

THE COURSE OF HEREWARD STREET: A REAPPRAISAL

By ADRIAN HENSTOCK

(Nottinghamshire Record Office, High Pavement, Nottingham)

Although Derbyshire historians have accepted the existence of Hereward Street as a Romano-British road which ran from Chesterfield through Matlock, Wirksworth and Ashbourne to Rocester in Staffordshire, a re-appraisal of the evidence suggests that the line of the road bearing this name was elsewhere, as will be demonstrated here.

Attention was first drawn to Hereward Street by S. O. Addy in 1917, who declared its course to be marked by the line of the present Chesterfield-Matlock road as it passed through Ashover parish from Stonedge to Slack (Fig. 1). This theory was extended in 1959 by Professor K. Cameron, who discovered another reference to the name in relation to Hanging Bridge over the River Dove near Ashbourne (Fig. 2), which he linked to the Ashover reference to postulate the existence of a major highway connecting the two areas. The subject was taken up and developed by R. W. P. Cockerton in 1960, who cited circumstantial place- and field-name evidence for an ancient road on this line, which he suggested might be of prehistoric origin but improved in Roman times. More recently other writers have accepted the existence of this road as Roman, notably John Bestall, Roy Milward and Adrian Robinson, and Dr. and Mrs. Dodd.¹ But whilst this route is undoubtedly of some antiquity it does not seem possible that it was Hereward Street.

There are, in fact, only two definite documentary references to the name Hereward Street. One occurs in a group of four 13th century charters relating to Ashover in the Beauchief Abbey cartulary, and the other in the 14th century *Quo Warranto* and assize proceedings relating to the Ashbourne district. A third, doubtful, reference, occurs in 13th century Kniveton charters recorded in the Kniveton family cartulary. Unfortunately both Addy and Cameron attributed incorrect geographical locations to their documentary references, and these attributions have been accepted without question by later writers without re-examining the original documents. In order to attempt to identify the true locations it is therefore necessary to digress into a detailed discussion of these records.

Ashover area

Hereward Street is named in four charters of c. 1275–1300 granting to the monks of Beauchief Abbey rights of common of pasture over part of Ashover moor, not far from their grange at Harewood on the eastern extremity of Beeley lordship. These charters appear in the Beauchief cartulary and were partly printed by Samuel Pegge in his history of the abbey published in 1801 and quoted by Addy in 1917.² All describe the 'metes and bounds' of Ashover Moor, although the fourth describes a smaller area than the others. The descriptions are as follows:

Charters 1–3

... a Serleforkes per Hereward Street versus austrum usque viam que ducit de Essov' versus pontem de Matlock et sic descendendo per eandem viam usque le Wringandstones et sic ascendendo usque Athelstowe per Wetemore usque Schiterley et de Shyterley usque Paystohirst Roche et sic descendendo per le Moresyde usque Staniford Sik et sic ultra moram per Alwaldsetes usque metas et divisas de Wyngerworth et de metis et divisis de Wyngerworth usque metas et divisas de Waleton et sic assendendo usque Astwode juxta Harewode ...

Charter 4

... a Serleforkys per Herewardstrete versus austrum usque viam que ducit de Derley ad Schyterley et inde ascendendo per Paystohirst usque Dewgliswode et inde ascendendo ex parte australi de Aylewaldesetis usque divisas de Walton descendendo per easdem usque ad Astewode.

