Wirksworth Archaeological Society

Place-names in documents and maps in Wirksworth

Place names are extremely interesting as guides to historic geography, human-made features, and flora and fauna of the local area. Here are some local ones. Where we do not know where this place name is now located we have put "un" (for unknown) next to its meaning, but in many cases the current name is given and the place-name is still known and these names may appear in the 1709 map of Wirksworth or later maps, such as the tithe maps.

Our town

Lutudarum, of Roman date after the Celtic	(Llwyt - Daru) Grey Oakwood The town is famous for its wooded surroundings in the Ecclesbourne valley, the middle Derwent valley and its historic oak woods at Shining Cliff at the nearby hamlet of Alderwasley. See note 1 below
Wirksworth, 835	Fortified Enclosure or "Weorcs" Enclosure Note: names before 900 are considered to be more like likely of physical features - the date of the first record of the Wirksworth place name being 835AD. See note 2 below

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Name, date recorded	**Considered meaning and location if known or as shown on Tithe Map ("un" for a location that is now unknown).**

Part 1: Local names in historic documents

Abboteswell, 1275	Abbot's Well, **un**known location (Wigwell Grange?)
Ad Fontem de Wirk', 1275	At the fountain of Wirksworth, (Market Place?)
Adam Karr Yate, Adam Karre Yate, 1610	Adam Carr's Gate, un
Allerwall, 1415	Alder Tree Well, un
Arundel House, 1630	Arundel House, un
Ash Piece, 17th century	Ash Piece
Atte Cros, Cros, iuxta Crucem, 1281	At the cross (possibly the town cross in Market Place)
Ball Close, 1610	Ball Close
Bandlond, Banelondhil, Bannokhill, 1220	Land where beans are grown (possibly Bank Close)
Barhul, 1275	Hill-Hill or Boar Hill: Barrel Edge
The Barkhowse, 1519	The Tannery (on the road to Walk Mill: Haarlem Mill)
Barleyfield, Barleyflatt, 1709	Barleyfield
Barn Close, 1649	Barn Close (three different ones)
Barrel Edge	Barrel Edge (Hillhill? promontary)
Barr Acre, 17th century	Bar Acre (hilly acre)
Bateman Bridge	On Derby Road by Alton Manor (Bateman family)
Bayley Croft, 1649	Bailey Croft (Bailiffe Croft)
Bayley Croft Steele	The footpath at Baileycroft
Beardingslowe, Berdingslowe, 1610	Bearding's Burial Mound, un

Beighton Close, 1610	Field of the homestead by the brook or Beighton's Field (family name of owners): Beighton Pingle
Bell Leys, 1709	Bell pasture, un (possibly a field devoted to the upkeep of the church bells)
Bishop Butts, 1420	Bishop's field edge or Bishop's Archery Field, un
Black Sitche, Blacksitche Feild, 1630	Black watercourse field, (possibly Blackshaw Field)
Blind Lane, 1681	Blind Lane (as in cul-de sac)
Blunderstone Wood, modern	Blunderstone Lane, Wigwell
Boale Hill, 1599	Bole Hill
Boblocke Farm, 1659, Bablake Barn, 1686	Boba's enclosure farm: appears to be on Coldwell Street
Boghefeld, Bowfeldes, 1420	Field with a bow (bend) or cottage in it: Bowfield isn't really bent so field with a cottage is more likely
Bolder flatts, Bulder Flatts, Broother Flat, 1709	Bolder Flatts
The Boome, 1630	The Barrier, un
Boreoxeyong, 1261	Borough or Boar ploughfield, un
The Bothes, 1428	Booth Close
Bradmede, 1258	Broad Meadow Cricket Ground
Bradston(es) 1258	Bradstones: The standing stone on Brassington Lane
Le Breyche, the Brechis, 1275	Norbreck Farm
Brefeld, 1415, Brey Feildes,	Fields of the Romano-British: Breamfield
Bre(i)ndewood, Bruntwood, 1539	High Wood: Brunswood (Brun of Colonia).
Brerefurlong, 1420	Briar field, un
Broade Close, 1630	Broad Close
Le Brodegor', 1415	Broad Gore, between 2 streams, un
Brookwall, 1610	Brookwall Farm
Brookwallclif, 1372	Brook from a spring or well on a hillside.
Bromeforth Fields, 1498	Broom fold (small enclosure), un
Brokstonedale, 1415	Dale containing burial mounds: Broxendale
Bunting Wood, modern	Wood with buntings flying round it
Bye Rakes, 1632	Bent (lead) rake, un
le Clay Crosse, 1331	The clay or pottery cross, un
The Comon Muddinge, 1610	The town middern (possibly south end of Harrison Drive, prior to building of the Drive)
Canonemede, 1258	Canon's Meadow (or Canon's house), un
Cowceflatt, 1500	Cow's field, un
Chewlowes, 1511, Tewelowes, Jewlowes	Chew's Burial Mound (near Pittywood)
Conghen Flattes, Conghen Pingle,1610	King's field or Rabbit Warren field, un
Cote feild gapp, Coteflat, 1649	Woodman's hut field gap (Cote Field)
Creuwles, 1539	Hut Pasture, but might be Chewlowes again.
Crocket Acre, 1420	Crooked acres or potters acre, un
Daudredynge, Daudryddynge, 1330	Valley clearing, un
Dernewalsicheside, 1415	Hidden well watercourse/bog side, un
The Douegang, 1650	The Dovegang lead mine (Dark Lane)
Echynglegh, Echyngley, Echynley, 1415	Additional (pig grazing) glade/pasture, un
Edersall, Edrisale, 1415	Aedric's spur or hill bank, un
Edge, 1620	Edge (Barrel Edge)
Elme Barne, 1630	Elm Barn, un
Fawne Meydowe, Fawnmeadow, 1420	Fawn's Meadow, un
Feliceparrok, 1415	Newly felled park, un
Ferineleg', 1247	Fair glade or Ferny Glade, un
Fiskerhegges, 1230	Fishing Hedge, un (Fish Pool Flat and spring)
Fispolholme, 1395	Fish Pool Watermeadow near Oathill?
Fletlondis, 1275, Les Flattes	The flatlands, un
Le Fouleside, 1415	The foul side, un

Foxcatcher Close, 1610	Fox Catcher field, un
Fullbeck, 1607	Foul or dirty stream, un
Garland pingle, 1658	The small corner of Mr/Mrs Garland, un
Gaskyn Crofte, 1473	The croft of Mr/Mrs Gaskyn, un
Gibcroft, 1420	The croft of Mr/Mrs Gib, un
Gill Crosse, Gill Crosse Leas, 1630	Ravine (Ghyll) Crosse (Cross); Leas (pasture), un
Gill Riddinge, 1415, Gilriddyng, Gylrydding, Gylkehille, 1420, Gilkybanke, 1620	Ravine Clearing (the ravine next to the Gilkin) Ravine Hill (The Gilkin) Note: the Gil may possibly alternatively represent a retreat as in hermitage, so: Hill with a quiet place for a hermit in it.
Godeacr'medowe, 1415	Good acre meadow, un
Grenefeld, 1503	Green field, un
Greve, 1420	The Ditch, un
The Grime Pitt, 1650	The grime pit /dump, un
Halle Close, 1538	Hall field, un but perhaps see Wirksworth Hall
Hannage Road	St Mary's Gate (east end)
Hardacr', 1415	Hard acre
Harryehalfe Acre, Harryhalfe Acre, 1610	Harry's half acre, un
Haselai, 1247, Hasley	Hazel enclosure (Wigwell Green)
le Hayfeld, 1379	Hay field, un
le Heynynges, 1258	The stone walled or edged enclosure. (Hannages)
Hengyngflatte 1500	Hanging Close
Henlowe, 1415 Henlowe, Henlowes,	Hen's Burial Mound (by Pratthall Lane)
Henristal, 1230	Henry's Stall or small house, un
Highlow furlong, 1500	Field with a high burial mound, un
Hoddesley, 1230	Pleasant woodland glade, un
le Hole, The Hole, 1415	Hole or hollow, un
Hollandfeld, 1415	Holland Manor Field, un
le Holm, le Holme, les Holmes, 1285	The watermeadow (Homesford on the Derwent)
Hulley Meadowe 1610 alias Holland Meadowe	Holland Manor Meadow, un
Hutchen leas,	Gate to a clearing or glade
Ikelwall, 1415	Icel's Well or church spring, un
Lankynsyerd, 1415	Lankyn's Yard (or enclosure), un
lapid' voc' Grimstones, lapides vocat' Grindstones,	(At the) singing grindstones, un (a water mill?)
le Kirkyerdsyde, 1415	Church yard side (church yard)
le Kirkeway, 1379	Church way - Pratthall Lane
le Kyrkstyle, 1415	Church path un
Leadway Mill, 1649	Lead street mill, un
Lyghthull, 1415, Lightlesse, Lighthills Lane,	Lightly coloured hill, meadow, lane (by Hob Hall)
Longlowe, 1610	Long burial mound, un
Longrenepeche, Longrenpiche, 1379	Long Green Piece on Pratthall Lane
Lylly Croft, 1649	Lily's Croft, un (check Hob Hall)
Lymepitt Closes, 1630	Lime Pit Close, un
Ludwell Flatt, 1658	Possibly loud well / spring (Lydia Flatts, Summer Lane)
the Maidenesgroue, 1650, the Meane Groue,	The maiden's grove, groove, lead mine, un
Milkem Botham, 1650	Milking Valley (near Pitty Wood)
Le Milnehouses, 1306, Milnehouse Greene	The Mill Houses (Millers Green) A green also means a place where animals (packhorses) may graze or wait.
Middelpeke, 1309	Middle Peak (Middle Peak)
Myddlehyll, 1500	Middle Hill, un
Newbridg, 1578	New Bridge (Wash Green Bridge)
Nortclif, 1320, Norcliffe	North Cliff / North Bank on Wirksworth Moor
Northefeld, 1330, Northefelde, Northfelde,	North field on Wirksworth Moor (check Middlepeak)
Oldcroft, Oldcroftes, 1415	Old Crofts, un
The Olde Pynfolde, 1630	The old (animal) fold / small paddock, un

