

DISCUSSION

ROMAN PERIOD

In the following section the results of the 1971–2 excavations on the Roman phases of both Sites A and B will be viewed in the light of previous finds and the results of more recent excavations. A correlation with previous work on the Roman sites is attempted here with the aim of providing an overall structure of the development of the extensive settlement that stretches far beyond the Stukeley defences (Fig. 26). Inter-site comparison is hindered by uncertainties over dating and the definition of phasing from site to site. Some comparisons will also be drawn with neighbouring sites for the Roman period such as, the forts at Rocester, Chesterfield, Brough, Templeborough and major industrial sites further afield.

As has been stated in relation to Rocester, it may not be valid to attempt detailed correlation between the sequence of events on such a site and historical events, the nature and content of the archaeological record being so different from that of the historical sources (Esmonde-Cleary and Ferris 1996, 219). Indeed, Little Chester nowhere figures by name in any source and the place-name *Derventio* is only recorded once in the *Ravenna Cosmography* (Rivet and Smith 1979, 334). Epigraphic sources likewise give no mention of the place name.

The Origins of the Site

No significant evidence for prehistoric settlement has been identified on the present site within the flood plain of the Derwent. The original Roman military base was apparently confined to the tactically stronger ground on the west bank of the river, a spot difficult to approach from the river on the east but with good access to the important mining district to the north-west and the upper Trent Valley to the south-west (Dool 1985a) (Fig. 28). Traces of Roman activity contemporary with the later stages of the Strutt's Park fort may have been recovered at Little Chester from the earliest levels of the North-West Sector of the fort, this material and traces of structure suggesting the growth of some civil activity at the river side here (Wheeler 1985, 39–44 and 300).

Although lacking the tactical strength of Strutt's Park the valley site on the east bank of the Derwent had easier access to the hills on the north-east and the valley of the lower Trent, was more sheltered and had better access to the river. Assuming more intact woodland in the upper reaches of the river and less human interference in its course the site may not have been so prone to flooding as in recent times. The technique of placing the earliest timber buildings on stone pads may, however, reflect the need to raise them above a damp soil and the later setting of the substantial building east of the Stukeley fort on a gravel platform may also reflect the need to raise ground level above potential flood level.

Period 1: Trajanic–Early Antonine occupation

As in the North-West Sector the earliest samian and coins date to the Flavian–Trajanic period, but may here be residual, incorporated in deposits laid down during the construction of timber buildings in the early second century. The presence of this material still indicates activity here soon after the abandonment of the Strutt's Park fort, even if structures or defences remain to be identified. On the present site this earliest

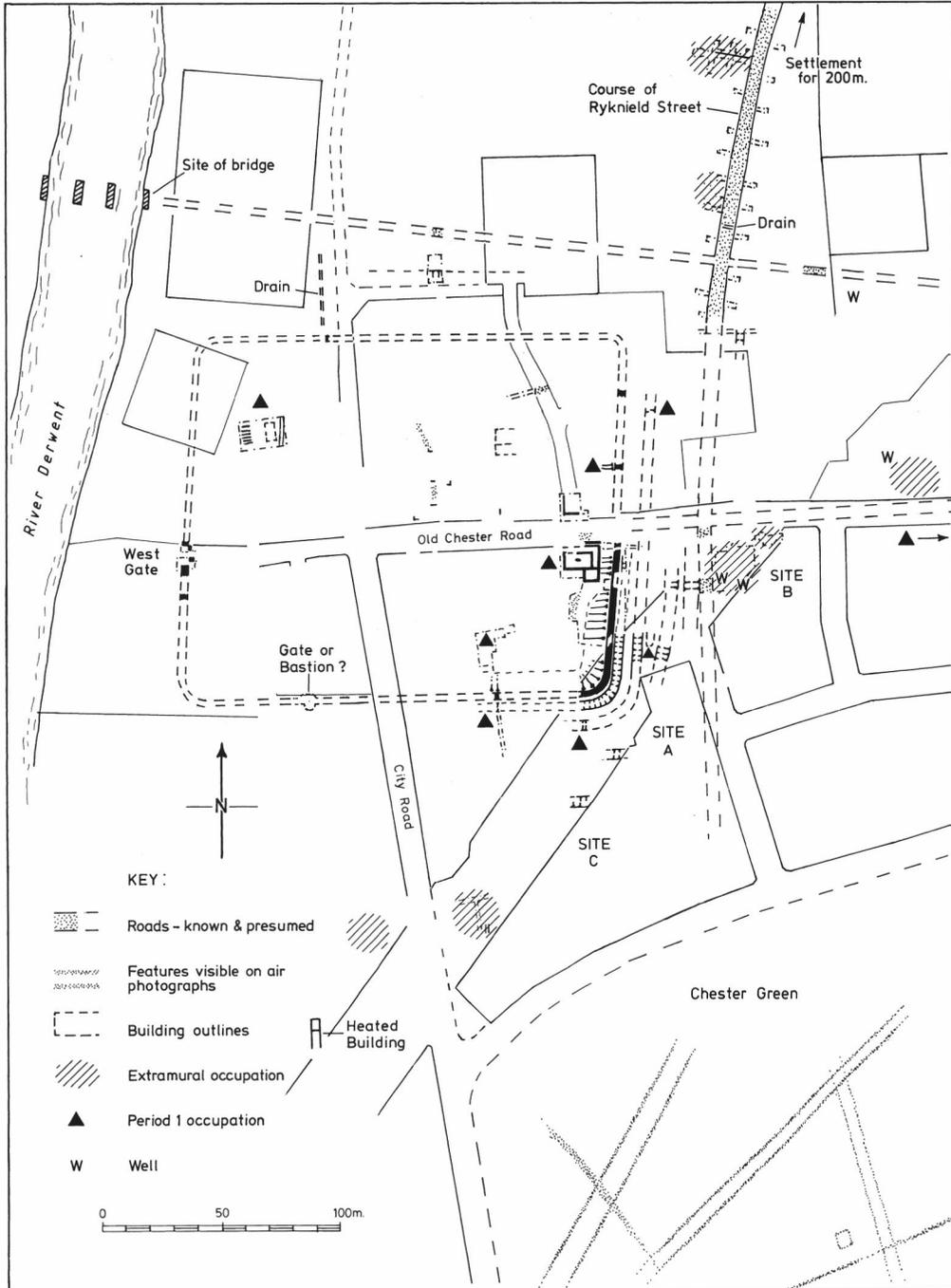


Fig. 26: Little Chester: plan of Roman sites in the vicinity of Little Chester.

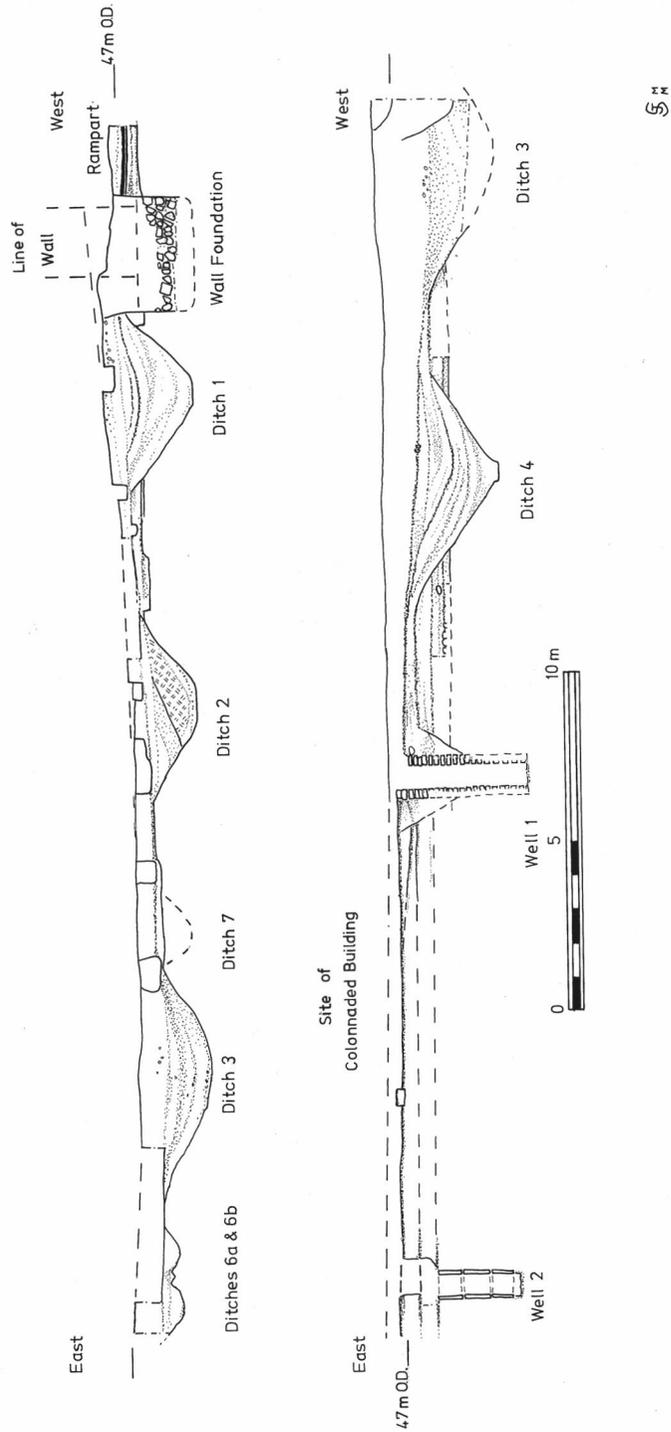


Fig. 27: Little Chester: composite cross-section of eastern defences derived from Sections G-K, N-L and detail sections.

occupation was incorporated in the first of three or four phases of activity in Period 1, this period spanning the six to eight decades before the major replanning of the site in Period 2, the mid–late Antonine period.

The nature of the Period 1 timber buildings is enigmatic, so little being exposed, but there are signs of an initial phase (Period 1.1) of timber buildings of beam slot construction, with no obvious floor surfaces. The slots surviving between Ditches 1 and 2 suggest complex rectilinear structures of a type compatible with Roman military construction but too little of the plan was exposed to say more than that, while the layout of this initial activity was on the same alignment as the later phases, the building plans were radically different. This first phase would date to the Trajanic period.

These structures were succeeded in Periods 1.2–1.4 by more substantial structures with clay and mortar floors and some beam foundations with dry-stone foundations. The original post-in-trench or sleeper beam construction was replaced by the use of boulders almost as ‘staddle stones’ to support or level up a raised timber structure. Within these buildings plaster and clay floors were inserted by phase 3, perhaps as a replacement to earlier timber floors. The use of a pattern of rough boulders as supports for a building has been noted, from a somewhat later date, in low-lying areas of the small town at Wanborough, Wiltshire, where both superstructure and floors were of wood (Anderson and Wachter 1980, 119–121). This technique will be discussed further in relation to the later stone block foundations of Period 4.2 (see below, p. 136).

The fragmentary building plans were not readily identifiable as military structures, the surviving remains being either parts of two parallel structures separated by a strip of open ground, or by a single building, the central section of which had been cut away by Ditch 1. In the latter case the eastern portion might have consisted of a building bounded by a narrow corridor facing west onto open ground or alternatively of two structures set back to back, the ‘corridor’ being the narrow open strip between them. Such an arrangement would mirror that at Rochester where, at a slightly later date in the second century, two barrack blocks, Structures 1 and 2, lay back to back, leaving a similar narrow strip (Esmonde-Cleary and Ferris 1996, 222–3).

In Period 1.4 these buildings were destroyed by fire, quantities of pottery in the destruction levels dating to the mid Antonine period. Coins within these levels were probably from a hoard hidden earlier within the building structure, some of the coins having suffered severely from the effects of heat, the pottery in the destruction dating to the middle or early in the third quarter of the second century. If the coins were deposited early in the use of these buildings then construction would date to Hadrianic times and would be compatible with the evidence for the previous phase, the destruction falling some four or five decades later in the mid Antonine period.

A case can thus be made for continuous Roman presence from the pre-Flavian fort at Strutt’s Park through to original activity at Little Chester overlapping with its later stages. Period 1 on the 1971–2 site encompassed the late Flavian to mid Antonine period, the main activity belonging to the Trajanic to Antonine periods. A hiatus in the Hadrianic period has been suggested by Burnham and Wachter but this seems unlikely, evidence for substantial structures at this period beneath the eastern defences to the north complementing the evidence for continued use of buildings on the present site (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 222; Wheeler 1985, 301–2). A drop in the quantities of samian ware lost here, as elsewhere, perhaps reflects variations in consumption or supply.

The extent of the earliest period of activity at Little Chester remains uncertain but some indication can be gained from observations and recent excavations, even if the nature of this early activity is unresolved. Burnt levels from the end of Period 1 have been identified beneath or immediately within the eastern defences of the fort at, for instance, Brassington's 1967 Site (Fig 2; Brassington 1996). The evidence at the Pickford's Garage site is more equivocal, the stone building surviving and being incorporated into the new defensive enclosure but adjoined on the south side by extensive burnt deposits (Langley and Drage 2000, 145). On both this site and the Nursey Gardens to the north, masonry buildings were encountered which were far more substantial than on any other part of the site, all other sites of this date producing evidence only for clay and timber structures. Their location and stratigraphical relationship to the eastern rampart showed they were part of the Period 1 layout, their scale suggesting that they were either major buildings within an early fort or perhaps official buildings, such as a *mansio*, within a civil settlement.

A complex sequence of timber structures forming Phase 1 of the North-West Sector included regularly constructed timber buildings of a possibly military character which could be dated to the Flavian–Trajanic period (Wheeler 1985, 38–44). Some finds, including two worn Claudian coins, could have derived from earlier activity which, in view of the presence of apsidal or circular structures and enclosure ditches preceding the rectilinear structures, might have formed part of a civil settlement associated with the Strutt's Park fort which continued in use till Flavian times (Dool 1985, 25–26). In Phase 2, equivalent to Phase 1.4 on the present site, the north-west quarter appears to lack the destruction horizon or spread of burning and to have been open ground (Wheeler 1985, 46–47).

On the present site, the partial destruction or erosion of the early levels by the eastern ditch systems and the inaccessibility of Period 1 occupation levels beyond them prevented the identification of any limit on that side, but no burnt structures nor any evidence for contemporary ditch systems existed within the excavation limits on Site B. Where the earliest levels were penetrated on that site, only metallised surfaces or sterile make-up was observed, but these exposures were very limited in area (Section, Figs 8 and 27). The line of Ryknield Street on Site B was not clearly defined, although a metallised surface existed from the earliest levels, suggesting it might have been a significant and long lived feature. By contrast, what deeper excavation was possible in the south part of Site A revealed truncated occupation and burnt deposits and similar levels were revealed to the west in the Webster excavations (Webster 1961). Early occupation, including timber and clay structures, was also encountered 100m to the north (Todd 1967, 75–77; Brassington 1996). The major buildings found in 1987–8 would have lain approximately central within this known area of the Phase 1.3 settlement, although, as noted above, there had been an earlier occupation in the North-West Quarter which had not suffered the destruction of 1.4. The only clue to a defensive system associated with Period 1 might come from Site C where the more southerly of the two possible ditches, the line of which lay some 45m south of the south wall, could have represented an early southern defence. The upper contents suggested a deliberate backfill at an early date but without a cross-section and further confirmation of its line its function can only be postulated.

At present, then, the extent and nature of the earliest period of occupation must remain uncertain until the limits of the built-up area are better defined. Period 1

occupation can, however, be traced over an area of 2.7ha, both within the later fort and extending well beyond its defences. Roman activity extended over an even larger area of up to 1km eastward along the axis of the road to the Racecourse site and also along the approximate line of Rykniel Street north-east to Breadsall and south towards the river crossing. Not all of this complex relates to the Period 1 establishment and the linear, road-side elements are undoubtedly civil or industrial offshoots of the military foundation, partly displaced by the development of the focal site, partly, in the case of the industrial area, located at a distance for reasons of accessibility to fuel and raw materials such as clay, sand, timber and coal. The latter would have been derived from surface workings on the higher ground to the north-east.

The axes of this occupied area are the two major roads, the northern and eastern settlements being ribbon developments along those two important routes. The genesis of the road system may be complex and primarily dictated by the location of the Strutt's Park fort and the location of the river crossing immediately to its north. The primary route of Rykniel Street probably approached this site on a straight alignment from the Trent Valley on the south-west, meeting with an east-west route which crossed the Derwent by exploiting the topography of Darley Slade. From this original focus a route may have then headed north-west into the area of the lead-silver mines near Carsington and Buxton beyond, while Rykniel Street, from its alignment, was perhaps driven north-east from the bridge-head. Only later was this diverted southward towards the new focus of activity on the eastern river bank at Little Chester and, although in the later stages of the site this route passed outside the eastern defences, it may have originally been directed towards the centre of the new site, its line possibly forming the north-south axis of its road system. The bridge site is recorded by Stukeley, possibly schematically, as abutments and two piers but the existence of a stone structure has been confirmed by more recent discoveries of rubble blocks in the river at this point (Brassington 1991, pl. 21 and 24). Such a bridge might be comparable to the albeit more substantial structure at Piercebridge which also was on a route that bypassed the actual fort (Fitzpatrick and Scott 1999).

No trace of the putative original route towards the bridge-head has been identified but the later route is known from its exposure north-east of the fort, flanked by settlement of later Roman date for at least 700m (Sherwin 1926). To the south-west, the route of Rykniel Street is less certain but presumably led to a point south of Little Chester, necessitating a bridge over the Derwent at a point down-stream. No trace of the southern bridge or of the road line has been recovered, despite recent work at the 'Prestige' site in the City Road close to the east bank of the river (Jones 1993; Ferris and Jones 1993). Test pits at the latter site possibly encountered river silts or were not deep enough to reach Roman levels. Aerial photographs, however, do support a route heading south-west towards the river, but continuing the line of Rykniel Street from a point south of the present site (Burnham and Wacher 1990, fig 71). Parch marks on Chester Green of two parallel features 10m apart could mark the side ditches of a road heading to the riverside. Two more straight lines would suggest the presence of another narrower route converging from the Racecourse industrial area to the north-east (Plan, Fig. 26). The observations on Chester Green would imply that a southern crossing point of the Derwent did exist but remains to be identified down-stream between the existing Great Northern Railway bridge and the medieval crossing. A crossing here would align with

the known line west of the river. The road there can be traced from the south-west side of Derby via Pastures Hill where it diverged north-eastward to eventually follow the Uttoxeter Old Road. Thence it turned east-north-east to follow Nuns Street and Keddleston Street where the road surface may have been observed below the modern street (Forrest 1967, 162–5).

The most intensive extra-mural activity extended along the road to the east although whether continuous as far as the Racecourse is uncertain (Wheeler 1985, 154–280). This far-flung activity was both industrial and funerary with some associated settlement of a simple nature on the western side, towards the core of the complex. The kilns produced a range of grey ware jars, bowls and dishes from the Flavian to Antonine periods, as well as early examples of the distinctive Derbyshire Ware (Brassington 1971; Brassington 1980; Dool 1985; 164–66). The finest products included lead-glazed vessels and stamped mortaria of a continental pattern. The road-side cremations commenced at a similar date, at least one of the mausolea and a jug burial belonging to the late first century, as well as some isolated burials in the area of the walled cemetery (Wheeler 1985, 222–280). The earliest graves at the centre of this burial plot may also have been marked by a now-lost monument, the outline of which is fossilized in the pattern of later inhumations (*op. cit.*, fig. 101). The quality of the kilns and their products and the style of the tomb structures flanking the road would only be appropriate to a fully Romanised community of some status and sophistication and would not have been merely an adjunct of the few buildings associated with the kilns and iron-working. In its developed state in the second century, the cemetery can now be compared with similar structures in Southwark, an indication, perhaps of the status of at least some elements of the population of Little Chester (Mackinder 2000). In general the Racecourse site begs the question of the nature of activity in the intervening area towards Little Chester and implies a military base and civil centre of some importance, with long distance trading connections.

Nearer the fort finds of Antonine samian at St Paul's Vicarage and Hadrianic/Antonine samian from a feature 4 m deep on the Old Chester Road near the Mansfield Road have been seen as evidence for an extension of early occupation and an early second-century defensive line (Brassington 1967). This could be part of a major focus situated nearer the Racecourse site or even the eastern limits of the present site, part of the same defensive circuit represented by the ditches identified on Site C. In the latter case a southern and eastern defence line could be projected from these observations to enclose much of the known area of late first and early second century activity centred on the major structures within the eastern defences of the later fort.

An *enceinte* of that size, implying a fort of up to 8ha, would be unusually large for a normal auxiliary fort and requires more certain evidence from other points on the circuit but one factor in its favour is possibly the course of Rykniel Street from the north. The road is usually seen as being directed to skirt the later Period 2–5 eastern defences but if it was part of the earlier topography then it could be seen as a route approaching a larger early fort, the section adjoining the eastern side of the Stukeley fort representing, originally, an internal road. Section L–M on Site B revealed metalling extending to the subsoil, bordered by a kerbstone, suggesting that the road was a primary feature (above, p. 41, Fig 8).

The early buildings to the west on the Pickford's Garage site might relate to this putative plan (Langley and Drage 2000, 133–143, 278–79). Langley and Drage drew

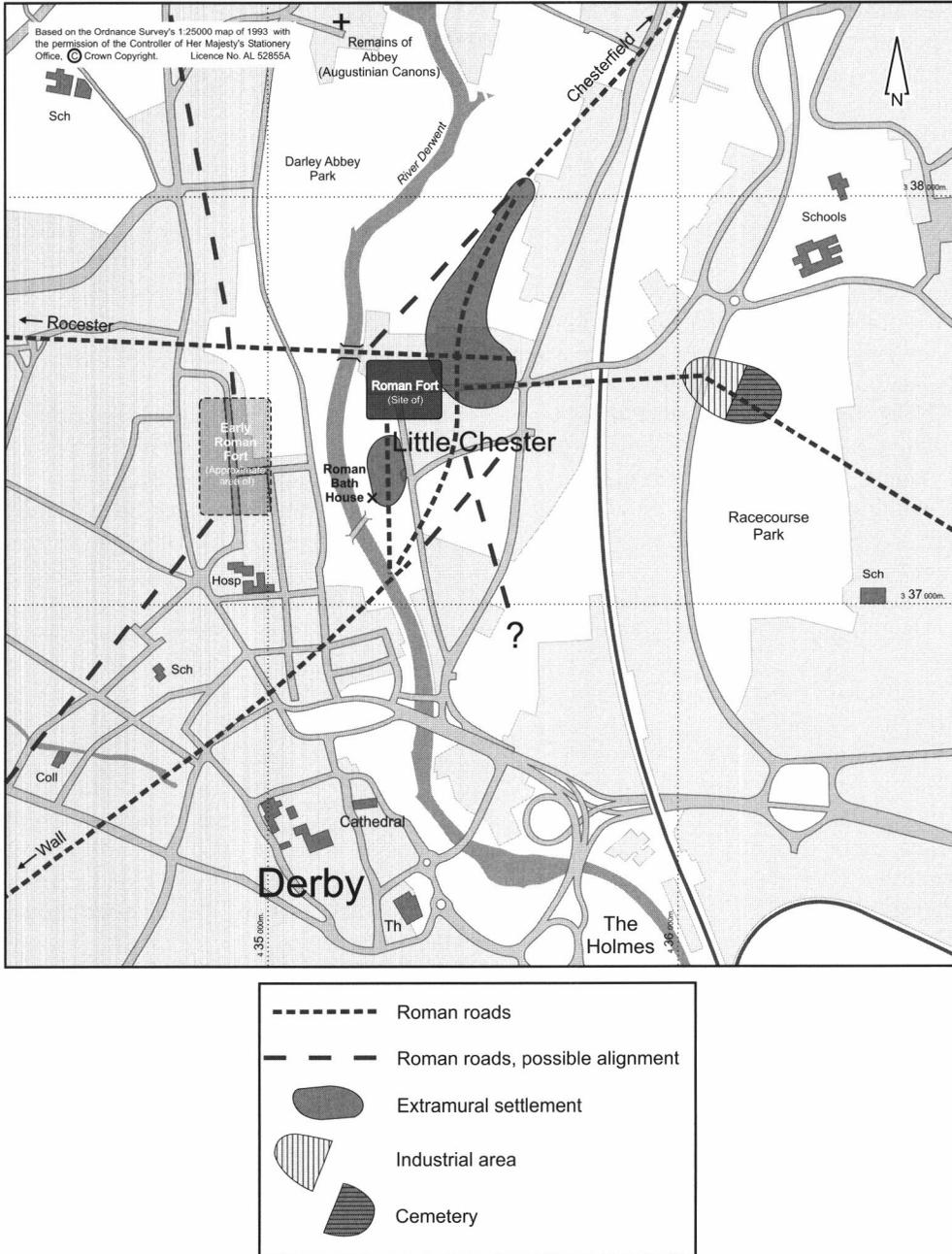


Fig. 28: Little Chester: overall plan of Roman Derby.

parallels between this building and the large administrative building at Stonea but that was on a grander scale and of a different plan (Potter 1989, 160–169). A closer parallel for this structure, with its central rectangular area surrounded by corridors on the east and north, leading to a larger room at one corner, is the Period VI *praetorium* of the earlier fort at Loughor (Marvell and Owen-Jones 1997, 169–184). This building was similar in the size of the rectangular courtyard and, like Little Chester, was adjoined by a drain and road surrounded by various rooms giving onto a court. It differed in that there was no central feature in the courtyard and more rooms existed around the court but this is the result of the more extensive area investigated. The Loughor *praetorium*, in its developed and stone-founded form, dated to the Trajanic period and had lain rather far back in the *retentura* of a fort which had been truncated by a smaller replacement in the Hadrianic period. The new defences excluded the building rather than incorporating it in the new layout, as at the present site.

If this analogy is valid, the Nursey Gardens building could be part of the headquarters building of an early fort, this disposition consistent with a fort on an east-west axis with Ryknield Street serving as the *via principalis* (Langley and Drage 2000, 155–57; Brassington 1991, fig. 9). Period 1 buildings on the present site could then have formed part of the southern side of the central block of the interior, in an area where the *fabrica* or *valetudinarium* might be expected rather than, as proposed above, the barrack blocks identified from the linear structures and room with mortared floor.

