

**Coombeswood
Canal Trust**

Registered Charity No. 1088978

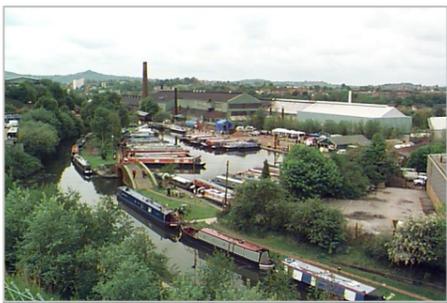


Fig.1 Hawne Basin- Halesowen

“COUNTRYSIDE WALKS”

Guide No2 To The Footpaths
From Coombeswood,
with links to The Leasowes,
Lapal Canal & Abbey Lands.



Fig.2 “The Black Horse P.H. & Canal Bridge,
Manor Lane, circ 1915”

(50p when sold)

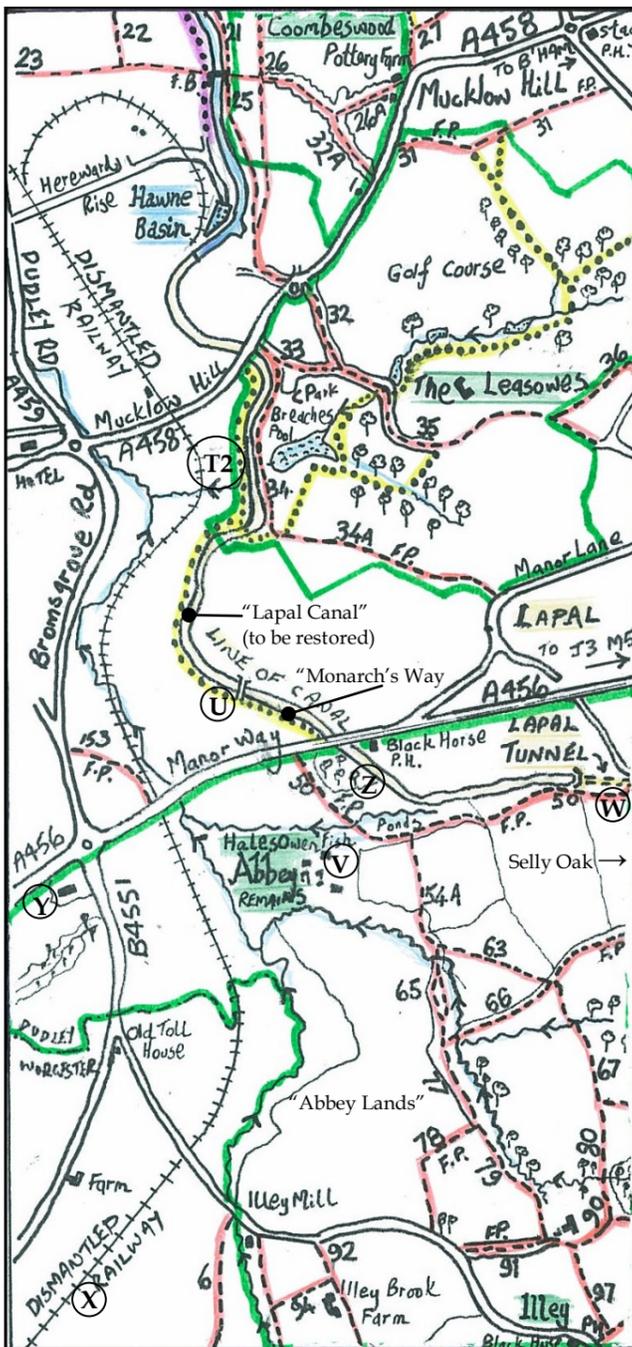
- INTRODUCTION -

In 1792 when the Dudley Canal Company proposed to extend their canal from Park Head, near Netherton to Selly Oak in Birmingham via Halesowen, it was to be ‘cut’ through open countryside. Designed to carry coal, ironstone, limestone, clay, road ballast and all manners of merchandise, locally and to destinations and sea ports beyond the Black Country, and also to exploit the vast mineral resources that lay beneath the District through which the new canal would pass.

