

## July 2023 - Meeting

Hi All,

We had a good turnout at our July meeting with a total of 40 made up of 34 members (including 2 new members) and 6 visitors. We had 4 apologies from members who were unable to attend. Our paid up membership now stands at 54 which is encouraging.

I have made this a double month edition of the Newsletter as we do not have a meeting in August, and, I will do the same in December with a December/January edition as we do not have a meeting in January. So there will be 10 issues of the Newsletter per year.

With regard to this Newsletter.....

### **On page two 'Coming Events' section.**

I have given details of our next Meeting on Monday 11th September 2023 which is 'REMEMBERING THE BATTERIES' Nickel-cadmium industrial battery manufacturing in Redditch from 1918 to 1993 which is a presentation by Anthony Green, Redditch History Society Secretary.

In this section I have also given details of the Forge Mill Needle Museum August Holiday Exhibition which is REWIND TO THE 80s – RETRO KIDS CARTOONS a Summer exhibition by Lee Bradley from Friday 21st July to Sunday 3rd September 2023 10.00am to 4.00pm

**On Pages three and four** we have a report on our July presentation: The changing face of Redditch through the lives of one family, a presentation by Elizabeth Simpson - Chair, Redditch History Society.

**On Page five** I am promoting our Heritage Open Day - Forge Mill Needle Museum on Sunday 17th September 2023: 10.00am to 4.00pm. We have been involved in this event for 10 years and, on this 40 years since Queen Elizabeth II opened the museum, we want to make this our best supported yet.

**On Page six, seven and eight** I have produced an article on the Roman Road which ran close by, and now through, Redditch. This is an extended version of material which I have used in various presentations/articles on the history of Redditch. To date, I have relied on input from supporters/members for the Newsletter, but these have now dried up. So, in their absence I hope that you find my effort interesting.

However, don't hesitate to send me copy.

### **Next Meeting...**

Our next Meeting is on Monday 11th September 2023 and is 'REMEMBERING THE BATTERIES' Nickel-cadmium industrial battery manufacturing in Redditch from 1918 to 1993. This is a presentation by yours truly and there is more on this presentation on Page 2.

The meeting will be, as always, at the Oasis Christian Centre starting at 2.00 pm.

Anthony Green, Society Secretary

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# Coming up

**Next Meeting Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023  
'REMEMBERING THE BATTERIES'**

**Nickel-cadmium industrial battery manufacturing in Redditch from 1918 to 1993  
A presentation by Anthony Green, Redditch History Society Secretary**

Redditch was unique in having two alkaline battery manufacturers within its area.

The first to arrive was the Batteries Limited which was established in 1918 in a factory in Hunt End and the second was Britannia Batteries which was set up in 1929 in Union Street.

The two companies were merged in 1947, to become Alkaline Batteries Ltd, and were based at the Union Street site. The company changed its name to Chloride Alcad in April, 1973.

They later sold the company in 1982 to the Marathon Manufacturing Inc of Waco, Texas, USA who retained ownership for 5 years. However, due to the financial difficulties of the parent company in 1987 it was acquired by the French specialist battery company Saft, who embarked on a major transfer of all their pocket plate manufacture from their site in Bordeaux to Redditch.

However, in 1991 Saft acquired the Swedish company NIFE AB, the descendant of the original Nife Company, who were in financial difficulty due to a large manufacturing investment. In 1993 the Redditch plant was closed and the production of the Alcad products moved to the Swedish factory based in Oskarshamn. The Alcad brand name was retained and still continues to be made and sold throughout the world.

In this presentation Tony tells the story of this important local manufacture, which was well known throughout the world, and still is today, but is relatively unknown within Redditch, its manufacturing base. The presentation includes much original material.



**Forge Mill Needle Museum August Holiday Exhibition  
REWIND TO THE 80s – RETRO KIDS CARTOONS  
Summer exhibition by Lee Bradley**

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup> July to Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023 10.00am to 4.00pm**

Local artist, Lee invites you to step back to the 80s and remember (or discover!) all those wonderful kid's cartoons that played out on teatime and Saturday morning TVs all across the country.