There are, however, several factors against this interpretation. The distance between these structures and the putative line for Ryknield Street on Site B would be too large for that to have served as an early *via principalis* and the apparent lack of early structures in that area also militates against this area lying within the centre of a fort. The remains of early buildings recorded to the west by Webster could not be characterised as any specific military type and their alignments, between 9 and 19 degrees east of north, were considerably at variance to the Period 1 buildings here; the former alignment might concur with that of the Stukeley fort's eastern defences rather than the early layout (Webster 1961, 91–93). Without the recovery of detailed building plans and certain identification of early defensive lines the extent of the early fort at Little Chester and its relationship to the civil settlement must still remain unresolved.

Period 2: Mid to Late Antonine

The first defences on the line of the known fort appear to have consisted of a simple rampart and Ditch 1, enclosing an area of 2.7ha. The surviving bank on the present site consisted of alternate bands of redeposited burnt debris and clay which appeared to have been brought in rather than excavated from the ditch. Similar grey clay was encountered on the neighbouring Pickford's Garage site but here the interleaving material was sand. The nature of the rampart front at this stage was not revealed and there was no evidence for any substantial stone or timber turret at the corner, although if such had existed its foundations would surely have been visible cutting into the rampart. In the Webster excavations the very denuded southern defences were of similar construction and had also been established in the mid second century, the greatest intensity of activity within the defences occurring in the following later Antonine period. A construction date for the rampart in the mid Antonine period would accord with evidence from the west gate where a primary stone gate may be recognised in the Phase 3 masonry, on the assumed

line of the rampart, the later stone wall represented by the two butt ends of the wider, Phase 5 foundations in front (Annabel and Wheeler 1985, 35, fig. 12). At the Pickford's site a slightly later date is suggested for construction by pottery of the late Antonine period; a construction date of post AD 180 is there suggested (Langley and Drage 2000, 149).

For the remainder of the circuit and the other gates little evidence is available, but the culvert seen on the north side running across the line of the outer defences may, if it is of Roman date, give some clue as to the position of a gate on that side (Fig 27: Brassington 1991, 51, fig. 23). From the length of this feature it can hardly have drained into a defensive ditch, since it crosses and passes beyond the presumed line of the outer late Roman ditch shown by Stukeley. It could have been inserted into a solid causeway crossing the defences at this point, probably as a roadside culvert leading out from a gate; the southern end lay opposite a break in the wall. An analogy can perhaps be seen with the drain identified at the Pickford's Garage site, heading east towards the east gate, but that seems to have been of a more regular construction (Langley and Drage 2000, fig. 3, site 28). The possibility exists, however, that this was a post-Roman, even post-medieval feature, analogous to the late culvert noted south of the west gate (Annabel and Wheeler 1985, section A–B, fig. 13). On Stukeley's plan it coincides with some feature, perhaps a small bridge, over the outer ditch, the line continued by a hedge heading northwards. Even if the drain is a late structure it may still have utilised an ancient interruption in the wall and mark the northern end of a cross-road within the circuit. A road alignment here crossing the western half of the interior would, if projected towards the line of the southern defences, coincide with the 1926 exposure of the wall line on the north side of Parkers Piece (Brassington 1991, pl. 4). The primary evidence from that excavation is a photograph that shows two trenches following the remains of the front and back faces of the structures, these trenches diverging respectively to south and north, as if dug to follow projections both internally and externally from the wall line visible in the foreground of the photograph. One explanation for this seeming widening of the curtain wall is that the damaged remains of a gate had been discovered at this point, the structure of which was partly set back from the curtain-wall but also had some form of projecting towers; the implications of this will be further considered in relation to the post-Roman addition to the south-east corner of the walled circuit (below, p. 141). A cross-street here would lie rather far to the west within the interior and only 60m behind the west wall line but would suggest an interior layout facing west. The plan of the enclosure is, however, not symmetrical, with the east-west street too far south within the enclosure. Such anomalies might question whether the site was a planned fort of normal pattern, but without further details of the internal layout during this and later periods this question cannot be resolved. South of the walled area this projected road line would pass the east side of the bath-house and further on would converge with the line of Rykniel Street close to the putative southern river crossing.

In the 1971–2 season no information was recovered about the interior during this and later periods, these excavations revealing only details of the defensive sequence and the growth of the extra-mural settlement. The internal layout is not clearly defined on other sites, the most substantial buildings investigated being those incorporated from the previous layout and standing just within the east gate (Langley and Drage 2000). Their survival in an unorthodox position close to the tail of the rampart supports the other

evidence that the interior was not laid out on standard military lines. Traces of substantial structures seen in 1926 and 1971 near the centre of the enclosure may have belonged to later periods of the site but they indicate the position of an important building, possibly a headquarters or public building, on the east side of the road line (Brassington 1982a). This central building would have lain in the north-east angle of the putative axial roads. Phase 3 of the North-West Sector contained a small granary although this was not of a strictly military pattern (Wheeler 1985, 47–54). On balance the new defences would not seem to belong to a regular fort, in view of the irregular layout of the interior and the lack of, for instance, a corner turret on the present site.

For a new enclosure to be created after a phase of destruction in the mid Antonine period might still accord with ideas of trouble within the province at this date. This has been linked to references to a Brigantian revolt and archaeological evidence for destruction on civil sites in the Midlands, such as at Wall and Stanton Low (Round 1992b, 74; Woodfield with Johnson 1989, 264). The south Pennines demonstrate some military activity at this date, the building inscription from Brough-on-Noe proving reconstruction of one major building in the fort late in the reign of Antoninus Pius (RIB 283). At the nearest site to the west, Rocester, Esmond-Cleary and Ferris have identified the construction of defences and barrack blocks in the mid Antonine period but on a site that had previously been neglected if not abandoned (Esmond-Cleary and Ferris 1996, 222). Exact correlations between structural phases on disparate sites and attempts to link these to historical events are problematic, since considerable doubt surrounds the location or nature of any unrest at this period and there is a danger of conflating separate incidents associated with the frequent changes to the northern frontier in this period (Salway 1981, 199–206). In this context the burning of the Period 1 buildings may be no more than demolition preceding the construction of new defences, although the quantity of pottery vessels, amphorae and glass in the destruction levels does suggest that the buildings were not empty of possessions and were therefore not derelict. Although the substantial building on the Pickford's Garage site continued in use, it is perhaps significant that two coin hoards of this period were interred within it. The only certainty is that in the late Antonine period at Little Chester there was major reconstruction of defences on a previously occupied site and that while the new occupation is not proven to have been of a military character it may have retained the use of substantial and official buildings from the previous period, one of these buildings being of a courtyard plan similar to a *praetorium*.

Area B outside the defences was, in Period 2, an open metallised surface bordering the south side of the main road leading from the site of the new east gate. Here access from the east to the gate would have crossed the line of Ryknield Street. The original line for this north-south route and its later diversion has already been suggested. Section L–M revealed substantial gravel metalling revetted by gritstone boulders on the west, a similar arrangement being noted to the north but at a higher level (Brassington 1982a, 75–6). This arrangement conforms with local road construction as exemplified by the road found to the north and would confirm that Ryknield Street did skirt the eastern defences from this time onward (Dool 1972).

The start of Period 2 would coincide with the end of the pottery industry in the eastern Racecourse area but overlap with the use of the cemetery. The pottery industry now migrated northwards to the Holbrook and Hazelwood areas (Kay 1962). By this stage

the roadside was occupied by a row of monumental tombs and burial therefore moved into open ground behind (Wheeler 1985, 248–52). Firstly an important group of north-south oriented military burials of the mid second century were interred and, shortly after, the walled cemetery was established. This had a complex history extending over the next two centuries but was probably focused on an existing monument, now destroyed, cremation and, later, inhumation burials on various alignments, being interred around this focus.

Period 3: Early Third Century

The changes to the defences in this period were relatively minor and may reflect no more than maintenance of the earthen bank and ditch and whatever revetment had existed. The filling of the primary ditch and replacement by Ditch 2 to the east would have allowed the consolidation or replacement of the rampart front but would have rendered the defence less formidable, a wide berm now intervening. The impression is of a relatively weakly defended enclosure without a stone front but the upper part of Ditch 2 has been lost by later erosion and it probably was originally as formidable as its predecessor. Dating of this change is uncertain, Ditch 1 containing rubbish survivals of mid late second century date, the primary silt of the new ditch dating to the late second or early third century.

The relatively slight defences may accord with results from the North-West Sector of the interior where Wheeler encountered little sign of occupation in her phase 4 (Wheeler 1985, 54–63). After a phase of industrial activity in the late second century, a humic deposit had developed suggesting a low level of activity in the third century. This change in land-use was interpreted as signs of the cessation of military control, the development of these deposits being reminiscent of a ‘black earth’, with all that that implies for abandonment or a change in use to cultivation (Yule 1990). But even if part of the interior was cultivated other areas could still have been occupied by official buildings; the building within the eastern defences, for instance, may have continued in use. The presence of military equipment of a third century type shows a military presence of some form although it need not imply a garrison (Wheeler 1985, 141, nos.13, 17 and possibly 18).

