



Issues in the archaeology of Wirksworth Examinations of the Great Hannage and the Vicarage Garden

Wirksworth Archaeological Society
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Contents	Page
Introduction to the closing report	3
Topography, hydrology and related issues	3
The archaeology	6
Location of the examinations	7
The Great Hannage examination	9
The Hannage place-name	9
The investigation at the Great Hannage	10
The Vicarage Garden examination	20
The investigation at the Vicarage Garden	20
Conclusions	29
Great Hannage conclusions	29
Vicarage Garden conclusions	29
 Summary conclusions of the five reports	 31
 Appendix 1 Summary table of minor and visual investigations	 32
Appendix 2 Previous archaeological examinations in Wirksworth	33
Appendix 3 The boundaries of the Hannages	34
Appendix 4 Sough issues	37
Appendix 5 A corpus of stone sculpture in St Mary's church	39
Appendix 6 Consideration of the fort question	47
 Reference List	 49

Other reports by the Wirksworth Roman Project:

Origins & History of Wirksworth, 2nd edition, January 2009 (first edition 2006)
The Culvert at Wirksworth: an Archaeological Evaluation Report. May 2007
A Ridgeway Route between Wirksworth and Derby and its constructional features. August 2007
The Street: A re-evaluation of the Roman road from Wirksworth to Buxton, May 2008

A word of thanks

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**By
Anton Shone**

2009

Website: www.wirksworthromanproject.co.uk

Introduction

Principal archaeological work in this report by Dean Smart; John Wheeldon; Sandra Green; Mary Wiltshire; Sue Woore; John G Evans; Ivan Wain; Rob Slater and Anton Shone.

In St Mary's church is an early Christian sarcophagus lid known as the Wirksworth Stone. Most commentators regard it as dating from about 800AD or before. It covered the grave of a person thought to be of holy or saintly status and was found in 1820 below the altar pavement: the iconography of the Stone is of humility and virtue rewarded (Hawkes, 1994). The Stone is testimony to the great antiquity of St Mary's and is described by Leonard (1993) in the definitive work about the architecture of Derbyshire churches as the greatest treasure of any Derbyshire church. It is the presence of this stone which is the reason why Wirksworth deserves the greater attention of archaeologists.

Evidence of Wirksworth's early beginnings is compelling. Wirksworth is named in the earliest genuine Mercian charter of the Peak District, from 835; The town was known to be at the centre of the largest network of Portways in central Derbyshire and a rare Northumbrian Scaet coin of 750 was found in Church Street. By the late 1990's these combined factors had led those historians who had considered Wirksworth to take the view that St Mary's was an important and ancient church of Minster status (Turbutt, 1999). However, this view appeared to exist in some kind of vacuum, as no understanding of why the church or town should be present during or before the Saxon period accompanied it, and prevailing opinion was that Wirksworth was of little or no consequence to the greater history of the Peak District and had no possible Roman or Iron Age beginnings.

In getting to grips with these issues, the Project, almost accidentally, looked at the issue of the road network first and it transpired that the Portways essentially represent routes which date from the Roman period or before, thus Wirksworth was certainly a major route centre in the Roman period. This itself would account for the presence of the Minster church, because such churches are at the centre of large parishes and require effective communications to serve those parishes, but it also gives support to the question of the settlement in general, as an effective road network is necessary to trade and the establishment of a market.

The early mediaeval component of Wirksworth, identified by Gill Stroud in 1991 centres around the church and it is salient to examine why this should be the case.

Topography, hydrology and related issues.

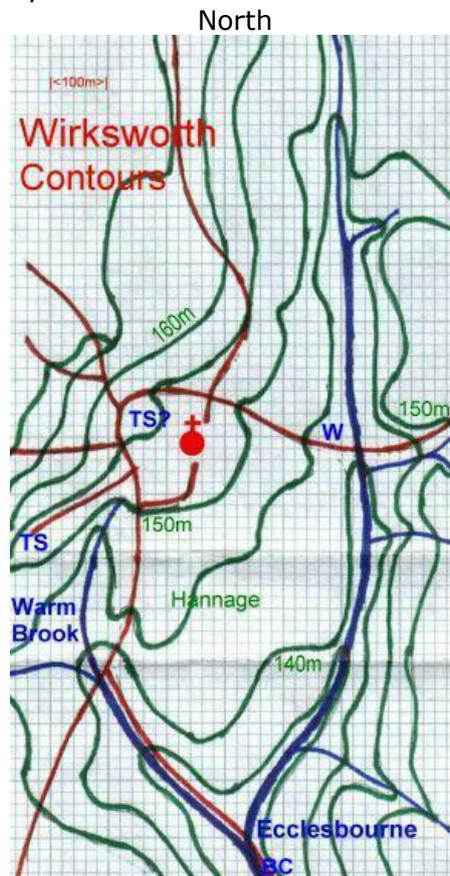
The early mediaeval settlement area of the town is constructed on a peninsula or island bounded by the headwaters of the Ecclesbourne on the east side, the course of the former Warmbrook on the west and south sides, and a dry valley, possibly a continuation of the Dale, which runs down the centre of Coldwell Street on the north side. This potentially renders the central area defensible, only a short section of ditch or palisade would have been necessary to close the gap in the surrounding streams, between Coldwell Street and the Causeway. Many of the low lying areas immediately around the streams were extremely boggy, so much so that in living memory horses were lost in the wet ground where Water Lane crossed the Ecclesbourne.

This peninsula rises gently from the south east corner at Water Lane about 10 metres by contour up to the old Market Place in the north west corner. Prior to the two archaeological examinations described in this report, it had been felt that the underlying geology on the east side of the Ecclesbourne was gritstone (Millstone grit, specifically Lower Kinderscout Grit), on the west side was carboniferous limestone and Wirksworth itself sat on an intervening bed of limestone shales (Stephens, 1929). Whilst this is true in general terms, the peninsula appears to be formed of a hill of glacial solifluction material overlying the shale, being a deep layer of hard packed limestone rubble in sandy grit.

In addition to the potential suitability of this site as a dry hill in comparison to the surroundings, it is necessary to consider its suitability for a settlement in terms of water supply. Once on the limestone plateau water becomes a serious problem for settlements because of the permeability of the rock and reliable water supplies were difficult. However, being at the junction of the limestone and gritstone strata means that Wirksworth is well supplied with streams, springs and wells. Most importantly, some of these springs were thermal, and it was necessary to look back into historic documents for evidence of this. The hydrology of Wirksworth was drastically changed during the Jacobean and Georgian periods when many drainage soughs were built, virtually eliminating the thermal springs and the streams they

fed. The first sough being the Dovegang Sough, started in 1632. A good example of this loss is the Warm Brook, which ran along the east side of the Meadows, and where its course can now only be traced by a little avenue of trees, and then along the south side of Water Lane, where its course is completely obliterated. The thermal issue is crucial for an effective settlement because it means that there is a reliable water supply in the winter – your springs don't freeze up.

Short (1734) discussed two warm brooks in Wirksworth, one on the east side of the town, one on the west: "That on the east side of the town is a sough or level a mile long, made for carrying water from their lead work(ing)s; where it appears first to the Day, they have made a very convenient bath." This must be the Hannage sough, started in 1693, which is thought to have drained a warm spring in the churchyard (see appendix 4). He then goes on: "There was formerly here a very good warm spring, but by sinking so many shafts in quest of lead, they have lost it and most of their cold springs." In any case, once the Hannage sough reached Ratchwood mine in 1733, the whole hydrology of the area was affected, resulting in yet more spring losses to the east and north of the town. In the progress of its various stops and starts of construction in the nearly 30 years it took to complete, the Hannage sough might have worked wonders for the drainage of the lead mines but it did terrible damage to the springs in and around the town. Thomas Bagshaw a local lawyer much involved in litigation about the soughs said, in 1702: "the town of Wirksworth hath borne the losses of their water from the town to the impairing of their health, being utterly deprived by the sough of as fine springs in the town as the Kingdome had." (Slack, 2000). It is not possible to certainly identify the churchyard spring, there are no accurate records. The church must however have had a water supply: babies have to be Christened and priests wash. The churchwarden's accounts for 1697 report the repair of the church well hole (though without giving an exact location) and later, a spring which may or may not equate to the church well is listed in Wirksworth Church-yard by Farey (1811), though again in a way making it impossible to know where, indeed Farey may have been working from documents about the churchyard spring without knowing it may have ceased to run by the time of his work in 1811.

