date of most of the other sculptural material of the Peak, such as the stone crosses, confirms the early importance and presence of this church. This, together with the "Eccles" place name, would make Wirksworth the lost capital of the Lutaderenses, Lutudarum, even if we set all other evidence aside.

The presence of Wirksworth as the major settlement of central Derbyshire in the years before the Viking invasion is certain, and again the presence of the church is key to this, the Saxons do not build major churches in fields, a Minster Church such as St Mary's has to serve a big enough congregation to sustain it and the presence of a town is therefore unavoidable. The town survived through the entire Mercian period into the Danelaw and to the very end of Anglo-Saxon rule in England, at the Norman conquest. Wirksworth appears in 1086 in Domesday book and its position as the key market town of central Derbyshire remained intact throughout the middle ages, indeed by 1563 when a diocesan census of households in Derbyshire was recorded (Riden, 1978), the parish of Wirksworth was only slightly smaller in number of households than the combined parishes of Derby. Wirksworth contained 470 households and Derby 507, or using our previous multiplier example, Derby would have a nominal population of 3,192 and Wirksworth 2,960.

The history of Wirksworth and the history of the Peak District are inextricably linked, and although virtually every other town and village of the Peak has a valuable and useful history book about it, Wirksworth to date has not. This study therefore represents an attempt to address the history of Wirksworth in the years before the Norman Conquest. Work being undertaken by the Victoria County History will doubtless provide for the period between the Conquest and the modern world.

Summary conclusions of the five reports

Five reports have been undertaken by the Wirksworth Roman Project. The Project owed its beginnings to work done in 2005 in which the potential Roman origins of Wirksworth were considered in an initial consultation document "Origins and history of Wirksworth. The search for Lutudarum: evidence and assessment" (of which this work is the final incarnation). A major issue arising from that original document was that the archaeological background which one might expect for such a venerable town did not exist, with the archaeological resource to provide such a foundation being wholly absent, and the Derbyshire Archaeological Society having shown no interest in the town. To address this weakness, an application was made in April of 2006 to the Derbyshire Community Foundation to fund an archaeological project for Wirksworth. This application was successful and funds were allocated in June 2006 for one year.

The first work done by the group which gathered to carry out the Project was a training exercise and the location chosen was a ford near Hardhurst Farm, known as Wirksford, at the suggestion of Mary Wiltshire and Sue Woore, whose work on the Duffield Frith is well known locally. We felt we had not got the archaeological experience to consider the town itself to begin with. To the surprise of all concerned the little ford concealed a secret. It wasn't a ford at all. It was a curiously well-built and substantial culvert, it was approached by a section of ruinous causeway and a well-made wide gritstone roadway ran off it. However, we could find no dating evidence and the associated report "The Culvert at Wirksford" said so.

It was then suggested to us that we might be able to date the culvert by comparing it with others which had known features associated with them. This didn't prove exactly to be the case but it led to the assessment of nearly 30 culverts and stream crossings between Wirksworth and Duffield on the east bank of the Ecclesbourne, at which point it was found that six of them appeared to have the same generic construction as the culvert at Wirksford and that a section of known Roman road, Longwalls Lane, appeared to run in proximity to the culvert at Wilderbrook Lane End ("Knaves Cross"). A flurry of activity then took place which resulted in the conclusion that the six culvert sites were features probably associated with Longwalls Lane and that at Wirksford was one of the series, therefore of Roman origin and thus part of a Roman road route along the ridge-way between Wirksworth and Duffield, of which Longwalls Lane near Blackbrook and North Lane near Milford represented well preserved sections. This resulted in a further report: "A ridge-way route between Wirksworth and Little Chester, Derby: a Roman road its constructional features".

At this point it had become clear that we couldn't do everything that needed to be done quickly enough, the year's funding had expired and we still had a long list of outstanding problems to solve, so we carried on, now with the kind help of the Wirksworth Heritage Centre. The most serious of these outstanding problems was the question of the route of The Street, the Roman road which ran south-eastwards from Buxton and which was invariably thought to run to Little Chester via Carsington. One of the first documentary tasks we had undertaken was the plotting of all officially known Roman finds in and around Wirksworth on a very large scale map. In the case of the known section of The Street and of the Ridge-way, known finds clustered around these roads. But in the case of the supposed line of The Street between Carsington and Little Chester, there was a vast blank space, there were no known finds. This caused us to question the received wisdom about the supposed southern route of The Street and in due course we found that, amongst other problems, some fumbling ineptitude on the part of William Bennet, Bishop of Cloyne, in 1817 had effectively destroyed all subsequent rational assessment for the route south of Longcliffe. The consequent wholesale documentary revision and associated archaeological work finally identified the route of the southern section of The Street as Brassington Lane and its destination as Wirksworth, and Wirksworth as a major route centre in the pre-turnpike road network of the Peak District. The associated report "The Street: A re-evaluation of the Roman road from Wirksworth to Buxton" was published, after a further year of effort, in summer 2008.

Finally, we undertook two limited examinations in the town, summarised in our report "Issues in the Archaeology of Wirksworth", which should be taken into consideration with this report. The complete and utter lack of any prior archaeological examination of Wirksworth was breathtaking. At the beginning of our Project no archaeological evidence existed which was capable of supporting the documentary assessment that Wirksworth had a likely Roman past associated with a conceptual civitas district of the Lutudarenses, and this past was probably an important and wholly overlooked one in national terms - but the results of the five reports begin to do this. We have put the matter "on the radar" and hope that (at the very least) some developmental archaeology may improve matters in the future. Our very grateful thanks are extended to all who have been involved or who have helped in any way whatsoever.

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