

Dawley Heritage Trail

This delightful trail takes in much of Dawley's rich history and culture. Along its route, you will discover the sites of former collieries, old tramways, canals, long-silenced wharves and railway platforms. Much of this industrial legacy has also come to provide distinctive habitats for a variety of wildlife which you will encounter on the way.

At Castle Pools you might pause a moment to picture in medieval times a castle that once stood there. There are churches and chapels, the places of squatters' cottages, the site of a natural spout and a 'holy' well, not to mention furnace pools, a former cinderhill, and a pottery where you wouldn't have expected one, all with their own fascinating and socially important stories to tell.

There are memorials to tragedies, and the stories of some of Dawley's prominent individuals, such as Captain Webb, who, in 1875, became the first person to swim the English Channel unaided, and more recently, Edith Pargeter, the author 'Ellis Peters' of the Brother Cadfael stories.

Accessibility: The trail is for the most part on the level but there are one or two steeper sections. Boots or stout shoes are recommended although the majority of the walk is on well-surfaced paths. Short road sections, pools and watercourses require particular care and supervision of children.

Length: About 10km (6 miles) with short-cut options.

Time: 2½-3 hours (Short Cut Walks: 1 hour)

Key Features: Industrial and social history, archaeology, nature conservation, views.

Refreshments: At pubs in Dawley, Little Dawley Doseley, Horsehay; cafés in Dawley.

Public Transport: Buses to Dawley, Little Dawley and Horsehay.

- 1 Start at the top end of Burton Street (at the junction with Station Road) and walk towards High Street. About half way down on the right you will see two or three shops within an arched frontage. This was the Old Market Hall.

The indoor market was a handsome building of 1867 with arched façade, vaults beneath and a clock and bell tower, long since removed. It was once busy and prosperous but with changing social and economic patterns its fortunes waned and it was converted into shops.



Dawley High Street

Courtesy of Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

- 2 At the bottom of the High Street, near the Lord Hill pub, stands the refurbished memorial to Matthew Webb, Dawley's most famous son.

Captain Matthew Webb, born in 1848, was the first person to swim the English Channel unaided in 1875, but died only eight years later attempting to swim the rapids below the Niagara Falls. His memorial was erected by public subscription in 1909 and bears the inscription 'Nothing Great Is Easy'. The Lord Hill pub was one of Dawley's oldest, around which the town's centre grew up in the early 19c.



Captain Webb memorial

Courtesy of Shropshire Archives

Facing the pub, walk forward to your right into New Street. On the right is a substantial building with a white-painted frontage: the Old Town Hall.

Originally built as a Temperance Hall in 1873, the building passed to Dawley Urban District Council. During its lifetime it has served as council offices, public meeting venue, concert hall, dance hall, theatre, and place of worship.

- 3 50m further down, cross over to the pavement on the left hand side of the road and continue walking to the end of the road. This junction is known as Portley Corner, with the former Portley Colliery having occupied land to the left of where you are.

The colliery is one of many that characterised the Dawley landscape in its industrial hey-day of the 19c/early 20c. Owned by the Coalbrookdale Company, it extracted coal and ironstone.

- 4 Turn left into Finger Road/Springhill Road junction and make your way up to the mini-roundabout where you should turn left again into Hinkshay Road. You will soon come to Mount Gilbert Special School on your left, formerly Langley School. To the left of the school is the site of the former Langley Field Furnaces and behind the school was Langley Field Colliery.

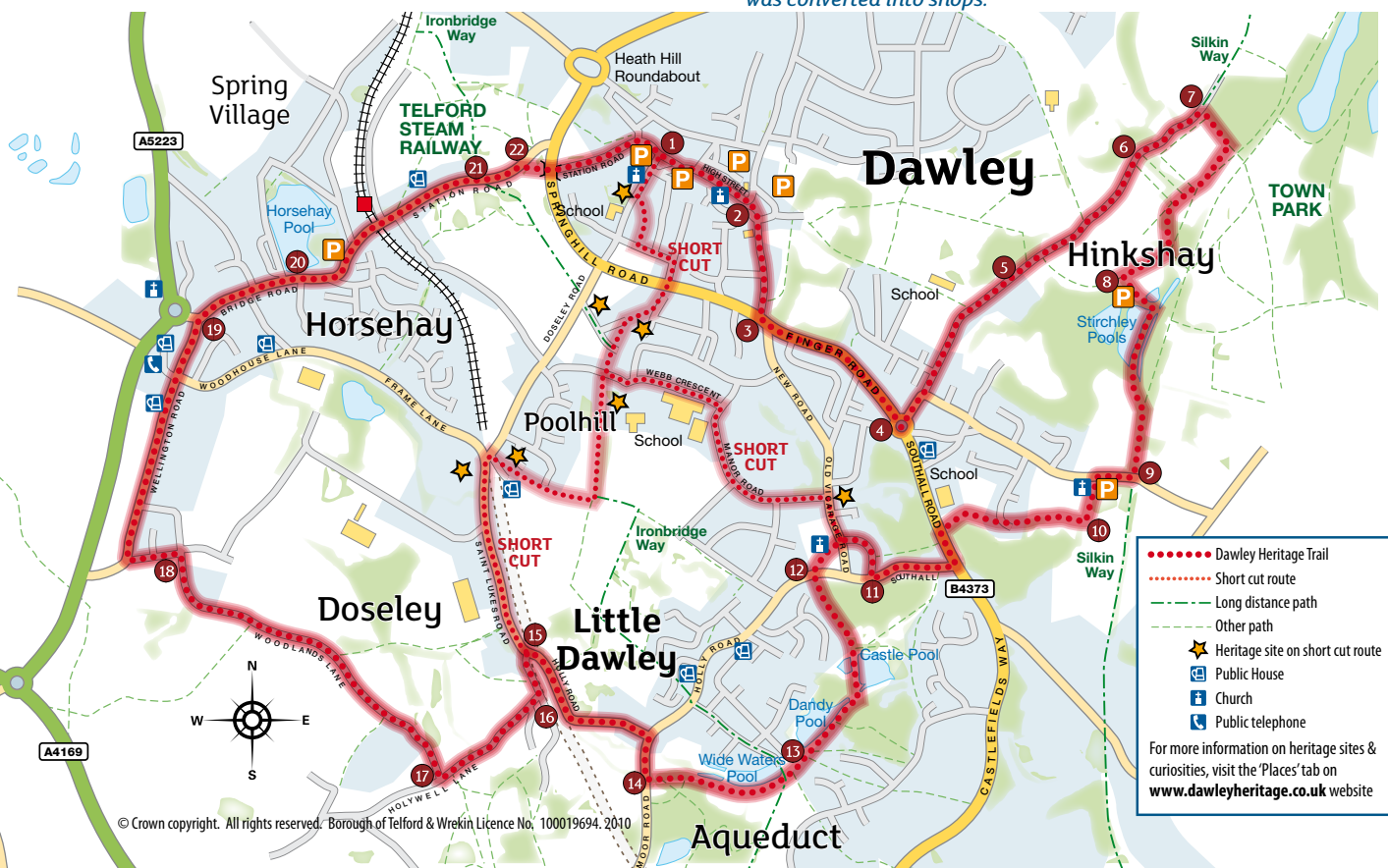
Langley School, which cost £3,000 and accommodated 600 pupils, was set up in Dawley in 1878 by the newly formed School Board.

The blast furnaces came into blast in 1824 and 1825 and survived for about 50 years. The nearby colliery was a considerable enterprise with ten shafts operating between 1803-1885, producing coal and ironstone.

- 5 A further 160m on, you will notice a pair of old cottages on the right hand side of the road, and beyond these, an old gas lamp and a possible Second World War air raid shelter in a field. A further 200m on brings you to an area known as the Jerry Rails.

The track which crosses the Hinkshay Road at this point is the route of an old tramway, used for the movement of raw materials.

Continue forward. There are some metal railings on the opposite side of the road. Cross over.



The deserted area behind the railings is the site of the former Ever Ready Battery Factory, which employed mainly women from the Dawley area. It was demolished in 1994 after only 38 years. At the end of the railings was a 19C Church of England Mission Chapel and a short-lived Mission School. Next to this was Hinkshay Village, comprising mainly three terraces of workers' cottages, built by the 19C Botfield family of industrialists.

- 6 Walk round the bend in the road. Off to the right in the middle distance you can see a prominent brick chimney:

The chimney is the sole survivor of the Stirchley Blast Furnace & Chemical Works. The furnaces came into blast in 1827, the chemical works for the period 1886-1932.

- 7 Directly ahead of you there is a blue sign marked Silkin Way. Turn right here, and after 40m turn right again, also signed as the Silkin Way. You are now in Telford Town Park Local Nature Reserve.

The reserve supports a variety of wildlife. The woodland is mostly oak, birch and willow, and attracts many birds including song thrushes. The expanses of grassland provide a rich habitat for butterfly species, grasshoppers and crickets.

On entering the stretch of woodland ahead of you, look to your right. You may be able to discern parts of a brick wall, the site of the Stirchley Forge & Nail Factory.



Great spotted woodpecker

Courtesy of Glen Bishon

Built in 1828 by William Botfield the forge and rolling mills used pig iron from the nearby Stirchley Blast Furnaces. It changed hands a number of times, as did the short-lived Nail Factory, before closure in the late 19C/early 20C.

As you walk on, look to your right again where you may glimpse some brick tunnels, believed to be tramway tunnels or air shafts. Where the Silkin Way bears off to the left you should turn right through a gate and follow the Dawley Heritage Trail signs.

Off to the left is one of the five 'species-rich' grasslands within the Nature Reserve, containing such plants as common knapweed and red clover, as well as small heath, orange tip, ringlet and comma butterfly species.

Where the paths cross ahead there is small brick building off to the right. Turn sharp left here.

- 8 As you approach Stirchley Pools car park, take the path bearing off to the left and dropping away.

Stirchley Pools were probably built as reservoirs to maintain water levels within the adjacent Shropshire Canal.

Continue straight on this path until you reach Stirchley Bottom Pool to your right. Turn right at the Dawley Heritage Trail waymarker post. The remains of this section of the Shropshire Canal are to the left.

In 1788 William Reynolds began extending the Shropshire Canal southwards from Donnington Wood to the River Severn with eastern and western arms being built south of Southall.

Bottom Pool is a favourite haunt of the heron, and home to pike, bream, perch, chub and carp, also many species of waterfowl, and to damsel and dragonflies in summer.

At the end of the pool turn left. You will come to a tarmac path where you should turn right. You have rejoined the Silkin Way, which leads ahead to a prominent road bridge. A few metres before this on the right hand side you should be able to make out the surviving brickwork of the platform of the Dawley & Stirchley Railway Station, with the goods yard off to the left.

Stirchley Station opened in 1861 on the London & North Western Railway's (LNWR) branch line to Coalport. The station was renamed Dawley & Stirchley in 1923, closed to passengers as early as 1952 and to freight in 1964.

Just before the bridge take the small track off to the right which rises to meet Stirchley Lane.

- 9 Turn right and carefully cross the road. 30m on you will come to a clearing on the left with a lovely chapel to the right. Turn left here.

Built in 1840, Stirchley Wesleyan Chapel has the curiosity of actually being within Dawley parish, due to the landowner refusing to sell land to the nonconformist movement.

With the chapel on your right, continue straight ahead, passing through the gate.

- 10 After 100m in the woodland, turn right. 200m further on, you will see some modern houses ahead and to the right. Pass along the trail immediately to the left of the brick wall of the garage of the end property. Continue on this track until Southall Special School comes into view on the right. On the left is the site of the former Southall Mine. A little way further on, you will come to the junction with Southall Road. Turn left and continue forward until just before the junction with Southall. Cross over with care, and turn right into Southall. Stay on the right hand side, but on the left just before the mound, you can see a narrow track which leads down to the site of the former Dawley Castle Furnaces.

The furnaces, owned by the Coalbrookdale Company, operated between 1810-1883 and supplied pig iron to the company's forges at Horsehay. Both these works and the nearby mine are presumed to have acquired their names from their proximity to the historic Dawley Castle, although slag from the ironworks is believed to have obliterated all remains of the fortification.

- 11 Take the first turning right off Southall into Hamilton Road, and walk to the end. Cross the road and enter the grounds of Holy Trinity Church.

Holy Trinity was built in 1845 near to the site of an earlier church. Evidence suggests that there had been a chapel here since the 12C. The present-day sandstone building in the perpendicular style was improved and enlarged in 1886.



Old Holy Trinity Church

Courtesy of Shropshire Archives

Follow the left hand fork in the path around the church and look to your left across the graveyard to a set of low black railings around a communal memorial grave. It marks a particularly sad mining tragedy in the history of Dawley, the Springwell Pit Disaster:

On 6th December 1872 eight young miners from Dawley lost their lives when the triple-linked chain hauling them to the surface snapped, plunging them to their deaths. It is said ten thousand people paid their respects at the funeral.

SHORT CUT OPTION:

You may wish at this point to take a short-cut option back to Burton Street where you started from (see Trail Map). The following sites are of interest en route: **Manor Farm, Pool Hill School, Site of former Dawley Gas Works, site of former Dawley National School** which is now Dawley CE Primary School. For more information on these sites, go to the 'Places' section on the website: www.dawleyheritage.co.uk

If continuing the main trail, exit at the bottom left of the churchyard.

- 12 Cross over Holly Road and take the signposted public footpath which follows the line of a former tramway connecting the Coalbrookdale Company works at Horsehay to those at Dawley Castle. At the first crossroad of paths before the first pool, Castle Pool, look to your left. Near here is believed to be the site of Dawley Castle:

In 1316 the nobleman, William de Moreton, fortified an existing manor house on this site. It became known as Dawley Castle, garrisoned by the Royalists during the English Civil War and subsequently pulled down in 1648 by order of Parliament. There are no material remains today.

Castle Pool and the other pools you will pass are all excellent wildfowl sites. Mallard, teal, shoveler ducks, as well as Canada geese and greylag geese are common visitors. There are also plenty of fish and you may be lucky enough on occasions to catch site of the blue flash of a kingfisher.



Mute swans

Courtesy of Glen Bishon

Continue forward. Cross over the footbridge and two further bridges, finally turning right along the waymarked Trail. You are in fact following the Coalbrookdale arm of the former Shropshire Canal. The mound to your left is the site of the former curiously named Botany Bay Colliery.

The Coalbrookdale Company sank a group of deep mines here in about 1810 to extract clod coal and ironstone for the nearby Castle Ironworks. This was just 20 years after the first British convicts were sent to Botany Bay in Australia. For a while it became fashionable to name collieries after far-flung places.

Continue on the path. At the end, take the left hand path and pass through the car park, exiting straight ahead and following the waymarked signs.

- 13 Cross the tarmac road and take the path immediately to the left of Wide Waters Pool on your right. Continue on this path which takes you alongside the remains of the Shropshire Canal. Keeping the canal on your right, continue forward and eventually a handsome restored stone and brick bridge comes into view.

The Tub Boat Bridge carried a tramway over the Shropshire Canal. It owes its name to the long, shallow iron boats that were towed, transporting coal and ironstone along the canal.

Pass under the bridge and follow the path to the Lightmoor Road.



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Front page photos, top left – Holy Trinity Church; top right – Capt Webb memorial (courtesy of Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust); mid left – The Cosy Cinema, Dawley (courtesy of Shropshire Archives); mid right – Tub Boat Bridge; lower left – Springwell Pit Communal Grave; lower right – Round House (courtesy of Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust)

Courtesy of Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

- 14 Turn right at the junction and carefully walk up the Lightmoor Road to the junction with Holly Road. Cross over the road. Immediately on your left is Little Dawley War Memorial and opposite the road on the right is the former Little Dawley Methodist Chapel.

The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, known locally as the 'Big Penny' was built in 1837. It was closed in 2004 and later converted into residential dwellings.

Turn left at the junction and walk down Holly Road. About 100m on, if you look to your right, you will see set back from the road an old cottage, called Ivy Farm.

Built in the 17C this lovely half-timbered dwelling is believed to be the oldest surviving house in the Dawley area.

- 15 Continue along the road and you will eventually come across some surviving rails in the road and a wooden gate off to the right.

There used to be a rail crossing here, part of the Wellington to Craven Arms Railway Line. Doseley Halt was on the other side of the wooden gate and to the right of this was the site of the former Top Yard Colliery including Springwell Pit, where eight young miners lost their lives in the infamous mining accident of 1875.

SHORT CUT OPTION:

You may wish at this point to take a short-cut option back to Burton Street where you started from (see Trail Map). The following sites are of interest en route: **Doseley Church and site of former Canal Wharf, site of former Dawley Gas Works and site of former Dawley National School** which is now Dawley CE Primary School. *For more information on these sites, go to the 'Places' section on the website: www.dawleyheritage.co.uk*

If continuing on the main trail, you need to turn sharp left (as though almost back on yourself) down the hill towards Gravel Leasowes.