Changes at Little Chester might also correlate with sites such as Rocester where in Phase 2C the military presence of the late second century is replaced by a civil settlement within the same defended circuit (Esmonde-Cleary and Ferris 1994, 225). But even if only partly in use and not of sufficient status to have been listed in the Antonine Itinerary, the earthworks may still have served as a defended road station and as a base for the safe storage and dispatch of the products of the lead/silver mines upstream at *Lutudaron*, presumably near Carsington, since lead ingots have indeed been found west of the site close to the road from Little Chester to Rocester (Dool and Hughes 1976).

On Site B east of the defences there was little major development of the extra-mural area at this stage, the only feature being the slab-lined well, Well 2, surrounded by an open metallised surface which appeared to extend as far as the north-eastern corner of the site. The lack of occupation deposits or structures might suggest an open area set outside the east gate of the defences, close to the junction with the road approaching from the east. Such an area could have served many purposes from parade ground to market area,

the latter more likely in view of the presence of the well and the scant evidence for military activity in this period.

Extensive extra-mural settlement has certainly been traced north and south of the Stukeley defences but the origin of this and its status at this date is still uncertain. To the east metalworking, mainly smithing, however, was still carried out. In the eastern cemetery the walled cemetery seems to have continued in use but from the early third century inhumations were far more common than cremations, none of the graves marked out by the status of their monuments or grave-goods.

Period 4: Late Third Century

This period saw major changes to the site with the construction of the wall circuit that stood until the time of Stukeley, the recutting of ditches and the erection of the colonnaded building on Site B. Features of this period were subdivided into two phases to accommodate changes in the ditch system and the development of the extra-mural area.

The substantial defensive wall is assigned to the earlier Phase 4.1, the foundation here conforming in alignment and construction to other exposures elsewhere on the eastern side of the Stukeley fort (Langley and Drage 2000, 154–56). No direct evidence for the date of the wall was retrieved, but the filling of Ditch 2 is presumed to have derived from the cutting of the construction trench while the mortar and stone chips on the metalled surface of the berm could have resulted from the building of the curtain. The latter was added to the existing rampart, following the curving outline of the corners as here and, on the west side, abutting the existing gateway (Annable and Wheeler 1985). Whether re-positioning or re-building took place at the other gates is unknown. The curving corners were not, on the evidence of Site A, furnished with internal towers unless some structure existed set into the upper part of the rampart. Nor, at this date, is there any evidence for bastions.

The only other suggestion of structures associated with the wall is the remains of the cellar on the Pickford's site, this structure interpreted as simply part of the medieval house preceding Manor Farm (Bailey 1890). The structure was described by Bailey as being 3.8m by 4.3 m internally and had one wall of reused stone blocks and another of rubble. The position of this structure is noteworthy, however, in that it lay in alignment with the wall, fitting neatly between it and the south-east corner of the existing building incorporated into the rear of the rampart. The 'cellar' lay at a point approximately 23m from the site of the east gate and 46m from the centre of the curved south-east corner on Site A, implying that this structure was one of two regularly spaced features between the east gate and the corner. A point 23m south from the cellar would lie in the unexcavated ground between this and Site A. Langley and Drage give no description of the cellar structure and its relationship to the wall but do describe an adjacent late third-century coin hoard. This lay in pit 1351 of which 'The west (*sic*) side was cut away by the wall of the Manor farm cellar' (Langley and Drage 2000, 154). Of this hoard sixty eight coins 'were lodged in the stonework of the cellar wall' which begs the question as to the date of the structure; could, in fact, the hoard have been in a pit cut against the outer face of a pre-existing structure such as a tower set into the rampart behind the wall? The latter was then incorporated into the medieval building, the interior faces of the cellar being, at least in part, a refacing of this earlier structure. In this context the mention of 'vaults'

seen by Stukeley inside the walls may be significant, a series of turret bases having existed at intervals around the circuit, some of which were visible in his day or had been incorporated into other buildings standing against the wall in his day (Stukeley 1776, 54). This structure is also reminiscent, in its size and location, of the so-called Anglian Tower at York, the date of which remains uncertain but which may be a late Roman addition to the fortress defences (Buckland 1984).

On Site A a *terminus post quem* of the mid third century is provided for alterations to the defences by a coin from Ditch 2, but the construction of the wall can be dated to the later third century on the basis of a coin of Tetricus from the berm deposits associated with the construction of the wall. Pottery from these deposits was somewhat earlier and would accord with that for material from the construction trench on the Pickford's site dating to the mid third century (Langley and Drage 2000, 156). A construction date in the last quarter of the third century seems fairly certain, but the political and military context cannot be exactly reconstructed, in view of the rapid changes in the time of the two periods of Gallic Empire and the recovery of the province. The lack of information about the internal arrangements also precludes any judgement as to the nature of the civilian or military use of the walled area.

Outside the Stukeley defences, on Site B, the substantial Ditch 4 replaced the partially-filled Ditch 2, possibly supplemented by Ditch 7, which may either have formed an unfinished part of this system or have been an addition in the post-Roman period. This pattern of ditches needs confirmation but would imply a berm some 30m wide on the eastern side limited on the outside by Ditch 4, the intervening space possibly occupied by one or two slighter, discontinuous ditches. The new outer defensive line was 6.5m wide and 2.2m deep, considerably more substantial than its predecessors. This ditch cut earlier phases of external metalling but was associated with a third that probably originally oversailed Well 2, forming a new metallated area which was less extensive than that of Period 3, extending perhaps 30m from the edge of Ditch 4. No buildings occupied this area but timber structures of the late second or third century adjoined its eastern edge. These could have belonged to structures facing west onto the assumed line of Rykniel Street or north onto the road approaching the east gate. The course of this street was not clearly defined but it presumably ran along the outer edge of Ditch 4 and was bounded by a cambered edge on the eastern side where it adjoined an extensive open area at the junction with the east-west road approaching the east gate.

The latter part of the period, Period 4.2, saw little development of the defences but major changes in the extra-mural area. Silts in Ditch 2a accumulated during the later part of the third century, a similar date applying to the middle filling of Ditch 4. The latter ditch in particular contained a considerable amount of occupation material from the later third or early fourth century which had been deposited from the outside edge, implying increased activity in this extra-mural area and a lack of need to maintain the ditch system, the walls perhaps being seen as sufficient.

In the extra-mural area a final metallated surface overlapped the outer edge of Ditch 4 on the west and extended to the structures on the east which were now reconstructed and extended to the west. The major development at this date was the colonnaded building set upon this large open gravel area. The better preserved southern end suggested a structure with an open colonnade on the long, east side, a closed side on the west and a closed south end. The structure was certainly 7.5m wide by 11m long but may have

extended to nearer 20m; if the structure had continued towards the line of the east-west road it would have been 25m long. Although the structure may have re-used stone elements, the regular positioning of the square blocks on the east and the similarity of their circular rebates does suggest they had served their original purpose as supports for a colonnade of stone or wooden columns without intervening structures. The lack of evidence for stone column drums and the form of the circular rebates suggests these were perhaps turned from tree trunks. Internal floors were of clay, with no trace of domestic or industrial structures. The building would, then, have been of some pretension, furnished with a slate-tiled roof, the colonnaded side opening eastwards onto an open gravel area. The internal surfaces appeared to have received at least a floor of marl which had been much worn and was sealed by much trampled pottery of a wide date-range from the third into the fourth century. Whether this indicates the length of time over which it remained in use or a proportion of this material was rubbish survival is not clear; the former is more likely, since a similar range of finds were recovered from Ditch 4. The quantity of late samian and Lezoux ware may show the long use of such wares beyond their manufacture date, the vessels only discarded in the later third century.

Another separate building containing similar structural elements may have existed to the east, extending beyond the excavation limits. The building to the north-east was of a very different character and although it must have adjoined the road approaching the east gate on the north, the structure may have faced onto the gravel area to its south. A use as booths or simple shops might be possible, the palettes and mixing stones from this area giving some clue as to the activity carried on here.

The stone foundation blocks and wider parallels for the colonnaded building are discussed below (The colonnaded building, p. 284) There have been frequent finds of the two types of morticed block at Little Chester, but whether these derived from one large structure or were elements of a common vernacular building type is not certain. These blocks have derived both from the interior of the late Roman defences and from the extra-mural area. The most significant find was that of a building in the North-West Sector where the two types of block were used, one squared with insets for large square timbers, the other with circular dowel holes (Wheeler 1985, 64–66, fig. 30). This shows that two types of bases were in use at Little Chester, one supporting round-section, free standing columns, the other for squared timbers which had been used in conjunction with the longer blocks as supports for a timber-framed wall. Other blocks have come from the extra-mural area outside the east gate, including two with square insets from the vicarage garden north-east of the present site. This area has also produced a larger square pillar base with more elaborate mouldings, an element of a more refined and classical structure (Bailey 1890, 176). This had a vertical slot in one side, suggesting it had derived from a colonnade or one side of an arched entrance flanked by the frame of a balustrade. Other than the present site the building in the north-west quarter of the interior is the only structure where these blocks have been identified at Little Chester. This was a slightly smaller rectangular building with signs of a doorway on the west side flanked by square bases at 2m intervals, linked by linear slotted blocks. The interval between the column bases was much smaller than that on the 1972 building, the column bases being unnecessary in a building of this size, suggesting they were here in re-use simply as supports for a timber frame.

