

Redditch Roads

1: The Roman Road

Roman Roads in Britain

In Britain the Romans constructed a comprehensive network of paved trunk roads during their four centuries of occupation (43 - 410 A.D.).

Pre-Roman Britons used unpaved tracks for their communications, including very ancient ones running along elevated ridges of hills.

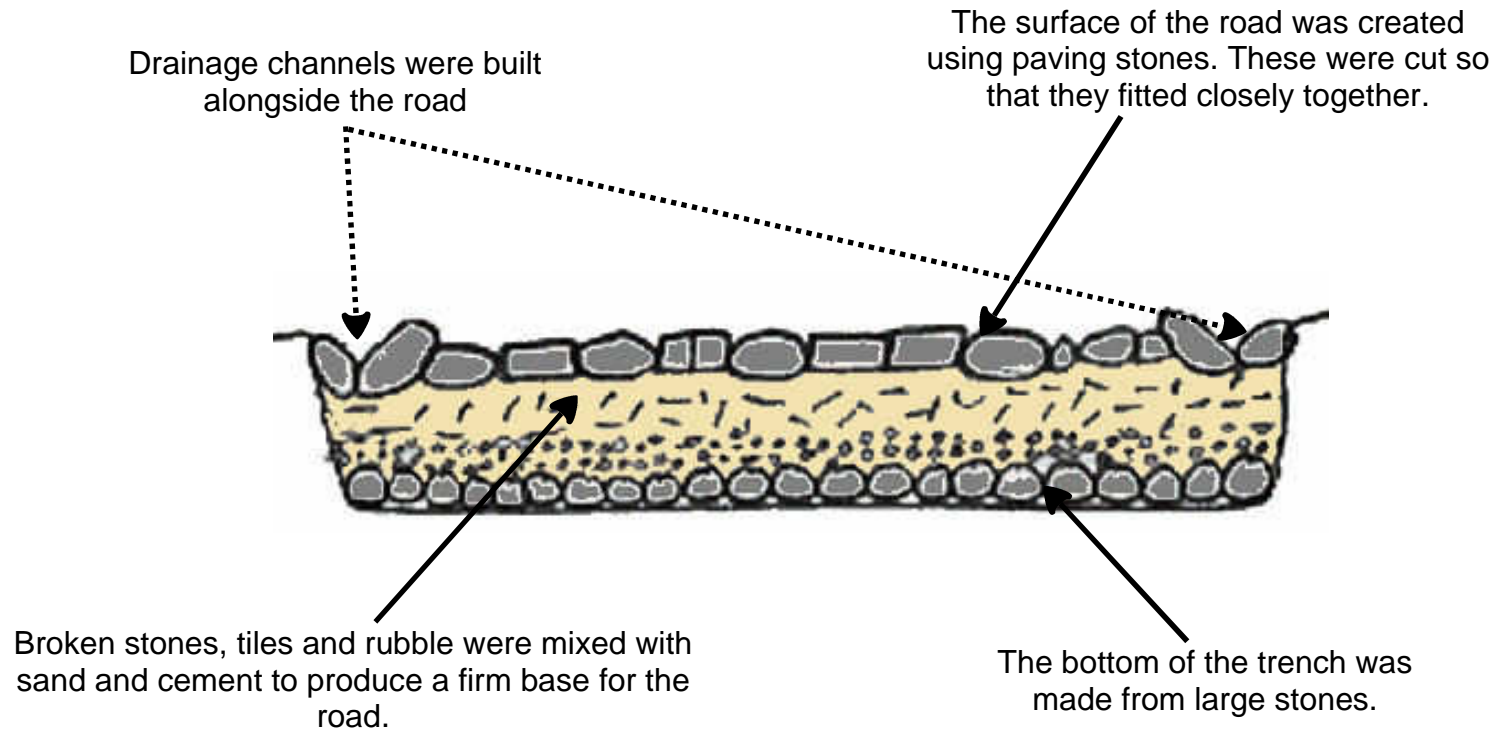
In contrast, the Roman roads were paved, to permit freight-wagons to be used in all seasons and weather to allow the rapid movement of troops and military supplies.

Roman roads remained in use as core trunk roads for centuries after the Romans withdrew from Britain in 410 A.D.

Systematic construction of paved highways did not resume in England until the 18th century.



Roman Road Design



The roads were designed to follow a course which was as straight as possible as this provided the quickest route for the marching Roman Legions. The road was dug about one metre in depth and about seven metres in width. Large stones were then put in the base and used for lining the sides. It was then filled gravel and sand. The surface was created with stones often pentagonal in shape (five sided) and fitted together to make the top layer of the road.

The roads were sloped from the centre so that rainwater would drain off into ditches at the sides of the roads.

