

FIRST CENTURY ROMAN OCCUPATION AT STRUTT'S PARK, DERBY

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STRUTT'S PARK, a residential area situated on high ground above the 200-ft. contour on the west side of the river Derwent, has been considered for some years to be the site of a 1st-century Roman fort. Small fragments of samian pottery recovered during a recent survey of the area indicated an occupation date not later than A.D. 60 (Forrest, 1967), but the main evidence for this early date depended on 1st-century coins recovered at various times from the area.

THE 1970 EXCAVATION

In 1968 a garden on the south side of a large house, 91 Belper Road (SK 34893745), fig. 1, was sold for building purposes. Trenches for the foundations of new houses were mechanically excavated in that year, and Roman pottery was recovered from the spoil heaps. Due to other commitments, no other archaeological work was undertaken at that time. Local opposition prevented further building operations, but during the autumn of 1970 it was reported that work was due to recommence. A small-scale excavation was carried out by members of the Archaeological Research Group of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society. The builder kindly gave permission for existing trenches to be trowelled and this work was undertaken by Miss T. Jubb and Messrs. R. Salt, J. Potts, K. Mann, N. J. Brassington and the writer. Work continued until the 20 January 1971 when the trenches were backfilled by the builder.

Site E (fig. 1)

The foundation trenches situated in the south-eastern quarter of the site were the first to be examined. Lying directly beneath the topsoil was a layer of pebbles 2 to 3 in. (5 to 8 cm.) thick. A post-medieval date is suggested for this layer by a clay pipe, dated by Mr. J. K. Clifford to c. A.D. 1640, which was found embedded in it. These pebbles overlay a stratum containing early Roman material and which consisted mainly of red clay with areas of large pebbles and sandy clay. The red clay was cut through only at section Z-Z where the underlying layer proved to be sand.