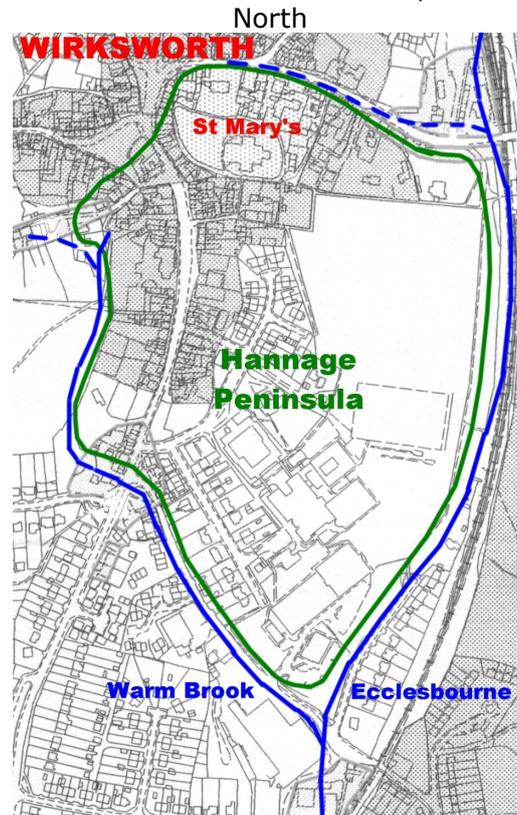


5 metre contour scale map of Wirksworth with pre-1700 river system and roads

TS denotes the thermal springs. W denotes the well in the Tanyard. BC denotes Bath Close

As far as the Warm Brook on the west side is concerned, the warm spring which fed it was at Gate House on the Causeway and it later flowed into the short-lived Meadowcroft sough which then drained back into the Warm Brook at the corner of Orchard House. Hackett (1863) observed that "at Warm Brook" two springs, one warm, one cold, had been so near each other that a man might have placed one hand in each at the same time, but this is a slight misunderstanding of the location of these two

springs which were actually at the bottom of the Dog Kennel watershaft of the Meadowcroft sough, which was at the west end of the outbuildings at Gate House. The complete loss of this warm spring, and of the whole Warm Brook itself, was probably due to the effect of the later Meerbrook sough which had reached a point in 1798 capable of affecting the hydrology of the whole of west side of the town. A temperature survey undertaken by the Project in 2008 suggests none of these thermal springs still run, though the Pitty Wood stream, further south at Millers Green, does have a higher temperature than one would have expected in comparison to the norm, perhaps an indicator of continuing thermal activity. Bray (1783) says there were two chalybeate springs (containing iron salts) in Wirksworth, one in Fishpool Flat. This was a meadow adjacent to the Ecclesbourne about 2-300 metres south of its junction with Warmbrook. Locally the other was supposed to be "near the Derby road", a statement which might render it intractable to solve, however a spring does rise east of St Helen's Lane (the old Derby Road) and flows down through houses at Wash Green, powering domestic water wheels in some of the cellars, presumably for weaving or spinning. In 1827 Wash Green had a tape-mill, brickworks, saw-mill and a bleach and dye yard, all presumably powered by this stream, which Slack (2000) regarded as being the headwater of the Ecclesbourne, which in earlier times had also powered Wash Green lead smelting mill.



Wirksworth central area, showing the Ecclesbourne and the former course of the Warm Brook

So we have a site that is potentially defensible and had an accessible year round water supply, at the head of a sheltered valley containing both good woodland (for fires and for building) and good agricultural land. It is also necessary to observe that Wirksworth exists in close proximity to a number of recorded Iron Age or Bronze Age barrows and that the number of unrecorded barrows or tumulii is far greater in close proximity to the town than is conventionally understood, for example there are at least three major tumulii opposite Wetherwick on the high ground at Hopton Lane immediately above the town. This high ground, which also has a megalith on the Brassington Lane side, is known to contain a number of burials discovered in 1828 adjacent to Brassington Lane which were accompanied by jet beads like large buttons, which Flindall (2005) regarded as indicators of the Bronze Age, but could equally have been late Roman.

Finally, in terms of a putative Iron Age settlement or "oppida", a conclusion of our report about the route between Wirksworth and Little Chester was that in so far as that route ran along the ridge-way between Wirksworth and Duffield Castle, such a route was possibly at least Iron Age in origin. If therefore, these issues are taken together it is conceivable that the development of Wirksworth as a settlement and route centre was due to there possibly being an Iron Age oppida on the Hannage peninsula, and that this would account for later development in terms of Roman interest and a road network, particularly taken in conjunction with the development of the trade in lead, and thereafter a conceivable continuity through the Saxon period and beyond, to the present day.

The Archaeology

It is important to moderate expectations of what could be achieved by a community project such as ours. We are not professional archaeologists, nor did the Project have large-scale resources to carry out area excavations. The work done within the town was of necessity small scale, and this must be born in mind. Observers should also take note of a number of issues:

1. We consider the nearest appropriate comparator in terms of an urban environment to be Chesterfield, and note that until 1973 almost no work had been done on the archaeology of that town either. Most of the archaeology found in Chesterfield near St Mary's Gate and Holywell Street has been the result of development work and it was this developmental archaeology which eventually found the Roman fort in the church precinct there, for which there had been no prior evidence. In all probability future archaeological examinations in Wirksworth will also be development related.

2. We considered, and have found that, the depth of the overburden which lies between the modern surface and the early mediaeval occupation layer is easily in excess of a metre and often more, this renders it extremely unlikely that chance finds of Roman or Saxon material will be made by anyone digging a hole in their garden or putting up a small structure. This is consistent with the depth of the overburden at other urban sites. Only where the overburden is less at the rural edges of the town have casual finds been made, such as the Derbyware shards at Pittywood Road.

3. There was a false (though not surprising) public expectation that the Project would dig a hole and find either a fort or some major feature at the first attempt. This cannot be the case. We have not even dug one hundredth of one percent of the town area, and we had not the resources to do more. The wholesale lack of prior work also meant that there was nothing on which to base a locational judgement about where best to start. Our considered judgement was to take two accessible locations as near as possible to the church, hence the Great Hannage and the Vicarage Garden.

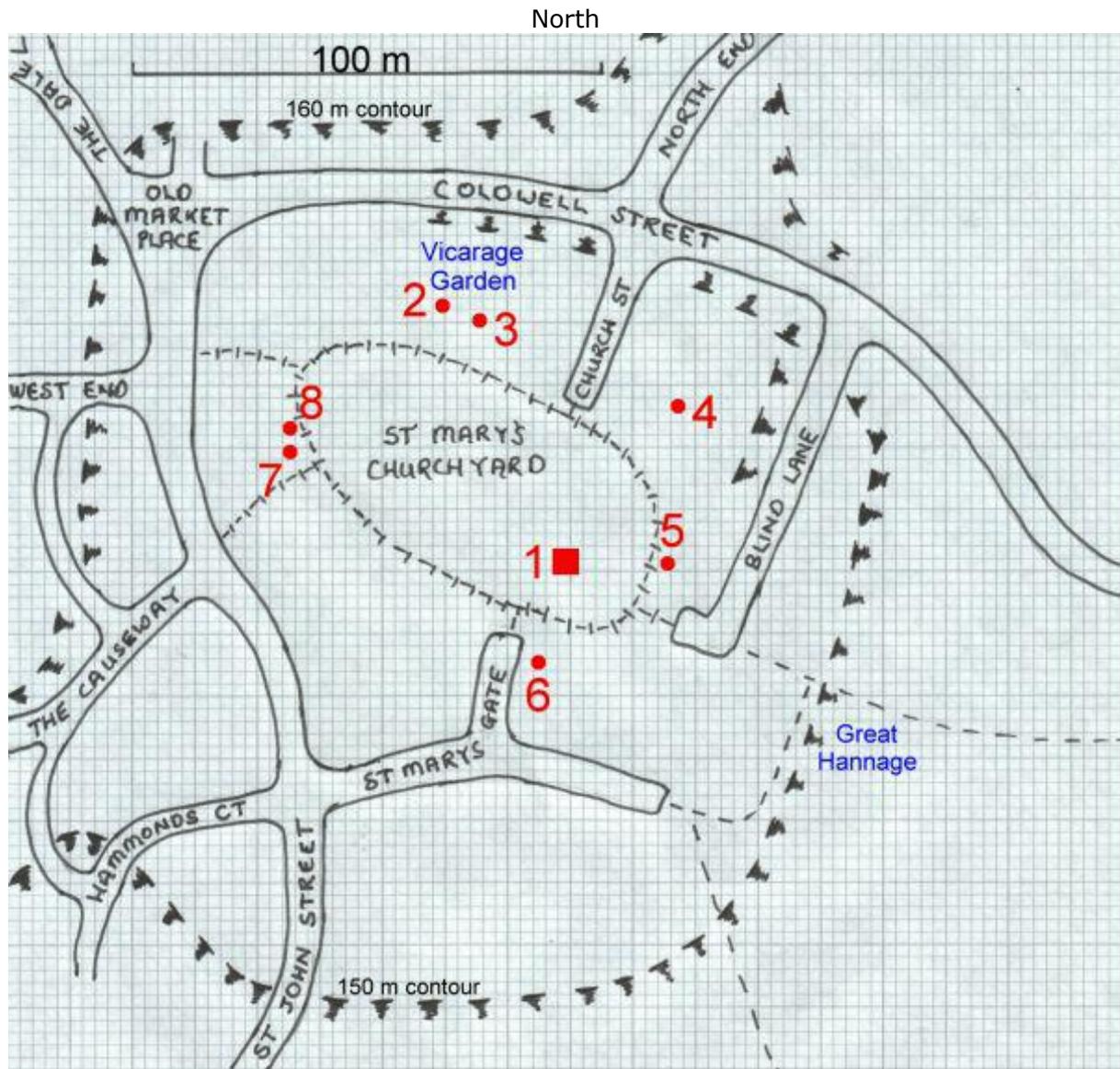
4. Similar to the view that a fort or mosaic would pop out of the ground in the initial work, was a view that we should find large amounts of pottery or coinage. This is all very well if you know where to look, or are fortunate to light upon a major feature at the first attempt, but there is a high level of uncertainty about the Wirksworth site. However, by way of re-assurance, and to offer a control (in the scientific sense) we might look at the work done by Leicester University at Little Chester in 2007 (Tate, 2008):

The examination site at Alfreton Road was 150 metres from the known fort at its nearest point. Six trenches were put in, of which the four furthest away were empty of Roman material. The two which contained material were: Trench 3, having a total excavated area of 60 square metres containing 184 Roman pottery shards, one unidentifiable radiate coin and no building material, or a density of 3 shards per square metre. Trench 4, having a total excavated area of 46 square metres contained 16 Roman pottery shards and no other artefacts whatsoever, or a density of about a third of a shard per square metre.