- 16 After 80m you will come to Holywell Lane on the right which you should take. Where the lane begins to climb you will see a bungalow off to the left and before this in the field was the site of the former Holywell Lane Squatters' Cottages.

Built by the labourers themselves in the early 1700s, these squatters' cottages were unique in their design as extensions grew randomly in response to the families' needs. They were demolished in 1978 by Telford Development Corporation, despite some local protest.

More or less opposite the bungalow on the right is a small brick construction with a pipe coming out of it.

Fed from a natural spring, Holy Well is a corruption of 'Hollow Well'. It gave the road its name and provided the local residents with their water supply.

The countryside hereabouts is more open and in late spring/early summer you may be fortunate to hear skylarks, whilst the hedgerows support a multitude of invertebrates feeding on plant species such as greater celandine and jack-in-the-hedge. Yellowhammers, nesting whitethroats and blackcaps are in evidence, as are sparrowhawks and buzzards.



Courtesy of Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

- 17 Walk up the rise of the lane. 40m from the well there is a waymarked turning to the right called Woodlands Lane. Take this. At the top of the bank, keep to the left (ignore a finger post off to the right). You will see a section of low brick wall – part of a bridge over the former Shropshire Canal. Nearby is a boarded-up cottage on the right, believed to be another very old squatter's cottage and the only survivor in the area. Opposite is where the old Stockings Farm used to be.



Courtesy of Gen Bishon

Continue along the lane when you will come to a junction with a road leading to the new Bournville Trust housing development. Cross over this and continue along Woodlands Lane. If you wish to divert for a few moments to visit the Bath Spout you should do so a little further on where there is a finger post indicating a public path to Doseley on the right. Follow the track down into a clearing. If you look in the bushes, you can see the original angle iron carrying the spring water to the Bath Spout, which, sadly, is no longer there.

Without piped water in these rural parts, people recall using the Spout as their sole water supply from the early 20C, a practice which continued within living memory.

Rejoin the Woodlands Lane and the main trail. You will come to another junction. Cross over this and continue along Woodlands Lane, crossing yet another junction. You will eventually come to a point with a charming house on the right called Woodlands House, a former farmhouse. Just past this, where the lane bends round to the right, on the left is a field. At the far end of the field, behind the fence are some industrial buildings which are all that remains of the site of Coalmoor Brickworks.

The New Coalmoor Sanitary pipe Co. Ltd. made sanitary pipes and firebricks here from 1908-1948, before becoming taken over by Coalmoor Refractories Ltd. They subsequently moved their operations to nearby Lightmoor Brickworks in 1951.

- 18 Continue along Woodlands Lane until you come to a striking building, Myford House, originally a private dwelling, but used as a residential care home for many years now. The lane bends to the left here. Continue along this until just before the junction with Wellington Road. Turn right along the footpath into an area known as Horsehay Flat. 80m further on you will come to a road off to the right. Cross over and continue along the Wellington Road, passing a row of terraced houses on your right. One of these, easy to spot from the 'Cadfael' name plate, is where the author Edith Pargeter was born in 1913 and brought up.

Further on, across the road, is the Forester Arms Public House, formerly the Craven Arms. At the small roundabout continue over into Bridge Road. 150m on you will come to a road junction. If you look to your left in the middle distance on the left hand side of the road you will see a tall, distinctive building, Moreton Coppice Chapel.

This handsome yellow and blue brick Victorian chapel was built in 1858 to serve four local Primitive Methodist groups. It was restored in 2007, celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2008.

- 19 Continue along the right hand pavement of Bridge Road. After another 100m

you will see Horsehay Village Hall on your left.

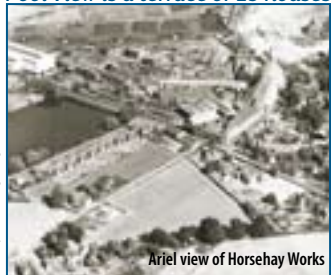
Originally the canteen for workers at the Horsehay Works, it was leased by the last owners in perpetuity for a peppercorn rent to the people of Horsehay when the Works closed in 1983.