Many of these names are readily identifiable on the modern map with the aid of Cameron's *Place-Names of Derbyshire*: for example, Ashover, Matlock Bridge, Eddlestow, Shootersley, Peasunhurst, Roach, Devilswood (Buntingfield), Wingerworth, Walton, and Harewood (Fig. 1). 'Serleforkes' can be equated with the 'Shirl Fork' which was one of the boundary stones of Ashover parish marked on a sketch map of 1687 and also described by Titus Wheatcroft in his 'Memorandum' of 1722, which show it to have been situated at the far northwestern extremity of Ashover parish, most probably at the point near Screetham House where the boundaries of Ashover, Darley and Beeley meet (SK 300667).³

The Ashover Moor boundary as described in Charters 1–3 above thus commenced at Shirl Fork—the point nearest to the monks' grange at Harewood—and proceeded approximately along the line of the present parish boundary in a southeasterly direction 'by way of Hereward Street' until it reached the Ashover–Matlock Bridge road near the top of Slack Hill. It then went partly down Slack Hill as far as the 'Ringing Stones' before turning back northwards up to Eddlestow (SK 328631) and then by way of

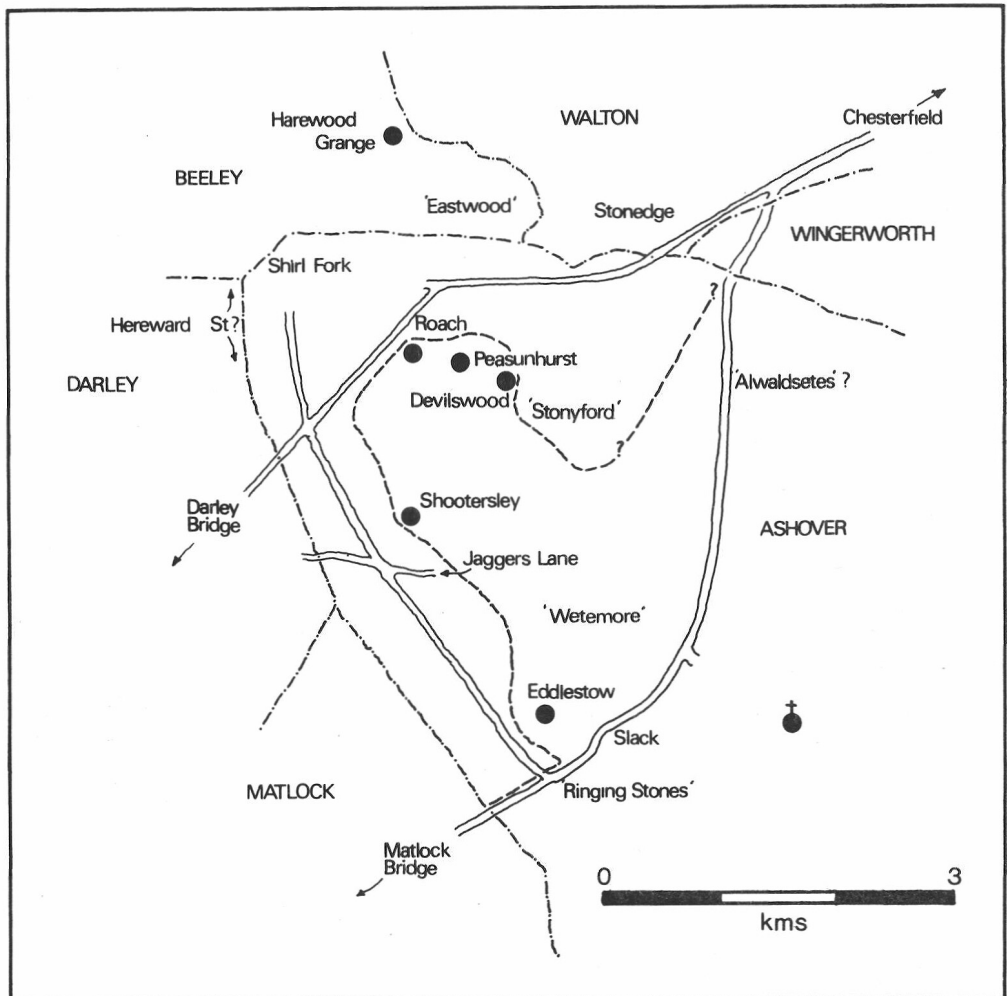


Fig. 1 The boundaries of Ashover Moor. The dot-and-dash lines mark modern parish boundaries; the dashed line marks the suggested medieval boundary of Ashover Moor. North is at the top of the map.