Stone mile markers were often placed along the roads to let travels know how far to the next safe overnight stop.

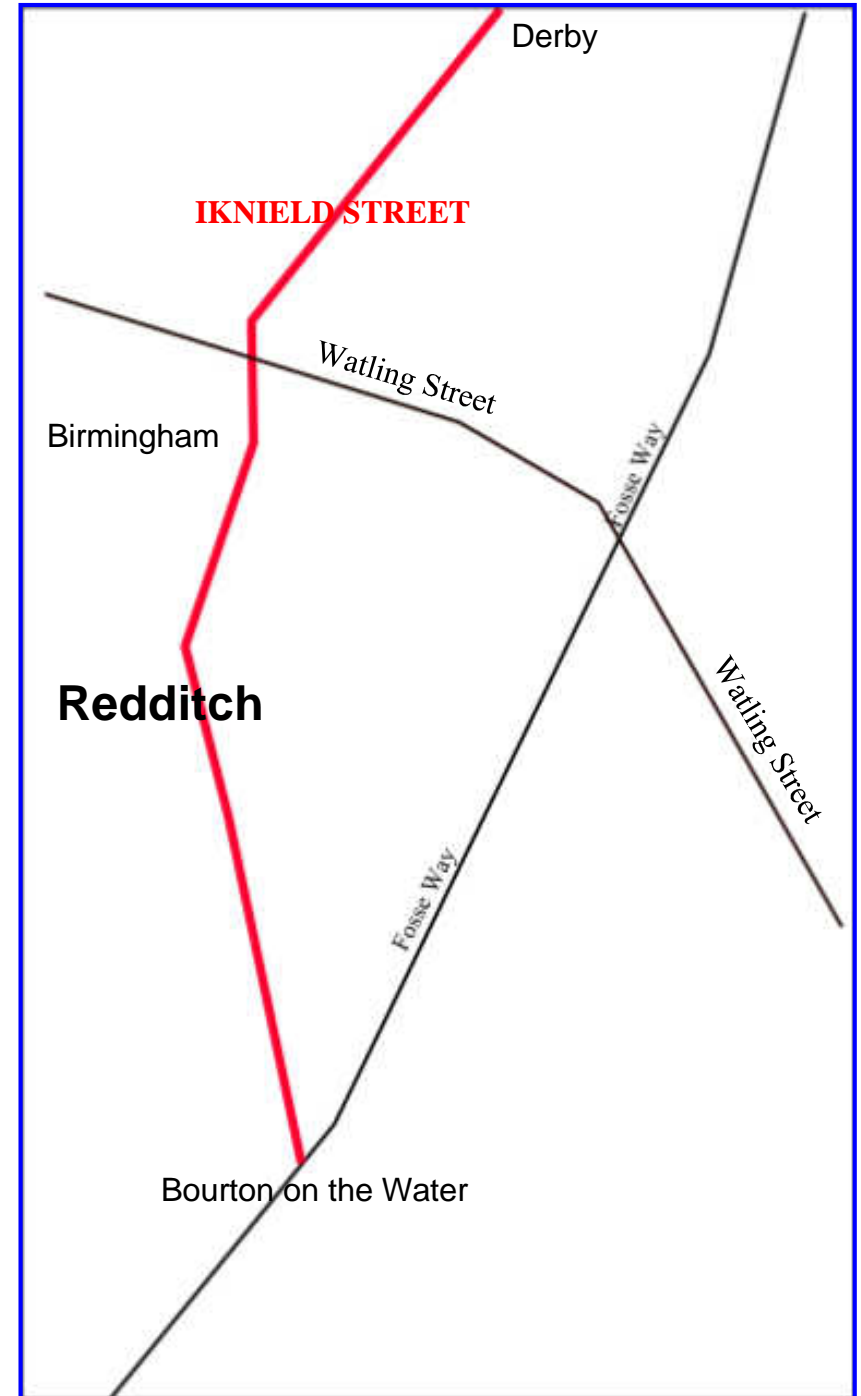
Iknield Street

Iknield Street (sometimes known as Ryknild Street) was a Roman Road which began at the Fosse Way at Bourton on the Water.

The route went North crossing the River Avon at Bidford and eventually continuing to Alcester, which was a roman town and had a roman fort overlooking the junction where the river Alne joins the river Arrow.

Beyond Alcester it continued North, passing through the area which is now Redditch and continuing through Birmingham crossing Watling Street (A5) north of Birmingham at Wall. It then continued past Burton on Trent, Derby and finished at Rotherham, which was a major Roman Fort.

It was an important Roman N- S road and the total length was about 80 miles.

