

# MATLOCK AND THE LOCATION OF DOMESDAY MESTESFORDE

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## SUMMARY

*The site of Mestesforde at the time of the Domesday Survey was considered, by Stenton in the Victoria County History, to be at Matlock Bridge, which is a view that probably prevails generally today. It and other reasonably feasible fording sites are examined with respect to the local topography of the Derwent Gorge, and the likely medieval transport linkages revealed by footpaths and by place-names. One site in particular, entering Matlock Town via the Ladygate, has not previously been suggested, but appears to be a preferable alternative to the Bridge for the ford site.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the 1086 Survey Mestesforde had six outliers or berewicks, (in modern terms) Snitterton, Wensley, Bonsall, Ible and Tansley, with the sixth, *Meslach*, identified usually as what is now Old Matlock or Matlock Town, sited around the later medieval church of St Giles. There is no doubt about locating the first five places (Bryan 1903, 5–7), and the elevated position of Old Matlock is probably a strong enough indicator to accept it as Meslach. This leaves some three miles of the west bank of the River Derwent, south of Snitterton and as far south as the boundary with Cromford for the territory of Mestesforde and the associated ford site itself. This is almost entirely the east flank of Masson Hill which rises from the river at below 100m OD to just above 300m OD. About the actual site of Mestesforde, historians have been undecided and suggestions have ranged from the present bridging site (Jewitt 1871; Stenton 1905; Cameron 1959, II, 389), to as far south as near Matlock Bath Station (Davis 1811; Lysons 1817; Naylor 2003, 11). The river gorge and its almost continuous cliffs on the east side and the very rugged nature of the west side make any sites other than discussed below extremely unlikely.

Stenton, in the VCH (1905, 330) settled it at Matlock Bridge, on the basis that the nature of the ground otherwise “absolutely prohibits the existence of any ford across the river” and that there was no trace of a lateral road between there and Cromford (Stenton, 1905, 330). It will be shown below that at least one and probably two other well-positioned points on the river were just as passable as a ford for east-west traffic as the subsequent bridging point so, in this case, Stenton’s lateral road argument, if relevant at all, is superfluous.

If Matlock Bridge was the ford site, there was also surprisingly little development there until late Victorian times, which is strange with such a substantial growth factor applied to a supposed older and main settlement. It is less difficult to appreciate that decline would set in at the ford if a different bridging site was selected.

### The river crossing points

In recent centuries there have been substantial man-induced changes to the River Derwent, notably two lowerings of the bed, in 1791 when it was done by “a miner from Winster” (Flindall, pers comm) and again in 1971, for the Matlock Flood Relief Scheme, both times at a point just below Artists’ Corner (SK 29555935) opposite the former High Tor Hotel at Artists’ Corner. By increasing the gradient these have lowered the water level and, to some extent, the bed, between about three metres to about one metre between there and Matlock Bridge. In addition to this there have been weirs for mining purposes above Matlock Bridge and at and below Artists’ Corner where construction and later removal would both have had an impact on the bed (Palmer Pearson 1918; Willies 2008, 9–10). The roadside section of the river, below the southern Matlock railway bridge for over a kilometre to Matlock Bath, has also been much modified by road widening on the west bank and by development of a leat and “island” using waste rock from the High Tor Mine (until recently the High Tor Colour Works) on the east side. The result is that today (and to a lesser degree in Stenton’s time) there is a lower and narrower river channel and much steeper, more intimidating banks than would have been faced by medieval forders in the important area for alternative crossings.

Taking this into account, the obvious crossing points are where there is a reasonably straight stretch of river where the gradient causes the flow speed to increase, a good bed and reasonable access via the banks: these occur (1) at Matlock Bridge (SK 2980 6025), probably just upstream; (2) at a point near Knowleston Place (SK 3005 5985) below the Pic Tor Cliffs (on which St Giles Church stands) at or just below the corner where Bentley Brook enters the main river (Plate 1); (3) at Harvey Dale (SK 2980 5960) just above Artists’ Corner opposite the bottom of St John’s Road (Plate 2); and (4) at Matlock Bath (SK 2970 5960) somewhat above the present railway station, possibly near the modern overhead cable-car. This last can probably be discounted as the difficult topography and distance from the Meslach site prevents the necessary transport linkages to the west. The obvious two alternatives to the Bridge site, with equally good (or perhaps, better) east-west possibilities, in relation to the Old Matlock site, are thus the Knowleston Place and Harvey Dale sites.