In the case of our examination at the Great Hannage, three trenches ACD and four test pits BEFG were put in, of which one trench and three pits were empty of Roman material. The three which contained material were trenches A and C and pit E. The total excavated area of trenches A and C and pit E was 8 square metres containing 8 shards of Roman pottery and two pieces of a single tegula roof tile of a type consistent with those found at Little Chester, a density of 1 shard per square metre, lower than Alfreton Road Trench 3 but higher than Alfreton Road Trench 4.

Location of the examinations

The Great Hannage, now Anthony Gell School playing field, is the largest field indicated on the tithe map of Wirksworth of 1837 on the east side of the town. There are several related field names in this area, known collectively as the Hannages. The archaeological examination concentrated on the north-west corner of the Great Hannage, nearest to St Mary's church precinct. The Rectory Garden, hereafter referred to as the Vicarage Garden, is on the north side of St Mary's churchyard.



Streetplan and contours around St Mary's churchyard.

Numbers in red show the church and also burials outside the current churchyard boundary

1. The church and the site of the sarcophagus tomb (see appendix - 5)
2. Vicarage Garden burials (this archaeological examination)
3. Vicarage Garden burials (this archaeological examination)
4. Probable burials found in 1986 (Undocumented archaeological examination)
5. Burials found while pipe laying in 1970s in front of Almshouses (Michael Handley pers comm)
6. Burials found while constructing the Parish Rooms (Marion Vaughan pers comm)
7. Burial found during work at rear of no 25 St John Street in 1922 (Michael Handley pers comm)
8. Burials found at rear of Westons Store 27 Market Place in 1970s (Michael Handley pers comm)

North



Wirksworth from the air in 1945

A denotes the Hannage examination; B denotes the Vicarage Garden examination
The east-west "crop marks" near A in this photo are possibly the result of football.

The Great Hannage examination

The Hannage place-name

The Hannage place name presents a number of problems, not least that the conventional translation from the Old English (OE), given by Cameron, 1959, gives you "High Edge" or "High Edge Enclosure". Clearly the Hannages are not high related to anything as far as we can tell, thus the conventional translation makes no sense. The Great Hannage and its rather lesser fellows are known within living memory to have sloped gently down on the east side to the Hannage brook, the headwaters of the Ecclesbourne, and more or less the same, though a little more steeply, down to Water Lane, the former course of the Warm brook, on the south side. Modern levelling work has given the Great Hannage an embankment overlooking the railway (which runs in the course of the Hannage brook, the brook is now mostly in a culvert under the railway), but this embankment was not original and cannot represent any apparent "high edge". Alternatively the "high" of "high edge" could be understood as meaning "important" as opposed to having height, so that "Hannage" might mean important boundary or edge in the sense that the original town boundary lay in the Hannage. Neither of these possibilities feel instinctively correct in relation to the topography. There are, however, several further possibilities:

The first alternative Hannage place name to compare is from Sutton in Herefordshire. In that case, because many Hereford place names are Celtic in origin, it had been translated as "Old Homestead Enclosure", from the celtic "hendre". There are some Celtic place-name survivals in Derbyshire, though they are not especially common (Brotherton, 2005). At Sutton, the "Old Homestead" in the Hannage field proved to be a Mercian royal palace near the Sutton Walls hill fort, with crop marks on aerial photographs showing an area of timber post holes corresponding to a large hall structure (White, 1990). Although it might be conceivable that a Mercian palace or hall could be associated with St Mary's as a Minster Church (on the grounds of royal patronage of such a church and Wirksworth also having been a Mercian royal estate) no archaeological evidence is presently apparent for this kind of relationship. A geophysical examination of the Hannages might have been possible, but in 2005 the area was levelled by the School without, apparently, a moment's thought for the archaeological consequences of doing so.

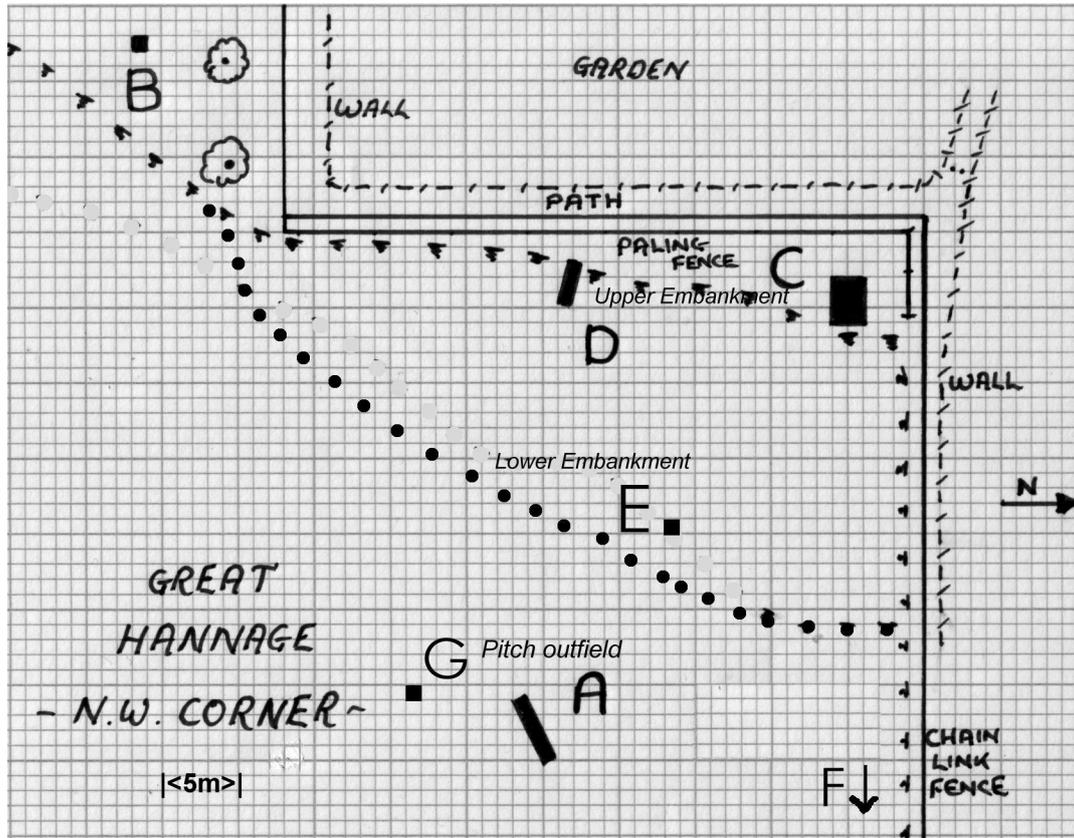
Cameron also noted that "Hannages" may originate from an Old Norse derivation "heyning" meaning enclosed ground or hay meadow. In so far as we have so far found no obvious structural archaeology in the Hannages (though the playing field levelling has destroyed large sections of the mediaeval field surface), it is quite possible that "Hannage" means Hay Meadow. However, Norse place names do not figure largely in the immediate area of Wirksworth in comparison to the eastern parts of Derbyshire, in the former Scarsdale and Morleystone Wapentakes, where Scandinavian place-names occur much more frequently.

Finally, Arkell (2008) noted the derivation of West Hanney in Berkshire, an original spelling of which was Hannige, as being derived from OE hanena ieg "Wildfowl Island". It is not modernly obvious that this derivation is possible in Wirksworth, but before 1700 the Hannages were bounded on the east side by the Hannage Brook and on the south and west sides by the Warm Brook. There is also a dry valley on the north side along Coldwell Street, this can be seen at the north end of the junction with Church Street and may even be the vestigial indication of a stream which possibly ran down the line of Coldwell Street in the distant past. It is conceivable that in antiquity that this would give the impression of an island, even now approaching Wirksworth at the junction of Canterbury Road gives a pronounced impression of coming up onto a plateau into the town and in the case of both the Hannage Brook and the former course of the Warm Brook in the Meadows, the view is indeed upwards to the town. Hannage as an "island" is therefore instinctively a sounder candidate than Cameron's "high edge" derivation, given the topography.

There is no known previous archaeological work for the Hannages themselves with the exception of a note by Barry Joyce (pers comm) that metal detectorists had found three Roman coins in the Hannages some time ago. No weight can be ascribed to metal detectorists if they fail to report their work properly. Any archaeological finds should be reported either to Derby Museum or to the County Archaeologist, as they may (however small) have considerable bearing on other work.