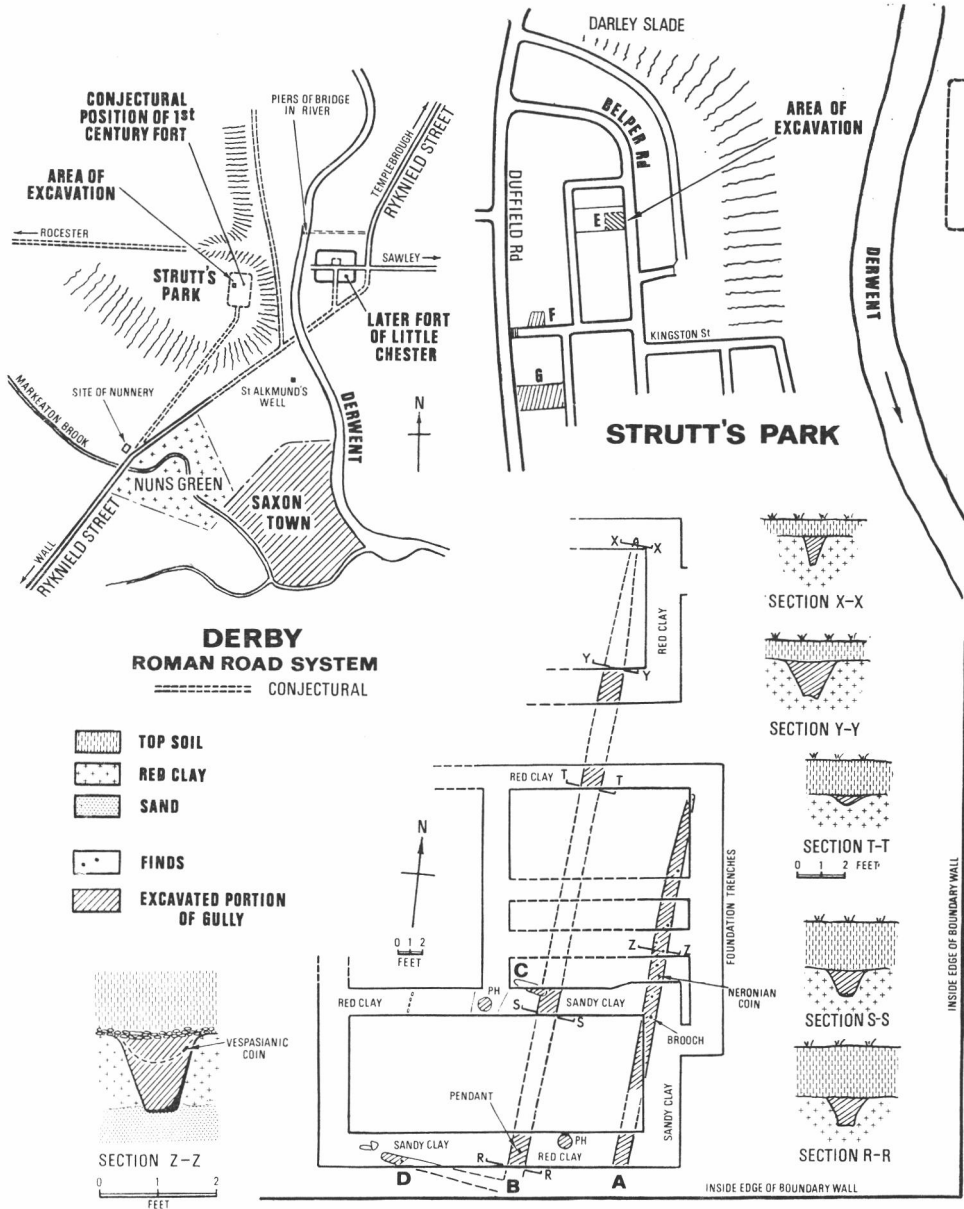


FIG. 1. Strutt's Park, Derby: location map, site plan and sections.

No artifacts were found in the red clay, and whether or not it was an artificial layer was not ascertained.

Two gullies, A and B, were located cut into the red clay, running parallel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ ft. (2.59 m.) apart, on an alignment 10° east of north. The eastern gully (A) ran close to a building trench and was traced northwards for a distance of 32 ft. (9.75 m.) where it petered out. A profile is shown in fig. 1, section Z-Z. The sides sloped inwards from a width of 18 in. (0.46 m.) at the top to 7 in. (0.18 m.) at a depth of 15 in. (0.38 m.). The bottom was relatively flat and was covered with a thin dark grey-black silt, which also extended up the eastern wall of the gully.

Fragments of thin sheet bronze and small bronze tacks were found in the silt. In addition, several small bronze objects, distorted by heat, and a small spillage of lead were found, suggesting metal-working close by. The main filling of the gully consisted of brown sandy clay containing a few fragments of animal bones, flecks of charcoal, corroded remains of iron nails and a few small lumps of daub. A head-stud brooch was recovered, together with 24 body sherds from at least 7 flagons, and one or two from storage jars. The main dating evidence, however, rests with the following coins and samian pottery: a *sestertius* of Nero, an *as* of Vespasian, a portion of a late Claudian or early Neronian samian bowl (fig. 2, no. 1) and small fragments of other small samian bowls. The Vespasianic coin was found lying amongst a layer of pebbles (section Z-Z), probably indicating the height of the filling of the gully at the time it was deposited.

Gully B lay parallel to gully A but extended 20 ft. further north. Unfortunately, only a small part of the filling could be examined. The section at the southern end (fig. 1, R-R) had a maximum width of 20 in. at the top (0.51 m.); the sides sloped downwards at an angle of 45° until, at a depth of 9 in. (0.23 m.) and a width of 9 in. (0.23 m.) they became vertical, terminating in a flat bottom. This profile suggests a bedding for a sleeper beam, since the slot seemed too narrow to have served as a post-trench. There was no indication that a wooden beam had rotted *in situ*. The bronze pendant (fig. 2, no. 2) came from the bottom of the gully near section R-R. It was evident, however, that no beam could have lain in the northern half of this gully, for the section X-X at the north end had a V-shaped profile. The sides here were not eroded, and the profile of the gully at section Y-Y, suggesting the sloping thrust of a spade on each side, implies that it had not remained open for any length of time. A possible explanation is that this portion of the gully marked out the ground for a longer structure than was actually built. That the northern and southern portions of gully B served different functions is suggested also by the section T-T, opposite the termination of gully A. At this point gully B became very shallow, as if coming to an end. Unfortunately, the back-filling of the builder's trench prevented an investigation of the ground south of section T-T for any trace of a corner or east-west gully.