On the present site the axis of the building was north-south, parallel to the line of Rykniel Street, separating it from an area of metalling on to which the colonnade faced. An interpretation as some form of open sided market building placed close to the road junction outside the main gate of the fort seems most likely. Its presence questions the status of the extra-mural settlement and at the very least suggests the area outside the stone defences was active and flourishing, as is also indicated by the extent of the ribbon development along Rykniel Street to the north where other stone-footed buildings existed, although not apparently of this sophistication. This level of activity implies the walled area was reserved for some official or military use, whether as a road station on Rykniel Street or as a down-stream administrative centre for the lead and silver mining area.

Period 5

There are few specific clues as to the later stages of the Roman occupation of the site, although, as noted below, the colonnaded building may have continued in use, to be replaced by a less substantial structure in the late or sub-Roman period. The coin series suggests no long-lived activity into the fourth century, but the supply of coin dwindled in the later fourth century on all but official sites. The lack of such coin here may only reflect the site's civil status. Late fourth century pottery did occur in Well 1 but this was accompanied by a dog skeleton, twigs and branches of deciduous trees and bushes and displaced blocks from the building, stones which must have been physically dug up and thrown down the shaft. Other evidence from the extra-mural area has included human skulls and fourth century pottery from the upper fill of a well-shaft in the Vicarage gardens to the north-east of the present site (Brassington 1969b). Such evidence could be significant, especially in view of the scattered human remains within the colonnaded building although these probably derived from shallow, disturbed burials of the Anglo-Saxon period. In the absence of late burials in the area some violent incident does seem to have occurred for human remains to have been scattered, at least in this area outside the defences.

The interior of the fort at this stage is known both from the excavation of the North-West Sector and casual observations and test excavations. The former area has produced the building incorporating possibly re-used foundation blocks, this structure seen as a late civil phase of the fourth century (Wheeler 1985, 63–69). The form of this simple rectangular structure and the remains of another set adjacent on the west could not be simpler yet their size and plan would be comparable to the individual units in the late 'chalet' type barrack blocks on the northern frontier and elsewhere. Such buildings have been identified not only in the frontier forts but also at Caernarvon and Malton where the number of infant burials has been taken to suggest a mixed military and civilian population occupying such structures (Welsby 1982, 79–81, 89). At this period the walled area could have served as a *burgus* on Rykniel Street, connecting with Wall and the proposed series of such fortified road stations along Watling Street (Hobley 1983, 83b; Gould 1999).

Although probably originating at an earlier period the heated building to the south in Parker's Piece has the distinction of yielding the latest stratified coin from the site, a coin of Gratian dateable to the period AD 367–383, lying in the base of the hypocaust. Such an object may, of course, have infiltrated at a much later date and does not date either

the use or abandonment of the building which, from the fire damage to the *pilae*, had seen long use (Brassington 1982b, 84). The plan is only vaguely recorded and may have been only a portion of a larger complex; other structural remains, probably of a separate building, were noted 45m to the north-east. The building was at least 11m long by possibly 4m wide and appears to have been divided by a cross wall, one room at least containing a hypocaust of twenty *pilae* each 0.3m square. Allowing for even the closest setting this implies a chamber at least 3m square, a suitable room-size for a communal bath building at a fort of this size. If part of a linear bath building it might be comparable to that at *Margidunum* (Burnham 1988, 49–51). As noted above, part of the interest of these building remains is as proof of a settlement area south of the walled area, the location and alignment of this heated building conforming with the line postulated for a road heading south from the fort towards the southern river crossing.

The coin series from the present site is discussed below and demonstrates a generally low number of losses in Period 5 on the present site. If, however, identifications given for finds over the last century and finds from other excavations are included to give a broader histogram for the whole site, a significant number of coins from the Constantinian period have been recovered and the series extends up to the reigns of Valens, Valentinian and Gratian (below, p. 226). A significant number of these finds derive from the work on the ribbon development settlement along Rykniel Street to the north of the site, suggesting some continuity of occupation in the extra-mural zone. Settlement may have continued here in the late fourth or early fifth century, as on other civil sites, the evidence for the dereliction and destruction of the colonnaded building on the present site belonging to a yet later date.

It only remains to consider the status and wider context of the site over the almost four centuries of its existence. Little Chester lies on a geographical boundary between the Peak District and its mineral resources and the richer agricultural zone of the Trent Valley. The site was in a position to capitalise on both and act as a staging post in the distribution of products from the mines. The area lies on the north-west edge of the distribution of coins of the Coritani/Corieltauvi and presumably on the southern edge of the Brigantian territory. Cornovian territory may well have lain to the south-west. In the pre-conquest period the first of these tribes may have traded surplus from their territory to obtain silver for their coinage, such a trade providing local knowledge to Roman forces arriving in the area in the 50s AD and an incentive to gain control of the Peak. The earliest fort on the high ground at Strutt's Park could have served both the practical purpose of gaining access to the mineral resources and as a base in the early campaigns to support Cartimandua and then to annex the southern Brigantes.

The foundation at Little Chester was almost certainly focused on a new fort, the size and location of which is not yet defined but the scale and quality of the infrastructure supporting it suggests a site of some status, perhaps again overseeing the lead/silver extraction and controlling the dispatch of its products. Not surprisingly, no evidence has come to light for processing, that was undoubtedly carried out on site, but Little Chester could well have overseen the transport of metals via the road system and the River Derwent; lead ingots have indeed been found west of the site close to the road from Little Chester to Rocester (Dool and Hughes 1976). The control of the industry, whether official or through a civil contractor, would have undoubtedly impacted on the fortunes and development of this site and depended on the silver content of the ores being mined.

The need for silver to produce coinage and bullion could have raised the status of the site, especially at the time of the introduction of reformed coinage, as at the end of the fourth century.

The context of the creation of the Period 2 defensive system is difficult to tie to any historical event and could now lie late in the second century, even to the time of Albinus, rather than be associated with some doubtful civil unrest set in the north and the midlands in the mid Antonine period, whether or not this is correctly identified with a Brigantian revolt. The nature of the occupation within the walled area in Periods 2 to 5 must remain unresolved with the present state of knowledge of the interior but the extent of the extra-mural settlement suggests this was a reserved area of some sort. The status and character of the occupation may have varied over the site's history as is suggested by the sequence of buildings in the North-West Sector. It is also noteworthy that on both this site and the Pickford's Garage site there were marked fluctuations in the types of pottery discarded, suggesting rapid changes in the character of the domestic or trading activity (Symonds below, p. 168). The area defended (2.8ha) can be compared to that of other small towns or road stations in the area although the circuits of many are not well understood. Wall, Rocester and Ancaster are similar in walled area and lie on or close to roads, the former being the most comparable in view of the long and complex sequence of early military occupation, the extensive settlement beyond the walled defences and the presence of major structures in the extra-mural area (Jones 1998; Gould 1998). Gould considers the superficial resemblance of these sites to continental *burgi* should be resisted, the latter being defended sites of a different character and of a much smaller scale (Gould 1999, 186). Little Chester, at a nodal point in the road system, could have long served an official purpose as the nearest stronghold to the sources of silver and lead in the Peak and as a market centre for products such as Derbyshire ware, linking with centres along the line of Rykniel Street and other major centres such as Leicester and Chester to south-east and north-west. Settlements in the Trent Valley and at sites such as Shirebrook and Ockbrook in south and east Derbyshire now complement the industrial evidence and future research will no doubt fill out the pattern of rural settlement (Kay 1956; Palfreyman 2001). As Langley and Drage have proposed the site could also have a civil function as an administrative centre for the Corieltauvi/Coritani, although peripheral to the tribal territory as defined by Todd (Langley and Drage 2000, 279; Todd 1991, 14–15). The location at the southern limit of the Brigantian territory and the eastern edge of the Cornovian would have allowed trading links across the boundary of the highland and lowland zones between these three tribes.

The fate of the site in the troubles of the late fourth century may be hinted at by the evident signs of destruction in the extra-mural settlement and, although perhaps shielded from disturbance by raiders from the Irish Sea, was eventually vulnerable to settlement by Anglo-Saxon groups penetrating the Trent Valley.

POST-ROMAN PERIOD

The excavations of 1971–2 were the first investigations to uncover significant remains of Anglo-Saxon and early medieval date at Little Chester, remains which complemented the data accumulating in recent decades for the pre-conquest origins of Derby itself (Hall 1974). The identification of post-Roman activity in this area of the later city may help in

understanding the ancient topography and clarify the few documentary references to the early Burgh and to the Danish activity in this region. It also raises issues of the place of Little Chester and the earliest settlement of Derby in the development of the post-Roman kingdoms, the site lying on the boundary of Northumbria and Mercia, while bordering territories held by Welsh princes on the west (Craven 1988, 17–18).