Inevitably, following completion of the new canal in 1798, there was soon to be a rapid loss of those green fields, almost along the entire route to Halesowen; as a result of the growth of mines, quarries, spoil heaps, new housing and factories. Haystacks were soon to be replaced by chimney stacks, and great clouds of acrid smoke hung over the skyline.

However, by 1958 the last coal mine in Halesowen had finally closed, and heavy industry in the location was by then in serious decline. Previously the Government in 1955 had issued an Historic Circular proposing a national system of green belts and wedges to prevent the threat of ‘Urban Sprawl’.

In Halesowen, we are very fortunate to have, right on our doorstep, the Coombeswood/Leasowes Green Wedge, and the open Green Belt facing the Clent Hills to the South and West.



Guide Map No2 Leasowes, Lapal Canal & Abbey Lands

KEY	
	Public Right of Way – Definitive footpath & reference number (where known)
	Path or Desire Line – not necessarily a right of way
	Canal Towing/ Access Path – not necessarily a right of way
	Green Belt (Approx) Boundary's (Dudley ONLY)

We hope that our Guide will help you to find your way around a part of our local Countryside.

You may be surprised at the varied and diverse landscape, with it's outstanding views, steeped in Ancient History, and rich in all kinds of vegetation and wildlife. Some parts include steep slopes and steps etc, and can be muddy at times. Appropriate sensible footwear and clothing is recommended.



Fig.4 “View of HalesOwen from
Coombeswood Wedge”

SOME SITES OF INTEREST

- GUIDE MAP No2 -

T2 - Heywood or Leasowes Embankment -
Here the canal crosses the Leasowes Valley on a very high embankment rather than follow the natural contours. There are many theories as to why the designer of the Canal took this unusual step; yet you may have one of your own, as you ponder and admire from the embankment, the beautiful view over the Leasowes.

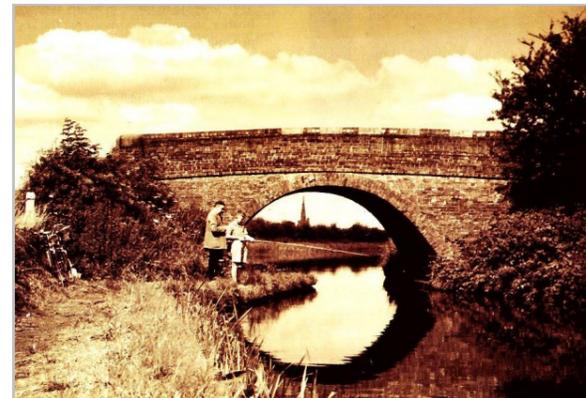


Fig.3 “Fordrove Bridge circa 1955”

U - Site of Fordrove Bridge - Here there was a simple brick arched canal bridge, (demolished in the 1960's), built originally to accommodate an old track way or ‘fordrough’ that once passed through the green fields from Webb's Green Farm to Manor Lane (Way). Little evidence remains today of the bridge, track way or farm.

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- We wish to thank Dudley MBC (Highways) for their kind permission to use their base maps which were used to prepare this leaflet.
- Photos - credits CCT & H.A.T. archive
- Fig.3 Fordrove Bridge by kind permission of Phil Waldren

DISCLAIMER

- The majority of the land indicated is in private ownership and the representation on this leaflet of any road, track or path is no evidence of the existence of a right of way.
- This leaflet is only a guide and is in no way intended for use with concern to boundaries and ownerships whatsoever.
- “Walk at your own risk”. Coombeswood Canal Trust will not be responsible for any claims for any damage or injury to persons or property however sustained. i.e. “Enter and walk at your own risk”.

SOME SITES OF INTEREST

- GUIDE MAP No2 -

V - Remains of HalesOwen Abbey - Following the line of the canal from Leasowes Park, carefully cross Manor Way, at the gap in the central reservation, just below the Black Horse Public House. Climb over a stile, near an information board, where suddenly the vista changes, and you are now in view of Halesowen Abbey, set in



Fig.5 "Information board, Manor Way"



Fig.6 "The Abbey ruins from Manor Way"

open countryside. There is unfortunately **NO** Public Access to the Abbey ruins at the moment, but they may be viewed from footpath Ref No50, which crosses the dry beds of the former Monastic Fish Ponds.