Wetmore along the edge of the moor to Shootersley (SK 315647), Roach (SK 318662), Peasunhurst (SK 313662), and Buntingfield (SK 322656). From here the line becomes uncertain but it must have turned around the head of the Amber along the edge of the moor in a southeastwardly direction to 'Stonyford Syke' (? a ford over the Smalley Brook) and then possibly northeastwards over the moor via *Alwaldsetes* to the Ashover/Wingerworth boundary east of Stonedge. From here it becomes more evident, presumably following the line of the modern Ashover/Walton boundary westwards over Stonedge past 'Eastwood next to Harewood' (probably a wood at the east end of Beeley lordship) and so back to the starting point near Harewood. Charter 4 above describes a similar area except that it does not include the projecting tongue of moorland south of the 'way which leads from Darley to Shootersley', which must be partly on the line of the present Jagers Lane.

These bounds describe an area of East Moor encircling the head of the Amber Valley, most of which is shown as open moorland on Burdett's map of 1767 and only disappeared as a result of being parcelled out by the Ashover Enclosure Award of 1783.⁴ It is obvious from the documents that the Matlock—Chesterfield road is the road described as 'the way from Ashover to Matlock Bridge'. Hereward Street, on the other hand, was situated to the south of Shirl Fork. The wording of the charters states that the boundary ran 'by way of' (*per*) Hereward Street, which suggests that the street ran down the western boundary of Ashover, possibly roughly on the line of the present parish boundary land parallel to Millstone or Screetham Lane, an enclosure road which runs from Screetham House down to Slack Hill. An alternative but less likely interpretation of the wording of the charters is that the medieval boundary went *past* or *across* Hereward Street rather than along it; here the obvious candidate is the present main road from Stonedge to Sydnoppe Hill and Darley Bridge, which the boundary crossed between Shirl Fork and Jagers Lane. This road formed part of a major medieval route from Chesterfield to Darley Bridge (where a bridge has been in existence from the early 14th century at least) and on through Wensley to Winster and the central limestone plateau. It was referred to by Titus Wheatcroft as one of the three major highways passing through Ashover in 1722, and was turnpiked in 1760.

Ashbourne area

The second definite documentary reference to Hereward Street appears in the official record of the *Quo Warranto* proceedings of 1330, which were instigated by the king to enquire 'by what warrant' the feudal landowners held their estates and privileges. Henry, Earl of Lancaster, who was lord of Ashbourne manor, claimed *thorotoll et passagium* in and around Ashbourne, that is, the right of collecting tolls on any goods passing through the town or crossing any of the neighbouring bridges. The boundary of the 'customs area' over which he claimed jurisdiction was described as running:

... de DONNEBRUGG usque ROUCESTRE et de ROUCESTRE usque HONGYNDEBRUGG et de HONGYNDEBRUGG usque BUGGYNK et de BUGGYNK usque HERWARDSTRETE et de HERWARDSTRETE usque BRITHWODEBROK et de BRITHWODEBROK usque DONNEBRIGG et sic circumquaque usque ASSHEBURN⁵

Here again, the problem lies in the identification of some of the place-names. Doveridge, Rocester and Hanging Bridge are easily identifiable as the major bridging points of the River Dove south of Ashbourne, and the boundary here is obviously following the river northwards (Fig. 2). *Buggynck* is a medieval form of the name Biggin, but unfortunately there are two places of this name near Ashbourne, one adjacent to Hartington and the other to Hulland. Of the two, Biggin-by-Hartington appears the most likely candidate, as this would continue the boundary line northwards along the Dove, although the naming of Biggin as a boundary point seems curious as it was a small settlement within the Earl's larger manor of Hartington. Near Biggin the river was forded at Beresford. *Brithwodebrok* is apparently a form of 'Birchwoodbrook' which must presumably be the stream running through Birchwood Park, a former hunting park of the Fitzherberts in Norbury parish southwest of Ashbourne, for which similar 13th century spellings are known.⁶