On the western side of gully B, two more gullies, C and D, lay at right angles, parallel to each other. These were no more than 3-4 in. (0.07 to 0.1 m.) deep, and may indicate internal partitions in a structure whose east wall was formed by the southern part of gully B. Near gully C lay a shallow post hole 12 in. (0.30 m.) in diameter packed round with stones. Sherds of a rustic ware jar were recovered from the bottom of gully D.

Between the two main gullies one post hole was located although others may have lain beneath the overburden. It was 14 in. (0.36 m.) in diameter, with straight sides 9 in. (0.23 m.) deep and a mitred base. A possible interpretation is that this post hole contained one of the upright posts forming a verandah attached to a timber-framed building, the foundations of which are represented by the western gullies; gully A might then represent an eaves-drip channel.

General interpretation

The interpretation that the features represented the remains of a timber-framed building must be treated with caution. Certainly they are associated with a Neronian, and possibly a Claudian occupation. The situation of the site close to the highest ground suggests a position inside a fort rather than a *vicus* outside. The rampart and ditches have not been located, and the size of the presumed fort is unknown. The alignment, however, could be indicated by the gullies. The material recovered from stratified deposits did not suggest a date later than the reign of Vespasian, and this would be consistent with the theory that the fort was dismantled under the governorship of Agricola.

A few sherds of unstratified samian pottery from the site, together with a small lead-glazed jar base, attest to an occupation of some kind in the 2nd century, but no later Roman pottery was found.

At 98 Belper Road, Mr. Nelmes discovered the upper portion of a Romano-British jar while making a driveway to his house in April 1970. The light grey fabric is similar to that produced by the early 2nd-century kilns on the Derby Racecourse.

The building sites denoted F and G on fig. 1 were examined by Mr. J. Potts in February 1971, but no Roman material was recovered.

THE COINS

In 1887, a hoard of 80 or 90 worn silver and bronze Roman coins was found in a vase during the making of a road through the lower part of Strutt's Park and soon after dispersed. Two coins, one Republican, the other a *denarius* of Tiberius, are the only ones definitely known to be from this hoard (Bailey, 1891); five others denoted "Strutt's Park Find" are attributed, some doubtfully, to the reigns of Caligula, Nero, Vitellius, Vespasian and Titus, and are probably from this hoard. A *sestertius* of the reign of Hadrian, also recorded as from Strutt's Park, may be from this source (Bailey, 1891; Bailey, 1893). All these coins are described as

being worn (Victoria County History, 1905), and it is likely that they were not deposited during the 1st century. As dating evidence for an early fort, they must be discounted.

Eleven coins remain to be considered, all of which were found on the high ground. A *denarius* of the reign of Vespasian was found in November 1913 at 72 Belper Road. A further six¹ were discovered when the foundations of houses were dug in the Belper Road area in 1922/23; they comprise two *dupondii* and an *as* of Claudius, an *as* of Nero, and two *dupondii* of Vespasian. Single coins were found in 1960 and 1961, and two coins came from the present excavations.

SCHEDULE OF COINS CERTAINLY FROM STRUTT'S PARK

Coins 1-7 are recorded in the *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, XLIX, 1927, 355.