Now incorporated in more recent farm buildings, very little remains of the 13th Century Abbey of the White Cannons of Premontre (France); part of the north wall of the presbytery, part of the South Transept, the south wall



Fig.7 "The Infirmary, Halesowen Abbey"

of the Frater, and a detached building called the Infirmary. The site was chosen, in a fertile valley which is very secluded, has a good supply of fresh water streams, and is sheltered by the rising ground of the Clent Hills to the West, and a Ridgeway to the East. The Abbot held sway over some 10,000 acres of land, with ten outlying Granges/Farms to manage the huge estate. The setting of Halesowen Abbey is very special as it still stands in open countryside, that has remained virtually unchanged since the 13th Century, and is often referred to as "Abbey Lands".

W - Lapal Tunnel (site of) - The builders of the Dudley No2 Canal, encountered rising ground of the Northfield/Sedgley Ridgeway, and drove

a narrow, single bore tunnel, 3795 yards long, at Lapal, to link their waterway with the Worcester and Birmingham Canal at Selly Oak, completed in 1798. The tunnel throughout its long history suffered numerous roof and side wall



Fig.8 "Lapal Tunnel" West Portal circa 1910

collapses, finally closing to traffic in 1922.* The canal was in filled from Manor Way up to the west portal of the tunnel, in the 1960's. There is no public access to this section of the canal, and what little evidence remains of its existence, can only be viewed from the adjacent public footpath (RefNo50).(*BW report 1991)



Fig.9 "The Clent Hills from Abbey Lands" at Illey.

X - Site of Dismantled Railway - The Great Western Railway (GWR) arrived from Dudley via Old Hill, to Halesowen in 1878. However, an independent Company known as the "Halesowen Railway" completed in 1883 a single line that would link Halesowen Station with the Midland Railway (MR) at Longbridge with rural stations in Hunnington and Rubery. There was also a plan to make a junction near Illey, with a connection to Birmingham via the Harborne line. The promoters of the scheme had visions of turning the surrounding countryside into a popular residential area for "railway commuters". However, the vision failed, with the onset of financial difficulties, and soon after opening, the line was acquired by the GWR and M.R as a joint operation (all the remnants of this railway are believed to be in private ownership).



Fig.10 "Ancient hedgerows & fields at Lapal, Illey and Frankley"

Y - The Grange - An historic house and former country seat of Lord Dudley and the Lea and Smith families. Since 1951 a sports and social members club and facility of the Seth Somers Trust.

Z - Site of Manor Lane Colliery - Around the 1860's attempts were made to find the highly profitable thirty foot seam of "Black Country Coal", beyond Halesowen and up to the foot hills of the Clents. Despite the sinking of deep trial pits here and at Wassell Grove and Uffmoor Wood, the coal had all but disappeared except for a few unprofitable seams. The plans of coal mines near the Clent Hills and plans to extend the canal to them were soon abandoned. Some coal was extracted from 1871 at Manor Lane, with a short canal arm being constructed, but the mine was never profitable and closed in 1887.



Fig.11 "The Clent Hills from Abbey Lands" at Lapal

LOCAL SOCIETIES

- Coombswood Cricket Club** - www.coombswood.co.uk
- Friends of the Leasowes** - (0121) 422 7585
- Halesowen Abbey Trust** - hales.abbey@btinternet.com
- Lapal Canal Trust** - chairman@lapal.org
- Monarchs Way Association** - Contact@Monarchsway.50megs.com
- The Friends of Coombeswood Wedge** - www.friendsofcoombeswoodwedge.co.uk
hello@friendsofcoombeswoodwedge.co.uk

USEFUL CONTACTS

- Dudley Borough Local Access Forum** - The forum is a statutory body, set up under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It advises the council on the improvement of public access to land across the borough for outdoor recreation and enjoyment. If you would like to find out more about the many other walking routes in Dudley, use the following link to view Dudley Council's map of urban rural paths: www.dudley.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/roads-highways-and-pavements/public-rights-of-way
For more information about the local access forum email: dblaf@dudley.gov.uk
- Leasowes & Coombeswood Wardens** - (01384) 814642
leasowes.country@dudley.gov.uk