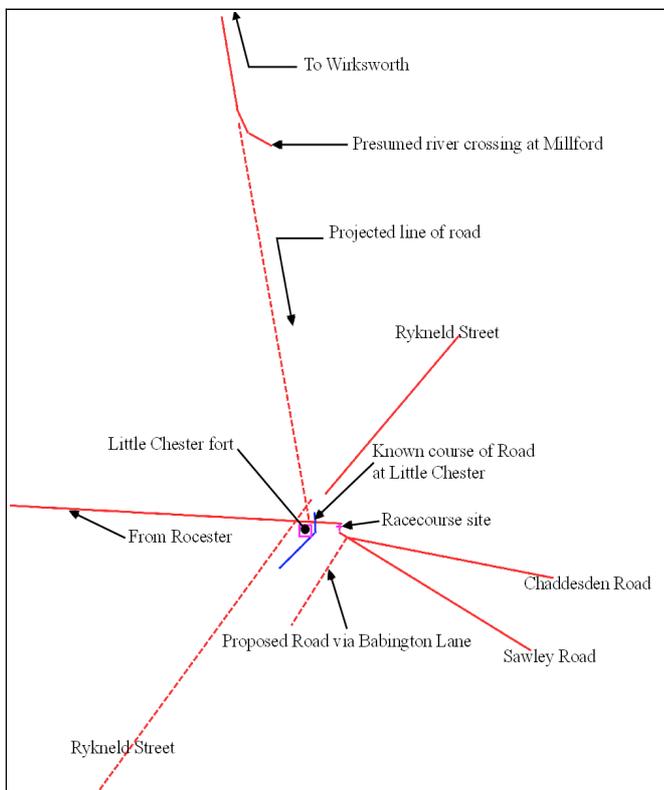


Re-evaluating Roman Derby.

In **The Rivers of Time**, I said that Derby's history is shrouded in mystery presenting researchers with many unanswered questions. To explain the mysteries I proposed that the evolution of the town had been driven by changing water levels. Confident that I had all the answers I published my findings in 2006. Three years later I was publishing a second book, **The Man-Made Global Warming Debate and Historical Contradictions**, re-evaluating the cause of the different water levels after finding evidence that the Medieval Warm Period had seen higher sea levels, hence higher river levels, than the climate scientists claim. This is a contentious issue not accepted by mainstream climatologists or Global Warming deniers. It seemed that the more one enquires about the history of Derby the more new questions present themselves. Continuing discussions within the group I belong to, **The Derby Heritage Forum**, brought to light further questions, particularly about Roman Derby. The various observations made by my colleagues and visitors from other groups about the Roman finds, sites and roads led to me speculating about the 'known' Roman information. Now, again, I find myself re-evaluating my findings with a 'what if' question. In my first book I claimed that water levels impacted upon the evolution of Derby including the Roman period. I then claimed that, in fact, there was considerable change due to the Medieval Warm Period which took place after the Romans had gone from our shores. So, **What If** the Roman period remains had been submerged by the waters of "the Humber deep" in A.D. 942 as claimed by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle? Is it possible that what we see today is only part of what existed in Roman times. Time to start again from the beginning!



We assume a lot from the layout of the Roman roads so another interrogation of that information would be a good place to start and my sketch, left, shows some interesting detail.

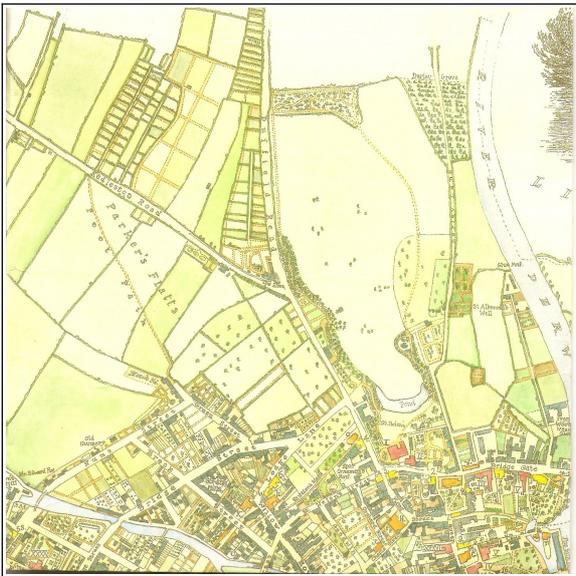
Ryknel Street, it is argued, passes through Little Chester as it travels from the south west to the north east. However, the road does not pass through Little Chester but in fact passes close to it.

