

## Soutergate : A Lost Chesterfield Street.

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IT is sometimes assumed that Chesterfield is identical with the lost Roman station *Lutudarum*, a place which is named on certain Roman pigs of lead, but it is difficult to see why the lead of Buxton, Matlock, Wirksworth, Ashover, and other districts should be sent to Chesterfield, where there was no navigable river available for transporting it. If the idea were to get it on the Roman road to Little Chester (Rykneld Street), why bring it north from where it was mined? On the evidence available one sees a certain difficulty in dogmatically asserting that Chesterfield and *Lutudarum* were identical.

A Roman road has, however, been traced to the neighbourhood of Chesterfield, and from the name itself it is certain there was a Roman station not far from the present town. The name is derived from "open country near a Roman *castra*." It has been suggested that Tapton Castle was the site of the Roman *castra* in the neighbourhood of Chesterfield, but this, like the former assumption, can only be regarded at present as not proven.

Chesterfield was, however, undoubtedly founded at a dated anterior to the Conquest, for a grant of land, etc., at what is now Chesterfield, was made in 955 A.D. by King Edred to Uhtred Cild,<sup>1</sup> and among other privileges was the right to build a bridge, no doubt over the Hipper, as the Rother skirts, rather than crosses the town.

<sup>1</sup> *Cartularium Saxonicum*, W. de Gray Birch, vol. 3, No. 911.

At first, no doubt, Chesterfield would be a town of a single street, with its southern entrance over a bridge. The old part of the town is very definitely the portion found lying in the angle between the intersection of Lordsmill Street (itself obviously an early street) and the river Hipper, the road lying north-south, and the river flowing west to east to join the Rother. Yet even to-day there are comparatively few houses lying east of Lordsmill Street, and an overwhelming preponderance lying west of it. Yet surely when Uhtred, or his heirs, built their bridge, the houses would naturally lie on either side the road, and not all on one side. Lordsmill Street, despite the antiquity of its name, must be of more recent origin than the road that crossed Uhtred's bridge. Probably the Lordsmill Bridge was rendered necessary by the proximity of the 'lord's mill,' but it seems certain that the original main street of Chesterfield must have lain west of Lordsmill Street, and necessarily parallel to it, whilst, owing to the smallness of the original town it could have been no very great distance removed from it. It would be necessary also for the lord's mill to be within easy reach of the town.

Now one of the principal puzzles in the study of mediæval Chesterfield lies in the identification of the lost street called Soutergate, i.e. 'the street of the cobblers.' A speculation regarding it is here proposed. Perhaps some old document may ultimately come to light, proving or disproving the theory here suggested, but meantime a feasible solution is made of the strange disappearance of this street name. The curious fact is that a mere chance similarity in names and geographical situation may have been the reason for the long continued masquerade of the old main street Soutergate in the guise of the modern South Street.

All the other old streets of mediæval Chesterfield are readily identifiable. Some have changed, but they

cannot conceal themselves; others are recoverable from old borough maps. Kalehalegate or Calow Road is now Hollis Lane, Glumangate represents the former Gleman-gate, or 'minstrels' street,' and High Street was on its southern side the mediæval Mercer Row, or Draper Row, a name which still lingered on till 1803, when a new name called High Pavement on the northern side emerged, gradually supplanting Draper Row to become the modern High Street. Similarly Toll Corner has changed and is now Low Pavement. There was formerly a Souter *Row*, as well as a Soutergate, but Souter Row is betrayed on the old 1803 map. It was the most westerly of the three north-south passages intersecting The Shambles,<sup>1</sup> and is plainly marked on the map as 'Shoemakers' Row.' This passage is now called Irongate. Near the junction of this passage with the old Draper Row till recently stood Taylor Brothers' drapery. This was formerly called Hewitt and Heane's, and this business was originally founded on the site of premises which claimed to represent the oldest draper's shop in the borough. In any case, however, Souter Row could not be identical with Soutergate, because it is definitely known that the old Soutergate ended in a bridge,<sup>2</sup> and because the lay out of the town made it necessary for the continuation of Soutergate to emerge from the northern end of the place in such a way that the inclusion of Souter Row would have premised an unnatural and totally unnecessary detour. Souter Row was merely one of the old Chesterfield 'trade rows,' others being Fisher Row, Potter Row, Mercer Row, The Shambles (*Fleishamulz* in Jeayes), Packer Row, and, one imagines Iron Row, now Irongate. Ample references to all of these can hardly be overlooked by any student of Jeayes' *Derbyshire Charters*, or Yeatman's *Chesterfield Borough Records*.