On the right hand side opposite the Village Hall and over the wall in the 'dip' was the site of the Horsehay Ironworks' Lower Furnace Pool, used as a reservoir to maintain water levels in the main Upper Pool (Horsehay Pool) so that the blast furnaces could continue to run even in the dry summer months. The large redbrick building which you are passing on the right is all that remains of the once extensive Horsehay Ironworks.

The two coke-fired blast furnaces constructed on this site by Abraham Darby II in 1754 and 1756 signalled an unprecedented expansion of the iron industry in east Shropshire and beyond. In 1783 the forge was added, and in 1790 the rolling mill. About a hundred years later, the site was purchased by the Simpson family who established the Horsehay Company and specialised in heavy engineering work. There were subsequent purchasers, but the Works finally closed in 1983.

As you pass the building, cross over the road towards Horsehay Pool alongside of which on the left are the first houses that the Darby family built for their workers in Horsehay in the 1750s. These are today called Pool View (originally Long Row) and Upper Row (originally New Row).

Pool View is a terrace of 25 houses built in three stages, the first in the mid-1750s. Upper Row was constructed by the Coalbrookdale Company in the 1830s.



Aerial view of Horsehay Works

Horsehay Pool, built to drive hydraulic equipment at the Horsehay Ironworks, is another excellent wildfowl site and great many species of duck, goose, coot and

moorhens frequent the water. There are also numerous damselfly and dragonflies in summer.

20 Continue along the footpath with the wall of the pool to your left. You will come to Telford Steam Trust's Engine Shed, formerly the Horsehay Works' Trans-shipment Shed.

Continue along the footpath. As you go over the railway bridge of the former Wellington to Craven Arms line, look down to your left where you can see the station platform and the remains of where the Horsehay & Dawley Station used to be.

Horsehay & Dawley Station, built in 1861, was very active throughout the late 19C/early 20C. There were 10 sidings and also dedicated Horsehay Works' access lines with a capacity of over 200 wagons transporting huge pieces of heavy engineering around the world. The station closed to passengers in 1962 and for freight two years later.

Further along the pavement you will pass the Station Public House. 100m beyond, there is a high wall on your left. Stop about three quarters of the

way along. Stand with your back to the wall and look out across the road to the Power Station chimney in the far distance. In the foreground, in line with the chimney, and about 200m in front of you, was the site of the Horsehay Potteries, long since demolished but of particular note architecturally and historically was the Round House.

Horsehay Potteries comprised a collection of dwellings converted from buildings erected in the 1790s as a pottery producing industrial ceramics. The Round House, a distinctive landmark, was a house constructed from an old bottle kiln in 1843, demolished in 1970.



Courtesy of Homes & Communities Agency

The Roundhouse & Cinderhill, Horsehay

Directly behind the Potteries used to be the site of another landmark, a huge spoil mound.

The mound called the Cinderhill stood more than 30m tall, comprised of slag from the Horsehay Ironworks. The material was later used for roadmaking and glass manufacture.

The area of land in the foreground of your view has been colonised by gorse, an indicator of heathland which may support green hair-streak butterflies, and also linnets and bullfinches.

21 Keep on the left hand side of the road. At the end of the crash barrier on the right hand side of the road, cross over with care and to your right you will see the site of an old tramway. Continue forward and just before the Burnt Tree Vehicle Rental Depot is the site of what used to be 'Days Automatic Waste Water Closet & Sanitary Pipe Syndicate Company Limited'.

Just about the most extraordinary name for a company you might find, it was set up on the site of the former Brandlee Brickworks. The Syndicate erected its premises in 1882 and made drainpipes and firebricks until closure in 1915.

22 Take the footpath at the side of the Vehicle Rental Depot down through the underpass. This brings you out into Station Road, Dawley. Continue along Station Road until you come to a row of semi-detached houses on your right. Set into the brickwork under the eaves of the first pair of houses is an interesting plaque which originally commemorated the Brandlee Methodist New Connexion Chapel.

The original chapel was built by the Revivalists or Winfieldites and opened in 1821. Two years later the society was accepted within the Methodist New Connexion movement. The building was demolished in the mid-1930s but the commemorative plaque was resited and reversed on the houses where the chapel once stood.

Continue along Station Road until you pass the Royal British Legion



Commemorative Brandlee Chapel Plaque



Dawley Heritage Trail

A journey through Dawley's long and colourful history

