the route of the veins underground, with regular shafts along the length of the vein.

Lead was mined in this part of Derbyshire for centuries, as long ago as Roman times (43-410 AD). It has a much longer recorded history than quarrying.

The land surrounding the village of Middleton is completely surrounded by lead-mining activity (see Plate 1, geological map). The lead ore was mined for a number of uses including roofing, plumbing, pewter, musket balls & lead shot and the manufacture of pigments & paints.

The best preserved lead-mined landscape is along the Via Gellia, which lies just to the north of the village, outside the conservation area. The steep-sided limestone gorge and access difficulties and topographical constraints have meant that the area has had little in the way of active land-management, or agricultural development. This has led to the survival of a high concentration of structures and underground remains from the lead mining industry. It is recognised as a High Priority Lead Landscape. Nether Ratchwood and Rantor Mines, within the southern part of the conservation area, are similarly recognised as High Priority Lead Landscape and are a Scheduled Monument.

To the south of the village lies Wirksworth, a town of national importance for lead mining, the heartland of lead mining within this part of Derbyshire and the place where the Barmote Court³ was held, and still is held to this day. The wealth of Wirksworth was built upon the success of lead mining and it was here that many of the wealthy lead merchants lived.

The Derbyshire lead industry declined after the late 18th century because of worked-out veins, increased production costs and cheaper foreign imports. The industry was protected from foreign ore by import duty but this was eventually abolished in 1845. Lead mining has now disappeared from this area of Derbyshire. Lead was last being worked in the 1920s.

Plan Form

The village of Middleton was separate and distinct from Rise End, although over time they became less so. During the 20th century, a considerable amount of demolition along the east side of the road at Rise End has again divided the two settlements. Pockets of open space and a lush tree canopy on both sides of the road help to preserve the separate identity of the two places. A long, linear main street with dense development loosely connects two focal points; the main junction and focus of activity at the north end of the settlement is centred upon The Green at Middleton and the southern nucleus is centred upon the space in front of The Rising Sun at Rise End.

The main ribbon of development that rises up the hill in Middleton was the principal medieval street. The constraints of the steep hillside, on the west side of the street, and the pattern of settlement, with shallow building plots, seem to indicate that the development may have initially been concentrated entirely along the east side of the street and that over time buildings were “dug into” the hillside on the west side of the street, and encroached upon Main Street. The village is without the distinctive long parcels of land usually associated with the medieval pattern of “crofts and tofts”. These may simply have been lost, as a result of successive waves of redevelopment, but this is not conclusive. Short crofts existed to the east of Main Street, but these have been densely developed. If long crofts did exist, they were probably located on the steep slopes to the west of Main Street, lying between Main Street and Middleton Moor.

A village green was often located on the very edge of the village, as it still is here. The earliest County maps show that there was no road extending to the north of Middleton in the 18th century (New Road is 19th century), so the “green” was truly on the perimeter of the village.

³ Barmote Court - a specialist lead mining court established to preside over ore measurement, inspect mines, collect fines & settle disputes arising over lead mining title, etc.
4. ORIGINS AND HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

The conservation area of Middleton-by-Wirksworth comprises two old settlements, Middleton and, to its south, Rise End and a large area of land to the south and south-east of Rise End which falls within Wirksworth parish. Whilst the settlement of Middleton lies within its own parish, Rise End falls on the boundary between Middleton parish and Wirksworth parish.

Middleton is first mentioned in Domesday (1086) when it was described as Middeltune. The name means “Middle Farm”. By 1297 it had received the suffix *juxta Wyrkesworth* (by Wirksworth). Rise End is first identifiable as *le Risende* in 1309 and the derivation of this name is probably the word “hris”, meaning brushwood.

The parish of Middleton comprises the village as well as the hamlets of Ible and Ironbrook (Ivonbrook) Grange, to the north.

Middleton was an outlying “berewick” or farm, part of the royal manor at Wirksworth. The village was served by Wirksworth Parish church and it did not have its own church until 1839.

There is little known about the development of Rise End. The name Middletoncross appears on several maps, including a plan of c1720 by Samuel Hutchinson, which shows Middleton Cross to be at Rise End, near the junction of the B5023 and B5035. It may have been a boundary marker, on the parish boundary, or a preaching cross, usually found by the side of an important highway.

