

## The Derby to Ashby-de-la Zouch Railway Line

The southern portion of the Cloud Trail between Melbourne and Worthington follows the route of the old Midland railway line which ran from Derby to Ashby-de-la-Zouch. This railway can be seen on the website's map. The section between Derby and Melbourne was opened on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1868 and consisted of a double track line with stations at Derby Midland, Peartree, Chellaston and Melbourne. Just over one year later, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 1869, the line was continued on as a single track from Melbourne via Tonge to Worthington. This enabled the line to carry lime stone from the Cloud Hill quarry. The final stretch of the line to Ashby-de-la-Zouch was completed on the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1874 with a single track section.

The line provided a regular passenger service, and with the Peartree railway station being near to the Baseball Ground so some of Derby County's fans would use the train to go to the match. The arrival of a bus service, however, led to a steady decline in the number of passengers, and in 1930, the passenger service came to an end. But the line was still used to carry freight and there were numerous excursions for local people at the weekend and in the evening.

During the Second World War, the portion of the line between Chellaston and Ashby was used by the British Royal Engineers and their American allies for *practising the demolition and rebuilding of railways and the running and maintenance of a railway line and its rolling stock. There was also a bridge building school.*<sup>1</sup>

After the war, the line's main use was that of transporting lime, lime stone and coal from the Cloud Hill quarry and the New Lount Colliery. This did not require the link from Ashby to Worthington, and in 1955, it was discontinued

The last passenger train to use the line for the return journey from Derby to Ashby is believed to have been a rail tour that took place on Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1952 and I am told that on a June in 1971, another rail tour completed the return journey from Derby to Worthington.

By the mid 1980s, the line had become completely overgrown and in 1988 the track was raised and the portion between the Trent and Mersey Canal became part of the Cloud Trail.

<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia