

Loamhole Dingle – History Under Your Feet

The circular trail takes you from Upper Furnace Pool through the beautiful woodland of Loamhole Dingle returning along the historic Ropewalk where industry once mixed with nature.

Upper Furnace Pool was in existence before Abraham Darby came to the Gorge in 1709. It was one of several pools in the valley used to store water for Coalbrookdale's industries. It has two streams flowing into it from the north-east and north-west. Today, it is a well-established pool for wildlife.

Loamhole Dingle is a wet, ancient semi-natural woodland consisting of mainly ash, alder, silver birch and hazel and a range of wild flowers.

The Lyde Brook flows from the north-west, through the dingle into Upper Furnace Pool and onward along the water courses of Coalbrookdale towards the River Severn at the bottom of the valley. Trees along the water's edge create a natural habitat for invertebrates. Here, the aquatic larvae of the rare crane fly, *Lipsothrix nigristigma*, thrive in saturated woody debris.

Horsetail and fern vegetation are the descendants of the giant trees which grew profusely during the Upper Carboniferous period (c.350 million years ago) when the coal seams were laid down.

The name 'Loamhole' may be derived from the word 'lum' or 'loam' which is soil composed of sand, silt and clay. Sandstone, further up the valley in Lydebrook Dingle, was quarried during the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century for the Coalbrookdale ironworks for sand castings to make iron moulds.

Today, the silt is collected in a silt trap situated at the beginning of the woodland entrance.

The Ropewalk track was developed in the early 1700s for horses to pull small tubs of sandstone from Lydebrook Dingle to Coalbrookdale. In the 1750s, a railway was built along this route to connect Horsehay with the Coalbrookdale Works.



Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

The Trust was set up in 1991 to look after 260 hectares of land for the benefit of wildlife, local people and visitors. The Trust is responsible for over half of the land within the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site, managing an important landscape with Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and endangered species.

The Trust also looks after 60 historic structures, traditional hay meadows and over 25 kilometres of paths. The Trust has an open access policy for walkers on all 260 hectares of land it manages. The Trust employs up to 25 local contractors to undertake various works. The Trust also has a strong volunteer programme carrying out a wide variety of tasks, contributing thousands of work hours each year.

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

The Trust's aim is to promote, protect and conserve the living landscape of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site

Find us at:

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REG CHARITY NO. 1004508



Artwork by MA Creative.

Cover illustration: Loamhole Dingle by Lynne Morgan

Back cover: The Iron Bridge © Mike Ashton

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Nearest parking: Coalbrookdale
Access: handrails and boardwalk, stone, steps and woodland paths

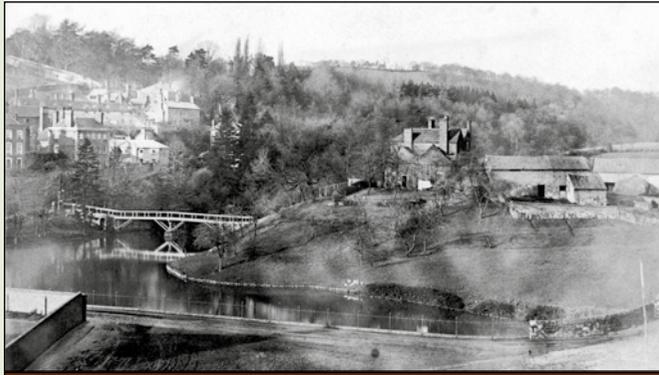
How long: 1.5 km / 45 minutes

How easy: undulating & steps

Mobility friendly: for 250m to end of new path, then steps

Toilets: Museum of Iron car park, Coalbrookdale

Crossing roads: Darby Road



Upper Furnace Pool, pre-railway (courtesy of IGMT)

START at the interpretation panel on Darby Road in front of Upper Furnace Pool (YOU ARE HERE). Follow the red way-markers throughout.

This photo shows the Upper Furnace Pool before the railway viaduct was built in 1864. The footbridge replaced a cast iron one which fell down in the 1840s. The sluice at the south-west corner of the pool bears the date 1838. The viaduct has 26 arches and this stretch of railway was known as the 'Golden Mile' due to the large costs involved in its construction.

The Upper Furnace Pool was one of a series of six pools which held water for the Ironworks and forges in the Coalbrookdale valley.

1 Follow the path under the brick arch and across the wooden footbridge. Turn left onto a narrow path and continue along to the end of the boardwalk.

The pool of water is a silt trap. It was installed in 2004 as part of the Water Courses Project. This is a favourite haunt of bird species, the Grey Wagtail and the Dipper.

2 Bear right to take the stone path uphill and through the woodlands and continue for about 150m.

This path, built in 2014 by 70 SGCT volunteers and contractors, replaces the original boardwalk lying parallel to the Lyde Brook.

3 Continue ahead over a small footbridge.

Here, the rare cranefly, *Lipsothrix nobilis*, breeds in rotting timber.

4 Bear left down steps to cross the brook via a footbridge.

The course of the water changes continually with water flow. The fallen tree across the brook has been climbed by children for over 40 years!

You may see footprints of a bank vole in the mud or a Dipper bobbing up and down at the water's edge!

5 Continue along the footpath uphill to an old track known as the Ropewalk. Turn left along the track, passing the Wilderness meadows on your right and Ropewalk meadows on your left.

Both the Wilderness and Ropewalk Meadows host a large variety of wild flowers during summer months. These are cut annually for hay and then grazed by the Trust's flock of Soay sheep.

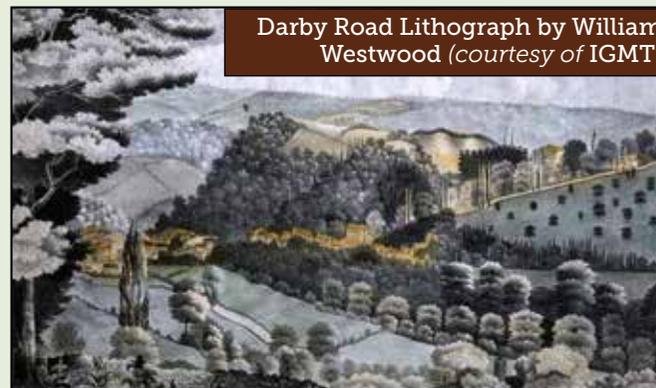
The high brick wall, opposite the Ropewalk meadow, is the remains of the Sunnyside deer park enclosure c.1750s. On the opposite side of this track, between the meadow and



Bank Vole (Stuart Edmunds)



Wilderness Meadow (Kate Chetwood)



Darby Road Lithograph by William Westwood (courtesy of IGMT)



an iron gate, 16 houses stood and were demolished in the 1840s. These can be seen in the centre of the lithograph.

6 Continue to the end of the Ropewalk to an original iron gate leading onto Darby Road. Turn left downhill past the Darby Houses to the Finish.

The Darby Houses, Rosehill and Dale House, were the former homes of the Darby family, the Quaker Ironmasters of Coalbrookdale.