The Knowleston Place site is close to a right-angled bend in the river into which the Bentley Brook has poured much debris during floods, so that the outside of the bend has been filled with debris. Normally the outer side is deeper. As a result, at low flows especially, the deeper water channel is on the inside of the bend and, just below it, the bed is flatter-bottomed and somewhat shallower than usual and an oblique crossing there would probably have been no worse than at the Bridge site. Indeed for substantial parts of the year the narrower part might very easily have been bridged by modest trunks of timber for humans and smaller animals such as sheep to cross dry-footed. The west side has flood-plain meadows from which it would be easy to access the river and the east has a low narrow strip of land which leads into Knowleston Place.

The river at Harvey Dale is more akin to the Bridge site, in both cases on fairly straight sections of the river causing a more rapid flow and shallower water of fairly constant depth. A change in flow resulting in marked turbulence today is here easily discernible just where the Dale (at the bottom of St John’s Road) debouches on to the river-side (about 50m downstream of the river footbridge). The turbulence is created



Plate 1: River Derwent today at a time of fairly low flow. The possible fording point between the Shiploads on the left and Knowleston Place (just off-right). The Bentley Brook enters at centre right depositing debris on the outside of the bend. Note how the tree is large enough to be swung round to form a temporary bridge over the fast-flowing but narrow channel.



Plate 2: The River Derwent in the section between the Shiploads and Horse Tor, about 1789. The water level is probably higher than natural due to a weir downstream. Even allowing for some artistic licence, the low banks are in complete contrast with the canalised channel observable today. The likely ford-site is in the middle distance. The modern viewpoint would be from the railway bridge over the A6 road looking south. (William Day, 1789, used by courtesy of Giles Robinson).

by a nick point developed at the underwater outcrop of the Matlock Upper Limestone and the underlying Matlock Upper (volcanic) Lava. It results in the flow speeding up, reducing the depth of the river just upstream and may develop sandbanks just downstream. Thus two possible fording sites develop. It was a visible feature before the 1971 change and is likely to have been so in medieval times also.

The beds here, as can be seen in the cliffs, dip northwardly into the minor syncline at Matlock Bridge and plunge eastwardly under the shales under Old Matlock. The immediate strata under the river bed consist of the top of the Matlock Upper Lava overlain by Upper Matlock Limestone. The top of the lava was, until recently, visible just west of the river in the floor of the south west corner of Harvey Dale Quarry and it is also seen in Ringing Rake Sough to the west (Warrener, Willies and Flindall 1982, 78–79; Ford 2001, 14–18). The outcrop is shown on the Geological Survey 1:10,000 Sheet SK 25 NE and in Smith (1967, 12–14). The lava has a markedly soft, ashy top a metre or more thick. This erodes at the junction causing a pronounced lip and nick point as the river runs over and then off the limestone. At least three nick points or rapids are located in the gorge in similar geological circumstances.

This causes the very local gradient of the river bed to steepen downstream and, given the constant width of the river and course, will cause the flow to quicken and thus the depth to reduce. The likely best crossing points will be either just behind the

nick point before turbulence sets in or, possibly, a little downstream where deposition will provide a firm and reasonably level bed.

The situation is somewhat confused by river changes following the 1970s deepening and the removal and re-grading of unconsolidated material in the bed, but this nick point was effective prior to 1971 (when the regular bed and shallow water depth enabled excavation machinery to enter the river at this point) and, subject to slight shift due to erosion, probably had the same effect on the river in medieval times as it does today. In the 1789 watercolour by William Day, Plate 2, the water level is possibly artificially high due to a probable dam associated with a then derelict water wheel at Artist's Corner, depicted in a pencil sketch (also 1789) by Turner. (British Museum Print Department, Turner Collection; Willies 2008, 9–10). The east side here has a narrow dale leading up to Old Matlock (widened as seen today by 19th century quarrying).

