



Allow 1½ hours for this walk

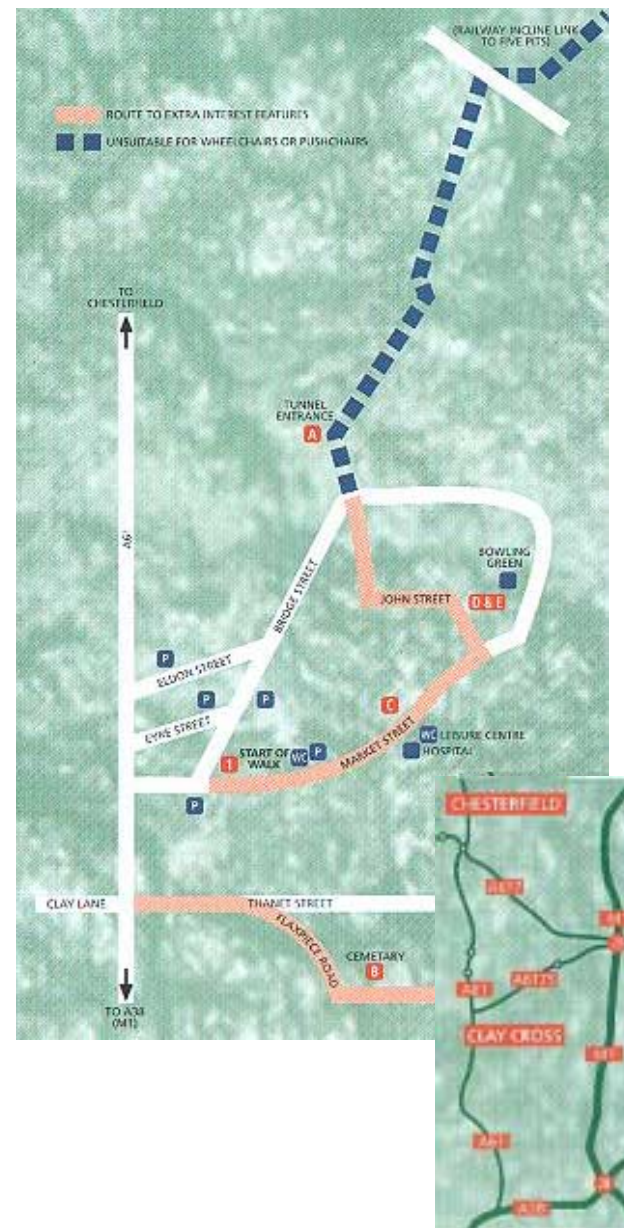
CLAY CROSS has a longer history than first appears. The high Street is built on the line of the Roman road between Derby and Chesterfield now known as **Rykneild Street** and was later to be part of the Sheffield-Derby turnpike road of I 756 before becoming the A61 in the 20th century.

Clay Cross is on a high ridge which forms the watershed between the south-flowing river Amber and the northward river Rother. The sandstone ridge had coal outcropping in the valley to the west of Clay Cross and this coal was to prove the key to development of the town in the mid-19th century

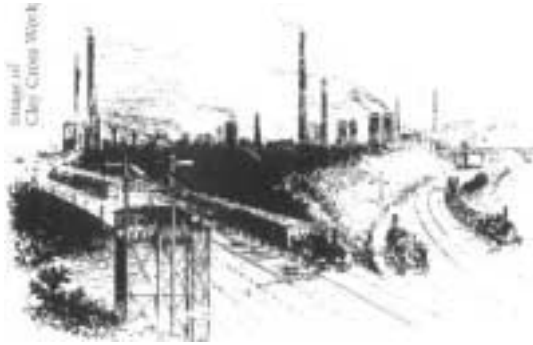
The vignette of Sanderson's map of 1835 shows Clay Cross as a small settlement at the crossroads of what is now Thanet Street and Clay Lane. Within the next twenty years the township was to spread northwards and expand towards the size we see today **George Stephenson's** route of the **North Midland Railway** between Derby and Leeds took the line under Clay Cross in a mile-long tunnel. While driving this tunnel, between 1837 and 1838, contractors discovered for Stephenson what the local people knew already - here was coal in commercial quantities.