1. *Dupondius* of Claudius. *Obv.* [TI] CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG [P M TR P IMP], bust bare l. *Rev.* CERES AVGVSTA S C. *R.I.C.* 136. Derby Museum 862-1922, but stolen 1964.
2. *Dupondius* of Claudius. *Obv.* [TI CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG P M TR P IMP P P], bust bare l. *Rev.* CERES AVGVSTA S C. *R.I.C.* 136. Derby Museum 925-1923.
3. *As* of Claudius. *Obv.* TI CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG P M TR P IMP P P, bust bare l. *Rev.* S C, Pallas Iaculatrix. Identification given as *C.* 84. Derby Museum 862-1922, but stolen 1964.
4. *As* of Nero. *Obv.* IMP NERO CAESAR AVG P MAX [TR P P P], bust bare r. *Rev.* S C, legend indecipherable, figure standing l. *R.I.C.* 381. Derby Museum 862-1922, but stolen 1964.
5. Silver *denarius* of Vespasian. *Obv.* IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG, laureate bust r. *Rev.* COS ITER TR POT, Pax standing l, holding branch and caduceus. Derby Museum 509-13.
6. *Dupondius* of Vespasian. *Obv.* COS IIII (A.D. 72), laureate bust r. *Rev.* SECVRITAS AVGVSTI S C. *R.I.C.* 819. Derby Museum 925-1923, but stolen 1964.
7. *Dupondius* of Vespasian. *Obv.* IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVG COS VIII P P, laureate bust r. *Rev.* FIDES PVBLICA S C, Fides standing l, with patera and cornucopia. *R.I.C.* 832, A.D. 77-8. Derby Museum 862-22.
8. *Dupondius* of Nero. Mint of Lyons. Derby Museum 477-60, but stolen 1964. Found in the area of the northern junction of Belper and Duffield roads near the electrical sub-station. No further details are known.
9. Republican *denarius* of M. Tullius (c. 109 B.C.). *Obv.* Roma head r. *Rev.* Victory holding long palm in quadriga r.; above, wreath; below, X. Condition worn. Sydenham, *Roman Republican Coinage*, no. 531. Found in garden of 13 Kingston Street. Derby Museum 516-61.
10. *Sestertius* of Nero, A.D. 64-66. *Obv.* NERO CLAVD CAES AVG GER P [M TR] P IM[P P P], bust r. *Rev.* ROMA, S C in field. *R.I.C.* type G. Corroded, but unworn when deposited. 1970 excavations; found 4 in. below a sherd of late Claudian samian bowl in gully A.
11. *As* of Vespasian. *Obv.* [IMP CAES]AR VESPASIAN AVG COS [VI], laureate head r. *Rev.* Spes advancing (?). *R.I.C.* 576a, Mint of Rome, A.D. 75 (identified by Dr. C. H. V. Sutherland). Corroded, but unworn when deposited. 1970 excavations; gully A, section Z-Z.

¹ cf. W. H. Hanbury's statement in "Short History of Derby", in *Education Week, Derby* 1937, 26, that "ten 1st-century coins were found in 1922".

THE POTTERY (fig. 2)

Samian — pre-1970 finds

Small fragments of pre-Flavian south Gaulish samian pottery were recovered during the survey of the Strutt's Park area conducted in 1966 (Forrest, 1967). These were examined by Mr. B. R. Hartley, who considered them consistent with an occupation not later than A.D. 60. Amongst the sherds was a small fragment from the base of a Ritterling 9, and several pieces from the base of a form 24/25 bearing the stamp ER.T.IV, Neronian in date.

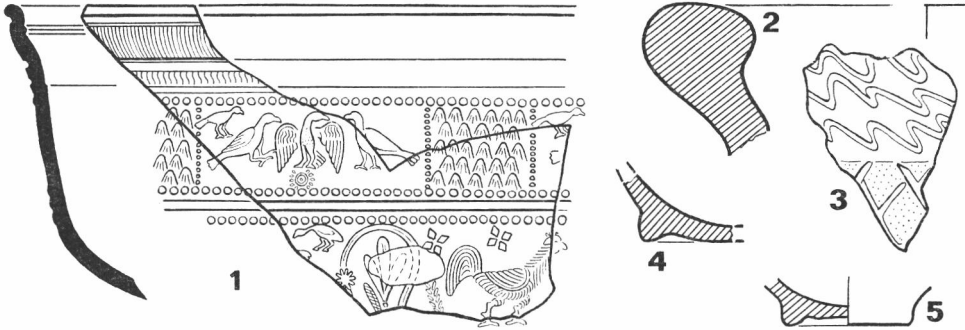


FIG. 2. Strutt's Park, Derby: Roman pottery, scale 1:2.

Samian — 1970 excavation. By Dr. Grace Simpson

Fig. 2, no. 1. Dr. 29. The design on the soffit, the area below the beaded central moulding, has much in common with Knorr, 1919, Taf. 46c, from Mainz, by LICINVS. That bowl has small (but different) quatrefoils above the same cock, O.2335. These alternate with arcades which are larger than the arcade on the Strutt's Park Dr. 29, with a goose as a space filler beside the arcade. Knorr dated the work of LICINVS as c. A.D. 35-60. Another potter who made friezes of this kind, with birds in panels alternating with leaf-tips in panels, was OF.FELICIS (Knorr, 1952, Taf. 23a, Neronian); LABIO, AQVITANVS and BASSVS also used the cock. The small quatrefoils are as Hermet, 1934, detail on pl. XV. 83. Probably late Claudian, certainly not later than A.D. 60.