The Orcharde Flatt, 1610	The Orchard, un
Osburnewallesiche, 1275	Osbeorn's wall /well watercourse, un
Othyl, 1395	Oat Hill
The Overfeild, 1610	The upper field, un
The Pale, 1630	The fence, un
Prestreddyng, 1473	Priests' clearing, un
Quenildhac, 1230	Cwenhild's Oak, un
Reake, 1650	The strip or parting / lead rake, un
Richemund Land, 1593, Richmonds Manor,	Richmond Manor (Holland Manor)
Rode, 1330	Road or Rood (Cross) un
Rollesley leiz,1539	The swine clearing of Mr /Mrs Rowlsley, un
Rueryat, 1275	Steep Hill Gate, un
Rycroft, 1415	Rye field, un
Shorte Acre, 1630	Short acre, un
Silke hill, 1473	Hill with a drain, un
Smalsiche, 1247	Small watercourse /ditch, un
Sondpyttes, 1420, Sontpitts,	Sand Pits, un
St John's Street, 1712	St John's Street, formerly Nether Street.
Stephul, 1230	Steep Hill (Steeple Grange)
Stepul cross, 1420	Steep Hill Cross (Steeple Grange)
Stepulyerd,1330	Steep Hill Yard (Steeple Grange)
Syndyngwall, 1415	Broad Hill Wall /Well, un
Tenter yarde, 1473	Yard for drying cloth, (Haarlem Mill)
Thombridge Heym, 1473	Field (holme) by little (or fairy) bridge, un
Thoppeshegh', 1415	Top hedge, un
Tithills, 1420	Hills with tits in them, un
Torne meadow, 1420	Thorny or hilly meadow, un
Le Walkmylne, 1415	Walk (fulling) Mill (Haarlem Mill)
Wapentakfeld, 1415,Wapentacke Feildes,	Hundred Meeting Place Field, un
Warmbroke, 1415	Warm stream (Warmbrook)
Washemedow, 1473, Whassemeydow,	Washing or boggy meadow (Wash Green)
Watlandes, 1500	Watland Farm Buntingford Lane
Weltfeild, 1610	Rolling (undulating) field, un
Wereford, 1341	Alder Ford or Ford by a Weir, un
Wetherwike, 1276	Sheep Farm (Weatherwick Hill)
White Meare, 1620, Whyte Meere,	White pond, un
Whitebecke, 1599, Whytebeck,	White (foamy/fast) stream, un
Wildeyerd, 1415	Mr/Mrs Wilde's Yard, un
Wirkesworth Parke, 1281	A deer park and sheepfold, un
Wyggewalle, 1229	Heathen temple spring (Wigwell)
Willymot Crofte, 1610	Mr/Mrs Wilmot's Croft, un
Wodesetes, 1330, Wodsett, Woodsetz,	House / Dwelling in the wood, un
Wormestall, 1610	Dragon's Lair (probably grass snakes), un
Worsley, 1677	Clearing for cattle (or clearing by the fortfications), un
Wyardestre, 1415, Wyvardestre	Wigheard's Tree, un
Wyvar Street Moor, 1600	Wyver Street Moor, un