His vibrant artwork brings to life all those well-known lovable characters like: Scooby-Do, Spiderman, Superted, He-Man and Masters of the Universe, She-Ra and many more.

This exhibition celebrates his great affection for these characters and creations from this iconic era and is suitable for 'children' of all ages!

Lee is often on site to chat with visitors.

<https://www.forgemill.org.uk/web/events/>



## July Meeting Report.

### The changing face of Redditch through the lives of one family

#### Presentation by Elizabeth Simpson - Chair, Redditch History Society

In this intriguing presentation, Elizabeth, starting in the 18th century, takes us through the story of one ordinary local family over nearly 300 years and shows how the development of the area has been reflected in their lives.

The story begins in Alvechurch with John Davis who was born in 1732 and Ann Newman, born in 1735.

They were married in Alvechurch on 20 November 1755, and they were Elizabeth's four times great grandparents.

They had a son, Joseph Davis who was baptised on 25 December 1775.

This takes us back to the earliest account of Redditch written by Joseph Monk, in 1776, a Primitive Methodist preacher who lived locally. He described Redditch as consisting of a few scattered houses along the four roads leading from the Green.

By 1794 Joseph Davis had moved to Redditch and married Sarah Smith on 20 November 1794.

The marriage is recorded at St Bartholomew, Tardebigge, as that was the parish for Redditch at the time but would have occurred at St Stephen's Chapel.

Sarah had been baptised on 27 September 1775 at Ipsley and was the daughter of Thomas and Mary Smith.

At the time of their marriage St Stephen's Chapel was the remaining building at the site of Bordesley Abbey, surviving the dissolution in 1538. Between 1797 and 1822 Joseph and Sarah had 13 children.

It is known that in 1814 Joseph was working as a shoemaker and that his eldest son, William who was born in 1797, carried on with this profession, as he is recorded as a boot and shoemaker living on Prospect Hill between 1841 and his death in 1861.

By 1835 Joseph is recorded as being the publican of the Crown Hotel on Fish Hill, which was the oldest pub in Redditch. Fish Hill later became known as Prospect Hill.

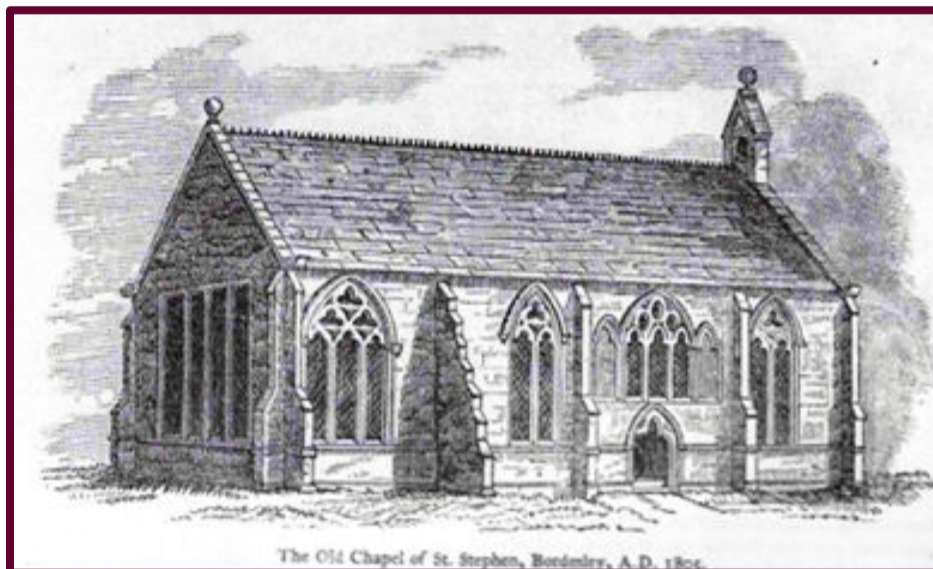
In 1800 the population of the town was about 1000 and by 1855 it had increased to 5000.

