

DESFORD

Deresford or Diresford from the Domesday Book of 1086, but the origin of the name may be older, since it means 'Deor's Ford, Deor being an Anglo-Saxon personal name. The village is on a hill – so it is strange that the name refers to a stream crossing. Perhaps the name is older than the settlement itself.

The remains of two Romano-British kilns were found on the demolition of the Georgian Manor House in Main Street in 1959, though this is not necessarily an indication of a permanent settlement. To the south of the village, lies part of the Roman Road from Mancetter to Leicester.

Employment

Farming used the Open Field system until Enclosure in 1760. Prior to that, in 1729, William Barnes, in his will, gave £100 to the Rector, Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor for the interest to be used for apprenticing poor children in the village. The money was invested in the purchase of land in the Open Fields and on Enclosure the trustees were allotted two fields between Station Road and Leicester Lane, adjoining the Heath Brook. Signs of ridge and furrow can still be seen today. The Barnes Charity still owns these fields and the income benefits Desford school leavers going on to Further Education.

Framework knitting, plus other allied trades such as needlemakers, was important in the 19th century. In 1832 the Leicester to Swannington Railway line, built by Robert Stephenson, passed through Desford; the third oldest railway in the world. In 1875, an attempt was made to sink a mine at Lindridge, in the parish, but due to constant flooding this was abandoned. In 1902 Desford Pit was opened, near Bagworth, and provided much employment until it closed in 1984.

Taking off

Desford had an aerodrome. In 1916, during WW1, the Royal Flying Corps rented a field to be used as an emergency landing ground. Leicestershire Aero Club rented 43 acres of land from farmer, John Cart in late 1929. In August 1935 the original site, and an additional 56 acres for future expansion, was bought by the aviation instrumentation company, Reid & Sigrist, to create one of the Civilian Flying Schools as part of the RAF's expansion scheme. It became No. 7 Elementary Flying Training School in WW2. In 1953 RAF Desford closed and the site was acquired by Caterpillar.

The old part of the village was designated a Conservation Area in 1981.

There is a history of dissenters in the village, including the building of a Strict Baptist Chapel in 1800, where William Gadsby used to preach. The Parish Church of St. Martin's is largely 13th/14th century. The list of rectors goes back to 1209.

The Malt House is possibly mediaeval in origin and was saved from demolition in the 1960s by the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.

Old Manor Farm, c1600-1640, on High Street, was occupied by the

Muxloe family in the 17th century and was a working farm until the 1990s.

In the 14th century the Manor of Desford became part of the Duchy of Lancaster and remains so today.



Old Manor Farm

More information can be found at: <https://www.desfordparishcouncil.co.uk/desford-and-district-local-histo.html>