At all three sites bed conditions would probably provide firm footing with a mixture of stone and fine material being typical. Of the three the Knowleston Place site would have the deeper water and, probably, fastest flow but would be by far the narrower. With a variation in low and high flows of some 250-fold (even after modern stabilisation of flows with the release of 'compensation water' due to the Upper Derwent Dams) each of these crossing points would be simple at times of low flows — maybe for much of the year except after rain-storms or snow-melts, but would frequently have been totally impassable for days or weeks, even mounted on a horse. The minimum depth to be dealt with is usually just over knee-high but an artificial bed of placed stone, or blocks of stone as stepping stones, could have been used to reduce crossing difficulty. It would also have been easy, at any of the sites, with a few hours work to erect a simple temporary scaffold footbridge using poles and branches. This would have extended the crossing season and it would be surprising if this was not done long before the late medieval (stone?) bridge was erected.

### Historical evidence

According to Stenton (1905, 312), at the time of Domesday, the upland nature of the general area had led to the survival of an archaic form of manorial organisation, of small hamlets occupying slender strips of cultivable soil. If this was so for Mestesforde, then it would most likely be close to its arable land and with access to meadows and pastures. This does not rule out the Matlock Bridge site, but both the Harvey Dale and Knowleston Place sites would probably be better placed, distinctly so for links to Meslach or Old Matlock.

Most of the important place-name evidence is conveniently available in Cameron's *Place Names of Derbyshire* (Cameron 1959, 389–94) and in the Matlock Tithes Award (DRO: D2360/3/28a). The place name *Matlock*, in its various manifestations, is an indicator of a meeting place: "the oak where the moot was held", which certainly emphasises the need for good communications in a split parish. The name *Masson*, nowadays the hill paralleling the west bank of the river, seems also to have referred to the valley (*Maessa's* valley), and there may be an etymological connection between *Mestes*, *Maessa's* and *Nestors*, so, for instance, the well known *Nestors Mines* — the Rutland and Masson Caverns sites today — may simply be translated as Masson Mines and *Mestesforde* as Masson Ford. The place name *Shiploads*, for the land broadly

between Matlock Bridge and the Matlock lower railway bridge between Holt Lane and the river, is especially significant, as perhaps “a sheep stream or, perhaps, ford”. A possible alternative is for rapids: *lud-*, or loud-stream, which was often linked to a ford place-name (Ekwall 1960). Evidence of a trading route is available from *Salters Way Mine*, close to the early track or road of today known as Salters Lane leading from the west over the top of Masson to Matlock (the name also occurs further west, beyond Winsters, and near Ashover en route eastwards from Matlock to Chesterfield). One further place-name, not listed in Cameron 1959, but included in Farey (1811, 261) seems of especial significance, that of the *Lady Gate Mine*, whose vein crosses the defile known now as Pic Tor Lane. This strongly suggests the lane was once *Lady Gate* (and the defile, perhaps, *Lady Dale*), leading from Old Matlock near St Giles Church to the river opposite *Harvey Dale*. It seems to suggest an important old entry to the town from the west, which would cross the river. On the eastern side, it is possible that Stoneyway, leading into Knowleston Place, was also a main entry to Meslach or Old Matlock. Thus both Lady Gate and Stoneyway lead from Old Matlock or Meslach to possible river fording points but Lady Gate had the obvious advantage of substantially closer links between Old Matlock and the open fields and grazing on the lighter soils of Masson Hill than either Stoneyway or Matlock Bridge.