Joseph and Sarah Davis's 9th child was Maria Davis, who was Elizabeth's great great grandmother, and she was baptised at St Stephen's Chapel on 11 March 1814.

She continued to live with her father, after her mother died in 1837, until she married in 1848 at the age of 34.



**Map based on Monk's description**



**Below: MARIA DAVIS**



## July Meeting Report cont.....

The most dangerous job in the needle making industry was that of the needle pointer, which Elizabeth's 2 times great uncle, William Andrews carried out. 'Pointer's Rot' which was caused by the dust from the needles entering the lungs and it resulted in many workers dying by the time they were 30.

Improvements were made to working conditions in the mid 1840's with the introduction of extractor fans. However, even though William was born in 1831 and had the benefit of the better conditions, he still died by the time he was 48.

Elizabeth gave a detailed and fascinating overview of her family over the years, and I must miss out so much as the family over this time participated in so many trades in Redditch such as shoemaker, needle industry, fish-hook industry, cabinet making, Royal Enfield, retailers, publicans, gas and electric industry, railways and more.

So, bringing it up to date, Elizabeth was born in 1951 and went to Bridge Street School, which changed its name to Holyoakes Field whilst she was there and then on to the County High School.

After 'O' levels she went to Redditch College of Further Education to do Business Studies.

These buildings were eventually demolished to make way for the current Heart of Worcestershire College.

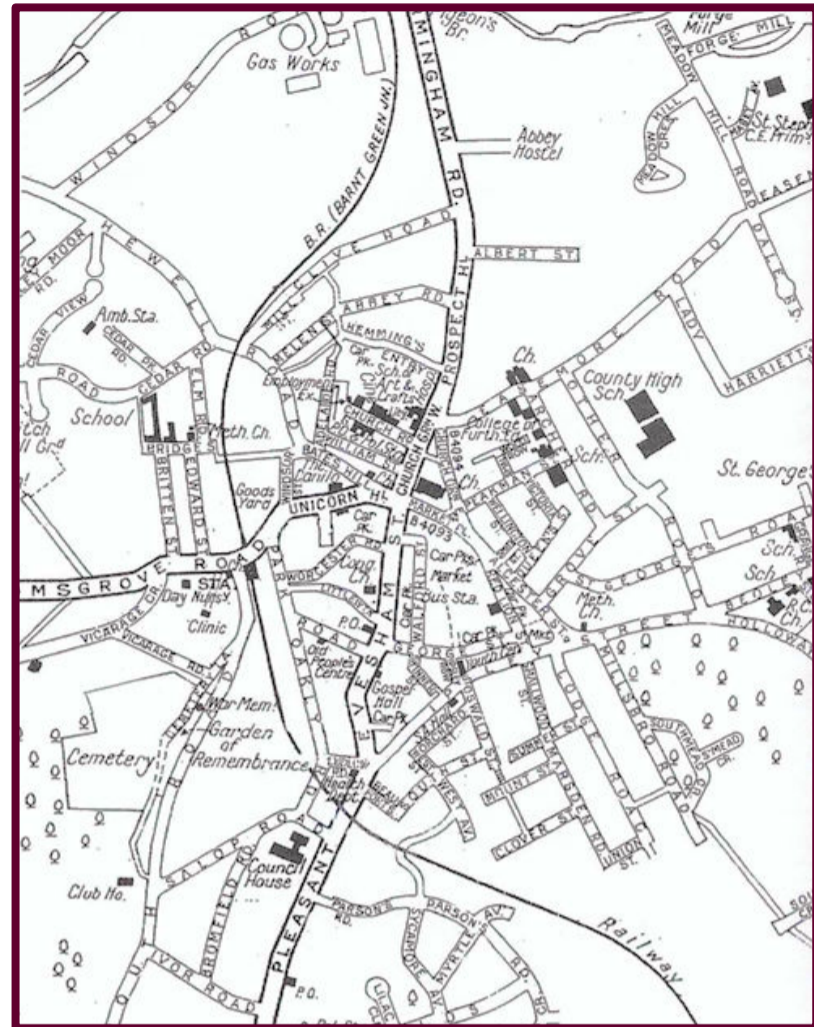
Whilst at the High School she got a part time job at Dyers hardware shop in Alcester Street, helping in the office and got fairly proficient at filing, it is now an estate agents and whilst at the College she worked as a Saturday girl at Huins shoe shop and earned 30 shillings a day, which helped to pay for driving lessons and buy material from the market to make clothes.