Part 2: Place-names from the 1848 Tithe Map (Tithe Award list)

We know where all these places are from the Tithe Map

Name	Comments
Alcove Piece,	
Allen's Croft,	
Allotment,	

Ann Field Meadow,	
Appletree Piece,	
Aspins,	
Back o'th' Green, le Grene in 1415	
Ball Close, Ball Close in 1610	
Bank Close and Bank Mine,	
Bar Acre, Barr Acre before 1800.	
Barbadoes,	
Barley Acre and Barley Flatt,	
Barn Close, Barn Close, 1649	
Barton's Land,	May be Mr/Mrs Barton, but Barton is also a burgage reference.
Basford Close, Basford Meadow and Basford Pingle,	
Bath Close,	Near Willowbath Mill - Wirksworth Old Bath
Beek's Croft,	
Bennett's Dowry,	
Big Close,	
Blackshaw Field,	
Blackwell Croft,	
Boggarts Inn	Inn with small hairy goblins around it.
Booth Close, les bothes, 1428	
Bott Close,	
Bottoms, Milkem Botham 1650	
Bradshaw Close,	
Bradstones, Bradeston, 1258	The standing stone by Brassington Lane
Breck,	
Breech, les brechis, 1275	Above the dale, Norbreck Farm
Brick Kiln Close,	
Bridge Close,	Opposite the Little Hannage
Brighton Pingle,	
Broad Close, Broade Close, 1630	
Broad Meadow, Brad Mede, 1258	
Browns Meadow, (John Broun,1457)	
Brunswood, Brendwood, 1539 (Brun de Colonia, 1267)	
Bull Close,	
Burley Flatt,	This may be a misprint for Barley Flatt
Cadman Car and Cadman Pingle, (Thomas Cademan 1465)	
Calledge Close,	
Calton Close,	
Calvers Croft,	
Carrs, the Carr, 1610	
Chalinor Close,	
Cheatle Ridge, (John Chedyll, 1473)	
Clay Flatt,	
Closes Head,	
Cloven Piece,	
Coal Pit Close,	
Corn Close,	
Cottage Close,	
Cow Close,	
Cox Close, Cocke's Close, 1601	
Crabtree Close, Crabtree Acre, 1630	
Cream Acre Sitch, Crombacr', 1415	Crooked acre watercourse
Crimble Carr, les Crimbulls, 1415	Small rocky piece of land