Although there was clearly a pattern of extensive settlement within Middleton from at least as early as 1086, and there are a wealth of historical documents, there are few maps of the village until the 19th century. The earliest large-scale map of the village is the 1835 Enclosure of the Commons and Waste, which lay upon Middleton Moor and Middleton Wood (Plate 3). The remainder of the parish appears to have been largely enclosed piecemeal by private agreement by this time. Sanderson’s map of 1835 shows the village prior to the 1835 enclosure (Plate 2).

The medieval open fields lay to the north & east of the village. Beyond these lay Middleton Wood, on the southern slopes of the narrow limestone gorge of the Griffe Grange valley. A route led from the east side of the village along Duke Street (known as Hallicar Lane in 1835), as far as “Lamber Close Beach” above the lead smelting mill just beyond Black Tor. To the south-west of the village lay Middleton Moor, a large expanse of common & waste land.

Porter Lane was turnpiked in 1759 with the creation of the Oakerthorpe & Ashbourne Turnpike. A toll-house was built (outside the conservation area) near to the entrance to the National Stone Centre and another toll-house was built at Rise End (Wirksworth Tithe Map), just before the railway bridge (pers. comm. A Partington), although it may be associated with the later 1804 turnpike. New Road was built circa 1804 as a branch of the Cromford & Newhaven Turnpike to link with the Via Gellia in the valley to the north.

The Enclosure Award of 1835 relates primarily to the enclosure of Middleton Moor & Middleton Wood and the formalisation of a series of roads across the moor, which provided access to a number of lead mines. It also includes formalisation of the various encroachments and scattered development that had taken place on the hillside to the west of the village, both at the top of Water Lane and in the area that has been replaced with Middleton Mine, to the west of the street now known as Hillside.

Plate 2. Extract from Sanderson’s map of 1835, showing the distinctive field pattern to the north and the expanse of Middleton Moor prior to its partial enclosure
One of the striking characteristics of the settlement, demonstrated by the enclosure award, is the presence of springs and sources of water to the west of Main Street, which seem to have shaped the form of the settlement and created an opportunity for expansion on the west side of the village. A large part of the Enclosure Award deals with water, and a section has been reproduced here verbatim:

“the inhabitants of the said township have been used to be supplied with water from certain springs arising out of parts of the said commons or waste lands and grounds called Middleton Moor, and out of old inclosures within the said township, one of which springs supplies a place called the Town Basin, another is called the Roarer, and others rise in or near a place called Water-lane, and the waters from such springs respectively have been conveyed by means of soughs and pipes and other channels to different parts of the said township for the purposes aforesaid, and which soughs, pipes and channels are now in a decayed and unserviceable state……to provide and lay down in lieu thereof pipes of cast metal, or of such material as he shall think proper for conveying the water from the said spring to the said Town Basin……”

Accounts from the 1760s (R Buxton “Extracts from the accounts of Richard Buxton”) describe in detail how the Great Trough or Basin was worked by stone masons and was brought down Water Lane with ropes drawn by men and a “reservoir” was created and finished at the same time. The Great Basin was located in the centre of the village green and had a piped supply. This structure is not the same as the later basin seen in photographs. The “Cross” at the top of the town was also finished in 1769 but precisely where this was located is not known.

The hillside, to the west of the village, was cluttered with houses, which seem to be scattered randomly. This lack of planning indicates that these houses were encroachments, built on waste ground. The
Following the enclosure of the open fields, many years supplemented with small trees. It was carried out using drystone walls, over the open fields is distinctive around Middleton for this stepped, terraced development. The cottages were built before quarrying became a major industry and were probably built to accommodate lead-miners.

The large number of landowners listed on the 1841 Tithe Award within Middleton-by-Wirksworth is indicative of a settlement with many people of sufficient income to maintain an independent living. There were 201 independent landowners within the parish. This pattern of land ownership had been built up over a long period. Of these only 10 had acreage of 10 acres or more. The vast majority of landowners had up to 1 acre of land. From this they would have kept a few livestock to supplement their income, which during the 17th and 18th centuries probably came from lead-mining. The acreage is also indicative that when the open fields were enclosed, the small fields that were created fossilized the medieval open field system. The enclosed fields were then split disparately between the villagers, just as they had been within the open field system. In 1841 the largest landowner by far was Philip Gell Esq who owned 450 acres and who had consolidated much of his landholding.