Elizabeth, and her husband, Andrew have now lived on Birmingham Road, Bordesley for nearly 40 years and can still see St Stephen's spire and the centre of the town from the back of their home.

As they are now in Alvechurch Parish Council area, she has now travelled full circle back to her ancestor John Davis's beginnings.

This was a fascinating and personal account of Elizabeth's family history, and I am impressed by how many hours must have been spent in carrying out the research required.

The presentation was very much appreciated by the audience and Elizabeth had many discussions in the refreshments break.



**Above: Redditch in the 1950s**  
**Below: Redditch County High School**



**Below: view of Redditch from Elizabeth's Garden**



# Heritage Open Day - Forge Mill Needle Museum

## Sunday 17th September 2023: 10.00am to 4.00pm



Our event has steadily increased in support from local community groups since we began, and, on this, 40 years since Queen Elizabeth II opened the museum, we want to make this our best supported yet.

Our Heritage Open Day is part of the National Heritage Open Day initiative and includes free entry to the whole site.

We are very pleased to have new exhibitors in this, our 10<sup>th</sup> year!

Amongst the wide range of local activities which we will have are:

- A range of iconic motorbikes from the Royal Enfield owners Club
- Meticulously built model boats from the Little Radford Model Boat Club
- Live music from Indigo Arts, our local community charity supporting young people.
- AIR (Arts in Redditch), a charitable organisation promoting and supporting arts, will be on-site with local artists and information on art in the town.
- Redditch Photographic Society will be onsite recording the event and will have a stand with experienced local photographers to give support and promote their aims. **\*New 2023\***
- Worcestershire Wildlife Trust will be promoting wildlife in Worcestershire.
- The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) community outreach team will have a display of costumes used in productions. **\*New 2023\***
- An information desk for the Redditch History Society/Friends of Forge Mill Museum. This will include the short video of Queen Elizabeth 2 opening of Forge Mill Needle Museum in 1983. **\*New 2023\***
- Free entry to 'ELEMENTAL' an exhibition by the Westhope Group in the Museum gallery. **\*New 2023\***
- Free entry into the museum - with the only existing water powered scouring mill. (although, sadly, we don't expect the wheel to be operating again until 2024).
- Tours by experienced volunteer guides of the Needle Museum and the Bordesley Abbey Ruins.
- Access to the newly refurbished children's play area plus activities for children.
- Gifts, local produce, and needles can be purchased from the Museum Shop.



More details can be found at Forge Mill Needle Museum at:

<https://www.forgemill.org.uk/web/events/>

and at Heritage Open Days at:

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/forgemill-museum>

# Redditch Transport System - Anthony Green

## Roads part 1 - The Roman Road : Ikniel Street



In AD43, the full might of the Roman army landed on the beaches in Kent.

Roman roads in Britannia were initially designed for military use, created by the Roman Army during the nearly four centuries (43 – 410 AD) that Britannia was a province of the Roman Empire.

It is estimated that about 2,000 miles of paved trunk roads (i.e. surfaced roads running between two towns or cities) were constructed and maintained throughout the province.

*Left: Map of principal Roman Road in Britain*

Ikniel Street (sometimes known as Ryknild Street) was a Roman Road which began at the Fosse Way at Bourton on the Water.

The route went North crossing the River Avon at Bidford and eventually continuing to Alcester, which was a Roman town and had a Roman fort overlooking the junction where the river Alne joins the River Arrow.

Beyond Alcester it continued North, passing through the area which is now Redditch and continuing to Metchley which was a Roman Fort in the area where Birmingham University is now sited.

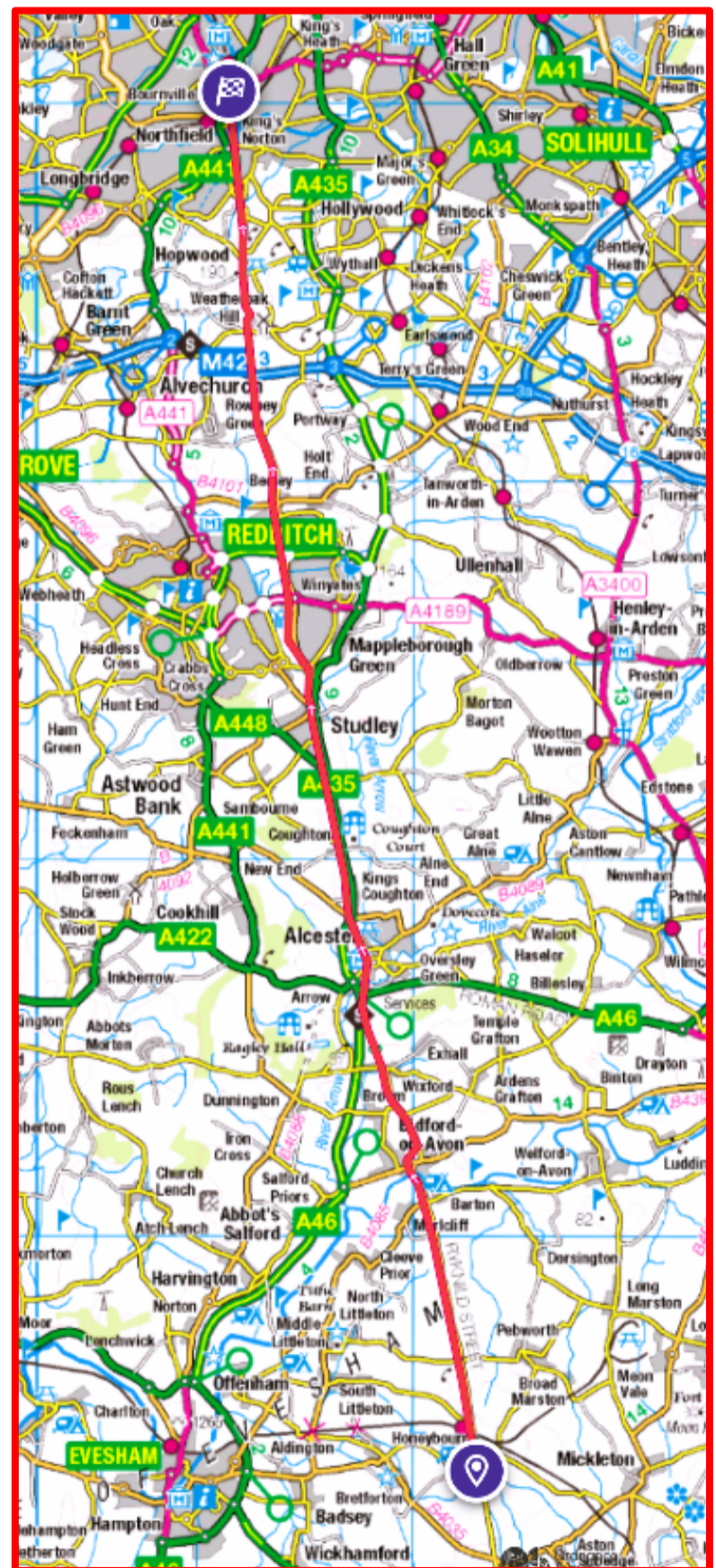
It then continued through Birmingham crossing Watling Street (A5) north of Birmingham at Wall.

It continued past Burton on Trent, Derby and finished at Rotherham, which was a major Roman Fort. The total length was about 80 miles.