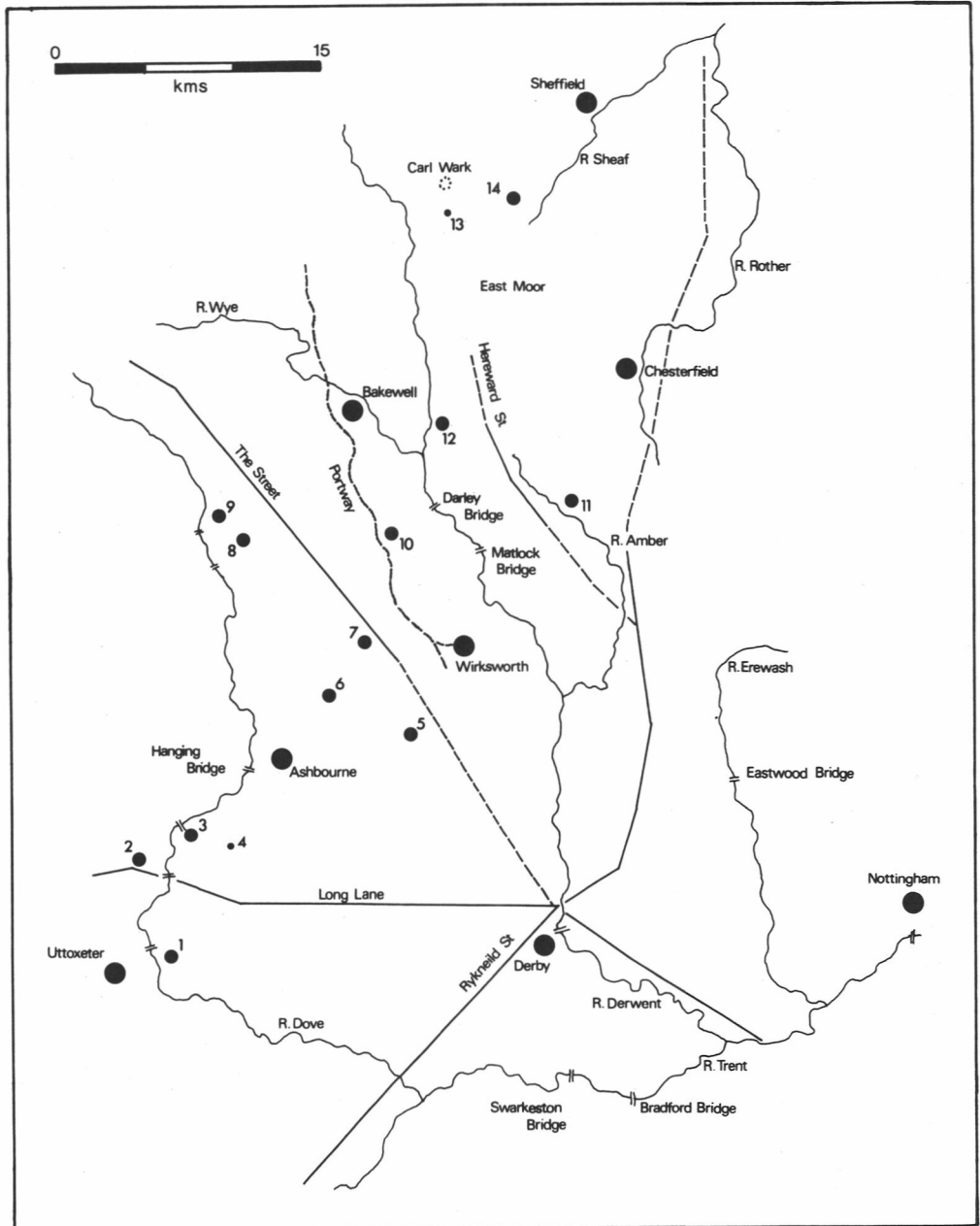


Fig. 2 Roman roads and ancient trackways in south Derbyshire. Solid and dashed lines mark known routes, dotted lines mark probable or possible routes, as discussed in the text. 1. Doveridge; 2. Rocester; 3. Norbury; 4. Birchwood Park; 5. Biggin; 6. Kniveton; 7. Brassington; 8. Biggin; 9. Hartington; 10. Winster; 11. Ashover; 12. Beoley; 13. Longshaw; 14. Dore. North is at the top of the map.

