

The Old Roads and Trackways of MIDDLETON & SMERRILL



Dale Lane links Middleton to the River Bradford, its long time source of water and passage to Youlgrave, Alport and the Derwent

DALE LANE

It is difficult to think of how Middleton could have developed without easy access to the River Bradford. Hardy's Well Mine might have been the initial source of water, but a village, even as small as Middleton, requires a far more generous supply. Indeed over time, the natural gorge down into which Dale Lane fits so comfortably, provides not only the water, but power, industry and communications that allowed Middleton to flourish.

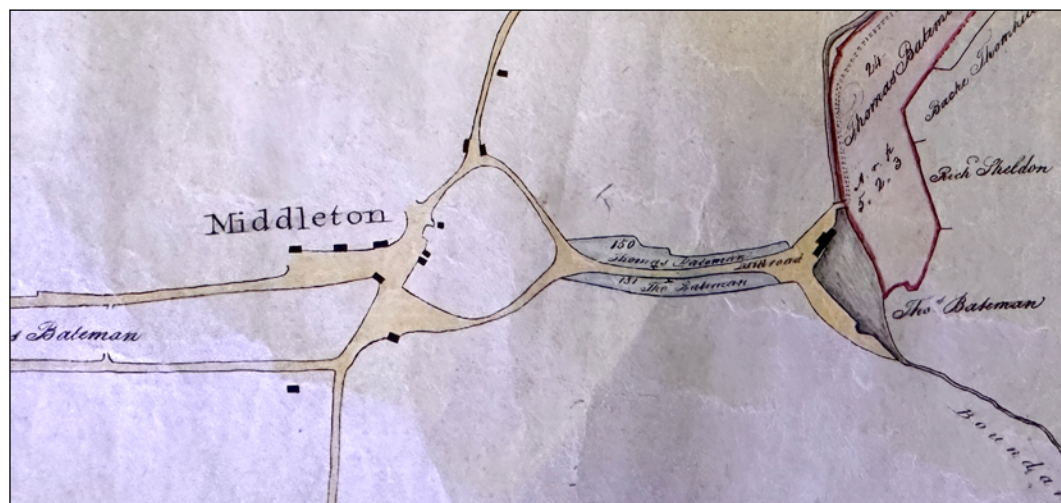
The wishing well is a natural sough (drain) which provided the village with water for hundreds if not thousands of years. Its route up to the village along Dale Lane must have relied on the effort of villagers and the strength of donkeys and horses. But in 1875, Thomas William Bateman adapted the disused Tape Mill into a pumping station, powered first by water, then petrol and finally electricity. The water was stored in reservoirs above the village and flowed down to three village taps. This ended in 1955 when mains water was introduced to the village.

Corn mills have occupied Middleton Dale since the 16c., the last built by the Bateman family in the 1820s. A little further upstream another water powered mill made red tape, pillboxes, bobbins, paint and lace before becoming a school room. On some maps the lane was labelled Tape Mill Lane indicating a daily commute or a school run for residents of Middleton. For local farmers this was the track used to deliver and fetch sheep for their annual visit to the sheep wash until 1953.

But Dale Lane was more than a local track. In the village it formed a junction with The Coach Road and Weadow Lane, and in Middleton Dale the Bradford provided a natural passage to the Portway at Alport and the length of Derbyshire via the Derwent Valley.

Further Reading

- 1813 Township of Middleton (Middleton Hall)
- 1819 Enclosure Map (Derbyshire Records Office)
- 1841 Middleton Estate Surveyors Sketchbook (Middleton Hall)
- 2001 Our Middleton, residents of Middleton by Youlgrave



1819 Enclosure Map of Middleton (detail)