As with most Roman Roads, Ikniel Street was incorporated into the roads which slowly appeared over the following centuries.

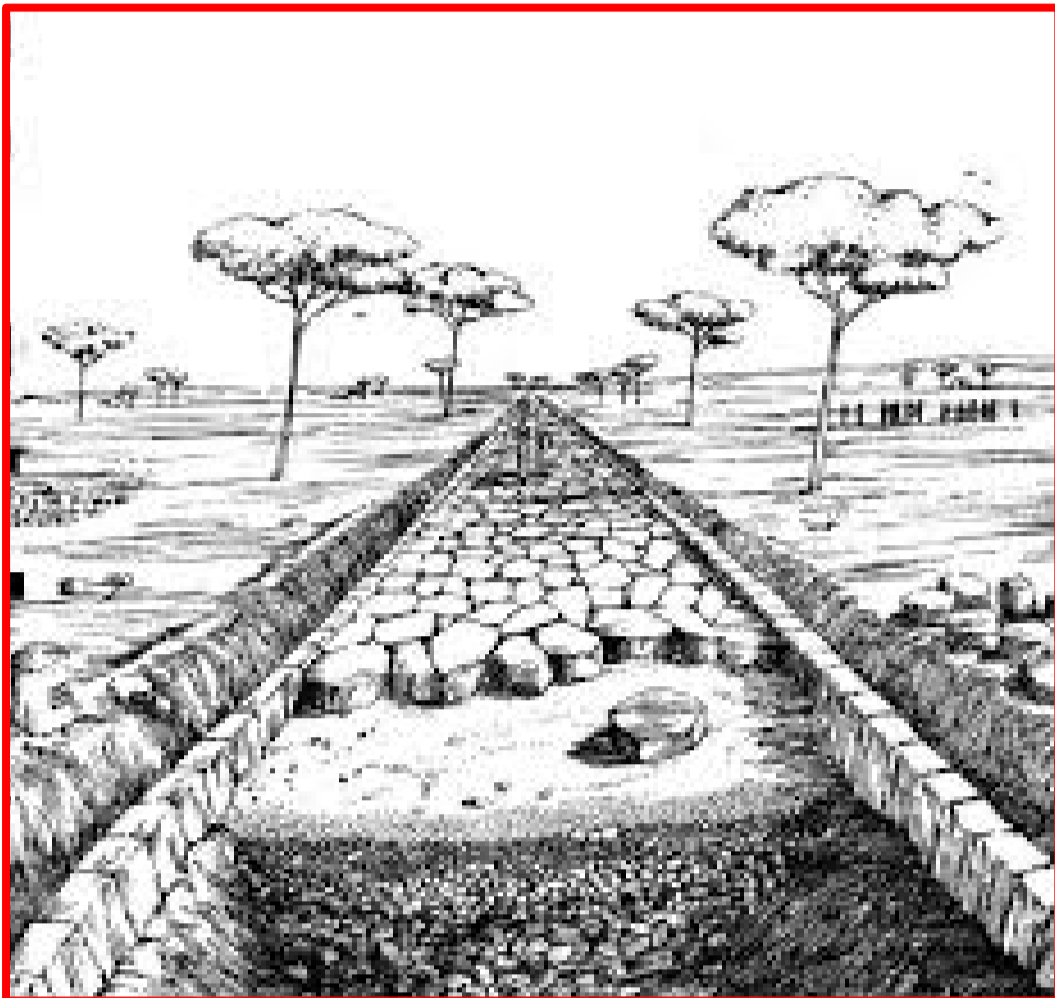
It can be followed on a modern atlas from it start at Bourton on the Water through modern roads and tracks to well beyond north of Birmingham.

Until the 1960's it passed by Redditch as a minor country road, although a short portion carried the B4497, which joined the B4101 route to Coventry.



*Above: Route of Roman Road superimposed on a current Ordnance Survey map.*

## The Roman Road - Ikniel Street cont....



Roman roads were designed to follow a course which was as straight as possible, providing the quickest route for the marching Roman Legions.