Critchlow Pingle,	If not Crichlow's pingle then Chrich's Burial Mound, curiously now the North End cemetery
Croft, les Croftes, 1415	
Crown Lands,	
Curtis Pingle,	
Daisy Close,	
Dale Close, Dalezyerd Hede, 1415	Dale enclosure top (Dale Farm, quarried away)
Dock Close, Dockfurlong, 1420	Waterlilly field
Dumbalks, Dunne Balkes,1539	Hill with a ridge below it (near Wetherwick)
Far Close,	
Fir Close,	
Fish Pond Flat,	
Five Acres, Fyve Acres, 1610	
Flaxland Meadow,	
Flint Close,	
Fore Piece,	
Four Lane Ends Close,	
Garden Close,	
Gents Close,	
Godber Close,	
Goodluck Close,	
Gorsey Leys, Gorsteleyz, 1539	Gorse pasture / glade (e.g. for grazing pigs)
Gratton Close,	
Great Close,	
Greenhough Close, (Roger Greenhalwe, 1446)	
Green Yard, Grenzyerd, 1415	
Hanging Close, Hengyngflatte, 1500	
Hannage, Hannage, 1420	Stone edge enclosure
Harvey Edge, (Thomas Hervy, 1492)	
Hatchen Croft, Hatchett Close, Le Hatginge, 1258	The Gate Croft
Hay Bottom, del Hay, 1316	The small enclosure
Heeley Croft,	
Higgot Close,	
High Stile Close,	
Hill Side, Hill Side, 1727	
Holling Walls, Holynwall, 1415	Holly well
Hollow Close,	
Holy Close and Holy Land,	Either lands to upkeep the church or burial grounds.
Homestead Close,	
Hopton Swamp,	Midden (tip) by Hopton Lane.
Horse Close,	
Hudson Close,	
Hunger Hill, Hongurhulle, 1358	Hill with a burial mound in it
Hunters Close,	
Improved Bit,	
Intake Close,	
Jackamoor Field,	
Jacksons Piece,	
Jewloes, Chewlowes, 1511	Chew's Burial Mound
Jones Croft,	
Kiln Acre, Kylne Feld / Croft, 1610	
Kitchen Leys,	
Knowles,	
Lady Croft, Lauedicroft, 1224	Church or chantry land ("Our Lady's" Croft)

Langley Meadow,
Longley Meadowe alias Broadeacre Meadowe,1610
Late Shaws,
Latham Close,
Leyfield, Leafeilde, 1610
Leys, le Leys, 1309 — The Leys (quarried away)
Lime Kiln Close,
Lime Piece, Lime peice, before 1880
Logs Wood,
Long Close, The Longe Close, 1630
Long Flats,
Lydia Flats, Ludwell Flatts, 1658
Margery,
Marl Close and Marl Meadows,
Martin Ash Greene, Martenasshe Greene, 1569
Mather Close,
Meadow, Meadow Wall 1420 — Meadow Well (/ Wall)
Mellors Land, (Edward Mellor, 1610)
Middle Close,
Milking Piece,
Mill Meadow, Milnemeydoo, 1469
Mine Hillock,
Mount Skip,
Nash Close,
Near Close,
Neek Close,
Nether Close,
New Close, Newe Close, 1630
Nine Ashes,
Nursery Piece,
Old Dam,
Open Piece,
Over Close,
Ox Close,
Paddock, the Paddocke, 1610
Park, Parkeleys, 1420 — Deer park at Hardhurst (see also Salt Seats)
Pearsons Patch,
Pen Close,
Perkins Pingle,
Pillow Butts, le Pyletebuttes, 1258 — Pilled Oats field /strip.
Pin Flatts,
Pingle, The Pingle 1610 — Small animal paddock / fold
Pingle Thorn, Pyntyllthorne, 1473 — Sharp branch thorn bush
Pools Close, Pooles Carre, 1610
Poor Pingle,
Potters Yard, — At Wigwell Green
Poyser Close,
Ridding, le Ruddyng, 1415 — The clearing
Rirley Croft,
Rocky Close,
Roger Pingle,
Rope Close, — Rope making field / ropewalk
Rough,
Round Flatt, the Round Flatt, 1638
Rushy Meadow,