Between the medieval period and the early 19th century, when the commons and wasteland were enclosed by an Act of Parliament (in 1833), the open fields were gradually enclosed. One of the best surviving examples of the early enclosure of land is the group of fields in the eastern part of the conservation area, off Chapel Lane & The Fields. The group of fields which were part of this former open field are described in the 1841 Tithe Award as Eastes Piece or Heastes Piece. The enclosure of the open fields is distinctive around Middleton for it was carried out using drystone walls, over the years supplemented with small trees.

Following the enclosure of the open fields, many independent smallholdings were established within the village. In most cases the main house was within the village, with the land some distance away, a few isolated strips inherited from the old open field system. In many cases, therefore, detached field barns were built. Many of the independent smallholders would have had a dual income, and supplemented their income from farming with lead mining, or vice versa.

There is undoubtedly some correlation between success in mining and ownership of property or land but the links are difficult to establish. The main beneficiaries of the lead mining industry were the buyers and smelters, of whom there is little evidence within Middleton, but the presence of lead enabled a pattern of independent small farms to persist.

Cluttered around the old village green are cottages within a very dense settlement pattern. Although the pattern around The Green is fairly random, with no distinct building line, the layers of development and the staggered rear property boundaries suggest successive encroachments both on the original open space within the green and onto the open fields behind the houses that fronted the green. It is in this area known as ‘The Hall’ that there are reputedly the remains of a cockpit. ‘A Hall is said formerly to have existed at the upper end of the village and near to it, a barn where cocks were trained in the days when the brutal act of cock-fighting was at its height’. There was also, it is said, a pinfold on the edge of the green, a common occurrence, which is now covered by the garages to the rear of No.15 The Green.

The central Town Basin in the centre of The Green, which appears on the 1843 Tithe map, had been removed by 1880. Following the improvements made to the local water supply under the Enclosure Act, most of the water supply was piped in cast-iron pipes and the village was supplied with a series of ‘taps’, connected to rounded stone posts, many of which can still be found. The “Town Basin was either moved or replaced with a large trough, which also gave its name to the “Town Basin’ (Plate 4). A commemorative limestone plaque, and no doubt date-stone, above the trough had been removed by 1900. The site was located just to the east of the present bus shelter.

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*‘Wirksworth and 5 Miles Around’ R.R Hackett 1863 (reproduced 1991 p.193).*
Figure 4
1843 Tithe map of Middleton-by-Wirksworth
Reproduced by permission of Derbyshire Record Office
To the east, the Duke of Wellington was slightly removed from the main part of the settlement. It appears to have been built as an early encroachment onto the common land on the periphery of the settlement. Its location beyond the core of the settlement probably relates directly to its proximity to the core of lead mining activity on the hillside, providing a welcome respite for the lead miners. It appears on Burdett’s 1767 map of Derbyshire.

Bagshaw’s Directory of 1846 describes Middleton as “a township and considerable village on a bleak situation, principally inhabited by miners”.

Like many industrial settlements, the area around Middleton was a hotbed of new non-conformist religions. There was no Anglican church, as the village was served by Wirksworth parish church. Middleton only acquired its own Anglican Church in 1839 (The Church of the Holy Trinity), possibly in response to the increasing numbers of non-conformist churches. The early chapels were formed by congregations of believers, rather than stimulated by one or two individuals. This and the focus of worship around the sermon provided a sense of belonging and immediacy to a largely working class community, a comfortable extension of the working environment.

Chapels
The Independent Meeting House (later Congregational Chapel) – built 1785 and re-faced or rebuilt in the late 19th century, Sunday School – d.1906
The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel – ca.1820, rebuilt 1874
Primitive Methodist Chapel – built 1846, rebuilt 1874 (Bulmers Directory 1895), rebuilt again in 1906-10 as the New Zion Methodist Church on a new site to the west

Other Buildings
The Church of Holy Trinity – d.1837-9
The Vicarage (Parsonage) to the Church of Holy Trinity - 1852 (White’s Directory, 1857)
The National School – 1846 (White’s Directory, 1857). The Gells of Hopton Hall gave the site for the School and at first it had restrictions and the chapel children couldn’t attend
Village Hall – 1927
The Rising Sun, the Wellington Arms (all listed in 1857, and no changes of name recorded from the 19th century onwards). There is local hearsay that the Nelson Arms was originally called “The Messenger” and in the 20th century it has previously been called the ‘Wildlifers’.
The 1843 Tithe Award also lists The Miners Standard

17th and 18th century industrial development – lead mining

Up until the 19th century the principal industry and employer within Middleton-by-Wirksworth was lead-mining.