Although I show the direction of the road in straight lines the truth is that it alters course a number of times along its length and when it reaches Little Chester it bends around the fort, seeming to avoid it. This should not be a surprise because Ryknel Street is claimed to be an ancient British route upgraded by the Romans and, if this claim is correct, the road pre-dates the fort and was not built for the fort. If this claim is correct then perhaps we can assume that the fort was built as close to the road as was practical at the time.

The blue line on the sketch indicates the route found during excavations. This route aligns with Lodge Lane which seems curious to me because of the town map shown on Burdett's County Map.

A section, right, shows Lodge Lane with a road system continuing on the opposite side of King Street. This road system is in the area of Strutt's Park where Roman finds have been excavated on a number of occasions. By the time of Money Penny's map of 1791 these roads are shown as field boundaries. Did Burdett record something that has since vanished? Before the present housing was built the site was occupied by Edward Strutt, MP for Derby, who had the whole area turned into a private park with serpentine paths and a lake.





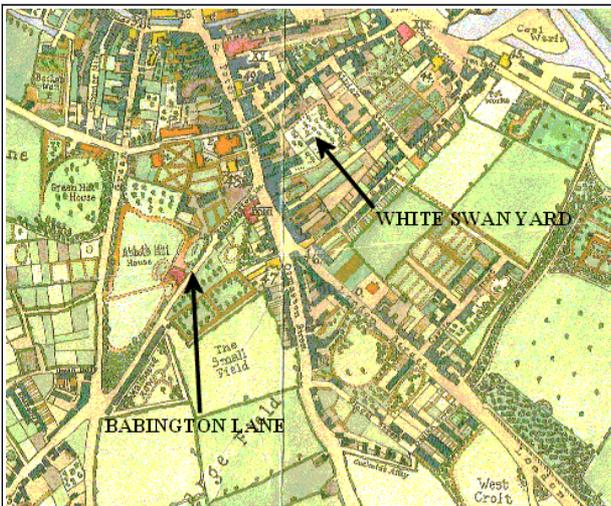
This section of Kevin Archer's redrawn 1815 Borough of Derby map based on the original by John Chatterton and John Thomas Swanwick, left, identifies St Helen's House and the extensive formal park gardens. These may well have been a template for the Derby Arboretum built a few decades later by Edward Strutt's uncle, Joseph Strutt. What can be seen is that any evidence of Roman occupation would have been severely disturbed or even in some places destroyed.

One question that has occurred to me in my observations on this particular area of Derby is whether during Saxon times the Roman remains were sufficiently obvious for the name of **Northworthy** to be applied to them. I am not suggesting that the 'worthy' element was meant to convey some suggestion of grandeur. If there had been extensive Roman occupation then it is probable that the area remained a clearing which I understand is the correct interpretation of the term.

The next well documented major road to consider is that from **Chester** via **Rocester** which forms **Long Lane**. Although the argument is made that this road points to Little Chester the reality is that its line, on the Ordnance Survey map, is just past Little Chester and aimed at the excavated site on the racecourse. (National Monument No. 13236).

The third of the 'documented' roads is the one from **Sawley** which has been found at the above mentioned excavated site but as far as I am aware was not traced through to **Little Chester** by archaeological means. My understanding is that it was assumed to be its terminus which is understandable if the belief is that the fort was the main focus of attention. This is not to say that there would have been no connection between the fort and the Sawley Road because it stands to reason that there should have been but I am questioning whether the excavated site was of greater importance than the fort.

I have included on the map the road that runs through **Church Lane, Chaddesden** where claims have been made for Roman finds and the road mentioned as a Roman Road in documents. This road also points to the excavated **Racecourse** site.



In **The Rivers of Time** I argue that **Babington Lane** was originally Well Street and led to the claimed Roman well found by John Keys in the White Swan Yard. (section of Kevin Archer's redrawn 1815 map, left)

Keys, in his 1890 book, described a well, "sixteen feet in diameter and sixty-four feet in depth". Although the well was lost when the area was redeveloped its presence could still be felt in the cinema built over the site. The front stalls were notorious for flooding when the water table was raised. Derek Palmer, who worked for the Derby council and was involved in the demolition of this area, recalled finding large stone slabs close to where Keys places the well. It was never followed up from an archaeological view point and now remains just conjecture. The line of this Babington Lane is also towards the racecourse site.

