



1926

Rosedale and the Industrial Revolution

In the North York Moors valley of Rosedale, over 150 years ago, the discovery of high-grade 'magnetic' ironstone or iron ore gave rise to a boom time for the sleepy valley. The 'age of iron' had started in Rosedale.

Soon, the dale-sides were covered with mine workings and massive calcining kilns, where the process of extracting iron from the stone began. A railway link was built with a trackway looping around the dale end, then diverting across the open moor to Ingleby Incline and onward with a connection at Battersby Junction. From here the iron ore was transported to be converted into iron in the hungry blast furnaces of Cleveland and Durham.

From across Britain and beyond, there came a great influx of workers into Rosedale, with the small rural community of just 755 people in 1851 rising to a population of over 3,000 mainly industrial workers by 1871 - so in just twenty years there was a staggering fourfold increase in the number of people living and working in the valley.

A range of labour skills was needed for the mining operations - miners, engineers, railwaymen, carpenters, blacksmiths, builders, stonemasons, horse-keepers, navvies and many other types of tradesmen. (Navvies were the men who actually built the railways.) Small cottages were built to house the workers and their families. Rosedale became a hive of industrial activity and commerce.

Well over ten million tons of iron ore were extracted from Rosedale's mines and transported to the ironworks of Teesside and beyond. However, after the Great War (1914-18) the demand for iron ore reduced. Combined with the availability of cheaper imports, this caused the Rosedale ironstone mining industry to cease in 1926. By 1931 the population of the Dale fell to just less than 500.

Remains of abandoned mines, domestic dwellings and ruined industrial structures, including the route of the railway, can be seen today. The impressive stone arches of the giant kilns can still be seen towering above the valley today, dominating the landscape and reminding us of the former importance of ironstone mining in Rosedale.



QUESTIONS

1. When did the age of iron start in Rosedale?
2. What were the upper dale-sides covered in?
3. Where was the iron ore transported to?
4. Where did the workers come from to work at Rosedale?
5. What size of increase in population was there between 1851 and 1871?
6. Give four examples of the labour skills that were needed to support the mining operations:
8. How many tons of iron ore were extracted from the Rosedale mines?
9. Why do you think there was less demand for iron ore after The Great War (WW1)?
10. Why else was there less demand for iron ore, which caused the Rosedale ironstone mining industry to cease in 1926?
11. How many years later did the population in Rosedale fall to under 500?

Find out more:

- Former industrial sites can be visited on walks from Blakey Ridge and Rosedale Abbey.
- Rosedale History Society, <http://rosedale.ryedaleconnect.org.uk/history-contacts/>
- 'Land of Iron' heritage project, <http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/looking-after/landofiron>