Ryefield, Ryfeild, 1610	Field where rye is grown
Salt Seats, Salt-seates, 1650	Gate to a park, deer leap at Brassington Lane
Saw Pit Close,	
Seeded Close,	
Seven Lands, Seven Lands, 1639	
Shaw Close,	
Shirley Close,	
Short Butts,	Short strip or short archery field
Shoulder of Mutton,	
Slate Pit Close, Slatepittfelds, 1610	
Smedley Close,	
Smelting Mill Piece,	
Smith Ridding, Smythrudding, 1415	The Smith's clearing
Solmes, Solme, 1415	Muddy dirty fields at Broxendale
Square Close, Square Close, 1630	
Statfield, Stadfould, 1539	Stud (horse) fold
Stephen Croft, le Stenefeld, 1415	The stony field
Sterndale Close and Sterndale Land,	
Stone Close,	
Stony Butts,	Stony strip or Stony Archery Field
Stubbing,	The tree stumps (cleared land)
Stubble Close,	
Sugar Loaf,	
Swaines Meadow,	
Tatlow, Tatlowe pingle, 1666	Tata's Burial Mound or owned by the Ttatlows
Thistley Close,	
Timber Hill, Tymber Hill, 1610	
Top Pingle,	
Triangular Piece,	
Trough Acre,	
Upper Ridge,	
Wall Close,	Wall or well close
Water Close, le Waterdale, 1415	Water Lane
Watering Place,	Place to water packhorses (un)
Waterdale Shrugges, 1649	Water Dale
Weeding Close,	
Wefsons Lot,	
Well Croft, Well Croft, 1420	
Wheat Close,	
Wheatcroft Close, Netherwetcroft; Ouerewotecroft, 1258	
White Close,	
Wicket Street	Wood Street
Wigley Croft,	
Williams Croft,	
Willow Lands, Willow Pingle; Willowe Land, 1640	
Winfield Close, Winfeild Farm, 1640	Winfield's Farm
Wood Close, Wodeacresiche, 1415	Wood acre watercourse
Woolley Pasture, Little Wooley, 1638	Small spring pasture (Wooley Green)
Wraggs Croft	
Yokecliffe, Zyelcliff, 1415, Zyolclyffegge, 1420	Sloping Cliff

Part 3: Historic streets in Wirksworth, most Wirksworth street names in the 1841 census

Beardsley Yard. No change in known records
Bowling Green Lane. No change

Blind Lane. No change
Causeway. Gate House Street in 1821, apparently Well Stones in 1700s.
Chapel Lane. Footway to Cromford in 1709
China House Yard. No change but is after 1774 when the China Factory was built.
Church Street. No change
Churchyard. No change
Cockpit. No change
Coldwell Street. No change
Dale End and the Dale. No change
Foggs Yard in 1800s. Now Fogg's Entry.
Godfreyhole. No change
Gorsey Bank. No change
Greenhill. No change
Hammonds Court. No change
Hannage Road. Now appears to be misnamed as the east end of St Mary's Gate.
Leese. The Lees at Brassington Lane, destroyed by quarrying
Market Place. No change in the name but has moved around.
Mill Houses. No change
Miller's Green. No change
North End. North Town End in 1709
New Road. New after 1800 is in fact a footpath ("foot road").
Pratt Hall Lane. No recent change
St John's Street. St John's Street in 1712, Nether Street 1709-1790, had reverted to St John's Street by 1830.
St Mary's Gate. No change
Summer Lane. Somer Lane in 1588.
Swine Market. Market Place (west end of)
Wood Street. Wicket Street in 1841.
Walkmyln Lane 1498. Cinder Lane and Derby Road at Haarlem Mill.
Warmbrook. No change
Water Lane. Water Dale Shruggs in 1649.
West End. West Town End in 1709.

Part 4: Others in random documents:	**Comments**
Hob Hall (le Obcrofte 1539)	Croft with (Hob) goblins or ghosts
Moot Hall (1474)	The Moot Hall (location changed)
Middle Miln (1709)	At Water Lane later Providence Mill Gorsey Bank
New Miln (1473)	The windmill in Bowsfield
Oathill Cross (1824)	Tollgate at Oathill.
Over Smelting Miln (1709)	As Middle Miln probably the same mill
Sconescomb (1835)	South of Callow Lane (? a combe valley)
Speedwell Mill (1790)	Miller's Green
Stanburnlow, Stainsborough (1415)	Burial Mound near a stony stream

Further thoughts

The above are not all the ones that can be identified and some place names have more than one interpretation. For example, “wall” can mean a wall, or sometimes a well (because of spelling variations over time, dialect and so on). For example Allerwall probably represents a well or spring with some alder tress growing near it, or it might represent a wall with some alder trees growing near it.