It is of course possible that the boundary of the Earl's 'customs area' may not have been precise where there was no natural boundary to follow, and that it could in fact have been notional rather than strictly geographical. A comparable customs area claimed by the burgesses of Derby is mentioned in the same proceedings, and its boundary ran from Doveridge Bridge to *Cordy* Bridge (Swarkeston) then to *Bradeford* Bridge (Weston-on-Trent) and to *Estwayt* Bridge (crossing the Erewash between Langley Mill and Eastwood, Notts.) 'as well as all the Derwent'.⁷ This line apparently follows the Dove, Trent, and Erewash rivers but does not define the limits of a recognisable geographical circuit.

Later documents exist which describe the customs posts in the Ashbourne area comparable with the 1330 boundary. The ministers' accounts of the Duchy of Lancaster from 1416/17 to 1446/7 record the annual income from tolls collected at these points. The accounts vary in detail but one of the fullest—that for 1445/6—lists the following income:

Hongyngbrigge	25s. 6d.
Hertyngton	2s. 0d.
Dovebrigge	10s. 0d.
Uttoxhather	— —
Roucestre	12d.
Norbury	12d.
Matlok	12d.
Derley	8d.
et tolum vocatur thoroughtoll	8s. 0d. ⁸

One account also lists a nil return for Brassington. Later still, in 1675, a statement of the perquisites of Ashbourne Manor (which had by then passed out of Duchy hands to the Boothby family) included '... the proffitts of the passage over the water of Dove to be collected at Hawkingbridgg Hartinton brigg Dowbrigg Uttoxather Rawcester Norbury Matlocke and Derly and the toll called Through Toll'.⁹

These documents indicate that tolls were then being collected at Uttoxeter, presumably as an alternative to the Dove crossing at nearby Doveridge, and also at the other Dove crossings at Norbury and Hartington, the latter almost certainly an alternative for Biggin, and confirm the identification of the 1330 record with Biggin-by-Hartington. More surprisingly they reveal toll-collecting points over the Derwent at Matlock and Darley Dale, apparently in place of the Hereward Street of the 1330 record.¹⁰ The toll boundary of the *Quo Warranto* document would thus appear to have run from Doveridge up the Dove past Rocester, Norbury and Hanging Bridge to Biggin-by-Hartington, and then struck eastwards to Darley Bridge and Hereward Street. From here it presumably ran back across the Derwent at Matlock Bridge and by some undefined route, possibly via Brassington, to Birchwood Park and then back to Doveridge. Hereward Street would thus seem to have been situated to the east of the Derwent and not near Ashbourne as other writers have previously suggested.

Kniveton area

The only other possible reference to Hereward Street occurs as a 13th century field-name at Kniveton mentioned in the Kniveton family cartulary. The name appears as (*H*)areweybottes in c. 1255 and c. 1285–90, which Cockerton suggested might include the element 'here-weg' ('army-way'), a variant of the more common *here-paeth* ('army-path') and therefore be connected with *hereward* ('army-guardian'). However, an earlier variant of the field-name also occurs in the cartulary as *Arnewey(e)botte* (c. 1200 and c. 1240), which throws doubt on such a derivation, and moreover a similar name, *Arweysbuttis* (c. 1260) also appears in a Parwich charter in the cartulary. As the letters *n*, *u*, *v*, and *w* are frequently confused in medieval documents a possible meaning of the name may be simply something like 'Harvey's butts', as Cameron suggested for the Parwich example.¹¹ Even if the name does refer to a 'way', then a route connecting

Kniveton and Parwich, for which there is some topographical evidence, would seem more likely. Whatever the origin, it is clearly not the same name as Hereward Street and can be dismissed from further consideration.