Interestingly this leaves the road from the **Wirksworth** area which takes a couple of angled turns to cross the river at Millford. The direction of this road before it makes its turns at Millford is directly towards the Little Chester fort. For some reason it is the only road that does point directly at the fort. This led me to wonder whether the fort we call Little Chester or Deventio is, in fact, Lutadarum and whether Deventio was lost under the raised waters of the Medieval Warm Period. My reason for thinking this is slightly complicated but goes something like this:-

The Romans named their sites after the local name devised by the native people. For this reason it is supposed Derwentio relates to the name of the local river. Taking the logic a little further it could be argued that Lutadarum has no connection to any known site in Derbyshire. However, a Latin Dictionary and Grammar Aid found on the internet lists the following meanings for words with the prefix 'lut'.

luteolus -a -um [yellow]; **Lutetia** -ae f. [a town in Gallia] (now Paris); **luteus** (1) -a -um [saffron-colored]; **luteus** (2) -a -um [of mud or clay; dirty]; **luto** -are [to smear with mud]; **lutulentus** -a -um [muddy, dirty, filthy, impure]; **lutum** (1) -i n. [a plant used for dyeing yellow; yellow color]; **lutum** (2) -i n. [mud, mire, dirt; clay]. There is a strong relationship with a description of mud or clay in the word 'Lut' whilst excavations of the earliest stage in the building of the fort show that it was constructed using grass turfs, which would have been of mud or clay. Is it possible that the source of the name Lutadarum is from its construction and location, i.e., Luta = mud or clay, Dar = the British name of the river and the 'um' ending signifying a place or habitation?

For my seemingly wild ideas to be correct I would have to explain how the alternative fort that I am suggesting could have disappeared without trace. I know that there is a suggestion from previous finds that the Roman archaeology could be quite deep. On page 10 of Joan D'Arcy's book, **City within a City** the finding of some Roman ware is reported although there is some confusion as to the exact location.

D'Arcy explains that the corn store was in the process of construction during September 1861 and quotes the following from the Derby Mercury newspaper. "While the workmen were excavating the foundations for the new corn shed of the Midland Railway Co, they found at a depth of from 12 to 14 ft. many fragments of Roman pottery, some of which are of beautiful design with figures and foliage in relief. The bottom of one jar has the maker's name stamped upon it. A quantity of large bones, in a sound state, were also dug up, supposed to belong to the elk and jaw bones of the wolf or hyena; these have all been carefully collected, and are now deposited in the museum of Mr. J. B. Robinson, sculptor, New Uttoxeter Road."

However, another report in **City within a City** tells the same story but places the finds elsewhere – "On the 19th of September, 1861, while some labourers were cutting a drain on the Chester Road, Derby, they turned up, at the great depth of thirteen feet, the beautiful specimens illustrated on the opposite page. They were embedded in a soft black mud, lying upon the gravel, which probably once formed the bed of the river. The beautiful but fragile ware, it is supposed was not made in Britain, although great quantities of fragments have been found in various parts of the kingdom, but that it was imported by the Romans, and was of considerable value. It is of rare occurrence that a perfect specimen is met with, although several may have been seen in the British Museum, and also in the Museum of Practical Geology. Our specimens have probably each formed a portion of a separate bowl or vase, and may have been used by some wealthy Roman about 1500 years ago".

In both quotations we have the same person mentioned, J.B. Robinson, sculptor, of New Uttoxeter Road, but we are given different reasons and places. In the first quote the reason for the digging work is 'while the corn store was being built' and the date of September, 1861 is the same. The second quotation claims that the digging was required because of 'cutting a drain on the Chester Road, Derby' and the depth of the dig is thirteen feet. We are given the extra information that 'They were embedded in a soft black mud, lying upon the gravel, which probably once formed the bed of the river'.

Whatever location is correct we are still met with the same question of how the artefacts came to be under some thirteen feet of overlying material. Finds at both the Little Chester fort and the Racecourse excavations were close to the surface so the depth in this case is puzzling. If the finds were in a previous river channel then the river must have altered its course. That in itself makes no sense unless the river levels did rise a lot higher during the Medieval Warm Period thus filling in the old channel. As the levels subsided with the onset of the Little Ice Age the river could have found a new course, the one we see today. This suggests that any fort close to the vicus on the Racecourse could have been on lower ground than the excavated site and could have become buried in the silt. Even that scenario is questionable because it would be expected that any lowering of the water levels should have resulted in the silt being carried away as the land drained and the river reverting to its earlier channel. Perhaps another natural force was in action? The extensive gravel beds along the Derwent and Trent flood plains indicates considerable erosion of the landscape in the higher reaches and we have visible evidence of such erosion, particularly and spectacularly, in the Matlock gorge. Could a deluge of gravel have filled the old river course forcing it eastwards to where it now runs?

If such a deluge took place after the Roman period then it could have removed evidence of occupation over a considerable area. So, again, **what if?**