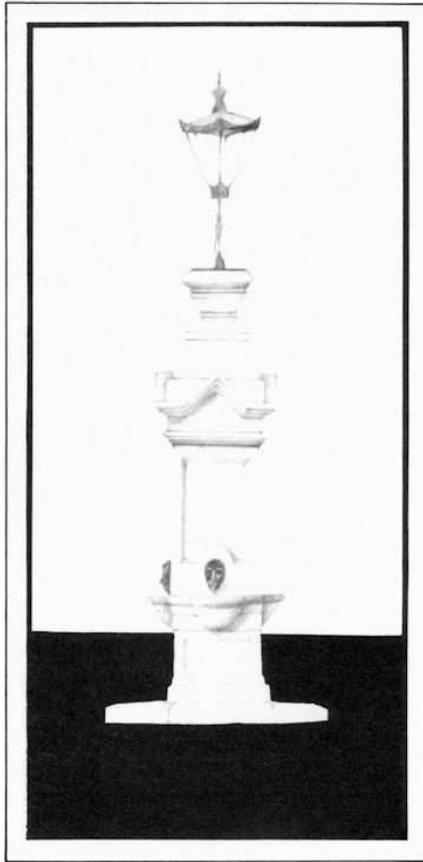


DAWLEY GREEN



by
B. T. Duckett

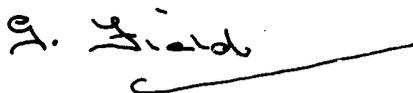
All profits from the Sale of this Book will go to Telford and Wrekin Dab Hand, (Disabled and Blind Handicap Club), which is a voluntary body founded in 1980 by Mrs Carol Steele, a multiple sclerosis victim. Originally based in Wellington, the Club now meets at Telford United Supporters Club in Park Road, Dawley Bank.

The main objects of the "Dab Hand" are - to promote the welfare of the disabled and encourage them to greater social activity.

To advise and assist members with practical problems connected with their disablement.

To maintain liaison with government departments and other agencies concerned with the disabled.

The Club has over 100 members, many of the living in the Dawley area. A few members are able-bodied people who act as "Helpers", and the Club also receives practical assistance from Dawley St John's Ambulance Brigade, Telford Community Council, and the Community Car Service. The organisation is entirely Voluntary, and is registered as a Charity with the Number 513121.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Field". The signature is written in a cursive style and is followed by a long, horizontal flourish line that extends to the right.

GWEN FIELD, SECRETARY
TELFORD AND WREKIN DAB HAND

FIRST IMPRESSIONS, SCHOOL AND PLAY.

This Book is based upon the memories of a school boy living in Dawley during the 1930's. It hopes to give some idea of life in the years prior to the Second World War, when the writer was a pupil at the Dawley C of E or "National" School.

Although born in Horsehay I lived in the Black Country until 1935, when my family returned to Dawley. I recall how quiet and almost rural the area seemed when compared with our previous surroundings. The streets appeared to have only light traffic, much of it horse-drawn, and in the days before starting at my new school I used to look forward to seeing the little delivery vans and milk floats, and the drivers of these vehicles were among the first local people that I came to know.

Within a couple of weeks I had been accepted at the National School, this being the most convenient place only a few minutes walk from my home. The Head Teacher at the time was, Mr F. Clayton, of Horsehay, and among the other staff were, Mr C. Tranter of Doseley, and the Misses Barnett, Peake, and Price. Being an all-age school it took children from five to fourteen year's, and here I was to stay until shortly after my 14th birthday.

The school day began with a general assembly for prayer and a hymn, usually accompanied by the Headmaster playing a small harmonium. When this little service was over we went to our desks and lessons would commence. The length of a school day was similar to that of the present time. Our desks had small china ink-wells and old fashioned wooden nib-pens and under the sloping lid was a space for books. Two pupils shared a desk in large classes which must have had over forty boys and girls.

Many children living up to a mile away would walk home for lunch and back within the hour and a quarter which was allowed. There was of course no school dinner service, but we could buy small bottles of milk, about a third of a pint, at morning break.

The main subjects on the curriculum were the basic essentials of reading, writing and arithmetic, plus geography, history, and religious instruction, but in between a story would be read to us. Most of these stories were from popular classics such as the works of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain and we heard plenty of "David Copperfield", "A Christmas Carol" and "Tom Sawyer", which were read to us in short episodes.

During the morning break, we were let out to play on the old pit mound behind the school which was alright in dry weather, but the clay was liable to "run" in heavy rain and wash down into the yard like thick milk, making a mess of our shoes if we stepped into it. The afternoon break was longer and for this we could go down to the "Council Field" by the park to play football or cricket, according to season. It was mostly unsupervised play with no coaching and only minimal equipment. Sports Masters and P.E. Instructors were not employed in Elementary Schools, and few families could afford to provide sports gear, so these activities were not developed to the standards existing today.

The Anglican Doctrine played a large part in the life of C of E schools, and in addition to morning prayer, a prayer was said at the close of each session, usually "Be present at our table Lord", before lunch, and "Lighten our darkness" at the end of the day. On certain occasions the Vicar of Dawley would take morning service and on Ash Wednesday we were marched down to the Parish Church for a special service after which we could go home for the rest of the day,

The better known bible stories were often read to us and periodically an examination in religious knowledge would be held. Children reaching the age of 13 were invited to apply for Confirmation and help was given to candidates preparing for this, but only a minority of parents were regular churchgoers and the number of applicants was very small.

When winter came the classrooms were not very warm, especially for those sitting a distance away from the large open fireplace at the front of the class. It was a case of wrapping up warm and it did not matter how we looked as there was no kind of uniform. Uniforms were only worn at Grammar Schools such as Wellington or Coalbrookdale High Schools, to which places a few of our brighter pupils went after passing the 11-Plus examination.

In due course, I sat for one of these exams, but like the majority of my fellows, application to study had been insufficient and failure ensued. I think only about 4 or 5 out of over 20 who sat with me were successful and did go to Grammar Schools, although it must have meant quite a sacrifice on the part of their parents who would then receive little in the way of financial help towards the extra expense involved.

Those selected for secondary education were looked upon as a kind of elite and most of us had no great sense of disappointment at not being among the "chosen". In fact I think we realised that we would not fit in at the more advanced seats of learning. I was however, old enough to understand that my failure to qualify might have an effect on my future working life.

School discipline was not over strict and canes were used sparingly even on some unruly characters who no

doubt deserved more than they got. The school was by no means a "Blackboard-Jungle" although it was regarded by some as a "rough" school when compared with Lawley or Pool Hill which were then thought of as the best elementary establishments. I do not doubt that our teachers did their best in a rather deprived catchment area.

In the free time after school and at weekends, I discovered that there were vast expanses of waste land with numerous pit mounds on all sides of Dawley. These areas had become the main playgrounds for local children and we were fortunate in having so much space with unlimited access. All the usual games were played on this derelict land where some of the mounds had large flat tops, suitable for ball games. Sometimes "Cowboys and Indians", "Cops and Robbers", or some battle we had seen on the "pictures" would be enacted.

My main area in the early days was the old Roughground which has largely given way to the new estates of Chiltern Gardens, Purbeckdale, and Mountside. There were some dangerous old mine shafts, still open and often fenced with only a few strands of wire, into which we could drop stones and count the seconds till they reached the pit bottom. No doubt there would be an outcry if those shafts were still open, but I never heard of any accidents, and no-one seemed concerned about them.

The Brandlee and Paddock mounds also afforded plenty of play space, and another "place of interest" was the old council tip at the side of the Doseley Road. Here could be found all kinds of things, including bicycle wheels to make "Bowlers", and pram wheels to build onto wooden go-carts. Some ingenious boys would keep visiting the tip to build up a stock of bike spares, and the end result of their efforts became a home-made bicycle which was often ridden round the side streets without brakes, tyres or saddle.

For many years a small field gun, probably an 18 or 25 pounder from the 1914 war, stood near to the tip. It was supposed to be there awaiting restoration and use as a War Memorial for the town, but nothing was ever done about this, and for years it was used in imaginative play by local children. I am uncertain of its final fate, but it is likely to have been scrapped at some stage.

Most of our activities were harmless fun, but as always, there was an element of vandalism and a prime target was the shelter in the park, which often seemed short of glass. The old gas lamps were sometimes attacked, but vandalism was not a very big problem in those days.

Quite a lot of our time, especially between March and October, was spent playing outdoors with very little in the way of equipment to use. There were several popular pastimes, such as marbles, catapults, kites and yo-yo's which involved some expenditure, but pocket money was very limited and we would be lucky to extract six or eight pence a week from our families so we had to be careful with it. The usual seasonal activities were carried on - catching tadpoles, knocking "conkers" from Horse Chestnut trees, and using makeshift sledges to run down the slopes of Paddock or Roughground in winter. Guy Fawkes night was more keenly celebrated and groups of boys and girls would prepare "Guys" to be wheeled round the streets in the hope of raising a shilling or two to buy a box of fireworks. It seemed that on November 5th every little garden had its own bonfire and small firework display.

The activities already described occupied some of our time when the weather was good, but there were other types of hobbies and play both communal and solitary which whiled away the long days of childhood. Some

were simple things like collecting cigarette cards which came in sets of 50. It could take a long time to assemble a full set and a lot of swapping "twicers" took place. Some of the cards were educational, including those from the "Wild Woodbines" which had series such as "Household Hints", "Garden Hints", and "Wild Flowers". Woodbines were the most common smoke for our fathers, most of whom were poorly paid and therefore, reluctant to buy the more expensive brands. Little books could be bought for only one penny and the cards mounted in them. Another collecting hobby was foreign stamps, but this was more expensive.

For older boys, there were constructive hobbies like fretwork and Meccano which were quite popular, but here again, shortage of money limited the scope of these interesting pastimes. Our few large toys were treasured possessions, usually Christmas or birthday presents, and we certainly did not get a toy every week. Perhaps this was better for us because I'm sure we got much more out of the few things we had than modern children do, with their more sophisticated play-things.



Apart from toys, hobbies and play, an important factor in our leisure time was the weekly visit to the cinema. When I first knew Dawley the only Picture House was the Cosy which stood opposite the Royal Exchange. This edifice was built mainly of corrugated iron sheet. It was painted black and had a capacity of about 400, some of them seated on long wooden benches. The films were often American, featuring the well known cowboy or gangster stars of the time (including President Reagan). The children's matinee was on Saturday afternoon and admission was 2d. The programme consisted of one main film, plus a cartoon and a serial shown in episodes over a period of weeks, always leaving the hero in an awkward predicament and ourselves wondering how he was going to get out of it. (He always did).



Sometimes we could not hear the sound track because of the noise from excited kids and occasionally the film would break, or the engine driven generator decided to fail. These calamities were greeted by uproar, and the two middle aged men who acted as part-time ushers often threatened to throw us out. Another distraction was the noise produced by heavy rain on the iron roof which sometimes reduced a "talkie" to a silent film.

A visit to the "Pictures" usually meant buying a bag of sweets from one of the nearby shops. A few caramels or boiled sweets cost as little a ½d so we could have an afternoon out for 2½d. In 1937 another cinema called The Royal was built on the old "Demonstration Field" at the junction of King St and Meadow Road, so we then had a choice of children's matinees. It was possible for older boys and girls to visit one of the three cinemas in Wellington, but this involved bus fare, bringing the cost of these outings to about 7d, a big slice out of our resources. There was of course no television so the cinema was the only place to see films and it was as important to us as T.V. is to today's youngsters. Even radio was only just becoming commonplace in Dawley and in most homes it was regarded as a highly valued possession, so although children would be able to listen to certain programmes they would rarely be allowed to operate the set. "Children's Hour" often serialised the old classics; "David Copperfield" was done many times and the "Toy Town" series was very popular. Apart from radio there was little in the way of home entertainment, except perhaps one of the wind-up gramophones or in the case of the more musical families, a second-hand piano. Some places still had old fashioned pedal organs in the lounge or "parlour" as it was often called.

A proportion of children's time was spent assisting in, or just observing adult activities, and many boys went fishing with fathers, brothers, or friends to local pools or to the Severn at Buildwas. Sometimes older lads would go without adults to fish in the Severn, but it was rare for them to possess licences and so many a hasty retreat was made from the river bank when a water-bailiff was spotted.

There were a few unpleasant activities practiced by children, such as raiding birds nests, "blowing" the eggs, and collecting them. Some boys and adults used Trap-Cages to capture certain types of wild bird. This was called "dabbing" and was in fact illegal, but not uncommon in the Dawley area.

A lot of local hobbies have almost died out now, pigeon keeping is much less evident, and rabbiting with ferrets or wire snares seems to be a thing of the past. In the depressed thirties, poor families were glad of free rabbit meat to supplement their diet, especially those who were on the "Parish". As children, we may have seen something of the above enterprises, but they were mainly an adult activity.

Such then were the most common features of our school-days, but by the age of 12 or 13 our horizons were becoming wider and we often ventured far beyond our old playgrounds of Brandlee and Roughground, sometime just to play or perhaps to explore the district, and it was in this way we gained our knowledge of the area.



Many parts of the Dawley area are still almost unchanged since my schooldays, so in our explorations we shall concentrate more on the things and places that have altered or disappeared. Among the most interesting landscapes was the region which now includes the Telford Town Park, but then contained the traces of old industries, sections of canal and lengths of abandoned tramways. It always seemed to be a kind of "haunted" place with a unique atmosphere of its own, maybe it was the presence of the old remains of Hinkshay Furnaces and the Stirchley Forge, and our awareness that the 19th century "Stirchley Murder" had occurred near to the old reservoir known as Stirchley Pool. Stirchley, Randlay, and Dark Lane must have been a hive of industry in the last century with furnaces, forges, mines and brickworks in action. All that now remains of these industries is the old chemical works chimney and a length of wall belonging to Stirchley Furnaces. There were many footpaths to explore, some of them still having sections of tramway. At one time all the works and mines had been part of a large "Industrial Empire" known as the Old Park Company which was the largest employer in the Dawley district. Only the Randlay Brickworks was still in operation. Other enterprises such as the Chemical Works and some nearby Slag works had then only recently closed down. The railway that had served them was still there, its northern section used by Randlay Brick Works. This line was only just over a mile long and came down from the G.W.R. sidings at Hollinswood. A few hundred yards away was another single line railway, the Wellington - Coalport Branch of the L.M.S. here we could watch the little tank engine and its two red coaches which called at Stirchley Station about 12 times in a day. There was also an occasional goods train which visited the small siding nearby, and seemed

to do a lot of shunting about just to drop off or pick up two or three wagons. Perhaps this performance was why the Coalport trains became known as "Dodgers". This railway has long gone and its track now forms part of the Cross Town footpath known as the "Silkin Way". A privately owned railway operated around the remnants of the Old Park and Malinslee Collieries and I can just remember seeing the old engine crossing the road near Old Park. The driver's name was Richard Woodvine and the loco was referred to as the "Dickie" engine. The names of some pits in the Malinslee Colliery are commemorated by roads on the new estate, e.g. Spoutway, Lawnswood, Waggoner's Fold, and Old Wharf.

Much of the housing at Old Park, Dark Lane and Hinkshay has disappeared, but many will remember Forge Row, Dark Lane Row, and the Single, Double and "Ladies" Rows' at Hinkshay, originally built for workers of the Old Park Company.

Another venue often visited was the area around the Castle Pool. This too had been an industrial site containing the Dawley Castle Furnaces which were part of the Coalbrookdale Company's empire, and here could be found sections of a tramway once used to connect the Castle Furnaces with Horsehay Works via Pool Hill and Brandlee. Much of this line was still intact prior to the Second World War, but was probably lifted during the wartime drive for scrap metal.

Also here was another section of the Old Shropshire Canal, and the remains of a Slag Works at Botany Bay. These Slag Works, like others at Stirchley and Horsehay, had been set up to make use of the slag mounds which had built up around the old furnaces. The clinker was passed through crushing plants and sold to make road stone, railway ballast or aggregate for tarmac and concrete. These plants operated from about 1922 until 1938 by which time most of the usable slag had been processed. At Rednal Fields the Dawley Water

Works was then powered by an engine which was either oil or gas and could be heard ticking away at its task of pumping water for the town supply. Stationary engines were still being used for many industrial and commercial purposes, and it was to be several years before mains electricity took over all their functions. Sometimes we would walk on as far as the wide water and the "narrow" which had been associated with the canal and had become popular with local anglers.

On occasions we would walk down to Doseley and through the Concrete Works to the Bath Spout calling there for a drink of spring water, then on across the field to Gravel Leasowes where there was a large abandoned pit engine house which had arched window spaces devoid of glass or frames and was reminiscent of a ruined abbey. Also here was the old "Pop Bottle" Chapel, so named after a remark by a visiting preacher who said "it's no bigger than a pop bottle". Close by was a footpath leading to Lightmoor and at the end of this was another Chapel with the nickname of "Fat Bacon" which was said to be a reference to the fact that pig's were sold to raise money towards building the Chapel.

Lightmoor was another old industrial site, containing an 18th Century Iron Works and Brick and Tile Works. Only the Brick Works was still in operation, and from a nearby footpath it was possible to watch the early stages of brick making. Opposite to the Brickworks was Lightmoor Junction, another place where trains could be seen including the long "Rafts" of coal wagons going down to the Power Station which was then only a few years old. The modern hopper trains still pass Lightmoor, but its passenger service and the little halt which had two wooden platforms are things of the past.

From Lightmoor we could return to Dawley via Burroughs Bank or Crackshall Lane, perhaps going on through Horsehay where there was more industry and a large railway siding. This was a very noisy place, especially when the riveters were in action on the large bridges that were assembled in the open yard under the tall Goliath cranes. Sometimes we could see the Horsehay Company's loco running down the wall by the pool, or J Paton's engine coming up from the Cinderhill Slag Works into the Great Western Yard. At certain times no less than 4 engines, 1 G.W.R. passenger train, 1 G.W.R. goods engine, and the two privately owned loco's, could be seen performing. Another form of steam transport often seen in this area were the Sentinel Steam wagons operated from Doseley Quarries or by one of the local haulage contractors. There was always a distinctive aroma from these vehicles, especially so when they were loaded with hot tarred chippings, and the resulting mixture of steam, smoke, oil and tarmac, produced a not unpleasant scent that lingered for some time after the lorry had passed.

Several horses could be seen working in the Old Coal Wharf where a number of Coal Merchants collected their supplies from railway wagons. The Bridge Works also used heavy shire horses on their network of internal plateways.

Most of our expeditions were carried out during the seemingly endless school holidays, and we must have done many miles of wandering in a landscape that could hardly be called attractive, but was nevertheless interesting, and aroused our curiosity as to what all the forgotten industries and methods of transport were like in their heyday. So far we have dealt only with facets of childhood, but now we shall move on to give a general picture of life in the Dawley of the thirties.

HOME LIFE

Dawley was, and still is, a mainly working class area, although it appears to be more affluent today. Much of the housing stock seems to be no different apart from new style doors and windows, but the interiors are much improved. The most noticeable change is in the number of cars which can be seen on the local estates, in pre-war days only about 2% of families owned a private car. The average terrace cottage had no bathroom or hot water system and some still had outside earth closets. Many properties had no internal water supply, and water was carried from the old cast iron hydrants that were a common sight even in the most central parts of the town.

Water from hydrants was generally used only for drinking or making tea, because virtually all houses had rain water barrels or tanks which provided soft water for all other domestic purposes. Conditions in the remoter areas were often worse with many people relying on wells and springs for their drinking water. Soft water for washing day was often boiled in old fashioned "Coppers" which were actually large cast iron pots set in a brick surround which had a small fire grate underneath. It could take about two hours to boil water in these devices, so clothes washing was usually confined to the traditional "Monday morning. Water for a bath was sometimes heated in the "Copper", then baled out into one of the portable galvanised bath tubs which could be found in most houses.

