

District, have a different character from those elsewhere in Derbyshire: Milton is the only example of a *tun* name; and Buxworth, Charlesworth, Chisworth, Hollinworth, Ludworth and Rowarth form as many *worth* names as in the the rest of the county put together. The Angles probably entered this remote district from Cheshire, perhaps a little later than elsewhere, for here we have the survival of the largest group of British place-names in Derbyshire.



The final decades of the Roman Empire and the thinly recorded centuries that followed are the most contentious in British history. National origin myths that are based largely on the writings of Bede have been challenged by archaeologists who say there is no excavated evidence to support the theory of mass migrations from Europe by the people whom we know as the Anglo-Saxons. And now geneticists tell us that the immigrants who followed the warriors across the North Sea amounted to no more than 5–10 per cent of the population. The Ancient Britons were not driven out. Rather, they continued to form the bulk of the population who farmed the land much as before. The military leadership had changed, but tribes such as the *Pecsætan* continued a way of life that had long been familiar to their ancestors.

Detail of the Benty
Grange helmet.
MUSEUMS SHEFFIELD



Place-names and settlement

The old idea that the Anglo-Saxons lived in villages from the time of their arrival in England has been discredited. The archaeological evidence is that most of the new settlers lived in scattered farmsteads, much like the native British, and that villages were unknown in the places whence they came. These dispersed settlements seem to have been founded within a framework of large units, known to historians as ‘multiple estates’ or ‘folk territories’, some of which were perhaps already ancient when the invaders arrived. Villages were formed much later; in Derbyshire they date perhaps from the second half of the ninth century onwards, though we have no firm evidence.

Some of the place-names of our present towns and villages were recorded in the two or three centuries before the Norman Conquest, but most made their first appearance in Domesday Book in 1086. This means that we cannot date the origins of settlements with any confidence, nor can we be certain of the original forms of their names. It was once thought that the ubiquity of Old English place-names meant that the native population of Britain had been driven out by thousands of Anglo-Saxon warriors and settlers, but archaeological and genetic evidence has shown that this did not happen. Bryan Sykes’s Oxford Genetic Atlas Project estimates that in southern England the combined Anglo-Saxon and Viking population amounted to no more than 10 per cent of the whole and that in the northern half of England it was no higher than 15 per cent. In remote places like the Peak District the proportion of immigrants from the Continent of Europe and Scandinavia must have been even lower, despite the names imposed on settlements by the new lords. Derbyshire has few place-names that are thought to have been of a very early Anglo-Saxon type. The Angles were not triumphant here until well into the seventh century. They replaced the old rulers but the great majority of the people who farmed the land were descended from the native Britons.

Throughout England the largest group of place-names that were recorded by 731, when Bede wrote his great history, refer to features of the landscape, such as hills, valleys, fords and springs. Judging by their names, some of the places that lay at the heart of the great estates that we know about in later

times, notably Ashbourne, Ashford, Bakewell and Hope, may already have been significant by this time. So may Chesterfield and Duffield, whose large territories were centred on settlements within extensive pastures in woodland landscapes, for this was the original interpretation of the place-name element *-feld* before it evolved into its modern meaning of field. Domesday Book records 11 examples of this type of name in Derbyshire, six of them in the High Peak. It also lists 13 examples of *-dun* ‘hill’, 11 of *-waella* ‘spring’, eight of *-halh* ‘nook’ and seven of *-ford*. Another interesting group of Old English place-names is that containing the element *ofer*, meaning ‘a flat-topped ridge with a convex shoulder’. We can usually see what was meant when we visit Ashover, Birchover, Bolsover, Calver, Codnor, Edensor, Heanor, Littleover and Mickleover, or when we view Cobnor Wood at Barlow from the dual carriageway between Sheffield and Chesterfield.

By far the largest number of Anglian place-names in Derbyshire, however, are those that end in *-ton* or *-ley*. These are thought to date from after 750, indeed some minor names ending in *-ley* are not recorded until after the Norman Conquest. A *-tun* was a small settlement that eventually became a village surrounded by arable fields. A *-leah* was a clearing in a wood, or a wood pasture, including some grassy spots that had been denuded of many of their trees and shrubs well before the arrival of the Angles. The first element of these types of place-name was often the personal name of the man who in later times would be known as the lord of the manor. The lowlands of south Derbyshire and the coal-measure sandstones in the east of the county have numerous *-tuns* and another group can be found in the eastern part of the Peak District. Derbyshire has over 100 examples recorded in Domesday Book or shortly afterwards. The *-leahs* were found amongst the numerous managed woods where the farmers pursued a more pastoral economy than those who lived and worked in districts whose fertile soils had long been used for growing cereals. Both types of name were given to settlements that emerged within an older framework of large estates. Bakewell, for instance, was surrounded with small places such as Beeley, Longstone, Pilsley, Rowsley, Sheldon and Taddington, while Chesterfield’s outliers included Brampton, Brimington, Tapton, Temple Normanton, Walton and Whittington and a number of minor places with *-leah* names.

Place-names ending in *-worth*, meaning an enclosure, are essentially Mercian in origin. Tamworth was the capital of the kingdom of Mercia. The most important example in Derbyshire is Wirksworth, ‘the enclosure of Weorc or Wyrç’, a well-documented Old English personal name. Wirksworth was recorded in 835 when a Mercian nobleman, Humbert, was granted land there by the Abbess of Repton in return for an annual rent of lead payable to the Archbishop of Canterbury. This, incidentally, is the only firm evidence that we have for the working of lead in the White Peak during the Anglian period. A group of *-worth* names in the far north-west of the county form as many of this type as in the rest of Derbyshire put together.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that in 828 the king of Northumbria submitted to Egbert of Wessex immediately beyond their boundary at Dore and that in 942 Edmund, son of Edward the Elder, conquered the Danes of Mercia ‘as far as where Dore divides’. The place-name means a ‘narrow pass’ or literally a door at the boundary. The border between Mercia and Northumbria was defined clearly, with no overlapping secular estates or parishes. The *-burh* endings in the names of both Mosborough and Barlborough, on either side of the river Rother at the northern edge of Derbyshire, suggest fortifications, but no earthworks have been found there and no firm date can be assigned to the names. Pilsbury, Norbury and Sudbury, which seemingly guard passages across the river Dove at the opposite side of the county, pose a similar problem.

Minsters

As we have seen, the *eccles* names near Brough, Chapel-en-le-Frith and Wirksworth show that at least some Christian communities continued to worship after the withdrawal of the Romans. The invading Angles were pagans and those in Mercia did not turn to Christianity until King Peada married the daughter of the Christian king of Northumbria in 653 and invited four priests as missionaries from Lindisfarne. As in other parts of England, the Mercian royal family imposed Christianity on their subjects. Our evidence is derived mostly from Bede and the other English monks who wrote the biographies of early saints, kept the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* up to date, and generally underplayed the role of the native British church.

Diuma, the Irish leader of the four Lindisfarne missionaries, was based in Repton, the early capital of South Mercia, where the king founded a double monastery for men and women. The site was probably already a high-status one, for large timber buildings have been discovered by excavation underneath the monastery. At that time, the river Trent flowed below the cliff that forms the northern edge of the monastic church and alongside Monsom Lane which led to the ferry at Twyford, but its course is now half-a-mile to the north. Repton soon became the favourite choice of burial ground for the royal family of Mercia. Merewalh, the third son of Penda and king of the *Maegonsaetan* tribe, was buried there in or about 686; then a succession of Mercian kings – Aethelbald (757), Wiglaf (840) and Wystan (849) – were buried in the same eighth-century chamber or mausoleum. Soon after his canonisation, the shrine of the murdered St Wystan at Repton began to attract pilgrims.

Harold Taylor has shown that the chamber, much of which now lies below ground level, was probably built for Aethelbald’s burial in 757 and covered with a timber-framed roof. The internal recesses on three of its sides are thought to have contained shrines for each of the royal burials. Then, about the time of Wiglaf’s burial in 840, the sanctuary of a new church was erected over the chamber and extended to the west by a central tower and nave, perhaps replacing an earlier church that may have stood immediately to the west of the

chamber. Following the burial of St Wystan, stairs leading down from the north and south *porticus* of the new church were cut into the chamber, so turning it into a crypt through which pilgrims could wind their way. Pilgrims kept coming to Repton until Wystan's remains were removed to Evesham by King Cnut. The later reconstruction of what became the parish church of St Wystan obliterated much of the Mercian building, but the crypt, chancel, eastern angles of the crossing and part of the north transept survive from the eighth and ninth centuries. The crypt was rediscovered in 1779 and exactly 200 years later part of the top stone of a high cross shaft, with carvings on both sides, was found just outside its east window. Martin and Birthe Biddle, who led the modern excavations, interpreted the image as a carving of Aethelbald as a rider.

Repton church was severely damaged by the Danish army when they wintered here in 873–74, but it was eventually restored, at least in part, and continued to be used throughout the remaining Anglo-Scandinavian period; a collegiate community was recorded there in Domesday Book. Repton parish had dependent chapelries at Bretby, Foremark, Ingleby, Measham, Milton, Newton Smisby, Solney and Ticknall, all of which were given to the Augustinian priory that was established next to the old church in 1172. The compactness of this group of chapelries suggests that Repton parish originally covered



The crypt of St Wystan's church, Repton. The chancel of this important and ancient church was erected in the later Anglo-Saxon period in a characteristically tall and narrow design with a string course and pilaster strips in the upper section; the original windows were replaced by the present larger ones later in the Middle Ages. The walls are clearly of more than one date. The darker stones at the bottom mark the crypt which was built as a mausoleum for King Aethelbald of Mercia in 757 and which became a popular shrine for pilgrims after the murder of St Wystan in 849.

PHOTOGRAPH: CARNEGIE

The interior of Repton crypt, reached by a staircase from the transept of the church.

PHOTOGRAPH: CARNEGIE



most of that part of Derbyshire which lay south of the Trent. Nevertheless, it soon lost its ecclesiastical pre-eminence to Lichfield, which is where St Chad established his see in 669 when he was appointed bishop of Mercia and Lindsey (north Lincolnshire). Three Derbyshire churches – Barton Blount, Longford and Wilne – are dedicated to St Chad. By the eighth century the bishops of Lichfield had become substantial landowners within the Derbyshire part of their diocese.

Another important early minster, or mother church, was St Alkmund's, Derby, whose nineteenth-century successor was demolished in 1976 to make way for a ring-road. Excavations led by C.A. Ralegh Radford proved that the church, which was situated close to the north gate of the later borough, was in existence by the eighth, perhaps even the late seventh century. Its original dedication must have been different, for St Alkmund, the younger son of the king of Northumbria, was killed about the year 800. His remains were moved later from Lilleshall to Derby and pilgrims were attracted to his shrine. The reputation of St Alkmund's church must have peaked in the mid-ninth century, just before the Danes invaded Mercia. In 871 the body of the Mercian ealdorman Aethelwulf, who was killed near Reading, was brought by stealth and buried here. The discovery of a richly decorated, stone sarcophagus in which his body is believed to have been laid was made during the excavation of St Alkmund's; the grave that was found alongside it was that of a high-status individual. Fragments of two high crosses (similar to another found in 1844) were also recovered. The excavators demonstrated that the earliest church on the site consisted of a nave (44 feet × 19 feet) with a sanctuary at the east end (14 feet × 12 feet). Towards the eastern end of the south wall of the nave a *porticus* (nine feet × seven feet) was entered through a wooden-framed internal doorway, probably opposite a similar one on the north wall. This simple plan was adopted by many early Anglo-Saxon minsters.

The Domesday Book entry for Derby recorded a collegiate church, which can be identified as that of St Alkmund, in the time of King Edward the Confessor. By then, the nearby church of All Saints (now the cathedral) was a wealthier, secular collegiate church, or royal free chapel as it was known in the twelfth century, but as no archaeological investigation of this site has taken place we cannot date its foundation. Derby was the only place in the county with more than one parish church. In the Norman period it had five parishes that included not only a share of the town but which stretched over the neighbouring countryside. Taken together, these large parishes probably define the limits of a large royal Mercian estate, typical of those that covered much of Derbyshire but very different from the small, urban parishes in the rest of the Five Boroughs of the East Midlands.

Minster churches on other large, royal estates can be identified or inferred from various scraps of evidence at Ashbourne, Bakewell, Chesterfield, Hope and Wirksworth. Dawn Hadley's analysis of the evidence for mother-parishes in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire suggests that the minster churches of

Ashbourne and Bakewell were formed before some outlying townships became small, independent estates, though not independent parishes, during the tenth century. Whether all these royal estates supported minster churches before the Viking invasions is unclear as we simply do not have enough evidence.