Inspired by this find, George and Robert Stephenson, plus four other partners (Known as 'the Liverpool Party') brought their financial resources to bear and, in 1839, formed **The Clay Cross Company**. They went on to develop a business including collieries, coke ovens, brickworks, limeworks, iron furnaces and foundry. Their ductile iron pipe production continued until December 2000.



The Company's development prompted the rapid expansion of the town. Its contribution was more than 400 houses for employees, plus school and churches; and for many years the Company was the town's main source of gas and electricity.



The earliest of the workers' housing was cleared away in the mid 20th century but Clay Cross Hall, Eldon House and "Gaffers' Row" in Market Street still stand today as testimony to the Stephenson's and the Company's housing endeavours. Clay Cross Hall was built in 1845 for Charles Binns, the General Manager of the Clay Cross Company. The hall subsequently became the home of members of the Jackson family who, in 1871, acquired all the shares of the Clay Cross Company and continued in ownership until 1974.

We hope that, by taking a short walk around the town, you will discover some of that heritage passed down to us by our Victorian forebears who took such pride in their achievements. They would, if they were able, be pleased to see you visit the place in which they spent so much of their lives.



OUR WALK, for which at least 1 1/2 hours should be allowed, starts at the round tower emerging from the pavement on Market Street. This is (1) the North Midland Railway tunnel ventilator number 5. This ventilator is the deepest of the tunnel's 9 shafts. At this point the railway is 44 metres below your feet and 110 metres above sea level, being at the summit of the line between Derby and Leeds. From the line's opening in 1840 until the last days of steam in die 1960s, smoke would gently waft from each ventilator after the passing of every train but such events are now a rarity



The site of the modern offices and shops beside the ventilator was once the railway's goods depot for the town, with wagons being brought up the incline through Clay Cross works to load and unload. Passengers had a little further to go. The Midland Railway provided a footpath, known as the "Black Path", to its station a mile north of the town, between Tupton and Hephthorne Lane. The station has long since closed but the path is still accessible from the end of Bridge Street and gives the chance of a glimpse of the northern, castellated, **railway tunnel portal (A).**

Now proceed along Bridge Street to its junction with Eldon Street. Here you will see a pair of houses with a shallow, deep-eaved roof. This is **Eldon house (2)**, built in 1840 as the offices of George Stephenson & Company. As it is now in private ownership its privacy should be respected.

From Eldon House, proceed up Eldon Street, turning left at the top into High Street. Although the shops here date from only the 1860s, you are now on the route of the Roman "Rykneild Street" and the Sheffield-Derby turnpike road. From 1786 until 1876 a tollhouse to collect fees from travellers was situated close to where the Post Office now stands. The two circular stone pillars which formed the toll gate can now be seen at the gateway to the house "Wynds Point" on the west side of the A61 about half a mile south of the town.

After crossing the High Street at the pedestrian lights, turn right at the Post Office, into Holmgate Road. At the next corner can be seen a building with a stone marked "Alma Lodge" (3). The stone marks the building's use in 1900 but from its construction in 1847 up to 1899 it had been a Wesleyan Chapel.

On the opposite side of the corner is the rear entrance to **Alma House (4)** the home of colliery owner, Thomas Houldsworth. A churchwarden for 25 years, Houldsworth owned collieries on the land to the west of Alma House, where Kenning Park now stands. Houldsworth's Clay Cross pits became exhausted around 1850 so he developed North Wingfield's Alma Colliery (named after the Crimean War battle of 1854) while also building his house of the same name here in Clay Cross. The private house boasts a flat roofed section, bounded by iron railings. It is said that on Sunday afternoons the town band assembled on the roof to play church music to the Houldsworth family and guests below.