In many homes cooking was done in the oven of coal fired ranges which also heated the kitchen or living room, and had to be black-leaded occasionally. to keep them looking bright. In some of the poorest type of cottage even the few facilities they possessed had to be shared with 3 or 4 neighbours. This joint use often included, washhouse, closet, and water tap. Lighting was mostly by gas, paid for by feeding pennies into a pre-payment meter. Electricity had been installed in some dwellings, but there were still a few outlying cottages which were lit by oil lamps.

The new council houses built during the twenties and thirties were a big improvement on the old 18th and 19th century houses. They were well equipped with bathrooms, inside toilets, and "Triplex" ranges. The rents of these homes were somewhat higher than those of the traditional cottages, the 4 bedroom type costing about 14/- per week, a large rent at the time.

There were comparatively few owner-occupied dwellings, with most of them being either heirship property handed down through families, or purchased by employees of industrial concerns who had sold housing stock to raise capital. Two examples of this situation were the "Great Sale" of Coalbrookdale Co. estates of 1910-1911, and the Horsehay Co. sale of 1936. Workers who were sitting tenants had first option to buy, and those houses not so purchased were sold off to various small landlords or Friendly Societies who sometimes invested in property.

The interiors of most houses were less well furnished than they are today, and many had Victorian furniture that had been handed down through the family. Iron bedsteads, leather couches, kitchen-pieces, wash stands

etc., were still in use, and such things as domestic refrigerators and washing machines almost unknown. Electric irons and vacuum cleaners were just beginning to appear, but for most housewives, flat iron, heavy mangle, dolly tub and scrubbing brush were the order of the day. Carpets were few and floors were covered with linoleum and home made rugs, or in the case of kitchens and washhouses just red "quarries" which had to be scrubbed or mopped.

"Best" rooms had wallpaper or distemper, but kitchens and outhouses were often treated with whitewash. Only one room was regularly heated, and although a cottage could have 3 or 4 fireplaces some were never used as few could afford more than one fire. So on winter evenings the whole family had to sit round the single fire to keep warm.

A number of people, especially the younger couples, were acquiring more amenities, and gas cookers began to replace the coal ranges. Hire-purchase, often frowned upon by the older generation, was helping families to obtain modern style furniture, and radio was becoming quite common. The old wireless sets often had outdoor aerials, some as tall as flag poles, in the garden. Acid accumulators were required in some sets and these needed regular re-charging. This was done by dealers, garages, or a local cottager who possessed a small generator. Mains radio was taking over from battery sets and this was more convenient and less expensive.

A principle difference between home life then and now is the role of television, which did not arrive in the Midlands until after the war. Before then it was radio, gramophone, piano, reading, or card and board games that occupied the time that is

now spent watching television



INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYMENT

We had been told at school about the decline of Dawley as an industrial area, and how the population had at one time been much greater than the 1931 census figure of just under 8,000. Scores of mines had been worked out, or closed down due to lack of demand. The blast furnaces had gone forever, along with several brick works, foundries, and forges. A great exodus had taken place in the late 19th century, with miners going to places like the Nottingham Coalfield, and engineering workers and others moving to the large towns of the Midlands and Northwest.

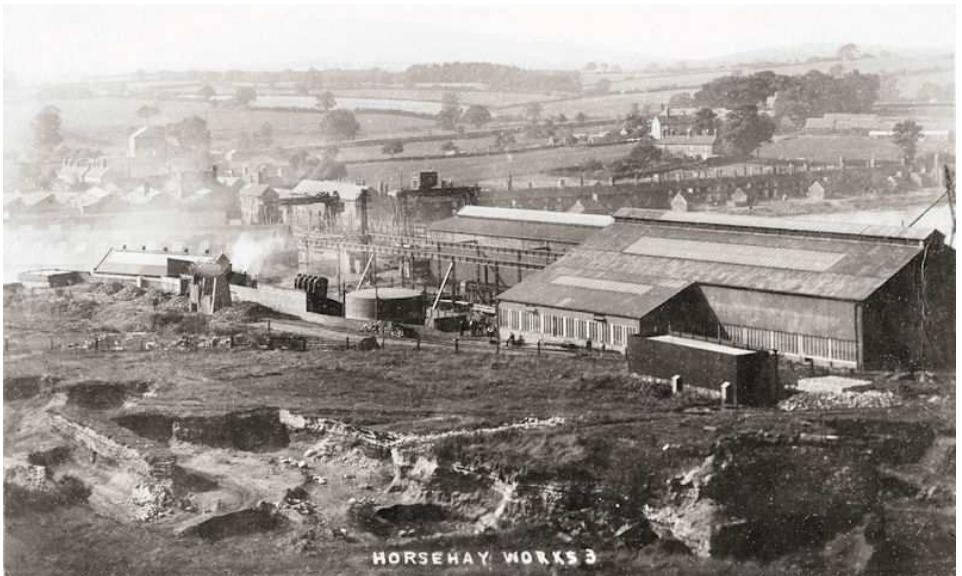
A certain amount of industry did survive, but few large employers were left after the break up of the Coalbrookdale and Old Park empires. The majority of Dawley men were subsequently employed in factories situated outside the urban area such as Joseph Sankey Ltd, at Hadley, The Lilleshall CO., J. Maddocks of Oakengates, and Allied Iron founders at Ketley or Coalbrookdale. A number went to work at the Sentinel Wagon Works and the Chatwood Safe Co. at Shrewsbury, some still living in Dawley and commuting daily by train.

The larger employers left in the immediate area were the Horsehay Company, Doseley Quarry and Pipe Works, and Randlay Brick Works. There were other Brick Works at Lightmoor, Birchfield, and at Woodlands near Horsehay. Some small pits were still functioning on the North Brandlee, Horsehay Common, and the Rock. Other miners were employed outside the district at Kemberton, Halesfield, Shortwoods, and the Lilleshall Company Colliery. There was only a small amount of agricultural work due to the high proportion of unusable land. Additional work was provided by the commercial sector such as local haulage contractors, the Gas Works, Midland Red, and other transport operations.

The industrial and commercial concerns listed were the main sources of employment for men, and of course a small number of men were working in shops. Most shop workers were women and many of these would be "Family Labour", wives and daughters of the proprietors of the business. A number of women were engaged as clerical workers in the various offices of the industrial and commercial concerns already mentioned. The toy factories at Wellington and Coalbrookdale employed many Dawley girls, and others worked in the lighter side of foundry processes, such as Core Making. Domestic Service gave a number of jobs, most of them part-time. For some careers open to women, Teaching and Nursing in particular, single status was obligatory, and young women who married were required to resign their positions. The majority of married women had no work outside the home, except perhaps a part-time domestic job to bring in a few shillings to help with household expenses.

Shropshire, being a mainly rural county, had wage rates lower than those prevailing in the large conurbations, and the average pay of manual workers living here would be in the region of 55/- at 1935 rates. This wage generally represented working time of 47 hours, including Saturday mornings. It is difficult to make comparisons with present day conditions, because of factors such as reduced hours, lower tax thresholds etc. The old days had some advantage for working men, including freedom from Income Tax for the great majority of manual workers. National Insurance took a smaller percentage of earnings, so too did rent, especially for those in older properties. The disadvantages came in the field of financial support from the State at times of long unemployment or periods of sickness. Family allowance was

unknown, and there were no concessions or supplements for low-income groups. With all these variations it is almost impossible to quote an accurate figure for the same standard of living today, but perhaps, (at the time of writing) something like £90 would be an equivalent income. Many Shop Assistants, Factory Labourers, and Farm Workers would be lucky to get about £2 per week, although some people in the retail food trade might receive a few shillings worth of meat or groceries as an extra. Farm Workers often had only nominal rents and some milk, eggs etc., but these payments in kind depended on the generosity of the individual employer. The low-paid family man, then and now, is not a great deal better off working than unemployed because even in the mid-thirties, man, wife, and four children received 38/- per week Dole money.



HEALTH AND WELFARE

The National Health Service as we know it today, did not exist prior to 1948, but there was a scheme of Health Insurance introduced in 1912 by which most workers were compulsorily insured against sickness. The provisions of this Act still applied in the 1930's, and secured free medical attention for the contributors, but did not do so for their dependants. The adult male worker receiving attention, sick pay, or hospitalisation was referred to as a "Panel" patient. His family were treated as private patients who, if they did not belong to some Friendly Society or Insurance Company Scheme, would have to bear the full cost of Doctor's bills. Most local people did belong to one of the old societies of Rechabites, Foresters, Oddfellows etc., or to one of the large Insurance Company Plans which helped to offset the expenses of ill-health.

It was these Societies and Companies that became known as "Approved Societies" and acted as agents in operating the State Scheme, including the payment of Sick Benefit. For needs which could not be met by National Health Insurance, help was available from Public Assistance, a development of the old Poor Law, or "Parish Relief" as it was often called. In this case any benefit required had to be applied for through a local Relieving Officer, and applications were assessed on the bases of "Household Need" which meant that all the home would be expected to contribute to the maintenance of their unfortunate relative. In some cases this resulted in reduced benefit or the refusal of a claim for assistance.

There were no Health Centres or large group Medical Practices in this area and Doctors worked alone or perhaps had one or two

partners. Surgery and Waiting Room were usually part of the Senior Partner's own residence. Dawley had 3 full-time and one part-time Doctor, Dr's H.C. Woodhouse and S.N. Browne were based at the "Terrace", and J.B. Robertson at the "Shrubbery", both in King Street. Dr Joan Browne assisted at the "Terrace" specialising mainly in female complaints.

These Doctors had no ancillary staff, such as clerks or receptionists and no formal appointment system. It was a case of "first come - first served" and waiting for the previous patient to emerge from the surgery before you went in.