The investigation at the Great Hannage

The Great Hannage at SK 2881 5382 consists of an embanked area (around Trench C) of the playing field in the north-west corner closest to the church, at a base height of 148 metres Ordnance Datum with the playing field having been levelled below it.



Scale drawing of NW corner of Great Hannages showing trench and pit locations
Magnetometry coverage was around trenches A and C and test pit B

Trench A

The first examination trench (trench A) was put in over two anomalies identified by magnetometry at a location in the football pitch outfield between the north west pitch corner and the embankment on the church side, at SK2884 5385. A base line was laid out and a trench pegged out off the base line. In the event only the western end was dug. Extreme care was taken as the location was on the edge of the playing field and the turf was cut and laid aside in sequenced order on base sheeting, so it could be replaced with minimal damage to the outfield.

Under 20 cm turf is a 2 cm layer of dark small round gravel which is part of the playing field drainage, below this is a 10 cm layer of stony dark mixed soil which is the result of the playing field levelling. Below that is a deeper layer about 30 cm of clean hard rubble, which is not modern and not part of the playing field levelling. It is extremely stony with limestone, a little gritstone and churt mixed together. Because the playing field drainage is very efficient, this layer was extremely dry and almost impossible to dig, below this was a layer of darker slightly clay substrate which had smaller gravel, pebble and similar material. At this point it was thought the underlying rock is shale and we did not reach that, the maximum depth achieved being 75 cm. Nothing which might cause a magnetometry anomaly was found.

Finds were entirely from the 10cm mixed soil levelling layer under the drainage gravel. It is thought that when the playing field was levelled, that the surface was scraped back by machine to the rubble substrate (later identified from Trench C as a glacial solifluction strata) and then a layer of "soil" was returned to the surface on top of which the drainage gravel and then the topsoil and turf was laid, this would appear to account for the mixed-up nature and dates of the finds.

Various "modern" shards of pottery were found, cream ware, blue and white "delft" etc, of Victorian and Georgian periods, also brown lead-glazed earthenware (1500-1800); three shards of clay pipe - two different stems and a decorative bowl shard, dating it to after 1750. Also in this layer were two metal items initially thought to be nails, but having a turned spiral appearance as if they were decorative in some way.

In this assemblage was a shard of Roman Severn Valley Ware, very smoothly textured and a delicate pale orange-brown colour. Identified by Gloucester Museum as Gloucester type fabric no 11b possibly dating from the late 1st or early 2nd century of a type associated with storage jars.



Shard of Roman Severn Valley Ware
Centimetre scale

The largest of the finds were two pieces of a single hand made Roman tegula roof tile, the underside of which showed evidence of drying on a sanded floor, the upper side showing a cats paw print, from where the cat had walked over it while it was drying prior to firing. (W13 cm, L11 cm, Depth 18 mm, red/orange clay tile unified colour throughout with stone and grog inclusions, no glaze, 304 grams). Identified by Derby Museum in comparison with tegulae from Little Chester.



Section of a Roman tegula roof tile, cats paw print on left
Centimetre scale (dog paw prints leave claw marks).

Test Pit B

A linear magnetometry anomaly was identified in the embanked corner of the field nearest St Mary's Gate, and consequently a test pit was put in to examine the anomaly. The test pit was 1 metre by 1 metre to a depth of 120 cm. This test pit produced almost entirely mixed tipped unstratified rubble and modern rubbish of all kinds, a great deal of burnt material, charcoal, ash and some rusty metallic infill which might account for the anomaly. Finds were limited to clay pipe shards and brown glazed earthenware pieces. Some of the modern tipping may have been due to the proximity of the pit to St Mary's gate and the former works yard of Wirksworth Urban District Council at the Holland Manor House.

The NW corner embankments

The older embanking (embankment 1) is very pronounced in relation to the rest of the field and is obvious on aerial photographs from the 1990s and on some old photographs of the Hannages. The lower embankment (embankment 2) in the same location is the result of the 2005 levelling work, where the remaining soil, spoil and machine scraped material was piled up against embankment 1.



Trench A with the embanked NW corner of the Great Hannage in the background. The upper embankment (1) is "original"; the lower embankment (2) dates from 2005.

Trench C

An examination trench was put in 3 metres from each side from the corner steel palisade fencing, and was initially laid out to be 2 metres square.



Sequential picture VI showing Trench C at the end of its first day:
Quadrant 2 at the top right of picture

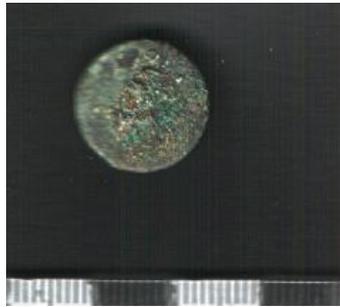
Quadrant 1 south west; Quadrant 2 north west; Quadrant 3 centre south; Quadrant 4 centre north
Later extensions: Quadrant 5 south east; Quadrant 6 north east

The turf and topsoil was then lifted and laid aside and the pit begun with the whole of the initial layer (layer 1) in Quadrant 2 taken out to 50 cm and sieved for finds, yielding various Victorian and modern material.

Below this 30 cm or so of "topsoil" was a 30 cm layer (layer 2) of darkly coloured compacted Victorian and Georgian domestic rubble, gravel, mixed small stone (limestone, gritstone, chert, pebble and gravel), broken brick, glass, Victorian and Georgian pottery and clay pipe shards, with evidence of burning that had produced a response on the magnetometry. This layer yielded a Victorian farthing coin of 1885 towards the top and a tombac button towards the bottom.



Typical shard of brown glazed earthenware
Centimetre scale
Produced between 1500 and 1800,
we regard much of this as being 1700-1800 at this site



Tombac button 15 mm diameter (brass and zinc alloy)
Common between 1770 and 1800. Centimetre scale
The back usually has a brass shank/small ring, often broken off,
the button is often shiny, this one is quite corroded, hence the green tinge

Below part of this layer on the east side of the pit was a section of tipped clay containing similar domestic material (layer 3). These layers yielded a very large assemblage of pottery including china of various kinds and small domestic materials from the Victorian and Georgian periods as well as oyster shells. These two compacted layers also contained some brown glazed earthenware (dating to between 1500 and 1800) also animal bone such as pig ribs. The way in which these items were mixed up suggests they were tipped from one or more other locations, as the very bottom of this layer contained rather more small building rubble as well as the following items:



Shards of feather-trailed Ticknall or Stoke slipware
Brown on yellow. Centimetre scale. The predominant period of production being
1640-1700 for this type of pottery (Spavold, 2005).



Marbles

The left hand one appears to be stone and the one on the right,
which is rather redder, appears to be of clay. Centimetre scale
Note: the left hand ball may perhaps be a stone musket ball rather than a marble,
though musket balls were more commonly of lead.
A lead pistol ball was also found possibly circa 1640/1650



Bowl of a clay pipe

The acorn shape of the bowl and the large foot of the pipe possibly makes
the date 1580 to 1610 (Shopland, 2005) Centimetre scale

Layer 4 composed a fine silty loam soil layer. We take this layer to be the mediaeval soil level of the Great Hannage field onto which all the above rubbish was tipped. In this layer were comparatively few finds, compared to the huge amount of tipped material in the layers above, and with no rubble or rubbish. These were the principal finds:



Mediaeval jug handle 1250-1350

Burley Hill Ware fabric type 01 (verification by Chris Cumberpatch)
the green lead glaze is much thinner than the later Tudor period glazes and
has only been painted on one side of the handle.

The indentations are to ensure the clay dries during firing.
The outer surface is a pale buff-orange, the interior blue grey. Centimetre scale



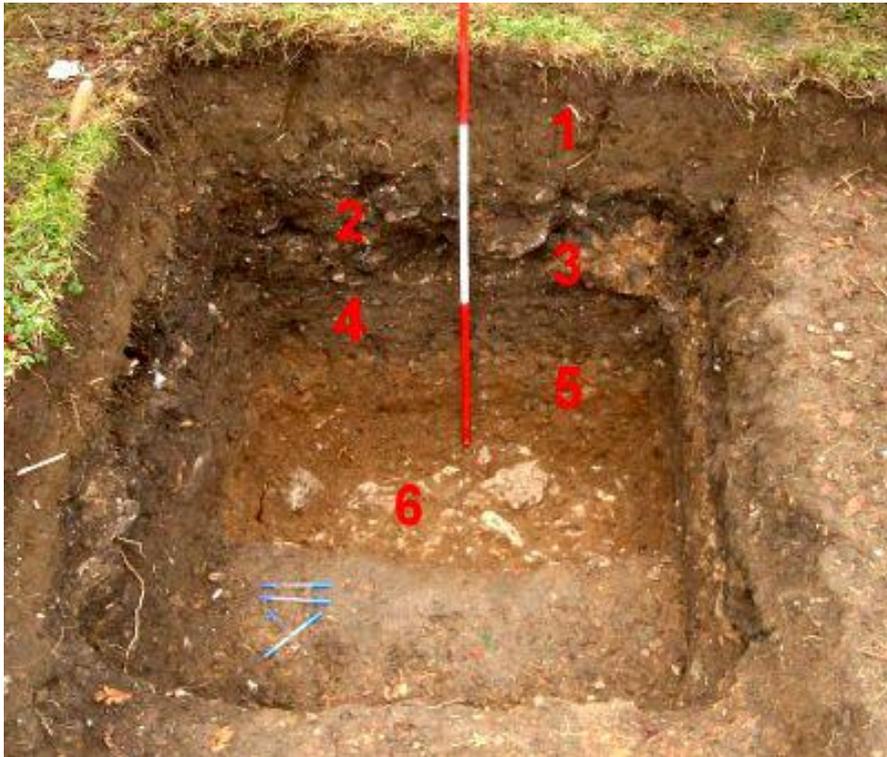
Three shards of Roman Derbyshire ware
Identified by Leicester University
Centimetre scale



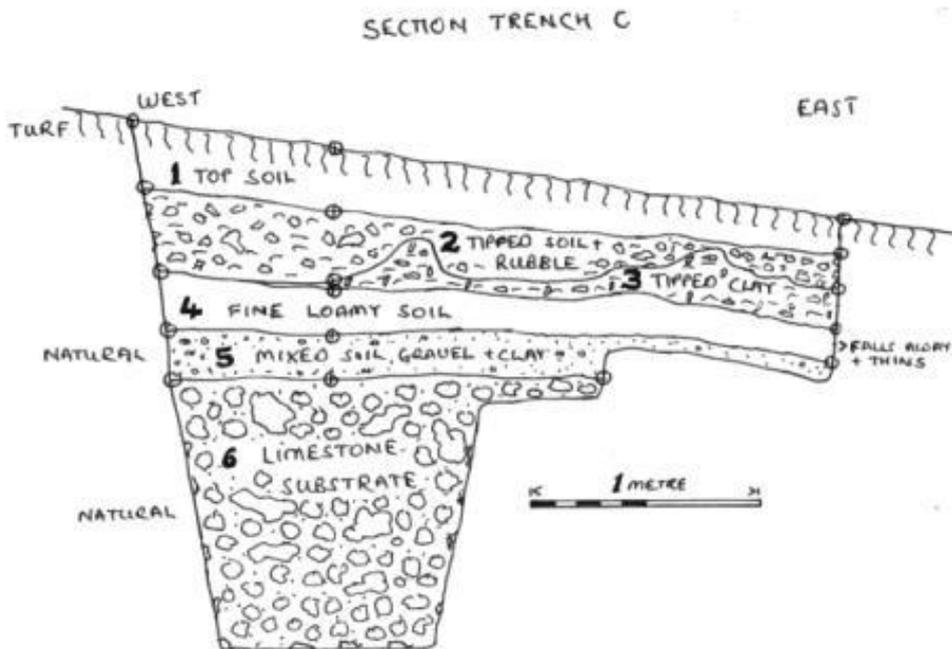
Roman colour coat ware.
Identified by Derby Museum
Centimetre scale

Below this final occupation layer at about 90cm down is yet another layer (layer 5) of less compacted mixed soil, clay and gravel substrate about 30cm deep, with no finds.

From 120cm depth downwards is a grey-white-beige sandy packed limestone rubble material (layer 6) of both large and small worn and sometimes friable eroded rock, with a little small churt, this is also completely clean without any finds and appears to be the geological substrate of this location, the result of glacial solifluction. Some pieces of layer 6 were taken for chemical examination to determine whether the small friable stone found in the layer was indeed limestone or whether it was some kind of mortar. This analysis has determined it all to be limestone, the friability results from the stone being underground in slightly acid conditions for a long (geological) period of time. In this case the limestone rubble is the natural bedrock of this location, due to glacial solifluction, being a natural feature sitting on top of shale, and which appears to form the key strata and contour of the Great Hannage, in effect a dry peninsula of limestone surrounded by boggy ground.



Sequential picture XII showing the stratification layers of trench C looking at the north side of Quadrant 2 prior to trench being extended eastwards



Sectional diagram of trench C final extent West - east alignment



Final extent of trench C looking east.
 "A" marks the mediaeval soil layer in quadrants 4 and 6

We removed another half metre section of the Victorian and Georgian rubble in quadrant 1 (south west) this contained: Top 20 cm various Victorian and Georgian demolition rubble; brown glazed earthenware, a little delftware china and green glass. Then from layer 2 at 50cm depth, various shards of white glazed china, pale green glass, brown glazed earthenware, clay pipe shards and a tombac button 25cm diameter with the remains of gilding on the back (1770-1800).

Much the same is true of quadrant 6 (north east) with the type of material from level 2 down to the mediaeval soil layer being clay pipe shards, china, brown glazed earthenware and green glass. The quadrant 6 mediaeval soil layer was much thinner than in quadrant 2 and sloped quite steeply in a south east direction. This had very little in it apart from bits of charcoal and some pebble and gravel, but there was a single sherd of white/pinkish pottery with a clear yellow glaze (Brackenfield 01 type, of between 1200 and 1400 and a little copper facet of unknown purpose rather like a keyhole facing of a small box.

Following this we excavated and sieved another section of the mediaeval soil layer from quadrant 3 of the trench. Despite this being a good square metre and a half of material with a depth of about 15 cm, it again yielded only 10 small shards of pottery of several periods, from a little green glazed medieval ware, to a small piece of abraded dark red-brown shell tempered ware later confirmed by Trent and Peak Archaeology to be Roman shell tempered ware of the late 1st or early 2nd century (50-150AD).

We note, from Tate et al, 2008, that at the Little Chester Alfreton Road site the majority of second and third century Roman pottery was found as abraded sherds in the mediaeval plough soil layer at that location.

In that this trench was stratified, the various finds brought out of it and their dates suggest that the mediaeval soil layer had been the actual surface of the field until the late Tudor period, when tipping of various domestic and other rubbish appears to have begun, and carried on between about 1580 and the 1800s, with casual losses of coins, such as the Victorian farthing of 1887, continuing afterwards due to the field's use as a recreation ground. It might be asked why tipping should apparently only begin in the late Tudor period? The only immediately obvious answer is that it is known that the Priest House, that is the house originally in the grounds of 5 Blind Lane, was thought to date from about 1500 (Palmer, 2008) if this is so, and the house encroached upon the Great Hannage with the construction of a garden wall (area 19 on Hutchinson's 1710 map), then this encroachment might account for why the tipping seems to begin in this period and would also imply the date of the wall to being between 1500 and 1580. This wall is considerably more weathered and ruinous than its counterpart the garden wall of Nether Hall nearby (area 13 on Hutchinson's 1710 map).

Examination Trench D

A final, small examination trench was opened to the south of trench C, this time on the slope of the embankment rather than the top. Again there is a layer of Georgian and Victorian tipped domestic and general rubble. In this case with rather less pottery, though with possibly a waster shard from the Wirksworth China Factory (1772-75), but more evidence of demolition rubble in terms of brick and tile pieces, mortar and charcoal, and of general tipping of material down the slope. As with nearby Trench C, pottery shards here include brown on yellow feather-trailed Ticknall or Stoke type slipware, brown glazed earthenware, creamware, a tombac button and clay pipe shards.



Sequential picture IV showing lower end of trench D limestone layer

At the bottom of the slope where the test pit meets the lower embankment (of material stripped from the field when it was recently levelled for football pitches), Georgian and Jacobean material appears to lie directly on top of the solifluction substrate with there being no intervening mediaeval soil layer at all. This may be the result of the modern soil stripping where the rubble above the stripped layer has fallen down the embankment onto the substrate. The contents of this trench are generally similar to trench C except that the domestic rubble layer is less deep.

A final examination day took place at the Great Hannage on Sunday the 21st of September, the purpose of which was to verify what we felt we understood about the way the site has been altered during drainage and levelling work in 2005.



Trench A showing the NW corner embankments

From the previous examinations we found that the upper embankment in the north-west corner was original and untouched by any modern work, that it was largely the result of the tipping of domestic and other rubble after about 1580, and it contained some Roman stratified pottery shards under the tipping. Pit C confirmed this and Pit D had been put in on the slope of the upper embankment but provided little further enlightenment.

Pit B, nearest St Mary's Gate also confirmed the tipping activity. Trench A, on the outfield confirmed the modern levelling and drainage, but we had not examined the lower embankment or accessible north side of the outfield. Consequently on the 21st September Pit E was put in to verify that the lower embankment is modern, which it is, and the result of scraping the top surface of the field to level and drain it then push the spoil into the corner to form the lower embankment. This pit 1m x 1m contained mixed loamy gravelly soil with small bits of limestone and small amounts of various pottery all mixed up including post mediaeval china and stoneware and one small abraded rim-shard of Roman oxidised ware, orange with a dark grey core which was sent to Leicester University for verification and confirmed.



Rim-sherd of Roman oxidised ware
Centimetre scale

Pit F was then put in, again 1m x 1m on the pitch outfield 4 metres from the boundary wall and 25 metres from the east side chain link fence at a point where the boundary wall turns away from the field towards Coldwell Street. This pit had the same drainage structure as trench A and under the drainage pea-gravel layer was mixed stony loam again containing mixed up china, glass and a lot of brick based broken up demolition rubble. There were no finds earlier than brown glazed stoneware.



Pit F, sequential picture III depth 30 cm showing the loamy mixed soil

Finally, by way of verification and to be certain of the outfield, a final verification pit, Pit G was put in 6 metres to the south of the location of Trench A. This pit again 1 m x 1m confirmed the outfield structure to be the same as found last year in trench A and again contained mixed up china, stoneware and brown glazed earthenware.

This completes the review of the Great Hannage itself and of the small items found during the work.

To summarise, the Roman materials found and confirmed by external verification are:

Two pieces of a Roman tegula roofing tile

A shard of Roman Severn Valley Ware, late first early second century

A shard of Roman shell-tempered ware, late first early second century

A shard of Roman shell-tempered ware, darker undated

A shard of Roman colour-coated ware, second or third century

A rim shard of Roman oxidised ware, possibly second century

Three shards of Roman Derbyshire ware mid second century or later.

There are a number of (probably) mediaeval unglazed coarseware shards found in the same stratified locations as the shell-tempered and colour coated wares.

One of the features of these items is that although we have not found huge quantities of any one ware, the range is quite interesting. The Roman roofing tile, a tegula, if it is indigenous to the location, is of considerable importance as being possibly indicative of a Roman building nearby, yet to be found and the first indicator of its kind reported for Wirksworth.

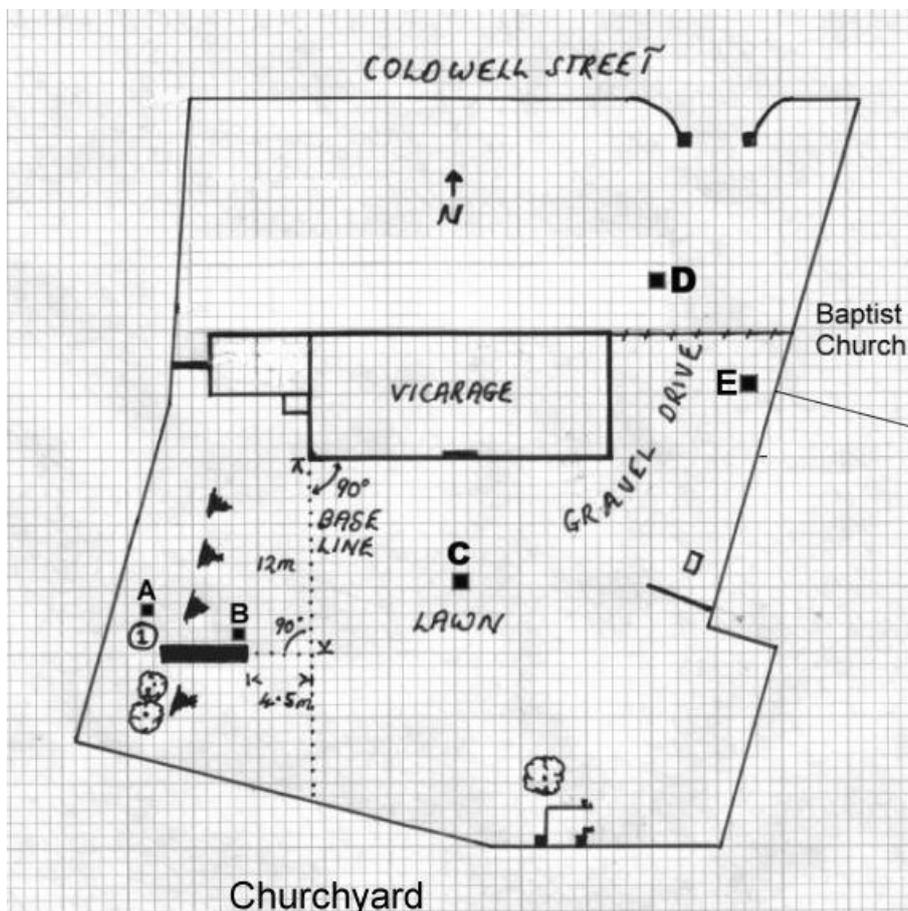
The Vicarage Garden examination

There is no known archaeological work on the west side of Church Street or in the area of the churchyard itself.

The earliest complete map showing the form of the garden dates from 1820 and that map gives the ground plan of the vicarage which existed prior to the one which currently stands there. The modern vicarage was built in 1830-1831 and is far smaller than its predecessor. The archaeological examination concentrated in the west boundary wall side of the Vicarage Garden and began on the 12th October 2008.

The investigation at the Vicarage Garden

The Vicarage Garden at SK 2872 5400 consists of about three-quarters of a hectare of garden, laid mostly to lawn, with some borders and trees. The west boundary of the garden consists of a very large embankment on top of which is a very high crudely built limestone wall. The level section of the garden is at a base height of 153 metres Ordnance Datum, being slightly above the adjacent churchyard and separated from it by the south wall of the garden, a feature which appears on the 1710 map.



Sketch plan of Vicarage Garden showing trench 1 and test pits A& B
Magnetometry coverage was along the lawn and gravel drive.

Test Pit A

The top of the west wall embankment near the wall is comprised of an upper layer (20 cm) of tipped various modern (i.e Georgian to present) garden and domestic material; below this is a layer (30cm) of loose tipped small 5cm limestone and a little brick rubble with some pottery, towards the bottom of which was found a Charles 1st coin weight of about 1632. The pottery of that layer is of a date range consistent with the coin weight; below was a then undetermined depth of tipped small limestone.



Charles 1st copper alloy five shilling coin weight
14.5 mm diameter. UKDFD ref no 15952

Core / Test Pit B

At the bottom of the embankment near the lawn a lower test pit was put in and under 10 cm topsoil, garden loam and a 10cm depth of old gravel there is a layer of demolition rubble 10cm which appeared to be mortared over or packed. Under that layer, which was then extracted partly by auger, was a then undetermined depth of loamy soil containing 4 shards of one piece of undated shell-tempered ware and 7 shards of other unglazed probably mediaeval coarsewares, together with 1 shard of Roman Derbyshire ware.

Trench 1

Work was begun on the 9th of November and the initial stage was intended to lay out the trench and strip off the garden soil and loam from the top of the trench prior to further work. In the process of taking off the leaf mould, garden loam and sub-soil, the upper layers found in the two initial test pits were confirmed. At the upper end of the trench, below the subsoil is a layer of small 5-10cm limestone rubble and at the lower end is a layer of packed demolition rubble. Not identified by the test pits was a dwarf retaining wall between these two sections. In terms of this trench all identifiable sections were given individual feature numbers, starting at the top with the topsoil itself as feature 1. We did originally allocate context numbers as well but the trench is relatively simple and therefore here we have confined the numbering in this report to feature numbers. If, at some point in the future further work is done, contexts can be re-allocated.

Features 1-7 are garden features dating back to the 1830/31 reconstruction of the vicarage, and for which date pottery shards found at the interface of features 3 and 6 are consistent with.

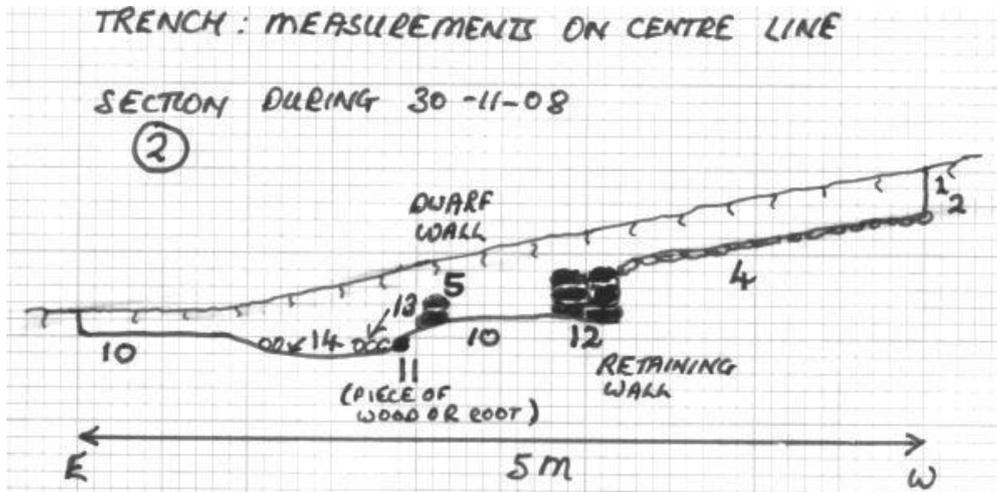
Features

- 1: Garden topsoil in which we recovered many bluebell, snowdrop and daffodil bulbs for replanting
- 2: Garden subsoil
3. An old gravel layer 10 cm down in the east end of the trench about 10 cm deep running up to, but not obviously under, a dwarf retaining wall.
4. Small limestone rubble running from the west end of the trench to within half a metre of the dwarf retaining wall
5. A dwarf retaining wall
6. Demolition rubble levelling layer under feature 3 running at least as far as feature 5, which appeared to be the substructure of a garden path, of which gravel feature 3 had been the top surface.
7. Garden/border soil backfill between feature 4 and feature 5 presumably for planting.

The dwarf retaining wall was therefore put in before the gravel was laid and before the soil backfill between the wall and the limestone rubble, but after the area was roughly levelled. The work we had done suggested that the limestone rubble had been cut into by the 1831 gardening works, but these had in fact only cut into the spillover from the rubble further up the trench and once some more of this spillover and the backfill (7) of dwarf wall (5) was removed it was found that the rubble layer (4) was being held back by a further and rather more heavily constructed retaining wall (12) two courses of very large (lime) stones wide and three high, which did not run quite parallel to the garden works or the dwarf wall (5) lower down. This rubble layer has a few inclusions (perhaps 10%) of demolition material such as brick, mortar, pottery, tile and animal bone (cattle by butchery judging by vertebrae size and cut marks). The retaining wall (12) was holding most of rubble layer 4 up and that the rubble was tipped with a landscaping purpose, presumably as a surround to the garden on this side, onto which soil and plants and the lower garden features could later be added.

We then cleared the garden path layer (6) and found the small packed demolition rubble of this to be constructed on top of a substructure of medium graded limestone (13) running in a slight trench cut for it (14). Features 3 to 14 except feature 10 (the soil) and feature 11 (a degraded piece of wood,

probably a root) therefore all appear to be related 1831 gardening work. Having removed all this material we then had continuous soil layer (10) running at a varying height the length of the trench. This soil layer appeared to be largely find-free. It is relatively dark grey-black and has comparatively few inclusions except for perhaps 10% of often very degraded friable limestone with a consistency of dryish putty. Other inclusions were occasional small charcoal and a very few small pieces of animal bone.



Section of the Trench after removal of backfill 7 and path 6



Photo of Trench 1 after removal of backfill 7, path layer 6, path substructure 13 and dwarf wall 5
The red number 12 in the centre of the trench locates the second retaining wall.

In the east end of the trench the soil layer (10) proved to be shallow and another interminable pile of domestic rubbish and rubble was found, best described as a pottery midden. The removal of this midden (15), which was largely on the south side, took considerable effort. The midden was comprised of the usual and seemingly inevitable mixture of Georgian pottery but appears unrelated to the garden work, being apparently sealed by it. A sample of the pottery assemblage appeared on further examination to be slightly earlier than that above the garden works.

Below and partly around the midden three differently coloured badly degraded and disrupted layers of mortar were found, at the east end of the trench and within soil feature 10. These layers 16, 17 and 18 we initially took to be indicative of a partially destroyed mortar floor. No directly datable material was associated with this, although we found a piece of roof tile with splashed-on lead glazing, making it

most likely late mediaeval. The layers are: 16, a red and apparently very discontinuous layer of powdered gritstone; 17 a feature, arc shaped in the north-east corner of the trench, comprised of medium 10 cm sized gritstones with a pink mortar on the top; 18 a narrow line of grey/white mortar running horizontally across the trench in the east end. The east end of the trench was down to 80cm below the lip at this point. Having worked back some of feature 16 and cleared a little more of the east end, it would appear that feature 16 was the underlying layer and was composed of powdered, spread or beaten gritstone and parts of it are mixed with small gravel mixed with lichen (a kind of moss) in small sods.

On the 30th of December at the east end of the trench a pair of knees (feature 19) were found towards the centre of the trench in the soil layer 145 cm from the east end and immediately this was recognised work stopped. The knees were appended to some leg bones, and we assume to the rest of a person underneath another ton of trench fill; oriented east-west, a metre down (from the north side lip), but with no evidence of wood, or coffin nails or anything else and no evidence of a grave cut in terms of differences in soil or fill composition.

There is a procedure for finding burials. It is necessary to call the police so they may determine whether there is a crime scene. We therefore phoned the law and eventually a number of officers appeared from the Great House of Constabulary, in ascending rank as the afternoon wore on, to peer into the trench. In due course (after about 4 hours) the senior officer declared it to be an archaeological matter and off they went, having made the usual police records. We then returned to record keeping of our own, before covering the east end of the trench. The County Archaeologist was informed and came to visit on the 8th January at which meeting it was agreed to carry on with the examination and work around the bones which were named "Ebeneezer", because we found the knees first. There appear to be no feet because of disturbance from the pottery midden (feature 15) which was above it with the cut of the midden resulting in the absence of the feet and the possible arc of gritstone/mortar feature 17.



Feature 19: a pair of knees.

Work began again on the 10th of January and this involved putting in a sondage (a hole in the corner) in the north east corner of the trench. In the case of the Hannage examination we found the solifluction layer to be beneath a 10cm depth of the mediaeval field surface. That mediaeval field surface yielded both mediaeval and Roman period pottery mixed up together. In the case of the sondage in the Vicarage trench there is no mediaeval field surface because it is extremely badly mixed up with a bone burial layer (feature 20) 20 cm deep.

It has been conjectured that the churchyard was larger in the past than it now is, because of anecdotal evidence about the finding of burials on the south side under the Parish Rooms and on the west side in the yard of a house below the Lych Gates (Marian Vaughan Wirksworth Heritage Centre pers comm). In addition, an unreported dig took place on the north-east side, in the rear car park of the Rural Community Council Offices on Church Street in 1986. This dig (judging by brief newspaper clippings in "Community Fayre") was going well, but then ended very obscurely without a report. It is possible that

the same features (i.e. burials) were found at that dig and the diggers stopped because they believed there may have been a huge depth of burials and simply backfilled their trench. Whereas we knew from the experience gained in the Hannage examination that the bedrock layer must be relatively near the surface, which it is at 125cm below the east lip of trench 1.

Ebenezer is therefore possibly the last or latest burial in this location, lying on top of a layer 20cm deep of very mixed up bone and soil, which is immediately on top of the solifluction bedrock layer. Some of the bone in the sondage and in the sides of the sondage were further leg bones again oriented east-west but almost all the bone appeared more degraded and very disturbed by repeated later burials (in the mediaeval period gravediggers would simply dig over existing graves many times in order to get new ones in). A jawbone was adjacent the knees at 103 cm depth (150 cm from the east end of the trench). There were no other pottery shards or artifact finds whatsoever in the sondage itself. The bedrock solifluction layer is feature 21.

Further examination of the mortar layers suggested these were not flooring because they seem to run at an angle to the ground - they may possibly simply be demolition effects. A few small pieces of the pink mortar material have been found in the fill of the west end of the trench again confirming the very dug-over nature of the trench area. The pink mortar has gritstone and charcoal inclusions; the white/very light grey mortar is harder and seems to be slightly shelly; in addition a few pieces of very fine white chalky mortar which has a slightly odd fibrous texture (perhaps hair or grass as part of the mixture) which would seem to be architectural or sculptural (Peter Noble, Manchester Arch Unit, pers comm) came out of feature 10.

A leisurely afternoon of scraping and sieving in the west end of the Vicarage trench took place on the 17th January. There were no great surprises but the layer of the trench we were working on appeared to contain a partially intact soil layer below the garden rubble and above feature 10, which we interpret as the graveyard fill covering Ebenezer. This soil layer (feature 22) is indeterminate and fading as a layer, but has produced several pieces of green glazed ware of various kinds and two pieces of unglazed coarseware. We interpret this soil layer as being possible evidence of the termination of use of the location for grave digging and as possibly representing a later domestic garden surface given the nature of the finds. If this is so, then it would be possible to date the ending of use of this area of the graveyard as being prior to the latest pottery dating, perhaps about 1350.



Left: Shard of Burley Hill rouletted green lead glazed ware 1200-1350
Right: small base shard of mediaeval unglazed coarseware found next to it.
Cm scale.

On the 21st January a second sondage was put into the west end of the trench, and the fills were found to be essentially the same as in the east end except that two pieces of beige gritstone (feature 23) were found between features 20 and 21, the first being a slab, rather like a paving slab, 50cm x 15cm x 7cm, lying at an angle counter to the embankment and oriented lengthwise rather north west to south east. The second piece, rather like a cobble, 10cm x 10cm x 15cm, was underneath it. There were no markings and nothing else (e.g. soil colour change) to associate these pieces of stone with, but they are not natural to this ground level. Below the slab a small depth of soil appeared to be finer and darker with no inclusions of any kind (even bone), feature 24.

At the west end of the trench the solifluction layer was 1.95 m below the west lip of the trench, at the east end 1.25 m below the east lip of the trench (remember, the embankment slopes). The location of this bedrock suggests that the modern boundary embankment of the Vicarage west wall does not in any way represent the original contour and that the original contour is best represented by the gentle slope of Church Walk path. The current steepness of the west wall boundary embankment of the Vicarage garden is due to the gradual increase of the underlying contour plus the large depth of the limestone

quarry rubble tipped on top of it in the Georgian period. The high wall which tops this embankment therefore appears to have no function other than to provide shelter for the garden. In putting in the sondage a few further shards of unglazed coarseware and one (only) shard of lead powder dusted ware were found.



Mortar and sod samples from layers/features 16, 17 and 18

To attempt to discover whether the burial layer carries on eastwards through the garden, a test core was put in the centre of the garden where the old pre-1830 vicarage had been about 8 metres from the central door of the Vicarage on the garden side (core C), and we found beneath a demolition layer the same fill and related material as in the main trench. The conclusion from this is that the mediaeval churchyard continues eastwards along the garden, possibly as far as the site of a former house on the east boundary (south corner).

We then wished to consider whether the burial layer continued north as far as Coldwell Street. As you will know from previous reports we tend to look for documentary evidence in relation to any work we are doing and we note the written history of the Baptist church on Coldwell Street (which is next door to the Vicarage on the east side and has a deep basement) makes no mention of them finding burials when that building was constructed in 1880 (Few, 1986) from this we presumed that the churchyard did not extend northwards as far as Coldwell Street, otherwise such burials would probably have been mentioned or would be known.