There is a noticeable lack of late Roman material but this absence of finds, however, only indicates the lack of official activity involving a money economy, and civil occupation based on barter or a subsistence economy could well have continued. Such absence may also reflect the difficulties of recognising late to sub-Roman occupation, sites of this period being notable for the lack of domestic pottery and a poverty of distinctive artefacts. The survival of early documentary references to a British leader Cadfan holding *Letocetum* in the seventh century sets that Roman station, the next southwards on Rykniel Street, in a different light and it is only the absence of such data which differentiates Little Chester (Craven 1988, 17). Similar references to Urien lord of *Catraeth*, probably to be equated with *Cataractonium*, Roman Catterick, are also relevant, especially in the light of the Anglian burials in the extra-mural settlements along Dere Street to north and south of the walled town (Wilson *et al.* 1996, 6–7 and 50–52). Little Chester would hardly have lain unused and the identification of early Post-Roman structures over the colonnaded building on Site B and preceding the Anglo-Saxon cemetery may provide the first evidence that this site was a centre of sub-Roman occupation. The location of Little Chester on the boundary of the upland zone could have been important in the interplay between British kingdoms to the north and west and Anglo-Saxon settlement in the Trent Valley to the east and south. Further speculation would be out of place here but the potential for sub-Roman activity provides the setting for the first Anglo-Saxon occupation of the site.

The Anglo-Saxon cemetery is important as one of the few excavated in the Derby area, although a check of the antiquarian records reveals artefacts and reference to burials that suggest the site is not unique. From the vicinity of Little Chester, a burial accompanied by a gold ring and a few beads found beside the town street of Little Chester could indicate a burial in the City Road or Chester Green area (Meynell Langley Hall *mss.* 1804). Further afield, skeletons, one accompanied by a comb, found in the construction of Derby canal in Breadsall Meadows, might suggest burials of the early post-Roman period, but such grave-goods do also occur in the late Roman period (*ibid.*). The greatest concentration of certainly Anglo-Saxon graves is further north in the Peak but this may represent a false distribution, favoured by the chance discovery of intrusive burials within prehistoric barrows which survived in a marginal area away from recent industrial and agricultural activity (Ozanne 1962). Cemeteries of the early Anglo-Saxon period undoubtedly exist in the adjacent lowlands occupied by the sixth century, particularly the upper Trent Valley where a cluster of burial sites and some contemporary settlements are known. Casual finds have identified a series of cremation and inhumation cemeteries along the line of Rykniel Street from Wychnor on the south-west to Stretton to the north-east, as well as at Hilton to the south-west of Derby and at Swarkestone Lowes, only 8km to the south (Meaney 1964, 220–23; Posnansky 1955, 136; Brookes 1989, 162). Other cemeteries have probably been identified at Melbourne in the Trent Valley to the south-east and at Duffield further up the Derwent (Meaney 1964, 75–6). Grave goods in the barrow burials at Swarkestone, dated to the late fifth century, are

somewhat earlier than other finds in the area. The nearest known settlement site is at Willington where three huts of sixth century date occupied the site of a late Roman settlement (Wheeler 1979, 125-33). This is presumably only one of many in the Trent Valley, more extensive villages having been excavated at, for instance, Catholme in the upper part of the valley (Losco-Bradley 1977).

The Little Chester cemetery succeeded, or developed from, a phase of early post-Roman activity and, as noted by Kinsley above, might be a continuation of a late Roman tradition of roadside burial, similar to Willoughby on the Wolds (Kinsley 1993). Here, however, the burials could derive either from a settlement along the road or in the interior, the dead, in the latter case, being brought out for burial in the extra-mural area. The complexity of settlement and burial areas in the area of small Roman defended sites is illustrated by reference again to Catterick where Anglian settlement and burials are known both north and south of the walled town. Two areas of Anglian burial have been identified, one close to the south-western defences and the other in an area of Roman extra-mural settlement 2.5km to the south-east along Dere Street (Wilson *et al.* 1996, 29-45, 47-9). The latter cemetery is noteworthy for its similarity with the present site both in the form of the graves and character of the grave-goods but also in the location within and around a Roman roadside building (*op. cit.*, burials 4169-72 and Fig 15).

By the ninth century Derby or Northworthy was focused on Saint Alkmund's Church, although a separate and perhaps earlier focus existed in the area of St Werburgh's in Wardwick (Radford 1976). The later Danish burgh then appears to have lain on the spur south of St Alkmund's and above St Werburgh's, this settlement focused on a new minster church of All Saints, the pre-conquest settlement eventually extending as a linear settlement as far south as St Peter's Street (Rollason, 1978, 61-93; 1983, 1-22; Roffe, 1986, 111).

It is in this period that Little Chester again produces tantalising evidence for activity, this time affecting the Roman defences. The platform of rubble on the south-east corner, rather than being a simple collapse of the wall or a clearance cairn, had the appearance of a foundation for an extension or addition to the defences in the later pre-conquest period. Such additions to Roman defences are normally identified as part of the strengthening of wall circuits undertaken in the later fourth century but the Anglo-Saxon pottery stratified beneath the stonework makes a later date more likely, unless there was some later intrusion into the foundation which was not immediately apparent. The extent and ground plan of this structure is not recoverable, the present outline having been truncated on the east and south by later disturbances. One possible interpretation, however, is that the foundation supported not so much a projecting bastion as an addition to the wall to create a more angular corner, creating better command of the south and east wall faces and a wider fighting platform at this point. This might then be confirmed by the plan of the fort as recorded by Stukeley which shows the wall as forming angled corners even though the ditch followed a more rounded outline at this point.

Support for the existence of other bastions may come from the photographs of the excavations of the wall line west of the City Road in 1926. As already noted, trenches cut to follow both faces of the robbed wall describe irregular lines, that following the stones along the front apparently diverging southwards to follow a projecting structure or area of rubble before returning to the previous westward alignment to the river. This feature

could not only mark the position of an original gate but also preserve traces of another shallow bastion flanking it.

Although rarely if ever identified, such defensive work might not be out of place in this period. The accounts in, for instance, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of warfare in the late ninth and early tenth centuries between the Anglo-Saxon and Viking forces in southern Britain include several mentions of possible re-use of existing Roman fortifications (Whitelock (ed. and trans.) 1979, 195 and 215). In the early stages of the invasion, during the period AD 868 to 879, Viking forces seem to have built some new defensive sites, such as Nottingham and Repton, but also to have taken the initiative in re-occupying sites such as London, Cambridge, Exeter and possibly Cirencester where Roman walled circuits were standing, often close to rivers accessible to ships. At London, on the southern limits of Mercia, the campaigns of Alfred recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle imply that the Viking army had occupied the Roman walls for up to nine years until dislodged in 880, while at Fulham the late Roman enclosure, similar to Little Chester in its area and location close to the river, was traditionally occupied by a Viking band in 879 (Vince 1990, 82–5). Accounts of Anglo-Saxon assaults on Leicester in 918 and Colchester in 921 also imply that the Roman defences here had been occupied by Viking forces, probably in the initial stages of the invasion of eastern England. The implication is that the invaders made use of these existing defences, necessitating their later expulsion by the native forces.

With the growing success of the Anglo-Saxon campaigns in the reign of Edward the Elder and Aethelstan several cases of the re-occupation and defence of Roman circuits can be identified. At Towcester Edward occupied and fortified the Roman town, reinforcing it with a stone wall in 921. In its size and its relation to both the Roman road system and the area of the Danelaw this site would be comparable to Little Chester. At Exeter a siege by Viking forces in 894 implies that the city had been re-taken under Alfred. Some thirty years later King Athelstan is recorded by William of Malmesbury as having ‘fortified the city with towers and enclosed it with a wall of squared stones’ (*Willelmi Malmesbiriensis monachi de gestis Regum Anglorum*, Rolls Series xc, 1, 48. I am grateful to Richard Hall for this reference). Although a late source, this information may have been derived from a contemporary poem and thus could record the refurbishment of the Roman defences by the Anglo-Saxons, albeit with some exaggeration since the Roman wall circuit of Exeter was presumably still substantially intact (Whitelock (ed. and trans.) 1979, 281).

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records Chester as rebuilt in 907 and at Colchester the ‘fortress was repaired and rebuilt’ in 921, in both cases following a Viking occupation. Manchester also was repaired and manned by Edward in 919, these works presumably referring to the Roman fort, the walls of which, like the *enceinte* at Little Chester, were largely intact until the seventeenth or eighteenth century (Bu’lock 1974, 170).

A context for a late pre-Conquest re-use of the Little Chester defences is provided by specific references to the reign of Queen Aethelflaeda of Mercia. In the period AD 907–918 she was instrumental in the construction of new burhs at several sites in the north-west Midlands, from Runcorn in the north to Hereford on the south and as far east as Tamworth and Warwick (Bond 1987, 112). The re-defence of Chester is also credited to her. Following this work her campaign was directed in 917 north-east to Derby where Aethelflaeda ‘obtained the borough which is called Derby with all that

belongs to it, and there also four of her thegns, who were dear to her, were killed within the gates' (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Mercian Register, *sub anno* 917; Whitelock (ed. and trans.) 1979, 214). In the absence of any other known stronghold in the area at this date the holding of Little Chester by Viking forces seems the most likely identification, the Anglo-Saxons presumably taking the defences but at the cost of the four warriors who died, having fought their way within the gates. Before her own death in the following year the Queen then took Leicester, the neighbouring and much larger Roman walled circuit within the western Danelaw.

