Wirksworth, Derbyshire

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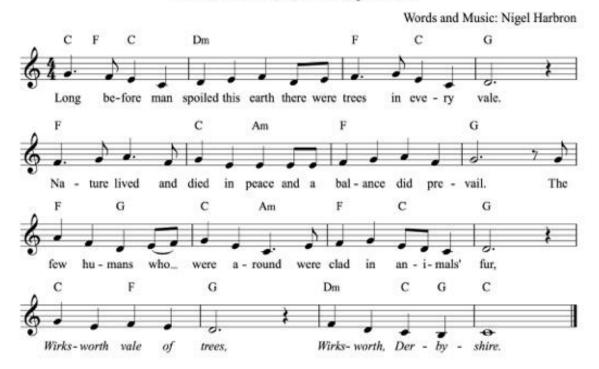

Long before man spoiled this earth there were trees in every vale.
Nature lived and died in peace and a balance did prevail.
The few humans who were around were clad in animals' fur -
Wirksworth: vale of trees,
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.

Then came the Romans from afar in search of coal and lead.
Mines and quarries opened up and slaves worked there in dread.
Whatever woes befell those men did not the tyrants' greed deter -
Wirksworth, town of lead,
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.

When finally lead ore ran out a new curse hit the town.
Limestone rock was quarried there turning landscapes upside down.
Vast quantities of stone were riven, the valley's sides now sheer -
Wirksworth, town of stone,
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.

Quarrying rock produces dust which covers everything.
Local people forced to live in misery unceasing.
The townsfolk moved away in droves to places with clean air -
Wirksworth, town of dust,
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.

And when the quarries ceased their work folk came back to the town.
Determined to revive the place with its buildings tumble-down.
With grants and graft they set about, made the houses as they were -
Wirksworth, town of pride,
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.

The town today looks like it did in the days before despair.
Georgian houses climb the slopes which lead off from the square.
The people go about their lives, but with one thing they concur -
Wirksworth, town once more,
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.

I became aware of Wirksworth only recently when looking for somewhere in Derbyshire to spend a long weekend in. The history of the town is fascinating, and it owes its current preserved state to the fact that it was almost a ghost town during Victorian times, when most other places were being redeveloped.

Apart from attractive streets and a splendid parish church, the town boasts not one, but two preserved railways, the main one standard gauge, and the other narrow gauge, and both are worth exploring.

Perhaps the only not so positive feature of the town was its pubs- plenty of them, but the ones we visited were all rather depressing places, destined, I suspect, to go the way many pubs have gone over the past decade. I need to go back soon to explore the remaining pubs, just in case they are better!