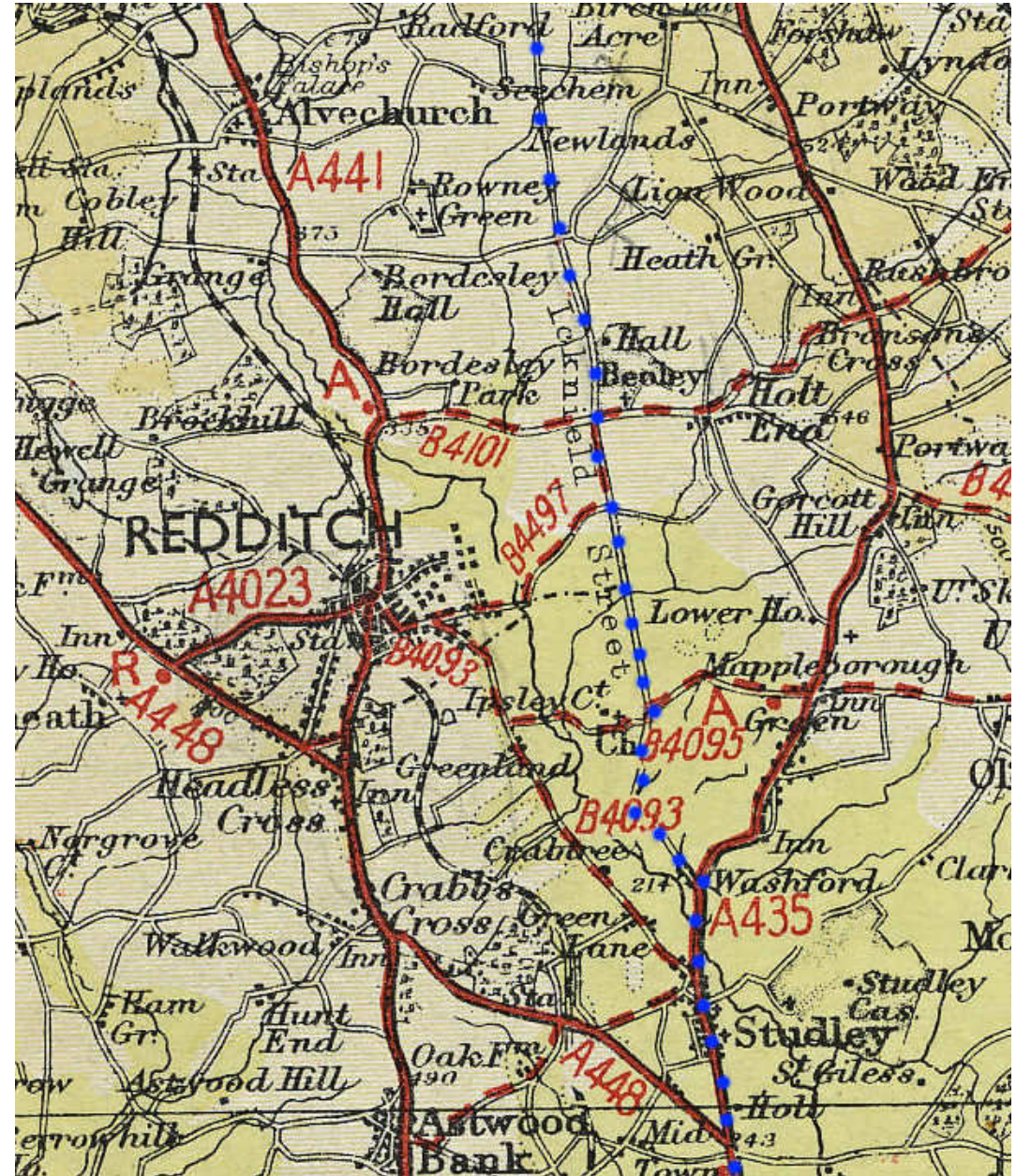


Modern Route

As with most Roman Roads, Ikniel Street was incorporated into the roads which slowly appeared over the following centuries.

It can be followed on a modern atlas from it start at Bourton on the Water through modern roads and tracks to well beyond north of Birmingham.

Until the 1960's it passed by Redditch as a minor country road, although a short portion carried the B4497 which joined the B4101 route to Coventry.



Route through Redditch

With the arrival of the New Town, the area to the east of the River Arrow was covered with housing and industrial developments.

However, the route of Ikniel Street was not lost.

Stretches of the road were retained as footpaths as the photographs (right) show.

The top photograph is the path between Church Hill Centre and Papermill Drive and the lower photograph is the path parallel to Ikniel Street Drive in the Arrow valley Park South.

So, walking along these paths follow a route developed for the Roman Army nearly 2,000 years ago.



Designed, produced and presented by

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