The first mention of a *Pontem de Matelock* is for 1250 (Cameron 1959, 389), and without presenting evidence, he suggests its position was the present bridge site. If correct, this appears to mean the Matlock Bridge was the first on the middle section of the Derwent. Hey (1980, 75) considers that the four-arch bridge surviving today may date back to the 15th century and it was certainly built (or rebuilt) by 1522. Its nearest competitors were Darley Bridge, built by the early 14th century, and Cromford Bridge which seems to date from the early 15th century. It also pre-dated the bridge at Bakewell (on the Wye tributary to the Derwent) which was there by 1300 so until this last date it seems probable it was the only bridge for a considerable distance serving the middle Derwent. The earliest bridge at Matlock would have conferred a distinct trading advantage on the town which may be reflected in it securing the continuity of the important Salters Way route, crossing via Matlock from west to east.

### **Medieval demand for a river crossing**

There would have been two major factors in the level of demand, first, local requirements for access to arable land and pasture and to go to church or moots, to visit friends and relatives in nearby communities or to attend local feasts (fairs) and markets and, second, more distant travel by chapmen or drovers, or by church or manorial officials, or for social purposes.

There was a clear and substantial need to cross the river by local people which would have provided the higher level of demand. Matlock as a parish spans the river with substantial areas on either bank which offer diverse geological and thus farming environments. There were open field areas and both good pasture and rough grazing on common lands, close by both banks (see field names and characteristic enclosure patterns on the 1849–50 Tithe Award Plan). Lead mining was certainly active at Domesday and late medieval times generally, probably requiring an inflow of feedstuffs and, possibly, timber, as well as the outflow of ore and metal. By late medieval times Meslach or Old Matlock, on the evidence of the church site, had become the central

place to which subsidiary hamlets would look, and there are a number of surrounding villages and hamlets which would also view Matlock as their local centre. More distant markets such as Ashbourne, Bakewell and Chesterfield and Alfreton would also attract and develop business links in the wider area. Until bridges were built, fording the river must have been a fairly frequent necessity for local people and, in the months where it was often impossible, it would have been a major hindrance.

It is difficult to isolate the potential pre-bridge distant travel from that which clearly would have taken place after the three bridges at Darley, Matlock and Cromford were built. Matlock is on one of the salters' (and drovers') ways which cross the Pennines and the building of three bridges fairly close by each other in a relatively short time suggest there was a substantial distant travel business to be captured. It is likely that, before the first bridge was built, when low river flows could be anticipated, then trade would flow to the Matlock crossing at the margin of the Peak and the lead mining field, and better agricultural land beyond, rather than take much longer routes (but easier river crossings) further upstream. The most obvious alternative upstream crossing before Matlock's bridge would have been via the Portway. This runs between Carsington and Brough via Grangemill, Winster, Alport and Ashford, where all stream and river crossings were fairly shallow. The Portway crosses the Salters Way between Grangemill and Winster, probably near Winster Moor Farm. It is this route which may well have seen the greatest loss of its distant traffic to Matlock Bridge.

So far as other than immediately local travel goes, then likely routes are perhaps best indicated by locations of medieval churches as a guide to more important settlements: St Giles at Matlock to Wirksworth, to Bonsall, and to more distant settlements beyond them such as Ashbourne. Routes north-west would include Winster (a chapel belonging to Youlgreave), and possibly Youlgreave and Bakewell onwards. The routes would tend to fan out from fairly close to Matlock, though any of the three sites would do for the longer journeys west. East would lead predominantly towards Crich and Alfreton, and to Chesterfield: ways to these went directly from Old Matlock via what is today Matlock Green.

### **The archaeological evidence: footpaths, trackways and boundaries**

Use of footways, ways and field and other boundaries relies on the assumption of their continuity since medieval times, which though acceptable in general can be dubious in detail and requires careful use. The most useful guide to these used here is the Tithe Award Plan of 1849–50, which has some routes not today extant on the Ordnance Survey maps. Many ways and paths must have had diversions during both informal and formal phases of enclosure.

By and large the medieval tracks would have followed the most direct route to an obvious destination (e.g. a medieval church close to its settlement centre), allowing for diversionary compromises resulting from severe topography so as to avoid excessive climbing over heights or descending into deep hollows. With due caution this seems to be a fairly reliable guide.