CONCLUSION

Whilst it is just conceivable that the road from Chesterfield to Matlock, Wirksworth, and Ashbourne could form the line of the Hereward Street of the *Quo Warranto* boundary, it does not fit the evidence of the Beauchief charters and an alternative route must be sought elsewhere. Two possible lines suggest themselves which would be compatible with both sources: (a) a route from northwest to southeast along the East Moor at Ashover, and (b) a route leading east from Biggin-by-Hartington to Pikehall, Winster, Darley Bridge, Sydnop Hill, and Stonedge. Neither convincingly explains the *Quo Warranto* document but on the basis of the evidence at present available route (a) would appear the most likely candidate. However it must remain a hypothesis constructed on a shaky foundation of tenuous place-name identifications and a variety of circumstantial evidence until more positive documentary or archaeological evidence comes to light.

The postulated route follows the natural scarp of the East Moor and as such is on an obvious line for an ancient ridgeway. Its course could possibly be interpolated southeastwards from Beeley Moor to Slack, Butterley (Ashover), High Oredish, and Wessington to a crossing of the Amber on the site of the existing Dale Bridge and then joining Rykniel Street near Four Lane Ends at Oakerthorpe or to cross it in the direction of Nottingham.¹² Alternatively it could have turned southwards to follow the ridge via Plaistow and Crich to a crossing of the Amber at Bull Bridge. The northwesterly destination is even more obscure: from Beeley Moor the route would probably have followed the line of the East Moor as far as the Longshaw area, but alternatively could have dropped down to cross the Derwent at Calver en route for Castleton and district.

The description of the road as a *straet* or paved way, whilst by no means conclusive, implies that it was either a Roman road or else an ancient British trackway in origin. Recent research shows that areas of prehistoric remains are frequently found adjacent to ancient trackways (for example Arbor Low and related sites next to The Street), and it may be significant that the gritstone moors of the East Moor are yielding increasing evidence of extensive bronze age settlement, especially Beeley Moor.¹³ It may also be significant that the possible site of an isolated Anglo-Saxon flat inhumation grave dating from the earliest period of the Anglian settlement has been discovered near Overton Hall, Ashover, not far from the postulated route, implying that the early settlers used an existing trackway.¹⁴

The road's northerly continuation would reach the northern boundary of Derbyshire, which in the later Anglo-Saxon period possessed considerable strategic importance as the border between the constantly-warring states of Mercia and Northumbria. Dore, on the later Derbyshire/Yorkshire boundary, appears to have had a particular significance as it features twice in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The place-name literally means the 'door' or 'narrow gateway' and presumably refers to the pass over the neck of East Moor via Longshaw connecting the Sheaf Valley in Northumbria with the Derwent Valley in Mercia, a route guarded by the enigmatic fortress of Carl Wark, which may be of Dark Age origin.¹⁵ In 829 King Egbert of Wessex conquered Mercia and led his army to Dore where he made peace with the Northumbrians, and in 942 King Edmund of Mercia reconquered the area which had then become part of the Danelaw 'bounded by Dore, Whitwell Gate and the boundary stream the River Humber'. Previously, in 920, his father King Edward had constructed fortifications at Trent Bridge near Nottingham and 'in the neighbourhood' of Bakewell.¹⁶ These armies would almost certainly have used existing Roman roads or other major trackways. The known main south-north routes are the Rykniel Street, leading from Little Chester near Derby to Chesterfield and Templeborough; The Street, which presumably linked Little Chester with Buxton; and the Portway, which ran from the Wirksworth area northwards past Bakewell (the