<sup>1</sup> A paper on the Shambles by George Bailey, with illustrations of ancient buildings since demolished, appeared in *D.A.J.*, vol. 3, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> Jeayes, *Derbyshire Charters*, No. 829.

The points to be borne in mind are these:—A street is required which (1) ran north and south; (2) ended in a bridge; (3) made part of a continuous route through the town; and (4) was the chief street of the town. That it was the chief street no student of *Derbyshire Charters* can have any reasonable doubt, for it is mentioned far more frequently than any other two taken in conjunction.

First let us eliminate the natural suggestion that Soutergate is identical with the present Saltergate. Saltergate certainly, in its continuation as Ashgate Road, crosses a bridge, but it can never have been anything but an outlying and relatively unimportant street. Moreover it leads merely to Old Brampton and the moors, is not situated for a main street in a town laid out as is Chesterfield, and finally does not run north and south at all, but east and west.

If Jeayes' Charters be consulted one is at once struck by the remarkable relative importance of the old street of Soutergate. It is not only mentioned very frequently, but was lined with property, with hardly a gap one imagines, was close to the market and connected to the dean's mill, the market, and the leper hospital by lanes or streets. Up to at least 1400 one cannot escape the conclusion that the main life of the town centred on Soutergate. As for St. Mary's Gate, it is not mentioned on a single occasion. Yet this once populous street of Soutergate has vanished completely. A main street, however, cannot actually be lost, it can only change its identity.

Let us now attack the problem from the opposite end of the town. The main northern entrance was, as now, undoubtedly by way of Holywell Street. Before the days of Cavendish Street, which was made about 1834-5, the old Holywell Street at Holywell Cross ran into Knifesmithgate. Knifesmithgate bent itself like a bow and emerged into Packers' Row. Packers' Row running

due south, met Draper Row at right angles, continued down the east side of The Shambles and went on to Toll Corner. At this juncture it met 'Kalehalegate,' now Hollis Lane. There seems little doubt that 'Kalehalegate' ran from the Rother to Packers' Row, for there is not a single mention of Vicar Lane in any mediæval charter yet transcribed. At Toll Nook, or Toll Corner, Packers' Row, according to the 1803 map, ran continuously into the present South Street, then called 'Rotten Row.' This name has usually been regarded as the salubrious perquisite of Beetwell Street, a very early part of the town, formerly called Stead Lane (from the proximity of the market-stead), according to an old deed.

When a street became old and decrepit, and full of ancient buildings, it frequently became known as Rotten Row in derision, and whether the adjective referred to the state of the property, or to the fact that the property swarmed with rats (called 'rotten' or 'rotton') is beside the point. The point is, of course, that Rotten Row is a name most eminently likely to be applied after some centuries to the old main street of Chesterfield, which would of course necessarily be the oldest street of the town. This is now South Street, and the character of this street, and its abrupt termination as a shopping street at its junction with Beetwell Street, show that it has at some time been gutted of property. The street itself continues across Markham Road and obviously at one time must have crossed the river, though it now bends round and ultimately runs back again into Markham Road. The name *South* is not unlike the beginning of *Soutergate*, and the description is geographically correct, for it does point south. Nevertheless this is mere coincidence, for the fact undoubtedly appears to be that the present South Street now occupies the site of the ancient main street of Soutergate, simply because this is the only reasonable and suitable site for such an old main street to occupy.

Jeayes' charter No. 829 of 1424 A.D. mentions "the Bridge at the end of the Sowtergate." One can at once rule out the Rother and Holme Brook (formerly the River Smale) from consideration. Both lie without the ambit of the old town. There is no doubt at all that the Soutergate bridge was over the Hipper. Jeayes' charter No. 741 of 1350 A.D. mentions a messuage adjoining 'Steppestonlane' and abutting on the highway (which no doubt indicates Soutergate) and the "water called 'Hipere'." 'Steppestonlane,' now lost, was therefore a lane running parallel to the 'highway' mentioned, and the stepping-stones must have crossed the Hipper at a ford such as generally existed before a bridge were built. It is evident that the stepping-stones at the termination of 'Steppestonlane,' and the bridge at the end of Soutergate were closely contiguous, as one would expect. No doubt the ford preceded the bridge, and it is common knowledge that new bridges frequently kept close company with old fords. It will be noticed that the messuage was abutting on the highway, but only adjoining the lane, which by inference must therefore have lain some little distance away, perhaps the width of an orchard, garden, or croft. This lost lane is now represented by one of the many narrow passages running south to the river from Beetwell Street and Low Pavement. Perhaps it may have been the original name of Wheeldon Lane, called nowadays after some member of the Elizabethan Chesterfield family of Wheldon, who may have resided in it. One of this family was an alderman in 1598 and the importance of the family might easily have led to a supersession of the old name. Now in Jeayes' charter No. 747, of 1360 A.D., this same identical messuage is mentioned again, as *being* in Soutergate, for No. 741 of ten years earlier recites its lease from William Lorimer, capellanus, to John de Whityngton, etc., whilst No. 747 shows it as leased by John to William Aleyn. In both

cases John is acting in his capacity as a brother of the ancient Guild of St. Mary, and not personally. The words of No. 741 'new market' evidently covered a vicinity, and did not merely refer to a restricted square of land. It is known from Jeayes that at least three, probably more, roads led off Soutergate. And these roads led just exactly where one would expect roads to lead to from the old original main street of this town, for one led to the Dean of Lincoln's mill, one to St. Leonard's leper hospital, and a third to the market.

Notice how Soutergate, by gradual change over centuries, might finally come to be looked on as South Street. The geography was correct and the two names not dissimilar. Imagine the present South Street to be lengthened south for not so many more yards till it reached the river and terminated in a bridge. Now in your mind's eye review the result. There would be one long continuous street from the Hipper to Holywell Cross, and then on towards Sheffield. It is there to-day except at the southern end, with four new openings since it was first constructed. These are the junctions with the old Soutergate (or its continuation Knifsmithgate) of Vicar Lane, Church Lane, Burlington Street and Stephenson Place. Of these, two, viz. Church Lane, mentioned in documents centuries old, and Vicar Lane (as Kalehalegate), are of very great antiquity. Stephenson Place was made a hundred years ago, and Burlington Street did not exist on the map of 1803 in the possession of Chatsworth Estates. As a matter of fact Burlington Street would obviously be of about the same date as Stephenson Place, though the latter may possibly not have been immediately so named when first opened up. Packers' Row was merely a special 'trade length' of Soutergate in its upper portion, and has survived owing to the fact that when the lower portion of Soutergate was gutted—possibly by fire, who knows?—the upper con-

tinued to stand. No doubt Soutergate ran under that one name from past the northern head of The Shambles to where it joined Knifesmithgate, down to the River Hipper. Doubtless the road, once over the bridge at the southern end of the town would deteriorate into a lane, veer slightly east, and run into Derby Lane, now Derby Road.

What was the bridge called? This is of course, like most of this article, mere speculation, but there were originally at least five bridges to choose from. Brampton Brigge (Jeayes, No. 817 of 1414 A.D.) can be at once ruled out. The bridge at the end of Saltergate must have been 'the bridge of Smale.' Reynolf's Bridge (Jeayes, No. 684 of f. Hen. III) looks as though it were situate in Chesterfield, but his No. 1111 suggests this bridge may possibly have been in Duckmanton, and on the continuation of 'Kalehalegate.' This leaves choice of two, Buckebrighe (Charter No. 696 of 13th Century) and Aldewyn's Bridge (Charter No. 683 of temp. Hen. III). Reynolf's Bridge in any case, by deduction lay over the Rother. Which of these two, Buckebridge or Aldewyn's Bridge, lay over the Hipper at the end of Soutergate it is not possible to say definitely. Yet one inclines to think that Soutergate concluded at Buckebridge, for Jeayes' charter No. 1746 of 1339 A.D. suggests that Aldewyn's Bridge must have had some connection with 'Aldewynlane.' It will be noted that Aldewynlane was in Newbold, and this suggests that Aldewyn's Bridge crossed the Smale or Holme Brook. All things considered it would appear that the southern end of Soutergate crossed the Hipper by Buckebridge, and that the street northwards continued unbrokenly up through South Place, South Street and Packers' Row till it met Knifesmithgate at the point where the right angled bend to the east occurs.