The parish of Matlock has a fairly dense footpath network (Figs 1 and 2). Concern here is with the west bank of the river, on Masson, where the footpaths survive especially well. There appear to be two foci for footpaths on Masson serving Matlock. The first appears to be a point near the bottom of St John's Road at Harvey Dale, the

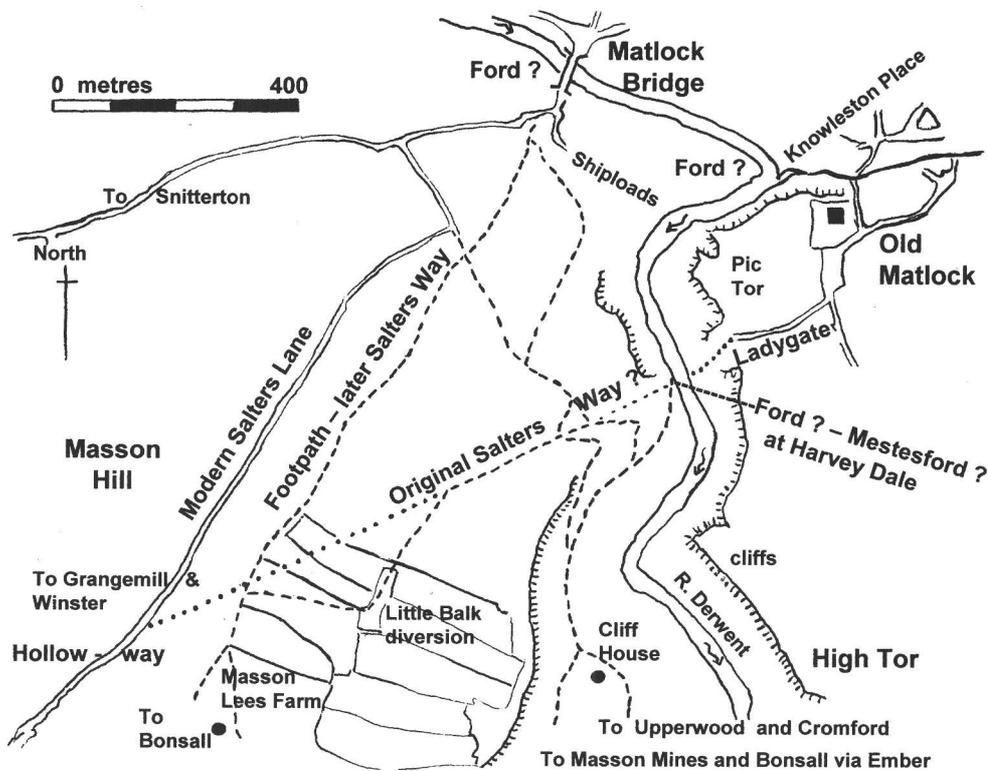


Fig. 1: Map showing possible ford sites on the River Derwent serving Old Matlock, with the projected original (pre-bridge) Salters Way from Lady Gate and Harvey Dale; the diversion along the later (post-bridge) Salters Way following the extant footpath; and the modern Salters Lane. Based on the 1849-50 Tithe Award Map.

second at Matlock Bridge. Two further footpaths cross the hillside, one across Harvey Dale to near the present-day St John's Chapel, the other to the dale itself, both running roughly parallel to the river, and appearing to divert all the paths focussing on Harvey Dale towards Matlock Bridge. This suggests that the Bridge site which survives as the main cross-river focus today displaced the use of the lower parts of the thus, earlier, paths to the riverside at Harvey Dale. If this was so, then these earlier main routes over Masson would have likely forded the river at Harvey Dale and passed up the Lady Dale or Lady Gate entry directly into Old Matlock. In a similar way what may have been an earlier route for the Salters Way, descending directly down to Harvey Dale seems also to have a further probable displacement which follows the length of a small close known in 1850 as the "Little Balk", where it crosses the open fields (Fig. 1).