postulated extension from Wirksworth towards Nottingham is by no means proven).¹⁷ The existence of Hereward Street on the line suggested here would provide another alternative route to Dore and the border which could have been used in these campaigns. This line along the watershed of the East Moor has a natural strategic importance, separating the valleys of the Rother and Sheaf with their access to Doncaster and the Humber, from the Derwent Valley with its access down to Derby or across to the Cheshire plain. It came to form the approximate boundary line of Scarsdale Wapentake, and indeed the suggested line of Hereward Street from Longshaw down to Oakerthorpe virtually divides Scarsdale from the rest of Derbyshire.¹⁸ This division is reflected in the evidence of place-names, leading Cameron to suggest that the boundary of Mercia through Derbyshire probably did not originally extend very far east of the Derwent. Although there are a few names bearing Mercian or West Midland characteristics in the Chesterfield–Sheffield area, most of Scarsdale was almost certainly settled from the northeast rather than via the Derwent Valley. This was also true of the 9th century Scandinavian penetration of the area, spreading out from the heavy concentrations of Danish settlement around Doncaster.¹⁹

It is thus possible that at some period in the 9th or 10th centuries the East Moor could have formed a boundary between Mercia and Northumbria or between Mercia and the Danes, and Scarsdale could have changed hands between one kingdom and another. A road such as Hereward Street along the ridge could have formed a troop or supplies route or else a patrol road for watching the border, and in this connection it is worth noting that a possible explanation of the name is ‘army-watch road’.

The accepted explanation of the name put forward by Cameron is, however, ‘Hereward’s Street’, incorporating the personal name Hereward. If this is correct the name could commemorate an otherwise unknown military or political leader of the Anglo-Saxon period prominent in the campaigns mentioned above. Alternatively it could have sprung from the popular folk-cult which grew up around the outlaw Hereward the Wake at the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th centuries. His exploits led the generation following his own to regard him as the popular hero of the English resistance to the Norman conquerors, and songs and ballads were composed extolling his heroic actions. Many of these were exaggerated, and the only definite facts known about him are that he mounted a combined attack on Peterborough in 1070 in alliance with a Danish army and then held out for a long period against the Normans from the Isle of Ely.²⁰ There is no record of his ever coming near Derbyshire, although it is not impossible, but as he enjoyed a similar position in popular folklore to the later Robin Hood, his name may have become linked with places similarly associated with the resistance movement, for example during the Mercian revolt of 1069.²¹

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank the following persons for providing information, references to documents, or helpful advice: Dr. Ian Blanchard, Dr. David Crook, Mr. Stephen Penny, Dr. David Postles, and the County Archivists of Derbyshire and of Glamorgan. I am also grateful to the late Mr. R. W. P. Cockerton for reading an early draft of this paper.

REFERENCES

- ¹ S. O. Addy, ‘Ashover and the Wheatcrofts’, *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, 29 (1917), 128–130; K. Cameron, *The Place Names of Derbyshire* (1959), 21–22; R. W. P. Cockerton, ‘The Hereward Street’, *D.A.J.*, 80 (1960), 71–79; J. M. Bestall, *History of Chesterfield*, 1 (1974), 9, 120; R. Milward and A. Robinson, *The Peak District* (1975), 125–127; A. E. and E. M. Dodd, *Peakland Roads and Trackways* (1980), 24–26.
- ² S. Pegge, *Beauchief Abbey* (1801), 250; Addy, *op. cit.*, 128–129; Sheffield City Library Archives Dept. Microfilm M/F A58, ff. 92–97.
- ³ Derbyshire Record Office D1088M/E 98–99; D. R. O. D253A/00 printed in C. Kerry, ‘Ashover: Memoranda by Titus Wheatcroft, A.D. 1722’, *D.A.J.*, 19 (1897), 26–27; some of the other stones can be identified from an award defining the boundary of Ashover and Tansley in 1779, D.R.O. D59A/PZ 23 and Nottinghamshire Record Office, DD.P 39/1.
- ⁴ P. P. Burdett, *Map of Derbyshire*, 1767; Ashover Enclosure award and map, D.R.O., D59A/PZ 24–25.
- ⁵ Records Commissioners, *Placita de Quo Warranto* (1818), 152–3.