Except in times of epidemics, Dawley's Doctors saw a lot less patients than their successors do nowadays. Surgery hours were only 9 am to 10 am and 6 pm to 7 pm., but this left more time for visiting patients in their own homes. In winter time, surgery hours would sometimes over-run by half an hour or so. There was a certain amount of private practice as some of the better off people were not then compulsorily insured. A visit from the Doctor cost about 4/6d and medicine, sometimes issued direct from a small dispensary at the surgery, in the region of 3/- a bottle. Poor people would often be reluctant to seek medical attention until they were seriously ill, and the same was true of Dental Treatment, hardly anyone went to a Dentist for routine care such as scraping or polishing. Most only went when they had toothache.

Local Dentists were based at Wellington, but two of them, Mr Lees and Mr Pratt, rented rooms in Dawley and held surgeries on one or two days each week. The cost of an extraction was around 5/-. Dental equipment of the type used in those days can still be seen at Blists Hill Museum.

Other medical services had differences from the modern style; Maternity was looked after by District Nurse / Midwives, and most births took place in the family home. Dawley had only one optician, Mr C Whitefoot who was also a Chemist.

The main hospital to which most Dawley people went was the old Royal Salop Infirmary, and some were sent for specialised treatment at Gobowen Orthopaedic, which was often referred to as the Agnes Hunt Hospital. Others sometimes went to one of the Wolverhampton Hospitals. The scourge of Tuberculosis was not yet defeated, and this type of patient would be catered for at Shirlett Sanatorium. Mental patients were treated at Shelton, (then known as Bicton), Hospital. Regulations at Hospitals were strict, and visiting times at the R.S.I very limited, with Sunday and Wednesday afternoons being the only periods allowed. Relatives wishing to enter were issued with passes admitting two visitors only. Some maternity cases which could not be dealt with in the home were taken in at Broseley or the Wrekin Hospital. Patients from all the Hospitals, who had had serious illnesses or surgery, could be considered for a couple of weeks stay at The Lady Forrester Convalescent Home at Llandudno. This could be arranged through the Local Insurance Committee, or "Hospital Committee" as it was called. This body was set up as a kind of "Watchdog" in matters pertaining to Health and Benefits. Its members including representatives of Local Authorities, the Medical Profession, and insured persons. The medical side of these old bodies is now the province of Family Practitioner Committees, and their financial and benefit area's are dealt with by D.H.S.S.

When residents had passed beyond the aid of all the institutions described, one of the three part-time undertakers would render the final service. The men concerned were primarily carpenters and joiners who offered a modestly priced package which often entailed a certain amount of D.I.Y. by relatives. This self-help sometimes included collecting the "Board", arranging for an experienced neighbour to do the laying out, and keeping the body in the house until burial day. A far cry from the comprehensive service provided by the modern Funeral Director.

Apart from sickness, there were other causes of poverty, including a high rate of unemployment, and many Dawley people were out of work for long periods. Unemployment Insurance Contributions were paid separately from Health deductions, an Insured person having two cards, one for each contingency, instead of the current all-in payment of N.I. Contributions. Dole was paid through the old style Employment Exchanges and had to be collected from there every Friday. Signing-on was done each Monday and Wednesday. Rates of benefit were 17/- per week for adult males, 9/- for a dependant wife, and 3/- for a child. The Dole ran out after 26 weeks, and if a person remained out of work for longer, (as many did), then it was a case of applying for Unemployment Assistance, which was a new scheme introduced by the Government in 1934 to provide for the long term workless. The benefit was subject to a needs test, similar to the General Public Assistance Test.

It was always possible to see a number of unemployed men standing in groups at street corners. The majority of them were well into middle age, and it was rare for teenagers to be out of work. Perhaps this was due to the small wages then paid to school leavers who started work at the age of 14, for about 9/- per week. By the

age of 18 some youths were doing the jobs of skilled machinists for less than 40% of adult rates. Full rate was not paid until the age of 21 in engineering, and in office work and retail trades it could be a few years later.

There were other groups of people in poor circumstances, including retired persons and widows whose basic pensions were 10/- per week, of course in those days many men worked on into their seventies to avoid having to exist on such an income. Another factor was the considerable number of three generation households, in which, younger members of the family helped to support pensioners. Few O.A.P's would have been keen to reside in the old type of Poor Law Institution, and although they had improved since Victorian times, the old stigma still remained.

Widows often lived in near poverty, even with help from Public Assistance, and the shortage of suitable work for women made it difficult to obtain employment unless the person had special skills or qualifications. For most widows, part-time domestic work or office cleaning was the usual type of occupation.

POLITICS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Dawley then and now, is part of the Wrekin Constituency which was represented by Mr Baldwin Webb a Conservative M.P. It is unlikely that Dawley on its own would have elected a Tory, but the Wrekin is and was a "Barometer" seat, usually held with small majorities. Most people hereabouts were Labour supporters, but the Constituency contained Wellington and the large rural area to the North where there was a considerable number of Conservative followers.

Dawley had only a few people of true Middle Class status, most of them being either Industrialists, Doctors, or Anglican Clergy, but there was a large amount of Tory support among those who were regarded as Lower Middle Class, and even a substantial number of Working Class people who voted Conservative. Mr Baldwin Webb, seemed to be popular with his constituents in general, and it was during his time that the "Wrekin Trip" was started. This outing took place once a year, and in its early days was known as the "Baldwin Webb Trip". It was then a big event in the area, and I recall one of the excursions going to Southampton to see and look over the great new liner "Queen Mary".

At election times, the main venue for public meetings was the Town Hall, and these were well attended. Outdoor meetings were also held, one regular place was outside Horsehay Works, where candidates addressed a gathering of workmen during the lunch hour. People seemed to take the promises of Politicians more seriously than they do in these somewhat cynical times, and M.P.'s enjoyed a greater measure of respect. Perhaps this was because they were rarely seen, except at election times or

other special occasions, whereas now they are familiar faces on our television screens.

As schoolboys we did not of course, have much knowledge of, or interest in, politics and council work, so all we knew about the local authority was what we saw going on in the streets, such as road repairs or street cleaning, and that familiar Dawley institution the unforgettable "Druggon". For the uninitiated the "Druggon" or Night Soil Cart was a rusty steel tank on wheels drawn by a large horse and crewed by two men. It toured the district during the night, collecting the contents of the old pan closets still used by many households. I can remember hearing the "Druggon" calling at some nearby cottages and the sound of the pans clanging on the side of the cart. The men carried a hurricane lamp, which was their only means of illumination I am sure that if we had been invited to design a coat of arms for Dawley U.D.C., the Druggon would have figured prominently in it!

The only other regular Council Service with which we were familiar was the street lighting supplied by the Dawley Gas Company from their Pool Hill Works. The type of lamp used, is now only seen as a garden ornament sometimes wired for electricity to light a yard or drive. High Street, had one of the large "Jubilee Lamps" erected to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Some lamps were bracket type, fixed to the side of buildings or pillar lamps mounted on walls. The distance between lamps was greater than in modern standards of lighting and brightness varied with fluctuations in gas pressure. There was no natural gas and all urban communities had their own Gas Plants making Coal or "Town" Gas as it was sometimes called. The service was quite good and lamps seldom seemed to be out of use. Perhaps this was because a man from the Gas Company cycled round the lighting area each evening to ensure that all lamps were

working. Before the arrival of automatic time controls, he had to light each individual lamp.

Occasionally we would see the more major type of road repair being carried out, and a familiar sight at these times was the old steam roller , now only seen at Traction Engine Rallies. The drivers of these machines would travel the County to different jobs towing their wooden, box-like caravans which served as living accommodation when they were a long way from their base depots.

The Dawley Urban District Council established in 1894 was based on the original parishes of Dawley Magna, Parva, and Nova, (or Dawley, Doseley and Malinslee). By 1935 it had been extended slightly to include parts of other parishes and contained more than 3000 acres, stretching from Hollinswood in the north to Coalbrookdale in the south, and from Moreton Coppice in the west to Stirchley in the east.

Only the more basic services could be provided, because rateable values were very low, with hundreds of poor cottages having values of only a few pounds per year. So it seemed strange to see the large number of new Council Houses being built in the mid and late thirties. The reason for this of course, was that the Government was anxious to provide employment for some of the many workless and so authorised a considerable amount of financial support to local authorities who wanted to clear their slums and create better conditions for residents. Over 300 houses must have been built in the immediate pre-war years, including the Portley Extension, Attwood Terrace, Ardern Avenue, Rhodes Avenue and Alma Avenue.

Since the days of large scale mining, the approaches to the town on the main road had presented a very unsightly picture, with large pit mounds still showing areas of bare clay. To remedy this, the Council took advantage of a Government supported scheme, similar to the current Community Programmes, in which, unemployed men were engaged in landscaping and tree planting, to improve the appearance of the more obvious eyesores, such as the large mound at the top of Finger Road, and other spoil heaps at Heath Hill.

There did not seem to be much concern about other environmental matters and many homes were quite close ! to unpleasant features, like slaughter houses. One bad case was a row of houses situated between the Gas Works and the Council Rubbish Tip, and subjected to the smoke and smell of gas production combined with dust and vermin from the Tip. However, considering all the handicaps of low value property, inadequate industry, and hundreds, of acres of unproductive land, the Council did quite well.



RELIGION AND SOCIAL LIFE

The two main pillars of social life, were the Methodist Church and the Public House. The Urban District had at least 12 Chapels still in use with well attended Sunday Schools and substantial choirs. Methodism was the predominant form of religion, its membership much greater than that of the 3 Anglican Churches. Divisions between the established Church and the Non-Conformist Community were noticeable and even among Methodists many still thought of themselves as Wesleyan or Primitive although their Churches had been officially united in 1932.