Not illustrated:

- a. Fragment of a base, probably from a Dr. 30; from gully A. Clear red gloss; not later than A.D. 65.
- b. Fragment possibly from a Dr. 18; from gully A. Micaceous body with thin orange slip, probably Lezoux ware. Claudian-early Neronian.
- c. Rim of a Dr. 27; from gully A. Pointed undercut rim, rare at Camulodunum, with a groove below the lip inside (Mountford, Gee and Simpson, 1968, fig. 8, no. 10). Claudian-early Neronian.
- d. The flange of a Dr. 24/25. A small cup with the same thin brownish-red gloss as (c); cf. Richmond, 1968, fig. 53, no. 33. Claudian-early Neronian.
- e. Scrap, gully B, probably from a platter base, early south Gaulish slip.
- f. Rim of a Dr. 15/7, unstratified. Thin wall with a matt slip, possibly Flavian or Neronian-Flavian.

Coarse wares

- Fig. 2, no. 2. Amphora, grogged fabric, rough orange coloured surface. Gully A.
 Fig. 2, no. 3. Body sherd from a jar; hard black granular fabric, sparsely grogged with small particles of quartz. Gully A.
 Fig. 2, no. 4. Flagon base; soft buff fabric with grey core. Gully A.

Not illustrated:

- g. Ten body sherds from a flagon some 9 in. (0.23 m.) in diameter; sandy textured creamy fabric. Gully A.
 h. Five small body sherds from a flagon, 7 in. (0.18 m.) in diameter; cream coloured grogged fabric, rough surface. Gully A.
 j. Three body sherds from a flagon, 6½ in. (0.14 m.) in diameter; rough whitish fabric. Gully A.
 k. Three flagon body sherds, mottled greyish-orange surface, cream fabric. Gully A.
 l. Fragment from neck of flagon, buff coloured hard sandy textured fabric. Gully A.
 m. Flagon body sherd; smooth hard cream coloured fabric. Gully A.
 n. Body sherd from jar; grey fabric decorated with close-set parallel lines lightly incised. Gully A.
 o. Fragment from the base of a jar in smooth grey fabric. Gully A.
 p. Body sherd from a large calcite-gritted vessel, rilled orange coloured surface with grey core. Gully B.
 q. Three sherds from a rustic ware jar; large rustications, rough black surface with reddish-brown core. Gully D.
 r. Two fragments from the rim of a mortarium; orange fabric. Identified by Mrs. K. F. Hartley as a likely product of the kilns south of Verulamium, including Brockley Hill and Radlett. Almost certainly Flavian. Gully B, section R-R.
 Fig. 2, no. 5. Portion of the base of a green lead-glazed beaker in a light grey fabric, identical with the lead-glazed ware manufactured in the Trajanic kilns situated on the Derby Racecourse (Brassington, 1971, fig. 12, nos. 287-92). Unstratified.

SMALL FINDS (fig. 3)

Bronze

- Fig. 3, no. 1. Bronze "sawfish" head-stud brooch with settings for stones in the stud and in the arms; red enamel is discernible in the boss at the foot, and between the lattice decoration on the bow. Mr. M. R. Hull classifies this brooch as his type 145, sub-division Bi. Precise dating evidence is lacking, but he considers a 1st-century date likely. An almost exact parallel is no. 8372, pl. 487, from Fotheringhay (Northampton Museum). Similar are nos. 1586, pl. 488, and 3379, same plate, from Lothbury (British Museum), and Fakenham (Ashmolean Museum), Roach Smith, *Coll. Ant.*, IV, pl. XXV, 4. Gully A.
 Fig. 3, no. 2. Bronze pendant, with stamped crescent-shaped decoration, and small hole piercing the centre. cf. Ritterling, 1913, Taf. XI, 59. Gully B.
 Fig. 3, no. 3. Gilded bronze, with engraved lines of decoration. Gully A. Other fragments of gilded bronze were found, but are not illustrated.
 Fig. 3, no. 4. Small bronze stud. Gully A.
 Fig. 3, no. 5. Small bronze rivet; others much smaller were also found. Probably used for fixing bronze plate to leather.