St. Mary's Gate would no doubt follow the building of the church on top of the hill. Till then no doubt the



lane now called Lordsmill Street would ~~turn~~ into Stead Lane, now Beetwell Street, so into Soutergate and through the town, via Knifsmithgate and Holywell Street. There may, in the street now called Elder Way, be the remains of an old, and now lost Chesterfield street called Northgate. The parallel side street called Broad Pavement was formerly called Narrow Lane.

In 1803, the central alley of the block now called collectively The Shambles, was known as Long Shambles.' Jeayes no doubt refers to the same street in his charter No. 750 of 1365, and Yeatman in his *Records of the Borough of Chesterfield*, p. 142, probably indicates the same street. Mercer Row or Draper Row was, in 1803, the southern edge of the present High Street. The most westerly of the three north-south passages was in 1803 called Shoemaker's Row. This was no doubt the Souter Row of the Middle Ages, but it is now called Irongate. The explanation of this is probably that the souters occupied one-half of this passage and the iron-mongers the other. Having disposed of the butchers, the mercers, the cobblers and the iron-traders we now find ourselves left with the other trades mentioned in the charters of Jeayes and Yeatman, viz. the Packers (Yeatman, p. 128, date 1341 A.D.), the Potters (Jeayes, No. 849 of 1460 A.D.) and the Fishmongers (Jeayes, No. 755 of 1368 A.D.). We can almost certainly deduce their positions in the present Shambles. Packers' Row still exists. Fisher Row we can deduce from Jeayes, for his charter No. 833 of 1426 A.D. mentions six stalls together, granted to John Leche. Charter No. 835 of 1427 A.D. of the same six stalls says *one* lay in Fisher Row, and the rest in Souter Row. As charter 833 says that these six lay 'together,' and Souter Row lay north-south, it follows that Fisher Row must have joined Souter Row at right angles. This means that Fisher Row is now represented by the transverse passage which crosses

the present Shambles east to west, and continuing on as Church Lane. This leaves us only Potter Row to identify. The central, westerly and transverse passages having been identified, and Mercer or Draper Row lying in the present High Street, one naturally imagines that the potters must have occupied the remaining or eastern of the three passages running north and south through The Shambles, that is the one running parallel with and adjacent to Packers' Row. As, however, the map of 1803 shows no thoroughfare at all through this alley, both ends terminating in culs-de-sac in the centre of The Shambles, it may have been that the potters and packers shared Packers' Row, in the same way as it was previously suggested that the iron-workers and shoemakers may have once shared what was formerly Shoemakers' Row and what is now called Irongate. In support of this suggestion it may be noted that Yeatman in his *Borough Records*, p. 143, says that Potters' Row was in Southgate. No doubt Southgate was actually written in the charter as Soutgate with an abbreviation sign for the 'er' of Soutergate, which Yeatman did not observe. If this assumption be correct then it strengthens the supposition that the potters and packers were both in what is now called Packers' Row, for Packers' Row was in Soutergate, just as apparently was Potter Row.

Doubtless the fact that the whole block with the four intersecting passages adjoining the market place is now collectively designated 'The Shambles,' when originally the name only referred to the central of the three north-south passages, arises from the fact that the Long Shambles was the last of the old trade rows to maintain its individuality. The butchers, clinging to their station longer than the others, ultimately gave their name to the whole block. Curiously too, till recently, drapers still held on to Draper Row, now High Street, and pot-sellers still occupy the southern shops of The Shambles,

not far from where Potter Row may once have been. It takes no vivid stretch of imagination too to fix the fishmongers in their central transverse alley until comparatively recently, whilst a butcher's shop still holds the northern end of Long Shambles.