One factor which no doubt contributed to the growth of Methodism was the number of small Chapels conveniently situated in outlying villages that were a good distance from the Parish Churches. Many children from Anglican families had been sent to Methodist Sunday Schools because they were nearer to home, and most of these youngsters stayed with the local Chapel in Adult life. Another feature was the greater opportunity for working class people to take part in the running of the Chapels. A minister could be responsible for up to 6 congregations and so relied heavily on his Lay Preachers, Stewards, and other Officials.

There was a big musical tradition in the area and many members of the various Chapel and Church Choirs were also singing with the large Dawley Philharmonic Society and Dawley Male Voice Choir. Music was an important element in the Choir Sermons and Sunday School Anniversary Services. These events were always popular and the host congregation would be swelled by representatives of the other local Chapels.

The most prominent occasion for the Chapels was the Dawley Sunday Schools Demonstration, which was held on August Bank Holiday. The various Sunday Schools would march from their headquarters and converge on the town from all directions, accompanied by Brass or Silver Bands. Each group would be headed by Standard Bearers with large fabric banners, which depicted biblical scenes and the names of the Chapels. They would meet together on the "Demonstration Field" which was the site of the present Bingo Hall. After the Royal Cinema was built, other locations were used, including the Paddock Mound and the "Council Field".

A huge open air service was held, after which, the entire parade passed through the town to be cheered by a packed High Street, which seemed as if every soul in Dawley was there. After the main parade, the different contingents went their separate ways and returned to base, where games were held and teas provided. Anglican Sunday Schools sometimes took part in the proceedings, but participation or otherwise very much depended on the attitude of individual incumbents.

The Demonstration was not just a big day for religious groups, but the high-light of the year for the whole of the town. Another event held on the same day was the Dawley Flower Show, which took place in the Town Park and was not opened until the Demonstration was over. The tenets of Methodism were taken seriously by staunch Chapel members, with Sunday Observance and the rules on alcohol and gambling being closely adhered to. A large number of Methodists were members of the Rechabites Friendly Society, which required total abstinence from its clientele. Total abstinence as not a feature of the other principle type of social life which was based on the old Inn's of the district. Some of the pubs were little changed from the style of Victorian times and

had "Quarry" floors, wooden benches, and old cast iron tables and fireplaces. Many were Free Houses owned by the Licensee and often remained in the same family for long periods.

Where a pub had been in the same hands for many years, it was common for it to be referred to by the Landlord's name, rather than the signboard title, for example, Poole's (Royal Exchange), Tarr's (Station Inn), Joe Williams's (Queens Head), and several others.

As far as I can remember only two were still brewing their own beer, the Royal Exchange and Queens Head, but there could have been more. The old Wrekin Brewery was by then supplying several houses, and the large Midland Breweries such as Mitchells and Butler, Joules, and Ansell's were on the scene. Closing time was earlier then, no later than 10pm, and Sunday hours were noon till 2pm, and 7pm till 10pm. There was little in the way of professional entertainment, and it was often left to D.I.Y. efforts by customers who sang the old favourites including "Nellie Dean" and "Lily of Lagoon", always among the "Top Ten". Occasionally a local pianist or solo singer would be engaged, but it was the "regulars" who provided the "Choir" and their renditions of the old songs often became increasingly discordant as closing time approached.

A special form of entertainment could be seen by passers-by at certain "turning our times", when a couple of aggressive characters had decided to "fight it out", and I have seen a few of these performances including one, which lasted for quite a time, leaving the contestants covered in blood. It ended with the arrival of a policeman who marched off with one of the men and stuck his head under a hydrant to wash the dirt and blood away.

Catering in public houses was very limited, and in most places was either non-existent or consisting only of sandwiches, pork: pie, or black pudding. Few Dawley people could then afford to dine out in Inn's or Hotels as many do today, so there was little requirement for meals to be provided.

The pubs did provide bases for many social activities including Homing Pigeon Societies, Angling Clubs, and Trade Union Meetings. Bowling Greens had become available at two of the larger establishments and Darts was beginning to overtake Dominoes in popularity. A big difference in pubs then and now is the number of women seen in them. Only a few women would be .found among the "regulars" and most of those only drank in the "Best" Room, away from the bar. This situation changed rapidly after the outbreak of war and by 1942 there seemed to be more women than men in some pubs.

There has been a drastic fall in the number of Methodist Chapels, and at present only 5 are still in use. The Public Houses are only one or two less than the number existing in 1935, and counting new Social Clubs, licensed premises have actually increased. At the end of the 19th century there must have been about 16 Chapels and something like 36 Ale houses, in the original urban district.

Other centres of Social life are worth a mention, including the numerous Whist Drives that have been superseded by Bingo, The Old Town Band, and the two principal Choirs mentioned in a previous paragraph. The most popular sport was Football, and there have been a number of Amateur teams representing Dawley, variously known as Athletic, United, Dynamos etc., and also village sides such as the old Horsehay Albion, Lawley Athletic and Hinkshay United.

Outside of the town the old Wellington Town F.C. known as the "Lillywhites" drew a considerable number of supporters from the Dawley area, and for those who preferred to watch First Division Football, there was always the famous Wolves, now sadly struggling in the Fourth Division. Cricket and Tennis had few participants and spectators, but there was a Tennis Club in the park, and a Cricket Team consisting mainly of Horsehay Company employees who played on fields at Moreton Coppice, or Myford.

The activities already described, provided most of the social life, but these were organised institutions with Committees and Memberships. There were more informal and casual facets of social life, like simply going for walks with friends. Much walking was done, and in those days you could meet many acquaintances who would stop for a chat. Dawley was not so "Cosmopolitan" then and it was rare to meet a strange face. The most popular long walk was to the Wrekin, and at Bank Holiday times it was possible to meet a large number of local people on the footpaths over Horsehay Common and Huntington, which was the usual route. It was customary to climb to the summit and always visit the "Needles Eye" and "Cuckoos Cup" before returning. For those with a couple of shillings to spare it was possible to get a good tea at the "Cottage" or the "Forest Glen", but for us youngsters it would more likely be a glass of milk from a farm at Huntington, or perhaps a drink of water from the "Tweeselty Well".



SERVICES AND TRAVEL

In outline the appearance of our High Street is much the same as it was 50 years ago, except for the new paving and pedestrianisation of recent times and the modern development around the Central Square. There are big differences in the interiors of most shops, the principal change being in the style of service. Supermarkets did not exist and all goods were kept behind the counter. Another difference especially in the food trades, is that many of the old skills used in preparing goods for sale have died out. In the old days, butchers killed their own animals in the back yard and produced all the products, such as sausage, pies, brawn etc. Grocers packed their own sugar into 11b or 21b bags after receiving it in 1cwt sacks, cheese came in as large circular slabs and had to be "wired" into triangular segments ready for sale. The larger shops had bakehouses attached and it was possible to have bread delivered to your home while it was still warm. Most food is



now prepared and packed in automated factories many miles away. There were no less than 7 butchers, 6 sizable grocers, and 4 greengrocers/fishmongers in High Street and Burton street. The service provided by these shops was quite comprehensive, and most operated some kind of delivery vehicle, including carrier bikes or "box" tricycles. Some traders were very obliging, and I know of one case, where a pork pie and 1/2lb of sausage rated a special delivery by carrier bike to a house in Lightmoor. The total value of this order would then have been about 1/- (5p).

The housewife visited the shops more often because she had no means of keeping food fresh for long periods. Deep freezing was unknown, and even the butchers had only recently discarded their old "Ice-Boxes" for new commercial refrigerators. Meat was considered to be an essential part of diet and consumption of beef, pork and lamb was much greater than at present.

Some shops had strange mixtures of trades, examples of this included a business consisting of printing, news-agency, drapery and milk delivery service. Another milk retailer was also a watch and clock repairer, and one greengrocer ran the newsagents shop next door. There were quite a number of small sweet and general shops, some of them no more than converted living rooms kept by housewives. Shop regulations were not very exacting and many of these cottage traders had open fires behind the counter and no proper washing facilities.

There were a few long established dealers, especially Clothiers and Drapers, who "knew their Dawley well" and always stocked the more inexpensive range of merchandise, suited to the poor circumstances and thrifty nature of most inhabitants. The "up-market" styles of trading would not have been very successful then, and to some extent this could still be the case today.

For day to day shopping Dawley was quite adequate, but housewives often visited Wellington on Market Day, and occasionally, perhaps once or twice a year, a shopping trip to Shrewsbury or Wolverhampton would be undertaken, usually travelling on a local private coach. These places were the nearest towns with large department stores, before the arrival of Telford Shopping Centre.

Inflation was not a big problem and some prices remained stable for long periods. Woolworths sold "Nothing over Sixpence", and there was a clothing chain known as the Fifty Shilling Tailors, but by the late thirties the "Three-penny and Sixpenny Store" had difficulty in keeping this image and it was soon to disappear. The clothing store too was forced to change its name because it was by then almost impossible to provide a suit of reasonable quality for fifty shillings. There were some remarkable bargains in watches and clocks, and I am still wondering how my very first pocket watch could have been produced and retailed for just 2/6 (12½p).

Several shops and services have declined or ceased to exist, including the old "Leather Shop" which supplied all that was needed for repairing your own shoes, a very common activity in times when good boots and shoes were comparatively expensive, sometimes costing a full week's wages or more, so they had to be re-soled a number of times and made to last as long as possible. Other services are less evident today, an example being the number of retail Coal Merchants. Once there were about nine firms operating in the district and regularly visiting virtually every household.

The old style chimney sweep, who was often a part-timer with another job, seems to have gone, together with the town Blacksmith who shod the trader's horses and ponies, fitted hoop-iron tyres to their carts, and carried out all sorts of metalwork repairs, sometimes using "Blacksmith's Weld" which has since been replaced by gas and electric welding.

Many traders were still using horse-drawn delivery vans and carts, from milkmen to coal merchants, and the familiar sight of these vehicles seldom caused a turning of heads, except perhaps the occasional appearance of Mr John Shewards ornamental hearse, which was a most impressive spectacle with the sturdy figure of Mr Sheward resplendant in black coat and top hat, sitting high up on the driving board.