- ⁶ Cameron, *op. cit.*, 591. The only other possible candidate appears to be Birchwood in Alfreton, where a small stream flows eastward to join the Erewash, *ibid.*, 188.
- ⁷ *Placita de Quo Warranto*, 158.
- ⁸ Public Record Office, DL 29/184/2906-2922.
- ⁹ Glamorgan Record Office, Boothby archives, D/D F Bo 15.
- ¹⁰ It seems unlikely that Darley Moor in Snelston is intended, even though it is very close to Birchwood Park, as it was not a bridging point and the name appears to be late in origin, possibly 16th century, Cameron, *op. cit.*, 602.
- ¹¹ A. Saltman, ed., *The Kniveton Cartulary*, Derbyshire Record Series, 7 (1977), 215-216, 230, 289, 320; Cameron, *op. cit.*, 385, 405.
- ¹² There is some topographical evidence for a possible ancient trackway leading from the Ermine Street north of Stamford and the Sewstern Lane, and then across the Vale of Belvoir to Trent Bridge near Nottingham via Waltham-on-the-Wolds, Hose, and Clipston-on-the-Wolds. In 1835 a section of road at Clipston was known as Herry Way Lane (G. Sanderson, *Map of the Country 20 miles around Mansfield*, 1835). A logical extension of this line would lead northwestwards from Trent Bridge towards Oakerthorpe, but the existence of such a trackway is entirely speculative.
- ¹³ Milward and Robinson, *op. cit.*, 110; J. Radley, 'The Base of an Urn from Totley Moor', *D.A.J.*, 84 (1964), 128; J. Radley, 'A Ring Bank on Beeley Moor', *D.A.J.*, 85 (1965), 126-131; D. N. Riley, 'An Early Bronze Age Cairn on Harland Edge, Beeley Moor', *D.A.J.*, 86 (1966), 31-53; J. Radley and L. Cooper, 'An Occupied Cave of the Bronze Age, Bunkers Hill Wood, Beeley', *D.A.J.*, 86 (1966), 93-98; J. Radley, 'A Triple Cairn and a Rectangular Cairn of the Bronze Age on Beeley Moor', *D.A.J.*, 89 (1969), 2-17.
- ¹⁴ A. Ozanne, 'The Peak Dwellers', *Mediaeval Archaeology*, 6-7 (1962-4), 35; A. Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (1974), 77.
- ¹⁵ Cameron, *op. cit.*, 240; Milward and Robinson, *op. cit.*, 160.
- ¹⁶ D. Whitelock, ed., *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle* (1965), 40-41, 67, 71.
- ¹⁷ R. W. P. Cockerton, 'The Port Way', *Derbyshire Countryside*, 27 (1932), 62-63; 28 (1933), 66-67; Dodd and Dodd, *op. cit.*, 13-18, 47-53.
- ¹⁸ The names Harewood and Harland Edge on Beeley Moor both contain the element *hār*², meaning boundary, Cameron, *op. cit.*, 44-45.
- ¹⁹ Cameron, *op. cit.*, xxviii-xxix.
- ²⁰ (T. F. Tout), 'Hereward the Wake', *Dictionary of National Biography*, 9 (1917), 691-2; the heroic saga of Hereward's death near Ely at the hand of a Breton knight who had come from Tutbury is related in a mid-12th century Norman-French history, C. T. Martin, ed., *Lestorie des Engles solum Maistre Geffrei Gaimar*, Rolls Series I (1888), 339-404, and A. Bell, ed., 'L'Estoire des Engleis' by Geffrei Gaimar, Anglo-Norman Texts, xiv-xvi (1960), 180.
- ²¹ It is an intriguing flight of fancy that, if Hereward Street was indeed an extension of the trackway referred to in note 12 above, it would have provided a direct road to Derbyshire from the Peterborough area.