If Little Chester's defences were firstly held by Vikings and then brought under Mercian control the archaeological evidence for structural changes to the south-east corner could be interpreted as repairs carried out following the attack on, and expulsion of, those defending it, the structural changes being equivalent to the works recorded at, for instance, Towcester. The large pebbles, suggested as having been used as projectiles, and found along the foot of the wall might even be debris from the preceding battle.

The holding of Little Chester by Vikings would follow logically from their earlier activity lower down the Trent at Torksey and Nottingham, the Derwent being navigable as far as Little Chester, where the presumed bridge for Roman Ryknield Street, south of Little Chester, or the known piers of the upper crossing to Darley Slade, would have blocked river traffic, whether or not the bridge structure was still in existence. An attraction for the Vikings in this area might have been as a source of silver, presuming some continued working of the old Roman mines to the north. The Little Chester fort should also be compared to the site at Repton, set to the south-west in an equivalent location on the banks of the Trent (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1992). At Repton a U-shaped earthwork was thrown up by the Vikings as a winter fortress, incorporating the church of a pre-existing Anglo-Saxon monastery and burial place of the Mercian royal house as a defensive gateway. Little Chester was more extensive and defensible but the length of its putative occupation is also unknown; it is possible that the Viking occupation of Derby/Little Chester commenced in the same period as the occupation of Nottingham and Repton and continued for almost 50 years, until the Mercian attack. The name of Northworthy attached to Derby may then reflect the topographical relationship to Repton on the south side of the Trent Valley (Roffe 1986, 111).

The longevity of Danish occupation would be compatible with the status of Derby as one of the Five Burghs, the events of 917 marking, not the end of Danish settlement but its shifting, perhaps to a new site in the area of St Alkmund's and the later All Saints. As Hall has noted, the sequence of pre-Conquest defended settlements could be complicated (Hall 1974, 19).

Possibly relevant to this phase of Little Chester is the account of an inhumation burial in the Chester Green area. This comprised a male extended with head north and surrounded by iron 'rivets' and iron staining, presumably from the decay of a wooden structure around the body (Glover 1829, 1; 295). The form of the rivets suggests clench bolts or ship's roves, but, although it is tempting to see this as evidence for a boat burial, such fixtures were used in coffins, albeit those of later pre-Conquest date (Rogers 1993, 1410–1412).

Within the wall circuit an area of inhumation burials in the North-West Sector was first noted in the late eighteenth century (Pilkington 1789, 2, 198–9). At that date the burials were described as covering nearly a quarter of the fort interior in an area occupied

by Mr. Waterall's orchard. Several of these burials were recorded in 1925, the graves all extended, oriented inhumation without grave-goods or trace of coffins, adults and children being certainly identifiable, suggesting a normal civil burial plot (Clews 1927). This form of cemetery would be characteristic of the earliest Christian communities and, in the absence of any recorded medieval chapel or church, might here date to the later pre-Conquest period. The re-use of derelict or only partly-occupied Roman sites as cemeteries is paralleled elsewhere and one class of such sites consists of the re-use of part of the interior of a Roman fort, whether or not this is occupied by the remains of a contemporary church. Examples include several Saxon Shore forts as well as northern forts such as Binchester, interpretations of such sites ranging from the simple use of derelict land as a burial ground to the cemeteries having served early monastic foundations defined by the walls (Rigold 1977; Ferris and Jones 2000, 3). In the present case there is no ecclesiastical connection, other than that Little Chester in the medieval period was held by All Saints as part of that church's endowment and that three of the prebendal farms lay within the walls.

Other features at Little Chester, such as the traces of timber structures outside the Roman walls on the present site and the results of past casual observations, cannot be directly related to any specific phase of the pre-Conquest occupation. The structures and occupation material on the present site could belong to a later, more peaceful phase when defence of the circuit was less of a priority. The mould and ingot from the berm and the corner structure are distinctive of a late pre-Conquest date and other casual finds of objects support occupation in the area during the tenth–eleventh centuries but are not specific to the nature of the community and could relate either to the putative Scandinavian occupation or Anglo-Saxon settlement (Langley 1990, 56–59). The comb fragment from the interior was of Anglo-Scandinavian type but the pin was of a type in more general use. The burials within the defences are equally difficult to characterise and although superficially similar to the late cemetery at Repton did include remains of children and could be of any civil population up to the early medieval period. The coffined burial on Chester Green, however, is more specific and can be paralleled in Anglian contexts; this could be one feature relating to Scandinavian activity.

Medieval Settlement and Later Land Use

Evidence for the later use of the site is rare and activity was probably much less intensive. Agricultural activity here along the line of the eastern ditch system is consistent with the presence of a medieval manor house set against the inner face of the wall. The recorded building of Manor Farm was of the sixteenth century but it incorporated blocks from an earlier structure, the house surviving until demolition in the 1960s for Pickford's Garage, an enterprise that lasted little more than 20 years (Bailey 1890). As a result of the excavations following the destruction of the site in 1987/8 it now appears that the old house overlay the substantial Roman building incorporated into the back of the fort defences at this point, raising the interesting possibility that this building had survived at least as a ruin within the walls and thus became a focus for the early medieval structure (Langley and Drage 2000, 130). As noted above, the cellar of this building may be identified with one of the vaults noted by Stukeley, these structures a series of turrets around the inside of the later Roman defensive wall. Other extant buildings, such as Derwent House and City House set around the perimeter of the fort, should perhaps be

examined in case they are overlying other such structures or can provide definite proof that these were simply features of the original medieval or post-medieval buildings.

In the time of these prebendal farms this area would have been one of several agricultural satellites to the urban centre of Derby, an element of its ecclesiastical landholdings dedicated to the upkeep of the major church of All Saints. Three of the seven prebendal farms lay within the walls of Little Chester, their locations identifiable amongst the buildings indicated on Stukeley's plan of 1721. Settlement in the medieval period was presumably limited to these farms, although the cess-pit and drainage ditch on Site B and the metalled surfaces on both sites may relate to settlement fronting onto the Old Chester Road.

The walls were in course of demolition before 1721 but it is tempting to see the regularly placed gaps in the east, south and west sides recorded by Stukeley as coinciding with the original gates. There is no break in the northern wall in the area postulated above as a gateway but the plan clearly shows a footpath that crossed the northern interior and continues outside the northern defences so at least a break in the wall existed here by the eighteenth century, close to the point where Sherwin's stone drain crossed the ditch system. It should be noted that a post-medieval culvert crossed the robbed wall at the west gate, presumably serving the City House nearby and draining into the Derwent. This suggests that such features were not necessarily Roman structures but could support the coincidence of such drains with original gates in the circuit. The southern interior and the area to the east, near to the later road to Chesterfield, were relatively built up by this date.

Stukeley records the destruction of the walls for road metalling and the present excavation on Site A found only a portion of the pitched stone footings in the wall trench, sealed by tip lines of debris dropping from south to north. The robber debris comprised mortar and gritstone rubble with occasional irregular blocks of wall core, interleaved with dumps of clay presumably from the levelling of the rampart. The only survivals from this demolition will have been that portion incorporated into the eastern end of Manor Farm and exposed in 1987-8, and other sections possibly incorporated at the time into another building on the south side and Derwent Farm on the west. The lower portions of these sections might survive and observations by Sherwin on the north side in 1926 and Brassington on the north-east suggest that demolition was not comprehensive and up to 2m of wall foundation could survive immediately below present ground surface at other points, the adjacent stratigraphy likewise surviving to a high level. This level of survival was confirmed by the discoveries in 1987/8.

The latest land use before the construction of the railway embankment was the construction, probably in the early nineteenth century, of greenhouses which perhaps are to be associated with the later use of Manor Farm. Thereafter the site was effectively sealed from interference for almost a century by the construction of the railway embankment, the construction of which had caused remarkably little disturbance. Along the north-west side of Site A a temporary railway had been created to assist in the early stages of work, the impressions of sleepers there being cut by the trench for a shallow 'toe', keying the lower edge of the embankment into the pre-existing surface of the rampart. Of the latter by this date only a low bank remained, the ditch system surviving only as a broad hollow some 25m wide to its east and south, the initial layers of Keuper Marl for the embankment filling this hollow of no more than a metre depth. The crossing

of the Old Chester and City Roads entailed the construction of substantial abutments on either side for the bridges but even here, away from the actual foundation trenches, the stratigraphy remained surprisingly intact and, in part at least, survived the demolition operations of 1971. The exposure of the previous land surface in that year then permitted the investigation of a site which has revealed, albeit after long gestation, perhaps the fullest archaeological sequence yet from Little Chester, illustrating its importance within the Roman province of Britain, its significant part in the Anglo-Saxon and Viking history of the region and its pivotal role in the origins of the present City of Derby.