Not illustrated:

- s. Rim, identified by Dr. Simpson as probably from an oil flask, with opposed holes through the rim for a small chain for suspension. cf. den Boesterd, 1956, pl. XII, 302.

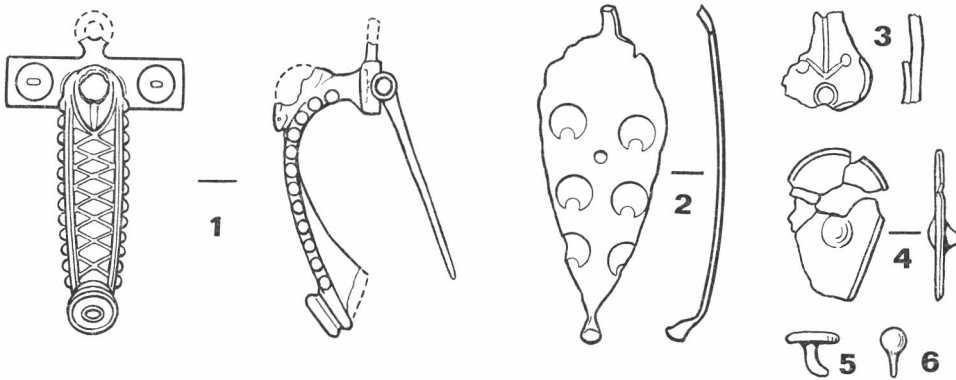


FIG. 3. Strutt's Park, Derby: bronze and iron objects, scale 1:2.

The bronze fragments have been examined by Dr. Simpson, who considers that they are typical of Claudian-Neronian legionary equipment that became obsolete before the Flavian period. The scraps of gilded bronze suggest quality equipment. At Neuss, many of the bronze military objects were decorated with white metal, and gilding is uncommon.

Iron

- Fig. 3, no. 6. A dozen iron nails and tacks were recovered, and many more disintegrated on excavation. Some were flat-headed, others were globular. One example is illustrated.

Glass, not illustrated:

- t. Fragment of good colourless thin glass. Gully A.
 u. Bead, green glass, similar to type A2 from Jewry Wall (Kenyon, 1948), fig. 93, no. 2. Unstratified.
 v. Fragment from the rim of a ribbed bowl or beaker in green glass. Unstratified.
 w. Small blue and white striped ovoid, one side slightly flattened; probably an embellishment from a head-stud brooch or other ornament. Gully B.

All finds from the 1970 excavation have been deposited in Derby Museum.

APPENDIX

The Roman road system in Derby (fig. 1)

The Roman road system in the vicinity of Little Chester is complex and much fieldwork remains to be done. The following notes briefly summarize the theories held at the present time and these may require drastic revision when more positive evidence becomes available.

Rykniold Street probably follows the line of an unmetalled supply road that connected Strutt's Park with Wall (Letocetum) in Staffordshire. Building operations in Nuns

Green uncovered what was presumed to be portions of this road, and these indicated that after crossing Markeaton Brook the road diverted some 10° eastwards from the line of the trackway so avoiding the high ground on the approach to the river. An assumption is made that the Derwent was crossed south of Little Chester and that the turning northward occurred near to the south-eastern corner of the fort. The excavations of 1926, 1966 and recent building activity confirm that Ryknield Street ran parallel to the eastern defences until after leaving the vicinity of the fort it curved NNE. in the direction of Breadsall. It is certain that Ryknield Street did not cross the river by the presumed Roman bridge north of Little Chester, two piers of which survive as piles of rubble stone on the bed of the river.

The road running westwards probably also follows an originally unmetalled trackway, linking the 1st-century forts at Strutt's Park, Rocester and Chesterton. The course of this road can only be traced as far as Markeaton a mile from Strutt's Park, at this point directly in line with Darley Slade. The original trackway may have continued eastwards, linking up with the 1st-century fort at Broxtowe near Nottingham. If such a trackway did exist it was later superseded by the road running from Little Chester to the Trent at Sawley.

The road shown running northwards on the west bank of the Derwent is a medieval trackway known as Darley Grove; it is possible that it is of Roman origin and connected with the Roman road, first brought to notice by the Rev. J. C. Cox, that runs along the Chevin side north of Duffield to the water-shed north of Wirksworth.

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