Apart from shops, there were other forms of mixed business in the commercial and light industrial trades. The above mentioned Mr Sheward, as well as providing hearses and funeral/wedding cars, also ran a haulage operation, a small farm, and the Unicorn Inn at Little Dawley. The Tarr family who then kept the Station Inn, operated a few small pits, and traded as retail coal merchants and haulage contractors.

An important service for Dawley people was Public Transport, and since 1926 most of this has been provided by Midland Red, of course there is a reduced requirement for buses now that about 40% of families have the use of a private car. In pre-war days, no less than ten different weekday services called at Dawley, which then had two official bus stops, one at the bottom of Heath Hill and another by the Lord Hill. Outside of towns the old buses would stop anywhere 'on request, except on very steep hills.

All buses from Madeley, Bridgnorth, Ironbridge, Broseley

Wood, Lawley Bank and Little Dawley, called at one or both of the Dawley stops, so giving the town the best service outside of Wellington. The principal need for Dawley was a good service to Wellington, and on Thursdays and Saturdays the buses were heavily loaded with shoppers for Wellington Market. On Saturdays this traffic would be added to, by cinema goers and football supporters, together with people travelling to Shrewsbury or Wolverhampton for shopping, cinema, or theatre. There were no through services from Dawley so it was all change at Wellington for another bus, or one of the frequent trains from the busy railway station.

Midland Red was the principal carrier, but there were 3 private bus operators who provided some works services, shopping trips, summer time outings, and private charter. I am sure many will remember travelling with Mr Walter Hart on the Wednesday journey to Wolverhampton, or going to Oakengates on Darrall's regular service via Old Park. The other operator was, Mr Bert Poole who's premises were situated on the site of the former Barclays Bank. The corrugated iron garage often formed a background feature in old photographs of Captain Webb's Memorial.

The old railway companies had branch lines passing through the area and the L.M.S. had stations at Stirchley and Malinslee, the latter situated at Dark Lane. The G.W.R. stations were at Horsehay and Lawley Bank. Until the arrival of Midland Red, the railways had provided most of local passenger services, but the stations were a good walk from the centre of Dawley, and so lost much of their custom to the more convenient buses. The original routes of these railways had been designed to serve the many old industrial sites, rather than to cater

for passengers. In the 19th century only 3 or 4 passenger trains per day would be running. The early 20th century saw a considerable increase in working class travel, but by the 1930's road transport had taken away a large amount of both passenger and freight traffic from these railways. The Branch Lines will be mentioned again in connection with some local outings that had become traditional, and it is traditions that will now be dealt with.



TRADITION AND PERSONALITIES

Several local activities had long traditions including the "Demonstration" which dated back to 1876, and there was the story of the "Pig on the Wall" which featured in an old photograph taken during a celebration to mark the achievements of Capt. Matthew Webb, the great swimmer. The pig was said to be "watching the band go by". This stunt was unlikely to have been unique to Dawley as other Midland towns have claimed pigs on walls.

One informal kind of "tradition" was the Sunday Evening "Street Parade" in which teenagers gathered in the High street on summer nights. Youths and girls, often in their "Sunday Best", and some of them just out of Chapel, would turn up in groups of their own sex and walk up and down the street. Boys would whistle and call out at the girls, and after a while the numbers decreased as pairing up took place and couples went off for a walk together. Many Dawley people must have met their future wives and husbands as a result of this ritual.

Christmas was enthusiastically celebrated, and the town band would tour the streets playing carols for a couple of hours. Post was delivered right up to lunch time on Christmas Day, and the GPO hired privately owned lorries to carry the parcels. On Boxing Day a local team of Folk Dancers or "Mummers" would perform their routine outside all the public houses, then take a collection for local charities. Their repertoire would include some of the old "Dixeland" type songs.

The Christmas holiday then consisted of just the two days and few people would get more than this. New Years Day was not a holiday in this part of the country. For manual workers the total holiday entitlement would not be more than about 16 days in the whole year, but even this seemed much better than the situation in the early years of

the century, when, apart from Bank Holidays, only one days holiday was allowed. So giving not more than 8 days per year.

At the Horsehay Iron Works this annual day off was taken on the third Thursday of August which was always the second, or "Cheap" day of the Shrewsbury Floral Fete. For this occasion a special train could be joined at Horsehay or Lawley Bank stations and this became a traditional outing which continued for many years. When a full weeks holiday was granted, Flower Show time was the week chosen.

Several local trips on the old trains were taken regularly, among them being a ride from Stirchley to Coalport for a picnic at the Swinney, and an outing to Sandy Beach at Buildwas by the "Horsehay Train". On August Bank Holiday the Much Wenlock Olympic Games took place on a field near to the old Wenlock station and the C.W.R. trains could be used to get there. Special trains were laid on to take families on working "Holidays" to the fruit farms of Worcestershire and Kent. These people would spend a couple of weeks picking fruit or hops and often slept in barns and other outbuildings. They were usually poor and unemployed and this was a way of earning some extra money.

Other local events often visited by Dawley people included Oakengates Wakes when a large travelling Fair, usually Pat Collins's, came to stay on waste land at the bottom of Station Hill. St George's Sports, held on the recreation ground, was another popular venue. Dawley was often visited by small Fairs which were usually sited on the Paddock Mound. Traction Engines were used to drive the generator which supplied power for the Show Ground. Fairs seemed to attract a greater number of patrons than

they do today, but of course much that we take for granted now was then regarded as something to look forward to.

One feature which always drew a good crowd was the little Biplane that came to the large field that is now the site of the Phoenix Centre. The pilot would perform various types of stunt flying and also take passengers for a short flight over the town for a fee of 5/-. There is a story that one passenger complained about the brevity of the flight, so the pilot offered to take the man up again, the passenger agreed, but when they were airborne the aviator went into his stunt routine. It was said to be a very distressed passenger that finally clambered out of the plane!

Cinema going had become a tradition by the end of the thirties and on Saturday nights the two picture houses were often crowded and queues would form outside. There were two performances during the evening and programmes changed twice a week. It was possible to take your girl to the cinema and buy her a box of chocolates for a total outlay of about 3/- (15p). Thousands of films must have been made by the great Hollywood Studios and many hundreds by British producers, but a film could take up to 2 years from its first showing in London until it was seen in Dawley. The worlds presented by Hollywood films in which "ordinary" Americans always seemed to live in large detached houses and drive around in huge cars, might well have been on another planet when compared with life in Dawley. The British made films dealt mainly with middle class life, and it was not until "Kitchen Sink" drama became popular in post-war years that we saw much of working class life like our own portrayed in film or theatre.

Many Dawley families now enjoy an holiday abroad, something that was confined to the middle class of

pre-war times when even prominent local people would seldom get further than the French Riviera, and for the average Dawley family, a week at Rhyl or New Brighton would be an achievement. Often a Day Trip to one of the above resorts had to suffice. There must have been some old people living then who had never been further than Shrewsbury.

When it comes to personalities then Dawley's own Capt. Matthew Webb was, and still is, our most famous son. His exploits are well known and are recorded in another publication available in local libraries. Suffice for me to say that Capt. Webb's Memorial was Dawley's most precious monument, and it was a good job some of the "old timers" did not see it described in an A.A Route Plan, as, "keep right at the Drinking Fountain!". Few other local people have gained any kind of national fame, but we do have a successful novelist in "Ellis Peters", (or Edith Pargeter) who once lived in King Street, and is now a resident of Madeley. A former Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Joseph Simpson, was born in the area and was the son of a Director of the Horsehay Company. Dr Parkes Cadman, born at Old Park, became a leading American Churchman and pioneer of Religious Broadcasting.

At local level there were some well known personalities including two of the longest serving Clergymen anywhere, both working for over forty years in Dawley. The Revd. Fawkes at Holy Trinity, and Revd. Parry of Malinslee. Some personalities have been mentioned in other parts of the book, but there were a few "Characters" among the local traders who will be well remembered by older residents, who know those places where the customer was not always right! A list of High Street shopkeepers is included with the diagrams at the end of the book.

Over the years the life of Dawley has been largely uneventful, but one 19th century tragedy is worthy of note. In 1872, there was a disaster at the Springwell Mine near little Dawley in which 8 young men were killed, when a cage fell to the pit bottom. They were buried together in a large tomb on the south side of Dawley Church.

Dawley's most noted murder took place near Stirchley Pool in 1867. The victim, a commercial traveller dealing in jewellery, was waylaid on his walk to Stirchley Station from Dawley, and was robbed and killed for his case of samples. This event aroused great interest in the area, and a play based on the circumstances surrounding it was produced by one of the old Travelling Theatre Companies, who provided entertainment and Drama in the days before cinema came into being. Descendants of the owners of the Theatre, the Allworth family, are still living in Dawley.



SUMMING UP

There is no doubt that living conditions are more comfortable than they were in the period of our story, and much of the real poverty has gone. The comparative affluence of recent times however, is to some extent due to the great increase in the number of married women with jobs outside the home. The single earner families are in real terms, only marginally better off than their pre-war counterparts.

There has been a marked change in attitudes towards those who "stray from the path" and moral standards commonplace today would then have been the subject of much adverse comment, Things that have become almost fashionable in recent times were often regarded as sins.

Social divisions were more apparent, and the middle class, especially Doctors and Anglican Clergy, who had most contact with the "lower orders", were inclined to address working men as plain "Jones" or "Smith", and to walk into cottages without bothering to knock. Of course in those days most of us were like Ronnie Corbett in the classic T.V. sketch "We knew our Place". Many of these attitudes are less evident now, and we can feel free to address our Clergy as "Roger" or "David". I do not think that the late Revd. Parry would have taken kindly to being called "Ted " in 1935.

The old Dawley U.D.C. which had only 1 full-time and about 4 part-time Officers, plus 12 lay Councillors, was like many small local authorities at the time, officially non-political, and the elected members sat as independents. Most of the Councillors, at least 7 out of 12, were either Doctors, Clergymen, or Industrialists who would have been most unlikely to support the Labour Party, but it was "not the done thing" to stand as Conservative, Liberal, or Labour when seeking a seat on the Council.