### The footpaths in detail

#### *The Salters Way*

The Salters Way approached Matlock via south of Elton and Winster on Brassington Common and diverted a little further south to avoid the height of Blakelow Hill on

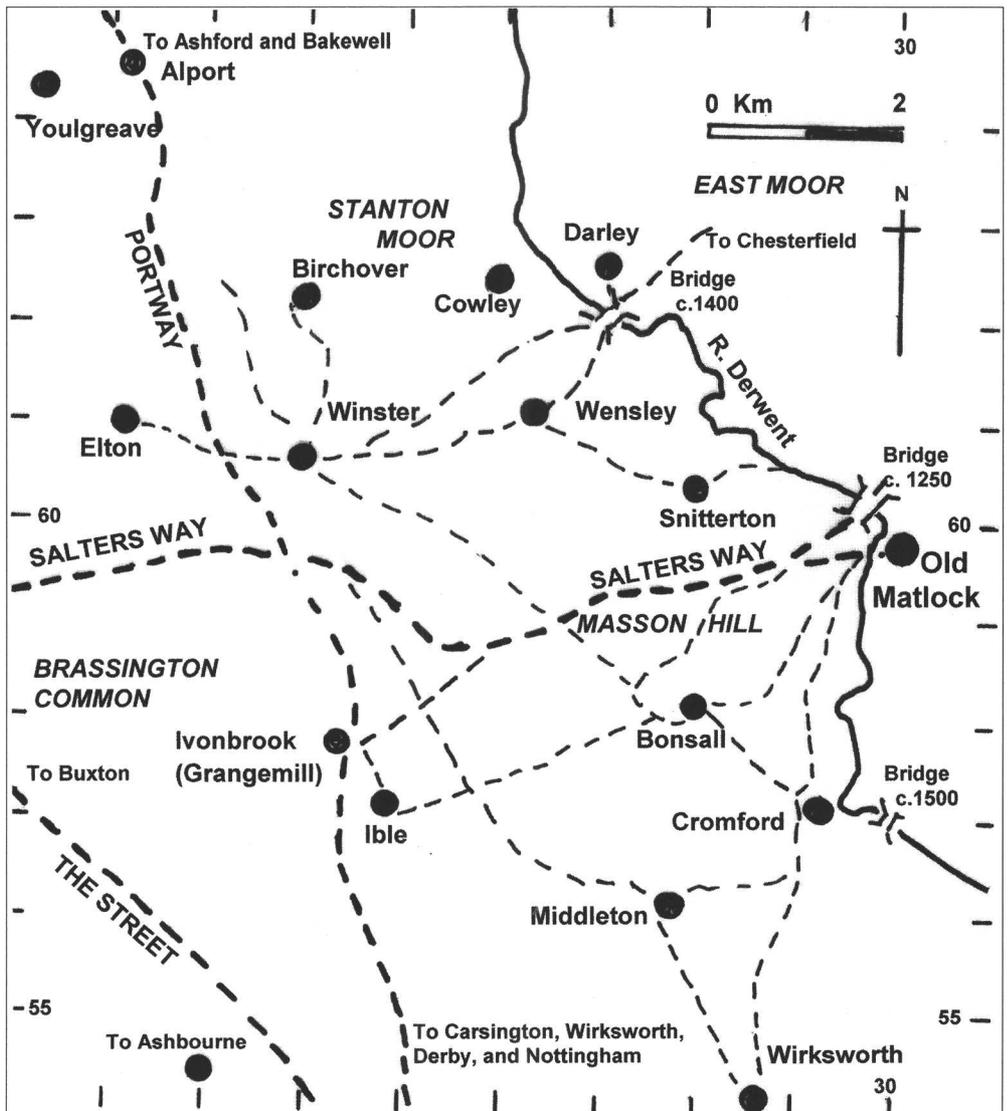


Fig. 2: The three major routes and local paths and ways between settlements west of Matlock and the crossing points on the River Derwent. (Source: OS One inch sheet 111 (1966 revision) and field observations).

Bonsall Moor, linking to what is now Naylor's Lane within neighbouring Bonsall and, within Matlock, Salters Lane. The only fairly certain track in Matlock which it would originally have followed is a hollow-way where it crosses the north side of Masson Hill, between higher and steep ground on the south-east and a very steep slope on the north-west down to Snitterton. The hollow-way section here runs on the eroded top of

the Matlock Upper Lava (6 inch Geological Sheet SK 25 NE) and terminates (SK 2870 5960) at the lower end close to the entry track to Masson Lees Farm.

