

The Old Roads and Trackways of MIDDLETON & SMERRILL



Whitfield Lane leads to the heart of Middleton's pastures. But it was also a route to mines and, in the 19c, provided the daily walk for Middleton farmers who worked at Friden Brickworks.

WHITFIELD LANE AND KENSLOW LANE

Whitfield Lane climbs steadily out of Middleton for one mile to a crossroads; ahead is Little Rookery Farm, to the left a track to Mount Pleasant, to the right Kenslow Farm and behind, Woodside Farm. All around are woods and fields of the pastoral heartland of Middleton. But in the 19c. another track ran besides Little Rookery Farm. This was Middling Road, a track to old mines and that once peppered the landscape up to the umber mine above Longdale.

Before the Inclosure Acts, it was usual for the land to be farmed from the local estate village with only agricultural buildings like barns built on commons. Granges, such as Smerrill Grange, with their monastic links, were an exception. Kenslow too had a monastic connection; there is a small chapel and the barns have had second floors added to be used as laybrother's dormitories. This could date the Kenslow barns and Whitfield Lane in the 1600s. The farmhouse at Kenslow was built in the early 1900s for the Middleton Estate manager.

By the end of the 17c the fields on either side of Whitfield Lane had been enclosed by the Middleton and Haddon estates. However the now walled lane would have remained a droveway for moving livestock from the village farm to summer pastures and returning them for winter grazing or the market.

But like Weaddow Lane, Whitfield Lane has its extension, a footpath that cuts past Ringham Low ('A barrow of considerable importance' - Thomas Bateman) to meet the Bakewell-Newhaven Road near The Oldhams. This was used as a short cut from Middleton village to Friden Brickworks where, from the 1892, Middleton farmers supplemented their incomes, and Whitfield Lane was their daily commute. The first plantation along the Newhaven Road after the footpath is Walk Lane Plantation.

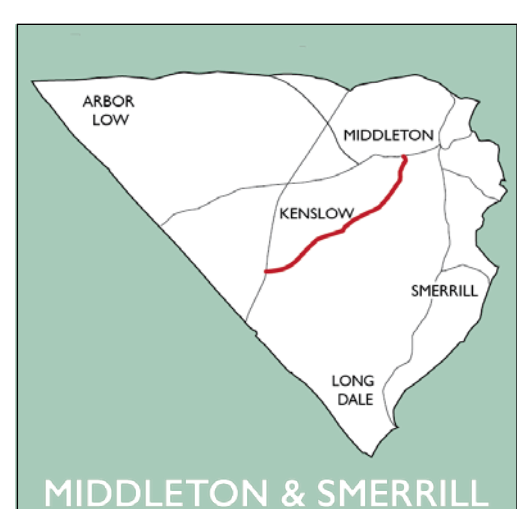
In 2023, an application was made by Peak Horse Power to downgrade Whitfield Lane and the road through Kenslow Farm to the Bakewell-Newhaven Road to a Byway, excluding motorised vehicles. The application was rejected by Derbyshire County Council who have subsequently renamed the track through Kenslow Farm as Kenslow Lane.

Further Reading

1813 Township of Middleton (Middleton Hall)

1819 Middleton Enclosure Map (Derbyshire Records Office)

1841 Middleton Estate Surveyors Sketchbook (Middleton Hall)



A PALIMPSEST

MIDDLETON VILLAGE HALL
Supporting the community of Middleton and Smerrill