The road was dug about one metre in depth and about seven metres in width.

Large stones were then put in the base and used for lining the sides.

It was then filled with gravel and sand and the surface was created with stones often pentagonal in shape (five sided), fitted together to make the top layer of the road.

The roads were sloped from the centre so that rainwater would drain off into ditches at the sides and stone mile markers were often placed along the roads to let travellers know how far it was to the next overnight stop.



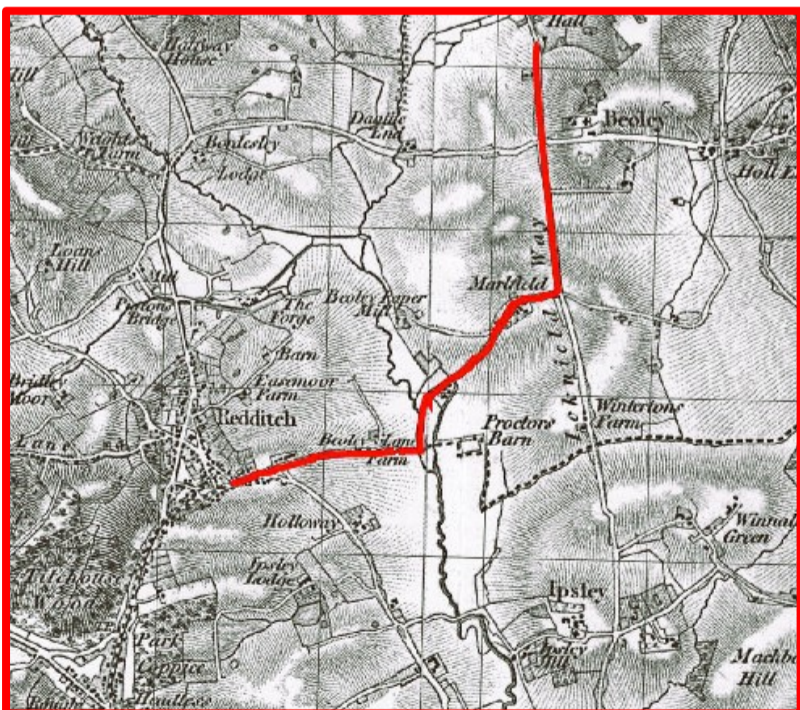
A fascinating walk (when you are young and fit) is to take the North York Moors heritage train from Pickering and leave at the Newtondale Halt request stop.

There then follows a fairly energetic walk though the Newtondale Forest ascending up to Wheeledale Moor.

It was well worth the ascent, for here we find the route of a remarkable mile-long stretch of ancient road amid wild and beautiful moorland. The road still has its hard core and drainage ditches.

It illustrates the quality of the Roman constructors as, since it was undisturbed, it is still in amazing condition.

Continuing along the moorland path, we arrive in Goathland and take the train back to Pickering.



### Happy Days!

In the years that followed the Roman occupation the Redditch area slowly developed.

Redditch itself came into existence during the time of the Cistercian Monastery at Bordesley and, after the dissolution, Redditch developed as an industrial town which was the centre of the needle industry.