The services provided by the Council were very basic when compared with the wide range and better quality of facilities that we now enjoy. The old U.D.C. did not have the resources to provide many of the things that we expect today, and what they had was used for essentials. 'They had only a very small full-time staff, who somehow managed to administer and service an area which amounted to at least one quarter of Telford from a single converted house at 69 King Street, and a small Depot in the former Market Hall.

Local Authorities now have the support of a large number of voluntary bodies that did not exist in pre-war days, but which now supplement statutory organisations in their Social and Welfare Work. This type of activity was very limited and mostly confined to basic support for the sick or poverty stricken. There was little help for those with other problems because of the prevailing attitudes towards such things as mental illness, suicide, and sexual deviations. Divorce was rare and difficult to obtain, drug problems unknown, and things like C.A.B., Samaritans, Alcoholics Anonymous and the various "Help Lines" had not been thought of.

Conditions in the old Industries were very poor, with workshops often gloomy and inadequately heated. Discipline was strict and there were no Break-times or washing facilities. Men would have to collect their pay in their own time, after work on Friday. and I know of one place where you were booked in and out of the toilet. Miners and Foundry workers had no shower and changing rooms and would have to go home in their dirt.

Telford was one of Britain's earliest industrialised areas and there was a long tradition of skill in the Iron, Steel and General Engineering Trades. Much knowledge had been passed down through the generations

and many families had been employed by the same firm all their working lives.

Most of the machinery and plant in local works was of Victorian or Edwardian origin, some of it purchased second-hand from other parts of the Country, and the operators of machine tools had to be very skilful

to produce good work with them. It was this ability to overcome the handicaps of working with antiquated machinery and an inadequate supply of "Tackle" that led to the development of the traditional "Gainnes" of the Dawley man when it came to dealing with practical problems.

It was often said that if you could work at Horsehay, Coalbrookdale, or Lilleshall Company you could work anywhere. When the Sentinel Wagon Works was established at Ditherington it was men from east Shropshire who occupied most of the key jobs. Many others, trained in local works, went on to Supervisory posts in Black Country and West Midland Engineering Firms.

In addition to industrial "Know-how" there were other common characteristics in local residents, including their "down to earth" unpretentious style. This was evident, not only among the working class, but in the cloth cap image presented by some of Dawley's most substantial families.

Even the Managing Director of the Horsehay Company, Mr A. H. Simpson, perhaps the town's leading Industrialist, although unlikely to be seen in a cloth cap, lived in a modest style which conformed with his Quaker background where ostentation was not viewed with favour. Maybe over the years, the influence of a succession of Quaker Ironmasters had percolated down to their hundreds of employees and played some part in the development of certain virtues, such as integrity, modesty, and thrift, common facets of the true local character.

Of Faith, Hope and Charity, the latter was reputed to be the greatest, so it was with Integrity, Modesty, and Thrift. Thrift was an outstanding characteristic of the area, and common in all spheres of activity. Thrift and caution were probably responsible for the failure to modernise and diversify our traditional industries. The same attitudes could be found in domestic life, but here they were perhaps more of an asset than a liability. The Dawley man of those days was far too astute to be led into debt by the lure of "Status Symbols", the dictates of fashion, or attempts to "keep up with the Jones's". He would, like myself, always leave home without his Credit Card!

The two institutions that had done most to mould the character of Dawley people were the Quaker dominated industrial empires and the Methodist Church. The old style Quaker way of speaking included many old English words used in the bible, such as Thou, Thee, and Thine etc, and the local dialect is full of such words, or corruptions of them, like "Thee wuttna" for Thou wilt not. There were many residents with biblical forenames - Isaiah, Job, Elijah, and obscure ones like Ephraim. The influence of religion has declined, but Telford has become a pioneer in the ecumenical movement and this had resulted in a degree of co-operation between Anglicans and Methodists which would have been unthinkable 50 years ago.

Another development of recent years has been the growth of interest in industrial archaeology leading to the establishment of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum. When local works began to dispose of their redundant stationery engines, locomotives, and belt driven machine tools, little thought was given to the possibility of saving them for preservation. There must have been hundreds of authentic local items which would have filled every building in the museum

complex, broken up and sold as scrap iron.

Even the now famous Iron Bridge was not regarded as anything special, and as children we walked over it, never dreaming that one day thousands of tourists would come to visit this rusting structure, or that an outline drawing of it would become the symbol of a large new town. How times change!



HIGH STREET - DAWLEY 1937

1

MELIAS	Grocer	3
		5
MARKET HALL		7
		9
BARNETT J.	Greengrocer	11
LEIGHTON E.	Electrical	13
PRIVATE HOUSE		15
WHITEFOOT C.	{Optician {chemist	17
PHILLIPS	Grocer	19
WHITEFOOT G.	Ironmonger	21
BOYLE	Fishmonger	23

METHODIST CHAPEL		25
FRANCES L.	Refreshments	27
SUTCH H.	Cycle shop	27A
PRIVATE HOUSE		29
		31
GREENHALGH	Wholesale Grocer	33
		35
MITTON	Fish & Chip Shop	37
BULLOCK	Newsagent/Draper	39
PANTER	Greengrocer	41
BAILEY M.C.	Butcher	43
NUMBER DISUSED		45
DARRELL	Grocer	47
WATTS	Grocer	49
POST OFFICE		51
JONES H.S.	Ironmonger	53
JONES M.	China Shop	55
PHILLIPS	Furniture Shop	57
BALL BROS.	Grocer	59
PRIME A.	Fish & Chip shop	61
SMITH N.	Hairdresser	63

BACHE F.	Newsagent	65
YATES H.	Butcher	67
PRIVATE HOUSE		69

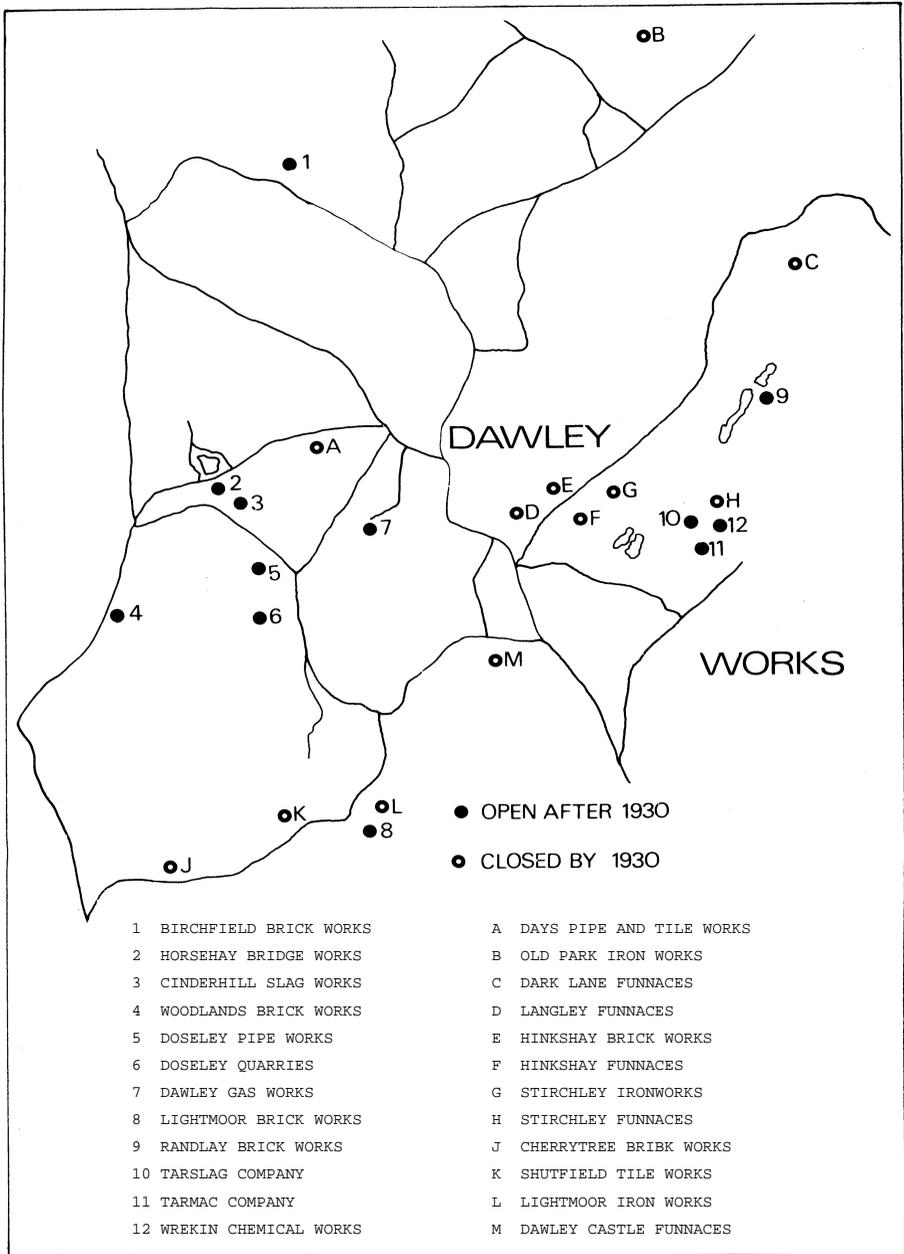
2	JUMBERS L.	Leather Shop
4	PREECE	Shoe Shop
6	MAIDEN A.	Grocer
8	DARRELL	Grocer/Baker
10	EVANS & SON	Draper
12	LLOYDS BANK	Limited Hours
14	PRICE Mr.	Grocer
16	BAILEY W.G.	Butcher
18	DABBS	Credib Draper
20	JARVIS F.	Greengrocer

