THE MALVERN HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Discovery Walk No 4

Science & Trains in Malvern Wells & (Great) Malvern

Points of Interest

1. Great Malvern Railway Station is a gem on the Great Western Railway. Unlike other stations, which were built to standard GWR specifications, this was specially designed by the architect Edward Wallace Elmslie for Lady Emily Foley. Lady Foley was the major land owner in Victorian Malvern and wanted an impressive structure to welcome rail travellers to the town. One of the station waiting rooms was built specially for her and is now the Lady Foley Tea Rooms. The stationmaster’s house was very grand and still stands above the station. The line between Worcester and Hereford was opened in 1861. Take time to look at the structure and decoration before leaving the platform. At the Worcester end of the platform is a gateway, now closed, leading to a tunnel to the Imperial Hotel on the road above. Known as the ‘worm’, this allowed 1st class travellers to leave the station without mixing with 2nd and 3rd class passengers. The house is now the Malvern Girls College.

2. Malvern College is still and is a boarding school, but has been used for other purposes over the last century. During WWI it was taken over by the Ministry of Defence for the Admiralty as a ‘bolt hole’ should the London HQ be bombed. It was never used for that purpose, although house 2 was retained by the Navy for use as the ward room for HMS Duke (more about this later) and house 3 for the Free French until 1944. During this period (September 1940 to May 1942) the school was housed at Blenheim Palace. The school briefly returned to Malvern before being moved again, this time to Harrow. The College was then used in the Communications Research Establishment (TRE), the main body responsible for the development of radar. The school returned after the war in September 1942 and remained a boys’ college until 1992, when it became a mixed college. TRE subsequently moved to a new site off St Andrews Road, which the walk passes later.

3. The early Victorian post box on the corner is one of four in Malvern – and only six in the entire country. It is Grade II listed. This rare design of post box was featured in a special set of stamps issued in 2003.

4. Malvern Wells Great Western Station was closed on 3rd April 1963, along with the rest of the minor stations on this line. GWR’s ‘King Class’ locomotives were unable to be used between Worcester and Hereford because of the small bore of the Victorian railway tunnels through the Ledbury and Malvern Hills. These tunnels, major engineering feats in their day, were both the work of Stephen Ballard, a local man who was also instrumental in the founding of the Malvern Hills Conservators. A second, wider tunnel under the Malvern Hills was opened on 2 August 1928. During WWII the original tunnel was used to store armaments. Shelves was installed and a narrow gauge railway line was constructed to carry the armaments into and out of the tunnel store. The tunnel is now an important bat roost.

Railway Tunnel Spring was discovered in 1853, during the building of the first tunnel through the hills. A small pumping station was constructed to raise the water to a tank above, to supply local homes that had lost their water when the tunnel was cut. The pumping station became redundant when the second tunnel was opened. The water now runs out at this point and across the golf course as a brook. Part of the Worcestershire Golf Club was used in WWII as American general hospital no.55.

The site of Malvern Wells Midland Station was on the branch line linking Malvern to Upton upon Severn, Ledbury and Malvern Hills. These tunnels, major engineering feats in their day, were both the work of Stephen Ballard, a local man who was also instrumental in the founding of the Malvern Hills Conservators. A second, wider tunnel under the Malvern Hills was opened on 2 August 1928. During WWII the original tunnel was used to store armaments. Shelves was installed and a narrow gauge railway line was constructed to carry the armaments into and out of the tunnel store. The tunnel is now an important bat roost.

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