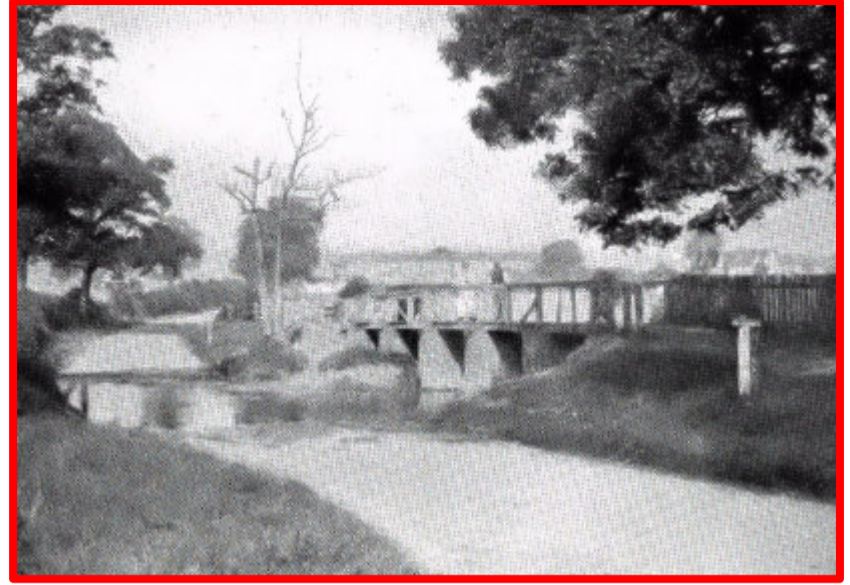
Ikniel Street, at this stage, would still be a major route and the important route North would be via this ancient road.

The route from the town (which I have superimposed on a pre-turnpike OS map) would have passed down Beoley Road, crossed the River Arrow and followed Marlfield Lane to Ikniel Street.

## The Roman Road - Ikniel Street cont....

Ikniel Street was very narrow and just wide enough for a cart, so carts could not pass each other. So, the carts carried bells to alert those coming in the opposite direction. There were 'laybys' which allowed carts to pull over.

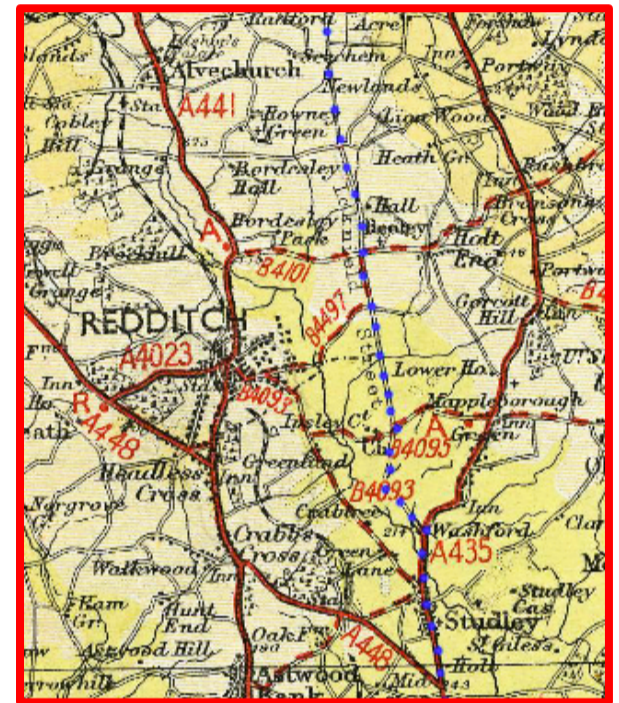
Beoley Road crossed the River Arrow where it was shallow and used as a ford. When the millers upstream opened their floodgates a great swell of water would rush down the river so that the ford was extremely dangerous. Mr Heath, the carrier, lost both horse and his son in 1820 and Henry Garfield drowned in 1861. Five horses to Birmingham Brewery were lost in 1810 and a further horse in 1825.



As with most Roman Roads, Ikniel Street was incorporated into the roads which slowly appeared over the following centuries.

It can be followed on a modern atlas from it start at Bourton on the Water through modern roads and tracks to well beyond north of Birmingham.

Until the 1960's it passed by Redditch as a minor country road, although a short portion carried the B4497 which joined the B4101 route to Coventry.



I have shown the route on a 1950's map and, in the 1960s, it was still a useful route to bypass the gridlock which was now occurring in the town centre roads.

With the arrival of the New Town, the area to the east of the River Arrow was covered with housing and industrial developments. However, the route of Ikniel Street was not lost.

Stretches of the road were retained as footpaths as the photograph below shows.

So, walking along these paths follow a route developed for the Roman Army nearly 2,000 years ago.