Ashbourne church was probably the original focus of the settlement there, for it is sited well to the west of the market town that was laid out after the Norman Conquest. The dedication is to Oswald, king of Northumbria, a popular saint in the North who was killed in battle in 642. The conversion of Mercia from Lindisfarne began not long after his death; perhaps Ashbourne was one of the earliest of the new Christian centres? The size and splendour of the present church demonstrates its importance, but the earliest architecture dates from the thirteenth century and just one fragment of sculpture survives from before the Norman Conquest. Nor is there any documentary record of Ashbourne before Domesday Book, when a priest and church were recorded. When William II gave the dues of Ashbourne parish to Lincoln Cathedral in 1093, his gift included the dependent chapelries and thus provided a clue to Ashbourne's early importance. Ashbourne was the mother church of Alsop, Bradley, Edlaston, Fenny Bentley, Hognaston, Kniveton, Mappleton, Parwich and Thorpe, and as this enormous parish was partly bisected by the parish of Bradbourne, which included the townships of Atlow, Ballidon, Bradbourne, Brassington and Tissington, it is likely that they too belonged to Ashbourne originally.

St Mary's, Wirksworth was founded on another large and ancient royal estate beyond the north-eastern border of Ashbourne. As we have seen, the name of the river Ecclesbourne, which rises nearby, suggests the presence of a Christian community there in the Roman period. The large, circular churchyard, encircled by town houses looking inwards, hints at an unusual foundation. A church and priest were recorded in Domesday Book. When Henry I gave the dues of the church to Lincoln Cathedral in 1100–07, Wirksworth parish included the chapelries of Alderwasley, Alton, Ashleyhay, Biggin, Callow, Cromford, Hopton, Ible, Idridgehay and Middleton-by-Wirksworth. It was also the mother church of the later independent parishes of Bonsall, Carsington and Kirk Ireton and probably also Matlock and Tansley. Perhaps at one time Darley and its dependencies of Wensley and Snitterton were also included within its territory? In other words, Wirksworth's minster church may have served the whole of the central part of Derbyshire that lay between the royal estates of Ashbourne to the south-west, Duffield to the east, and Bakewell to the north. A spectacular figure sculpture, one of the best from the whole of Anglo-Saxon England, was discovered in the church in 1820 and is now displayed on the wall of the north aisle. Its date is uncertain but is thought to be not later than 800. As it must have been the cover of the tomb of an important saint who was buried here, the sculpture provides striking confirmation of Wirksworth's early importance.

The evidence for Duffield having been a minster church is less clear-cut, but the church is dedicated to St Alkmund and it occupies a now isolated position



St Alkmund's sarcophagus
 Discovered during the excavations at St Alkmund's church, Derby, in the 1970s, this is thought to be the original tomb of the patron saint, who was murdered about the year 800 in Shropshire and whose body was brought to Derby, at that time known as Northworthy. St Alkmund's shrine became an object of pilgrimage.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CARNEGIE,
 WITH PERMISSION OF DERBY
 MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY



This remarkable coffin lid, now displayed on the north wall of the nave of St Mary's church, Wirksworth, was found during alterations in 1820. It has been dated on stylistic grounds to about AD 800, and is thought to have marked the burial of a saint. The church seems to be the successor to the *eccles* that stood hereabouts in Roman times and which has given the Ecclesbourne its name. St Mary's was an important minster church in the Anglo-Scandinavian period. The scenes carved on the slab depict stories from the life of Christ: washing the disciples' feet; the Crucifixion with the Lamb of God on a Greek cross; the burial of the Virgin Mary; the presentation in the Temple; the descent into Hell; the Ascension; the Annunciation; and St Peter receiving a scroll from the Virgin and Child. It is one of the most important pieces of pre-Conquest sculpture in England.

PHOTOGRAPH: CARNEGIE



The ancient parish church of Wirksworth occupies a circular churchyard with town houses facing into it. St Mary's was the minster church for the hundred or wapentake of Wirksworth. It stands large and proud with a crossing tower and is mainly in the Perpendicular Gothic style of the late middle ages, much restored by Sir George Gilbert Scott in the 1870s.

PHOTOGRAPH: CARNEGIE

on the right bank of the river Derwent, well away from the site of the Norman castle and the medieval settlement, but easy of access from those parts of the large parish that lay on the opposite side of the river. The manor of Duffield covered an extensive estate which after the Norman Conquest became a royal forest known as Duffield Frith.

The enormous territory that was served by the minster church of All Saints, Bakewell covered the royal estates of Bakewell and Ashford. It stretched as far west as the old Roman road that crossed the White Peak from Derby to Buxton, as far north as the deep valley of the river Wye, and even beyond this valley in the north-east. The River Derwent formed its eastern boundary,