In some cases we have our local knowledge which may make interpretation clear. Gill Cross near the Gilkin is an interesting example of this. It might mean Golden Cross or Ravine Cross if it were Old English (OE) (Guilden Cross) or Gil as in Ghyll - Ravine. However, there are some Old Welsh (OW) Celtic name survivals around Wirksworth, so it might mean (Gil) (Cruic) so, a Retreat - hermitage - by a Hill. This might make its fellow place-name of Gil Ridding: Hermitage with a Clearing. However, as it happens, The Gilkin lies next to an extremely steep ravine next to St Helen’s Lane, for those of you who have walked around it, it’s a kind of natural bowl possibly even a former quarry. This local knowledge suggests the meaning of Gil Cross is more probably “Ravine with a Cross” and that The Gilkin may perhaps mean “Ravine Hill”.

This local knowledge may work for other place names too: Summer Lane might mean a lane you could only use in summer, but its not in a valley and it doesn’t seem to flood in winter. Yet we know from how it works its way around the town that it seems to be a diversion - so it may be a corruption of Sumpter (a pack-horse driver) because you would take your pack-horses round the town to avoid paying tolls.

There are fascinating debates to be had for many of our local names: for those long nights in the pub. This list above is mainly taken from Cameron’s Place-Names of Derbyshire Part 2 and local maps, bear in mind, though, that his book is from 1959 and in the 60 years since, scholarship has moved on: sometimes he’s wrong or just out of date.

Note 1 “Interpretations” of the Lutudarum place-name

In the nearly quarter of a century in which we have been studying Wirksworth and attending to its archaeology, this issue seems to be brought up regularly by etymologists and antiquarians who have never been to the town and appear unknowing about its geography. Typical examples are Rivet and Smith (1981) who run with the idea that the first element of the name may mean mud or marsh. Speaking to local people this is hilarious. Wirksworth is built on a peninsula of very hard glacial limestone, no part of Wirksworth, in it or near it, could by any stretch of the imagination be described as muddy or marshy. The little River Ecclesbourne, which rises to the north of the town, is a small fast-flowing stream and no part of it from its arising at Bolehill to where its joined by the Pittywood Steam, a mile below Wirksworth at Haarlem Mill, could be described as muddy or marshy.

Similarly, Breeze (2002) took the view that the first element of the name may mean ash or cinders and goes on to give the impression that there would be great piles of ash lying everywhere as a result of lead smelting. This is equally lacking in a fundamental understanding (of lead smelting, Wirksworth’s key industry through the ages and where it has to take place). Lead smelting in olden times takes place in lead smelting hearths but its a two stage process: firstly the lead ore is roasted - this can be done locally near the mines and in so doing it reduces the weight of material that has to be carried to the smelter - a first stage process which results in ash near the mines and in the mining areas, such as in the lead field west and north of Wirksworth (Brassington and Webster, 1988). The roasted ore is then taken (usually by packhorse) to be smelted at a central place, often where the smelter can be driven by manual bellows or by the wind (so these sites tend to be up the valley sides - the principal medieval lead smelting area at Bolehill is a mile north-east of Wirksworth and high on the valley side). Wirksworth itself, however, is sheltered by its surroundings in a wide combe and was almost entirely unsuitable as a smelting site until the arrival of water and steam driven smelting mills.

This leaves us with the actual local natural environment, which is famous for its oak woods for which records date back to medieval times. Walking in these woods, even now, at Shining Cliff or Pitty Wood is to see the woods mostly as great grey tree trunks all around. For this reason we believe that the older etymologies, which are so thrust upon us by those who have not seen or understood the town, have failed to consider the reality, so, perhaps, and more likely, the Lutudarum place-name may simply mean Grey Oakwood.

Note 2 The Wirksworth place-name

More wearing antiquarians. Wirksworth is invariably quoted as meaning “Weorcs Enclosure” - but this appears to be a Victorian invention (Henry Barber again). There is no “Mr Weorc” in the Prosopography of Anglo Saxon England (A surveyed list of Saxon personal names)

The date of the first record of the Wirksworth place name is 835 AD which is a time when place-names tend to originate in physical or geographic features - there is no personal land ownership earlier in the Anglo-Saxon period (Gelling, 2000). Therefore the Wirksworth place-name is more likely to mean “Fortified Enclosure”. However, the “Weorc” argument is wearingly and endlessly repeated without the archaeological evidence of the town being taken into account or even looked at.

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