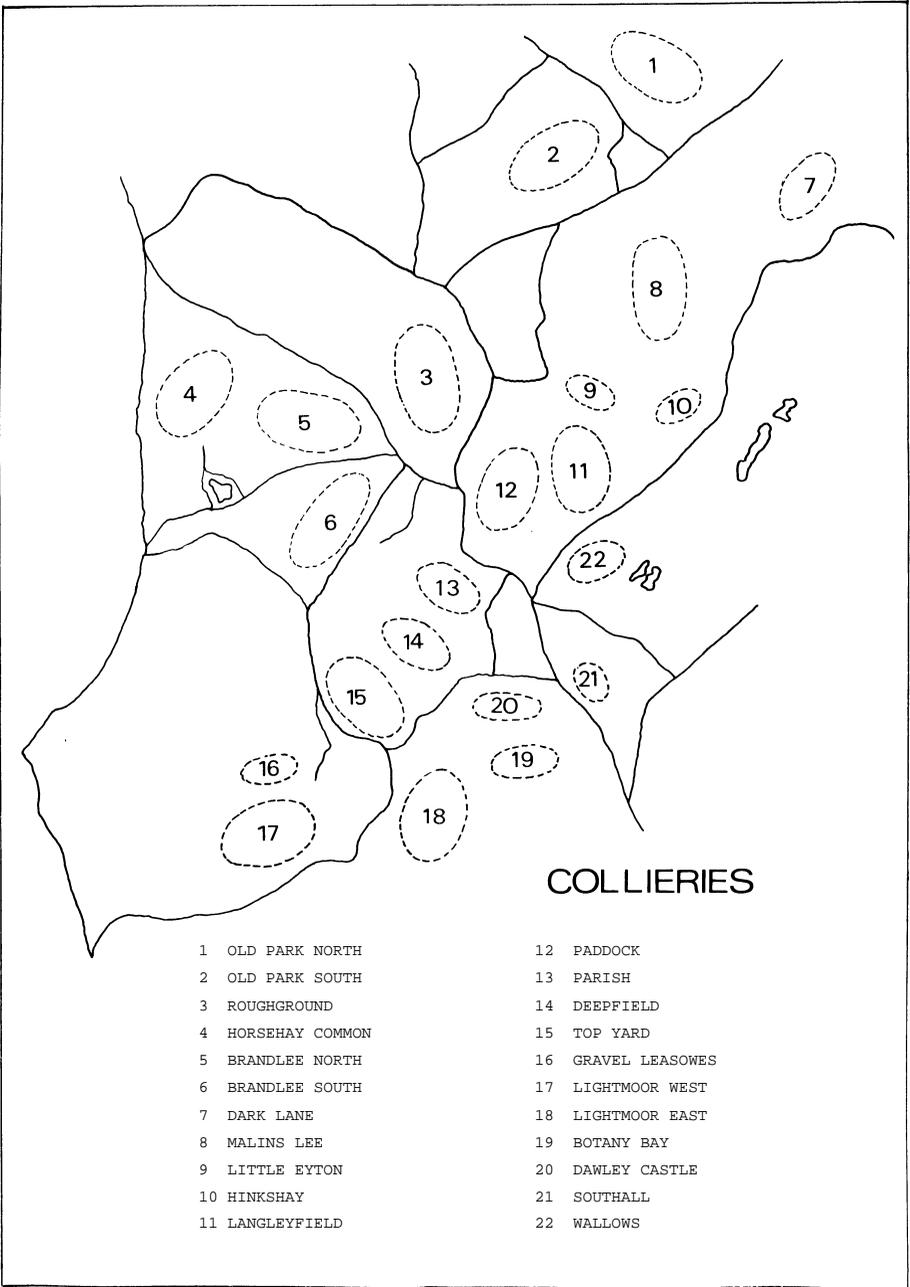
22	}	SMITH J. R.	Grocer/Baker
24			
26		TALBOT INN	
28		PERKINS P.	Clock Repairer
30		LENIS J.	Butcher
32		JONES E.W.	Electrical
34		JONES	Greengrocer
36		TAYLOR	Fish & Chip shop
38		GILES	Newsagent
40		RONLEY T.	Gents Outfitter
42		AYRES T.	Grocer
44		CROWN INN	
46		BERMROSE R.	Chemist
48		HILTONS	Shoe Shop
50		WALKER	Confectioner
52		WILLIAMS R.	Butcher
54		WOODING	Cheese Shop
56		BARCLAYS BANK (Mon. Wed. Fri.)	
58		GIBBS A.	Wool Shop
60		PRIVATE HOUSE	
62		BUNGALOW	
64		POOLE H.	Bus Depot

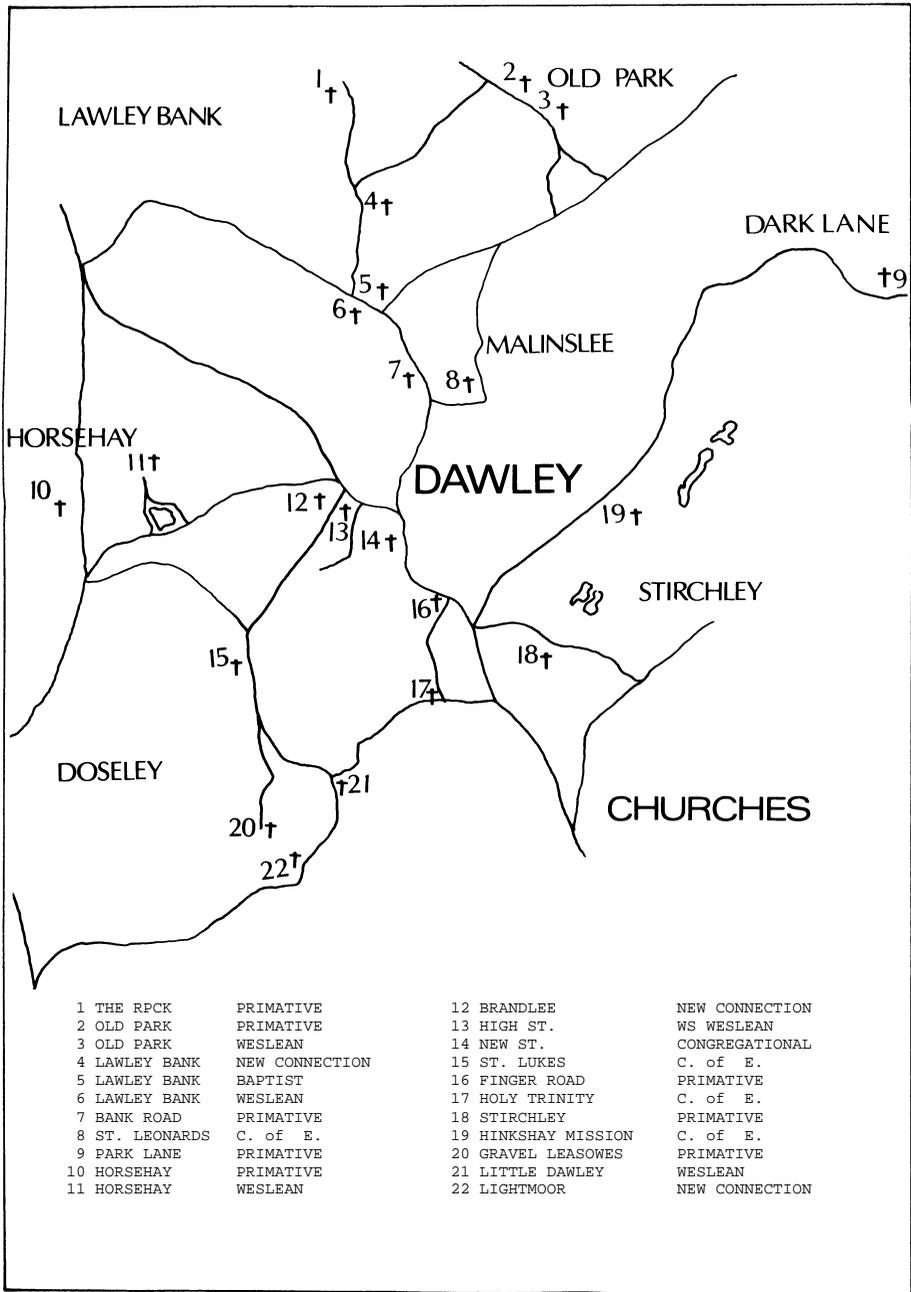
CAPT. NESS
 LORD HILL

PRICES (Circa 1930)

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|----------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 1 THE RPCK | PRIMITIVE | 12 BRANDLEE | NEW CONNECTION |
| 2 OLD PARK | PRIMITIVE | 13 HIGH ST. | WS WESLEAN |
| 3 OLD PARK | WESLEAN | 14 NEW ST. | CONGREGATIONAL |
| 4 LAWLEY BANK | NEW CONNECTION | 15 ST. LUKES | C. of E. |
| 5 LAWLEY BANK | BAPTIST | 16 FINGER ROAD | PRIMITIVE |
| 6 LAWLEY BANK | WESLEAN | 17 HOLY TRINITY | C. of E. |
| 7 BANK ROAD | PRIMITIVE | 18 STIRCHLEY | PRIMITIVE |
| 8 ST. LEONARDS | C. of E. | 19 HINKSHAY MISSION | C. of E. |
| 9 PARK LANE | PRIMITIVE | 20 GRAVEL LEASOWES | PRIMITIVE |
| 10 HORSEHAY | PRIMITIVE | 21 LITTLE DAWLEY | WESLEAN |
| 11 HORSEHAY | WESLEAN | 22 LIGHTMOOR | NEW CONNECTION |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our Thanks are due to:-

Stanley Allworth of Dawley,
Vie Noble of Wellington,
Mary Breese of Lilleshall,
and Pam Bradburn of Stirchley Grange
for their help with information on
the Stirchley area.

We are also obliged to the
County Library Services of
Shropshire and Staffordshire
for other assistance rendered..



Printed in England by Thumbprint Design & Print, Dawley, Telford