From here the modern Salters Lane was determined at enclosure, serving closes on either side en route to Matlock Bridge. A surviving footpath a few tens of metres on its eastern side is more likely to be fairly close to the original route to Matlock Bridge, the last stage descending directly to the bridge through Bridge Farm.

However, from the point at the east end of the hollow-way there is also evidence of a way following a more direct route to and from Old Matlock in a direct line, topographically located, down to and via Harvey Dale. This possible route for the Salters Way would require the suggested Harvey Dale / Lady Dale ford for the crossing, the route lasting until the bridge was built and the more direct route developed.

The footpath up Harvey Dale itself is shown as diverted slightly on the Tithe Award Plan from what was obviously the original route exiting at the bottom of the dale. Nowadays the bottom end of the dry valley is occupied by a small group of houses and there has been a further footpath diversion totally blocking the old route. The path can be picked up above the cottages, from there leading in an almost straight line up the valley south-westwardly to the central part of the former open fields on Masson hillside. There it nowadays diverts severely from its established course, and is seen on the 1849–50 Tithe Award plan as crossing between the former selions along the length of an enclosure named Little Balk and then across Big Balk. It then continues to a point just below the Holloway. However, if the surviving lower section on the 1849 plan is projected directly forwards over the selions it climbs towards the high north flank of the hill and joins the surviving route of the modern lane known as Salters Lane at the lower point of the hollow-way west of Masson Lees Farm. For a traveller coming to Matlock, on crossing the skyline, at the top of Masson Hill on the Salters Way, this would have been the obvious line of travel towards Matlock Church atop its cliff. The diversion from the obvious direct line may reflect development or extension of the open fields across its course. This would not be too implausible around 1250 and the building of the bridge when its distant function would change to a more local emphasis.

### **Other footpaths at Harvey Dale**

Two other main ways led off from Harvey Dale near the river, beginning together then splitting at what is today the mid 18th century Cliff House. The path, now St John's Road, has one branch leading to Upperwood at what became Matlock Bath and on over Harp Edge to Scarthin, Cromford and Wirksworth. This was the main through route from and to the south prior to the mid 18th century road along the valley bottom. The other branch diverts via the north side of Cliff House to the upper part of the Masson leadmining area (the Nestus Mines near Rutland and Masson Cavern at Abraham's Heights today) and along the hillside above Upperwood past Ember Farm to Bonsall Church.

All three routes from their junction seem likely to have crossed the river from Harvey Dale, up Lady Gate, to near the centre of Old Matlock. It would have offered the shortest route from the west bank into the Old Town.

Half-way up St John's Road the path from Harvey Dale appears to have been diverted to the bridge focus at (the much later) St John's Church, a branch, contouring

and almost paralleling the river, leading back, crossing the old Salters Way path down Harvey Dale (if such it was), until it is cut by the lower part of the surviving Salters Way footpath down to Matlock Bridge. It seems likely this was the effect of a new, more favourable river crossing.

The apparent existence of two separate footpath systems, one with the focus on Harvey Dale at one of the more favoured possible fording sites and another with a (presumed later) focus at Matlock Bridge, is the most compelling of all the evidence for the site of Mestesforde. It is also close to the Shiploads area which originally may have extended this far south, before being (much later) cut-off by the railway bridge.

The known extent of the Shiploads between there and the bridge site reminds us that Matlock may not have had a single fording place. Avoidance of tolls over bridge or ford or to avoid sheep or cattle entering the confines of Old Matlock town may have led to use of sites north of the Pic Tor Lane / Lady Gate site to around or above Matlock Bridge, which would include the possible Knowleston Place site at Bentley Brook below the Stoneyway. On the east side of the river, these traffic flows would easily combine again to take the ways towards Ashover, Crich and Alfreton or Chesterfield. Bridges at Darley and Cromford would have been equally attractive if Matlock was to be avoided or the destinations led in those directions. The early bridge, however, would be a very powerful draw to Matlock from these competing crossing points.

