Welcome to Street Lane

We invite you to read on and find out more about the history of this area.

Roman soldiers will have marched up this straight road during the period 43 AD to 410 AD. This was a Roman road called Ryknield Street and is known as Street Lane from what is now Station Road at Smithy Houses in Denby to its junction with Heage Road known as Chadwick Grave.



Roman Soldiers

The Roman road runs from the Fosse Way at Bourton on the Water in Gloucestershire to Templeborough in South Yorkshire. Locally the route was from Chester Green to Breadsall, to Smithy Houses and up to the Roman Camp at Coneygrey. From there it passed Oakerthorpe and Higham and onto Clay Cross and Tupton to Chesterfield, where there was a Roman fort.

At the Southern end of Street Lane is Denby Railway Station. It was opened in 1856 as Smithy Houses by the Midland Railway on its Ripley branch from Little Eaton Junction to Ripley.

The railway provided a siding for the Denby Iron and Coal Company and there was also a facility for processing the slag from the iron production. In 1901, the Nottingham surveyor Edgar Purnell Hooley was visiting the site and noticed some tar that had been spilled and covered with iron foundry slag. A major trouble with highways at that time was the dust raised by increasingly speedy vehicles and various ways had been tried unsuccessfully for binding the road surface. He noticed that this surface had withstood the passage of traffic and obtained a British patent for producing what he called Tarmac. In 1903 he formed the TarMacadam (Purnell Hooley's Patents) Syndicate Limited.



Derby Street Lane Station 1910 © picturethepast.org.uk

Passenger services finished in 1930, though the line remained open - primarily for the coal traffic. Among the numerous coal workings in the area, the Butterley Company's Denby Hall Colliery, a mile north of the station, was perhaps the most productive. Investment continued during and after WW2, with a washing plant for the colliery. The facility continued in use until after the station was finally closed in 1965. The track north of the station was lifted completely in 1968 leaving a short length of line in the remains of the station. The station house still survives as a private home, with both platforms greatly overgrown.

At the northern end of Street Lane we can still see the remains of the Morley Park furnaces. These were cold-blast and coke-fired iron smelting furnaces. These are Grade II listed and are also a Scheduled Ancient Monument.



The remains of the Morley Park Blast furnaces © DCHQ

The first Morley Park furnace was built for Francis Hurt of Ambergate in 1780 and the second added in 1818. Iron ore and limestone were tipped from the top into charging holes and the blast was introduced by a battery of engines. The furnaces were supplied by a series of banks of coke ovens and 3000 yards of wagonways. Production stopped in 1874 but the furnaces were restored in 1986, so they can still be visited today.

It is believed that the works supplied much of the iron used in the construction of the Derwent Valley mills.

The area between Street Lane and Marehay has long been industrial land, with various collieries and brickmaking works. There was also a coal mine near the junction of Street Lane and Heage Road. There were large expanses of opencast mining in the last third of the 20th century with much of the land now used as industrial estates.

Installed by Ripley Town Council. Written by Ian Tolley. Thanks to Peter Smith, Linda McCormick and Ripley and District Heritage Trust for their assistance and information and to all those who have given permission for illustrations to be used.

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