The 1841 Census records 196 men employed as lead miners in Middleton-by-Wirksworth, some as young as 15. Many of the women were employed as cotton spinners, probably based at Cromford. There was a Stone Scafler and only two stone masons.

However, lead mining was in decline by this time and was shortly to be replaced with quarrying as the main industry.

White’s Directory of 1857 paints a vivid picture of the village at this time of transition;

“There are several quarries of excellent marble in this township, of which great quantities are sent by the High Peak Railway to Cromford, and thence by canal to the celebrated marble works at Buckland Hollow (established by David Wheatcroft). Mining was formerly carried out here to a great extent, and very profitably. The principal mines now being worked are the Good-luck, Slackrake, Jackson’s, Welchman’s Venture, Croft, Snake, Sticking Brook’s, Sparkrake, and Bradwell, which are very productive yielding more ore than any others in the neighbourhood”

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1880 provides a snapshot in time of the state of the landscape and the declining lead mining industry. However, it does not represent what survived of the lead mines, as much of this evidence lies underground (see Figure 5).
By 1880, to the west of Middleton, on Middleton Moor, lay three major lead mines; Samuel Mine, Slackrake Mine and Bondog (Bon Doghole) Mine, all outside the conservation area. The hillside was also crossed by many veins. Within the village itself were two other lead mines; Croft Mine, just to the west of Main Street and Jackson's Mine, to the east of Main Street, just to the north of Rise End, both inside the conservation area. There were also numerous lead-mining shafts, many documented on the map, but many others unidentified, both within and surrounding the village.

To the north-east of Middleton, on the land which was once the open fields, there are Stitchen Mine, Nogg Mine & Burrows Mine (outside the conservation area). To the north and east of the village the land is peppered with old lead shafts, within the individual fields. The majority of these would have been sunk from the 17th century onwards, when lead mining was at its peak.

North of the B5035, and just to the east of Rise End, was the Dove Gang Vein, one of the principal veins in the area. The largest mine in the area worked this vein, Gang Mine, and the landscape surrounding the mine is now identified as of national importance, although it lies outside the conservation area.

To the south-east of Middleton and to the east of the B5023, within Wirksworth parish, there were Ratchwood Mine and Rantor Mine, the former was discovered on the 28 September 1696 and the latter was sunk in the 1740s. Both were still working until the 1860s (the site of both mines is a Scheduled Monument). Ratchwood Mine was among the five most productive titles in the entire Wirksworth lead-mining division. There were also a number of other, lesser mines; Rantertackers Mine & Greymare Mine, north of the High Peak Trail, and Ravenstor Mine & Maltster’s Venture Mine (removed by quarrying operations), south of the High Peak Trail, all disused by 1880.

Around the National Stone Centre, many of the mines have been removed by later quarrying, the location sometimes marked by baryte fragments in the soil. Along the High Peak Trail there is evidence of former mining activity (pipe veins) in

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4 “The Lead Legacy”, PDNPA, J Barnatt & R Penny, 2004
the form of small caves high up in the quarried rock-faces.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1880 suggests that in the immediate area only Jackson’s Mine & Burrows Mine were apparently still working. The last mine to be worked in the wider area was the Good Luck Mine in the Griffe Grange valley.

**19th century industrial development**

**The Cromford & High Peak Railway (C&HPR)**

The southern part of the conservation area includes a section of the route of the Cromford & High Peak Railway (now known as the High Peak Trail). The Cromford and High Peak Railway, which opened in 1830, was one of the earliest railways in Britain and a major feat of nineteenth century engineering. Promoted in the mid-1820s, the Cromford & High Peak Railway was conceived to link the Cromford and the Peak Forest Canals and ultimately to link the industrial towns of the north west and the Nottingham/Derby area and from there to London. At this time the comparative advantages of turnpikes, canals and railways were far from clear. It was seen as an economic alternative to canals, made possible by engineering advances, particularly steam power, which enabled stationary steam engines to pull wagons up the inclines.

One of the best surviving examples of these steam engines sits at Middleton Top, in the south-western part of the conservation area. The building and its associated wheel pits, at the top & bottom of the incline, is a scheduled ancient monument.