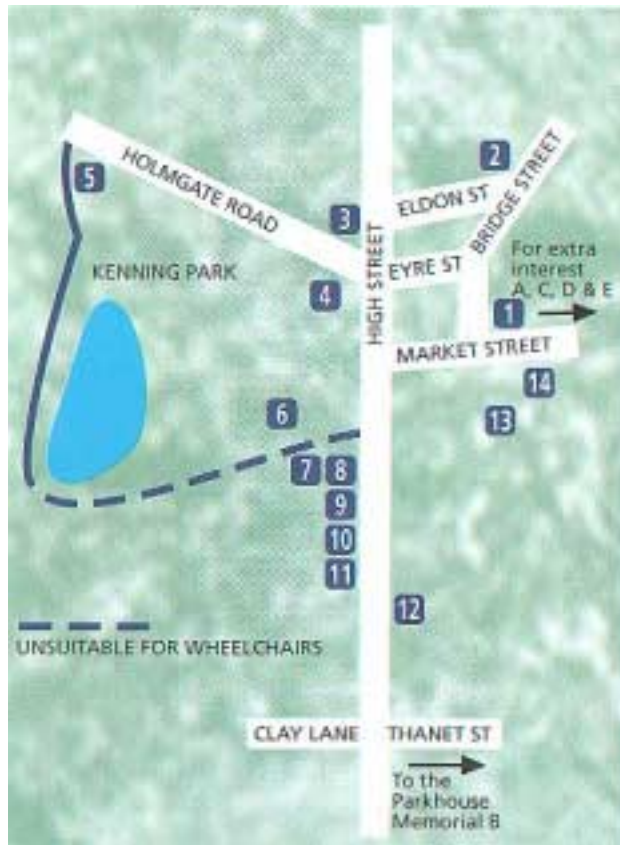


Now continue down Holmgate Road, keeping to the left and proceed beyond the Library, for about 250 yards, then turn left to Kenning Park (5). On entering the park, cross the bridge to your right and walk beside the pond. This is the focal point of Kenning Park, providing opportunities for angling and watching the range of birdlife in and around the pond. Swans, mallard, moorhen and coot are a common sight on the pond and its large wooded island provides a refuge for these as well as a variety of other birds. The surrounding mature trees of oak, ash, willow and alder, and the remnants of the ancient hedgerows bordering the park, provide habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Once a site of colliery workings, the park was donated to the town in the 1930s by pioneer of car distributorships and native of Clay Cross, George Kenning. From the park it is possible to get views of Alma Lodge and two other notable buildings, Melbourne Lodge and Springfield House.

Now follow the path to its end and turn left, behind the water sub-station, and head for the bridge across a small stream. Cross over the bridge and then follow the path beside the wall up to the High Street. On your left is Melbourne Lodge (6) once the property of Abraham Linacre and taking its name from his Australian connections, not the one-time British Prime Minister.

On the right is Springfield House (7), built by the Clay Cross Company as the residence of its engineer, William Howe, from 1866 until his death in 1872.



Continuing along the lane, turn right, on to High Street. The first building you pass is the former Victoria Hotel (8). Named after the Australian State, it was built by local man Abraham Linacre in 1878 who had returned from Australia having made his

fortune. Adjoining, is the much smaller but no less important Clay Cross Company Colliery Hospital (9), built in 1864 and one of the earliest of its kind. The hospital, paid for by the workers, was a wedding present to Charles Binns' daughter on her marriage to the Company surgeon, Dr. Wilson.

Next to the Parish Church is a much extended stone building, built in 1833 with just two bays either side of the front door. This is Hill House (10), bought by the North Midland Railway in 1837 as an office for the resident engineer, Frederick Swanwick. After the tunnel's completion, the house was sold to the Clay Cross Company. Between 1840 and 1866 it was successively occupied by the company's engineers, James Campbell and William Howe, then by Dr. Wilson.



The Parish Church of St. Bartholomew (11) was consecrated in 1851 and its spire added in 1857. The graves of William Howe, Engineer to the Clay Cross Company and the colliery owner, Thomas Houldsworth are notable. The first vicar was the Rev'd Joseph Oldham whose wife, Emma, was the sister of the founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement, William Morris.



Upon the death of William Howe, Morris was commissioned to provide a stained glass memorial window which remains in place today. For arrangements to view the window, please consult the church notice board.

Note that three of the nine railway tunnel ventilators are visible in the near ground. In the distance can be seen the gritstone ridge marking the edge of the Ashover anticline. Its Fabrick Rock visible on the skyline is some 982 feet above sea level and, with nearby Crich Stand, forms the southern most part of the Pennine range.

Continue southwards to the traffic lights at the junction of Thanet Street, Clay Lane and High Street.

Here is the original settlement of Clay Cross, with the pre-railway era George and Dragon on the corner.



If you wish to view the Parkhouse Colliery Memorial (B) cross High Street at the traffic lights and walk along Thanet Street to Flaxpiece Road, then Cemetery Road (about 8 minutes). The memorial is to the forty-five men and boys who lost their lives in the underground explosion at the colliery in November 1882.