To confirm this, a second test core was put in on the Coldwell Street side of the Vicarage where the garden begins to fall away down to Coldwell Street, 3 metres from the north east corner of the house (core D). This core extracted a little lawn and topsoil and then a layer of large stone which we take to have been a yard surface at 20cm depth. Below this is the most find-free core we have ever had in Wirksworth. The entire core from 20cm down to 125cm consists of clean fine loamy soil with the tiniest of charcoal and miniscule gravel inclusions, no more than 5%. At 125cm is what appears to be packed limestone bedrock. It is wholly different from the fill material (trench 1 feature 10) on the churchyard side. There is no burial evidence whatsoever.

We therefore conclude the mediaeval churchyard did not extend to Coldwell Street, but that we had not found the actual boundary, which must have been between the location of cores C and D, a distance of about 22 metres. It was felt that the most likely location to search for the boundary was at the point of the break of slope in the garden, that is to say the point at which the relatively level garden changes to a gentle gradient which falls to Coldwell Street, this co-incides with the rear boundary wall of the Baptist Church which is on the other side of the east boundary wall of the Vicarage.



View through the Vicarage Garden gates looking down to Coldwell Street

Therefore the last work associated with this took place on Saturday the 27th February when a small test pit (E) was dug 2 metres from the east boundary wall at the break of slope.

On examination this pit again contained fine loamy soil and a very little unstratified small demolition type material (a narrow brick layer 20cm down) and then for a depth of a metre fine loamy soil; the loamy soil became somewhat dustier and ashier about 80cm down. At 1 metre there appeared to be a layer of medium laid flat stones (8-10 cm) initially thought to be yet another yard surface. However, these were on top of a line of larger stones running in a line about east-west along the line of the break of slope.



The test pit is 30 cm x 60 cm at the bottom

On the south side of this line of stones was soil with some churchyard fill (RH side in the picture is the churchyard side), on the north side (LH side) is what appears to be a wall interior composed of rammed limestone and gritstone, faced with the larger stones. The pit wasn't wide enough to find the other side of this feature.

Although it may seem obvious that the feature represents a continuation of the boundary which runs behind the Baptist church (and is thus conceivably the boundary of the churchyard) there are several caveats. It was not possible to open the pit to find the full extent of the feature, and no dating material

was found except a few small pieces of brown glazed ware in the soil above it. Consequently the feature may be yet another part of the 1830 garden works even though it is relatively deep; alternatively it may be part of the footings of a building not shown on any of the maps we have.

In making a determination, it has to be said that the feature provides no obvious garden purpose, unlike the two dwarf walls found in the main trench which were there to retain the embankment. Here there is no embankment to retain and a wall crossing this location prior to 1830 would have blocked off access to the pre-1830 vicarage. Secondly, the feature is very deep, it continues an alignment of the other side of the boundary wall and it is at the break of slope. It may therefore possibly represent the churchyard boundary or may still be a feature of unknown purpose forward (northward) of such a boundary. In short we were not able to conclude what this feature was, but we note that the burial layer found on the south side of the garden in trench 1 and core C does not appear to be forward of it.

Conclusions

Great Hannage Conclusions

We conclude that the upper embankment feature in the north west corner of the field is the result of incessant domestic tipping from the later Tudor period (about 1580) to the mid Victorian period, with up to a metre of various layers of domestic and general rubbish, pottery of all kinds, clay pipe shards, buttons and other small items, ash, clay, demolition rubble etc on top of a relatively thin layer of mediaeval soil overlying the natural substrate.

This natural substrate is a solifluction layer of limestone rubble bound in sand, and appears to form the underlying contour of the Great Hannage which sloped gently down to the Hannage Brook. This has been altered by modern levelling for football pitches, which stripped off the mediaeval soil layer in many parts of the Great Hannage, except the north west corner (site of Trench C) and overlaid the exposed substrate with a layer of mixed up (and redistributed) soil, upon which a drainage layer of gravel and then turf was then laid. A large amount of the residue of this stripping was piled up against the embankment, so there are now two sets of embanking in the corner, upper and lower.

Where the Great Hannage remains untouched, the mediaeval soil layer has proved by far the most instructive in this examination lies beneath a depth of tipped material of up to a metre. Where the mediaeval soil layer is still present, it appears to contain quantities of datable material from the late 1st century to the Tudor period.

The various trenches and test pits we put into the Great Hannage provided Roman pottery shards in no greater density than 1 shard per square metre, however, this is not incomparable to work done at Alfreton Road at Little Chester, a site within 150 metres of the fort. In that case, the further away one got from the fort the less material was found, to the extent that four trenches at the north end of the Alfreton Road site totalling some 184 square metres were wholly empty of Roman material. Only trench 3 at Alfreton Road, nearest the fort, yielded a higher density of shards per square metre than we have from the Great Hannage. In addition, no building material was found in any of the Alfreton Road trenches, whereas we have a Roman tegula roof tile from the Hannage examination, found in Trench A.

Finding a single tegula must come with caveats. It is the only one, it may have somehow been brought in with other material (though it was sealed below the playing field drainage layer and no rubble was known to have been brought in to the playing field, only pea gravel and turf). Even if it is indigenous it may well have been moved around by the levelling process. Nevertheless, if we suspend our necessary credulity and take it at its face value it would be indicative of a major Roman building nearby, as only such buildings were tiled (most low status buildings of the time were roofed with wood shingles or with thatch). The density of the pottery finds would propose a location within 200 metres.

Vicarage Garden conclusions

Although the purpose of this Project was to identify Roman and Saxon activity and artifacts, it is right and proper that we should not simply bypass the mediaeval period, which is more obviously and interestingly represented in some of the archaeological features of the Vicarage Garden.

We conclude that the south side of the Vicarage Garden was part of the mediaeval churchyard.

As to dating the period of its use, this is difficult, but the church is a Saxon Minster (Hawkes, 1994, Hadley, 1996; Turbutt, 1999) and we know that permission to bury people in towns was first given by papal authority in about 750 AD (before which former Roman practice apparently often still prevailed which laid down that burials should be outside towns, and we note that almost all Peak District barrow burials are dated to before 800). The pottery finds in feature 22 suggests a termination of activity not later than about 1350/1400. Provisionally, therefore, the active period of this part of the mediaeval churchyard may fall within this date range. Only one shard of later mediaeval pottery found was not of this date range and this piece of pottery was stratified not in features 10 or 22 but in mortar feature 17 probably associating it with the demolition of a later building represented by the mortar.

In terms of the boundaries of the mediaeval churchyard, there is a considerable doubt. All we can say is that there is no apparent continuation of the churchyard beyond the break of slope towards Coldwell Street in the Vicarage Garden: the mediaeval churchyard did not reach Coldwell Street. On the other

hand, the mediaeval churchyard was clearly larger than it now is, and in addition to our finds, anecdotal evidence of burials on the east, south and west sides would support this. Returning, finally to our initial comments on topography, the church and the churchyard lie at the high point of the Hannage peninsula.

No conclusions can be drawn from the work in the Vicarage Garden which pertain to the question of a Roman settlement as it would have been necessary to remove all of feature 20 (the burial layer) to properly expose anything earlier or to work down to the bedrock with a measure of certainty, something we did not have the expertise or the inclination to do. A single shard of Roman Derbyshire ware was extracted in core sample B.

Summary conclusions of the five reports

This is the fifth and final report produced by the Wirksworth Roman Project. The Project owes its beginnings to work done in 2005 in which the potential Roman origins of Wirksworth were considered in a consultation document "Origins and history of Wirksworth. The search for Lutudarum: evidence and assessment". A major issue arising from that document was that the archaeological background which one might expect to exist for such a venerable town did not exist, and the archaeological resource to provide such a background was locally absent. 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 Wirksworth, at the suggestion of Mary Wiltshire and Sue Woore, whose work on the Duffield Frith is well known. 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 Wirksworth" said so.

It was then suggested to us by the Derbyshire Archaeological Society 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 Wirksworth 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 associated with Longwalls Lane and that at Wirksworth was one of the series, therefore of Roman origin and that it was part of a Roman road route along the ridge-way between Wirksworth and Duffield, of which Longwalls Lane represented the best preserved section. This resulted in a further report: "A ridge-way route between Wirksworth and Derby and 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 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 have undertaken two examinations in the town, summarised above, this should be taken into consideration with the report "Origins & History of Wirksworth: Lutudarum & the Peak District before the Norman Conquest" which is the original consultation document brought up to date with what we had learned since the start of the Project. At the beginning no archaeological evidence existed which was capable of supporting the documentary assessment that Wirksworth had a Roman past. The combined results of the five reports, in particular the conclusions about the centrality of Wirksworth to the Roman road network indicate that the assessment of Wirksworth as being a key Roman route centre is beyond doubt. The existence of this road network is also the reason for the importance of St Mary's as a Minster church, and the current balance of probability is that St Mary's is therefore Roman in origin, and so thus is the town. However, more needs to be done and we wish future archaeologists every success in doing so. The Wirksworth Roman Project is now at an end and our very grateful thanks are extended to all who have been involved or helped in any way whatsoever.