![Restored wheel pits at the bottom of the Middleton incline - part of the scheduled monument](image)

The original engineer was Josias Jessop. Jessop’s survey took the railway 33 miles from its junction with the Peak Forest Canal at Whaley Bridge through to that with the Cromford Canal, at Cromford. The route followed was essentially that of a canal, with more or less level sections following the contours, sometimes circuitously, and generally modest earthworks, plus three tunnels. The steep sections were overcome by the rope-worked inclines, using wagons coming in the opposite direction as counter balance. The restored remains of the wheelpit at the bottom of Middleton incline are one of the best-preserved examples on the line and the interpretation on site demonstrates how the inclines worked. For the level sections, Jessop had considered the use of locomotives, but it was only in 1834 that steam locomotives were employed. Until then, the railway was horse-drawn.

Originally conceived as a regional link, the Cromford & High Peak Railway was a considerable disappointment, although the greater part survived in service until the 1960s. The principal traffic by this time was limestone, with quarries, wharfs and sidings along the length of the railway and connected to it via mineral railways and tramways.

There was a well-established yard & sidings at the foot of Middleton Incline, with workshops, all of which survive, albeit in different states of repair. The workshops at the old sidings are still in use by Middle Peak Marble & Granite Ltd.

This yard was originally under the control of David Wheatcroft (a director of the C&HPR & a principal carrier along the local canal & railway network), and were used in association with his limestone quarry at Middle Peak Quarry, running alongside the Middleton Road, which was producing limestone for flux. A branch railway linked the C&HPR with the sidings and the Middle Peak Quarries in the 1830s. The area at the foot of Middleton Incline is illustrated on Sanderson’s map as a “Wharf”, the
name being retained after the railway was originally conceived as a canal. There were further sidings leading from the C&HPR into Coal Hills Quarry, also owned by David Wheatcroft until 1857, when Hopton Wood Stone was registered as a limited company. The link between the C&HPR and the Midland Railway in Wirksworth was never firmly established, although a provision was made by quarrying away the rock at Ravens Tor and the construction of large embankments. Tracks were laid down but there is no evidence that they were ever used. The incline is too great for a steam locomotive and it would have needed a stationary steam engine to pull wagons up the incline.

**Quarrying**

The history of stone extraction in and around Middleton is particularly complicated because there were many companies operating & using similar names. There were three traditional Hopton Wood Stone sites producing the creamy-white stone, of which only one called Middleton Quarry (later Middleton Mine) falls within the conservation area. Hopton Wood Stone is best known for its use as a decorative stone, as it could be carved with the sharpest of arises and could take a high polish. One of its most famous applications was for the interior of Kedleston Hall in 1763.

However, in the history of the use of the stone, it was also quarried for chemical processes, notably as a flux for blast furnaces in iron production, and more recently for sugar refining and glass making.

Hopton Wood Stone was first quarried from a place called Hopton Wood, an area of woodland on the west side of Ryder Point Road, in Hopton parish. Documentary evidence suggests that this stone was quarried from the 1750s, or perhaps even earlier, as the datestones for the Gell Almshouses at Hopton and School at Carsington were carved from Hopton Wood Stone in the 1720s. Historically Hopton Wood Stone was produced as both a polished limestone for decorative purposes, e.g. sculpture, fireplace surrounds & flooring, and it was also burnt to produce lime. By the 1790s the quarrying operation had moved to the east side of Ryder Point Road, on the west side of Middleton Moor, just within Middleton parish.

There was little quarrying, however, in and around the village of Middleton until the 19th century. The earliest quarries to be developed in the immediate area were around an area called Coal Hills, which lies in the south-east corner of the conservation area, within Wirksworth parish. Some of these quarries were extracting fossil & bird’s eye “marbles” and others were extracting limestone for industrial & agricultural uses. A number of limekilns are still evident around this area, although many more have been lost through quarry expansion. One of the first quarries in the conservation area to be established was Coal Hills Quarry, to the north of the High Peak Trail. This quarry was established by 1830, shortly after the construction of the Cromford & High Peak Railway (pers. comm. Tony Holmes). There is documentary evidence that the line finally closed between 1876-73. Derbyshire County Council and the Peak District National Park Authority took over much of the route to turn it into a long distance cycleway and footpath, called the High Peak Trail.