### **The possible Mestesforde site**

This would suggest that as a settlement, the presumed agricultural hamlet of Mestesforde may have clustered around Harvey Dale or a little distance southwards round the corner towards Artist's Corner. This would have been a fine, if restricted, habitation site, and would have benefited from the generally south-eastern and southern aspect of the hillside and a sheltered position with good access to the open field and pastures on Masson hillside just above. In particular it would have been well supplied with springs of pure water (more convenient than the river) due to the outcrop of perched water tables formed on the Matlock Upper Lava and at least one volcanic clay horizon above it. There is a perennial spring at St John's Chapel, and, before the 18th century driving of the Ringing Rake Sough and working of the Seven Rakes veins which cut through the rocks in this area down to and below river level (Warrener, Willies and Flindall 1981), there would have been others on the lower slope between Artist's Corner and Harvey Dale. Springs would have been much less likely on the western slopes of the hillside at Matlock Bridge since the volcanic rocks within the limestone are at greater depth because of the synclinal structure there.

The location of Mestesforde, therefore, at the Harvey Dale fording site would have been at a well endowed natural site. The ford would have linked two of the main Domesday settlement sites which were effectively on opposite sides of the river. The site (effectively, both sites), would have been in close proximity to plough and grazing lands and the lead mines on Masson (and at Pic Tor and High Tor on the east Bank) and would have been the focus of the main short and long distance routes to west, north-west and south across Masson.

### **Matlock Bridge**

What reasons, therefore, can be put forward for building the *Pontem de Matelocke* at a site some half a kilometre away from the old Matlock Town? First is perhaps that

the Harvey Dale / Pic Tor Lane fording site was very confined, both within Harvey Dale and in what was most likely Lady Dale. The Matlock Bridge site has less steep approaches and has the substantial meadow land of the Shiploads adjacent on one side, and Hall Leys (the present-day park) on the other which would both be valuable for local use or for grazing drovers' animals. Perhaps hardly less important is that it would have diverted passage of animals and the travelling "rogues and vagabonds" from the town itself. Unfortunately we have no details of ownership, but the bridge was a major development on a difficult site, and would stimulate considerable thought about its commercial implications whether by involved individuals or some corporate body.

### CONCLUSIONS

Stenton's (1905) view that Matlock Bridge was the only feasible site for a ford is plainly wrong. Rather there is good evidence to believe that out of a still limited choice of feasible sites, the most probable site for the ford was between the opposing positions of Pic Tor Lane (Lady Gate) and Harvey Dale, a conclusion based principally on the place-name evidence, footpath patterns, proximity of the ford to the Matlock Old Town settlement and suitability of the site both for a ford and for the Mestesforde settlement on the western bank of the river. Both settlements would have ready access to their open fields and local mines. Replacement of the ford by a bridge at a different site, at what became Matlock Bridge, probably in the mid 13th century, would have caused the ford-focused tracks over Masson to Harvey Dale to be partially realigned and diverted to leave the present day dual-focus footpath survival pattern. There is no reason to doubt the suggestion by Cameron (1959) that the early bridge, the *Pontem de Matelocke*, was at the present site, though ephemeral bridging by wood or by stepping stones is by no means ruled out at the original ford site (wherever it was). As the earliest bridge on the middle Derwent, it would have conferred a considerable trading advantage on Matlock and may have contributed both to the local importance of (Old) Matlock and the focussing of the important salt and droving route on the town. It perhaps also led to some diminution in trade importance of the old Portway and, perhaps, Ashford and Bakewell, for access to the north east of the county from West of the river Derwent.

If the analysis is correct then the bridge also led to the diminution in importance of the settlement of Mestesforde, as its function was taken up by the bridge site. Nevertheless Matlock Bridge and Bank, the main Matlock settlement today, were slow to develop and were largely a 19th and 20th century phenomenon. This reduction to its function may also have led to the location of Mestesforde and the place-name of Lady Dale being completely lost to local memory.

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