Returning to the traffic lights at the end of Thanet Street, proceed along the east side of High Street, pausing at the pit wheels and mine tub wagons forming the memorial to the miners of the area (12).

Here at the gardens across the road, were the sums of Stephenson's company housing, Pleasant Row, Chapel Row and Cellar Row.



Continue along High Street to the corner of Market Street, the site of the Clay Cross Pioneer Industrial Co-operative Society's first shop in 1860.

Next, turn right into Market Street, noting the Italianate school buildings and clock tower, off to the right, about 100 yards down Market Street. Erected in 1854 by the Company, and at different times being the **Mechanics Institute (13)** or higher grade school, they were handed over to the Clay Lane Urban District School Board in 1893. The more traditionally styled school buildings to the rear date from 1884 and formed the Board's Senior Boys' School until the 1930s when they became the Junior School and cater for children of that age group to this day.

The walk finishes opposite the railway tunnel ventilator, at the original Police Station (14), currently the Countryside Centre, on Market Street. The building no longer has its cells but continues to provide a useful service to the local community

For Extra Interest A further diversion, to extend the walk by about one mile, can be made by continuing down Market Street from the starting point. Passing the fire station, chapel, a row of stone Victorian "villa" type houses and the Community Hospital, you reach Sharley Park Leisure Centre (refreshment and toilet facilities available throughout the day).

Opposite is "**Gaffers' Row**" (C) or more correctly Egstow Terrace, built in 1846 and the only surviving example of early Company employees' housing. Of better than average standard of their time, they were built for the foreman grades. Despite external alterations in recent years, the houses have retained much of their distinctive character. Further along Market Street, through the settlement of Egstow, you reach John Street.

Turning left in to John Street brings you to the Company's bowling green. Its clubhouse is the last of four coaches from the **Ashover Light Railway (D)**, a narrow gauge line opened from Clay Cross works to quarries at Ashover Butts in 1925. Passenger services ceased in 1936 but, since 1952 coach No. 4 has had a new lease of life beside the bowling green.

The octagonal building behind the bowling green was once the Ashover Light Railway's "**Where the Rainbow Ends**" Café (E). Originally constructed at end of the line at Ashover Butts in 1926 it was relocated to the present site and reopened in 1952 for use by the Clay Cross Company sports club.

From this point you can either return along Market Street to the starting point or follow the path to the northern entrance of **Clay Cross Tunnel**. Stout footwear is recommended for this part of the walk and particular care should be taken due to the path's uneven surface.

To reach the tunnel, continue to the end of John Street, turn right down a footpath with two gates, cross Bridge Street to the works entrance and go through, heading for the white footpath signs to the left side of the works yard. On reaching the steel palisade fencing, keep to the footpath on the right and continue alongside the fencing to a footbridge



over the railway cutting. The tunnel entrance can be seen from that point.

To return to the town centre, retrace your steps to the starting point.

Alternatively, continue down the path alongside the railway to the site of the original passenger station for Clay Cross, at the road bridge over the railway. Apart from a good view of the trains at the busy junction of the Derby and Erewash Valley lines, crossing the bridge to Hephthorne Lane brings you to the foot of the former railway incline which links in to the Five Pits Trail (for details see separate leaflets).

For people wishing to explore the surrounding countryside, Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No 269, *Chesterfield & Alfreton*, is recommended, as is the leaflet *Clay Cross & Ashover Circular Ride*, available from local tourist offices and countryside centres.

Finally, we are grateful to local historian, (Cliff Williams, for the information and guidance which has made this publication possible.

This leaflet has been commissioned by the Heritage and Tourism theme group which is part of the Community Reeneration Project. The group consists of volunteers who have donated their own time to compile this publication. Special thanks go to Avril Millership, David Wilmot and Corinna Beatson.

Please Note - Some paths on the trail are not suitable for those using wheelchairs or pushchairs, namely the uneven surface of the path to the Tunnel Portal, as well path from Kenning Park to the High Street being very steep and narrow, with a bollard at the top.

All Users of this trail guide do so at their own risk and the publishers do not accept any responsibility for the safety of persons following the walks described. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information is correct at the time of going to press, the publishers cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

