

LEA MOUNT

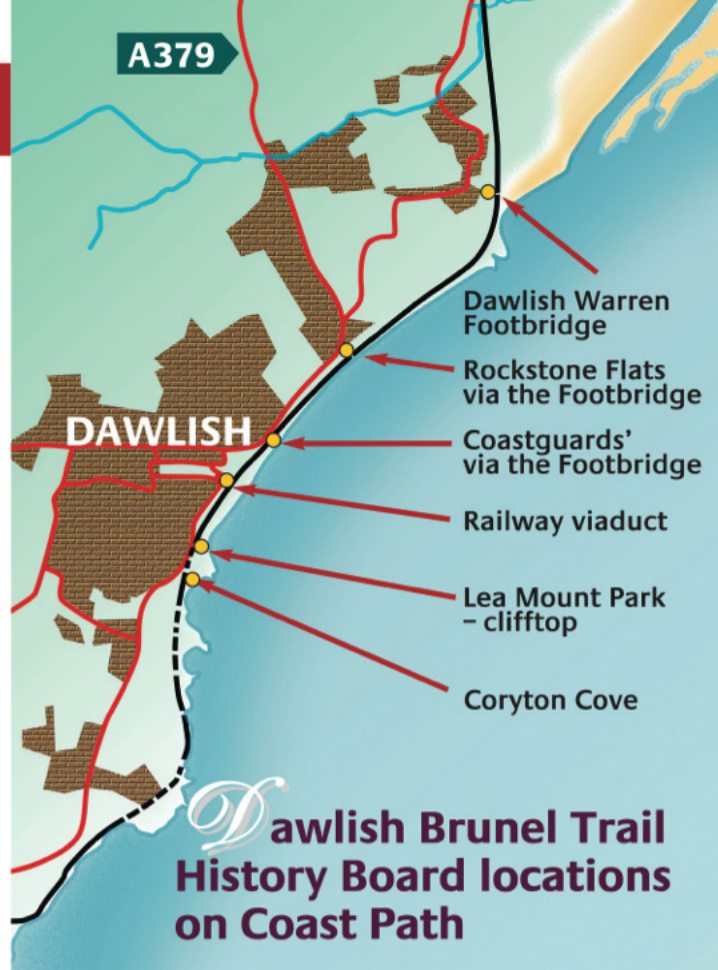
Before the Railways

...came to Dawlish, it was a fishing hamlet by the beach with another settlement by the church. The fashion for sea-bathing changed that, and the arrival of the railway altered it again. The history board on Lea Mount is at the end of the steep cliff path from Marine Parade, and it tells of the changes brought about by war, fashion and transport.

The public bath house on the beach offered a choice of sea or fresh water bathing in comfort, seen in this print, while the more adventurous could rent bathing machines on the beach.



The coastal views are impressive and take in the western end of the Devon & Dorset Jurassic Coast, World Heritage site, and reach as far as Portland Bill across Lyme Bay. A series of local 19th century prints show the growth of Dawlish and the arrival of the railway in the scene.



Dawlish Brunel Trail History Board locations on Coast Path

The history boards lie along part of the South West Coast Path, a section of the National Trail. They are placed between Dawlish Warren and Dawlish, and commemorate the development by the South Devon Railway Company of a coastal route to link Bristol to Plymouth and opened in 1846.

The railway is well known for the dramatic experience of travelling at the edge of the sea, in calm and sunny weather, or in raging storms. The walker is advised to follow guidance given about alternative routes according to weather or tidal conditions.

COASTGUARDS

Roads vs Railways

When stage-coaches opened new routes to the quiet towns and bathing places on the south west, new roads were built. A turnpike road was cut into the cliff to lead directly down from the Exeter road to the centre of Dawlish. It can be seen in the early 19th century print.



The history board, placed above the footbridge on the footpath from Exeter Road, tells how this innovative approach to Dawlish was later destroyed by the route of the South Devon Railway close to the face of the cliff. The turnpike road would have resolved many of the problems for today's motorists navigating the tortuous route into the centre of Dawlish.

The railway, however, does provide direct access to central Exeter for schools, colleges, business and shopping.

CORYTON

Red Rocks & Railway Tunnels

The history board stands at the far, southern, end of the sea wall path, overlooking Coryton Cove and beach. It can be reached from Marine Parade and the footbridge across the railway at times when the sea wall is affected by breaking seas. Coryton is hardly touched by the railway which runs at the foot of the cliffs. This was shown



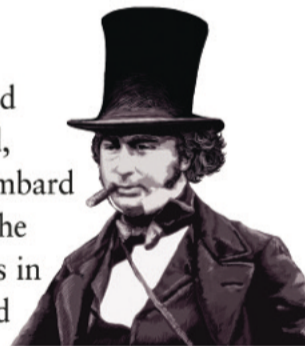
clearly in the watercolour by William Dawson, c1846, before the promenade linking to Boat Cove. The history board describes the striking soft red sandstone formations, and the task of tunnelling the railway route between Dawlish and Teignmouth.

It is a gentle walk from the Viaduct and is accessible for wheelchairs and prams. Care should be taken not to walk near the edge of the wall, and railway byelaws apply.

VIADUCT

Who brought the railway to Dawlish?

The history board can be found under the viaduct, facing inland, opposite the zebra crossing. Isambard Kingdom Brunel is known for the development of railway systems in the west of England, but he did not work alone.



Here you will find short notes on others who contributed to the arrival of a working railway at Dawlish. The watercolour, below, shows the town in 1846 before the growth that was encouraged by the new railway link to the rest of the country.



ROCKSTONE



The Coast Path runs at two levels between Dawlish Warren and Dawlish. There is a high level bridleway along the top of the cliff, accessible at all states of tide and weather, and the history board is placed on this path by the modern flats 'Rockstone'. It can also be reached by the footbridge from the sea wall path.

Safety advice is given on the boards at Rockstone, Coastguards and the Warren Footbridge concerning the sea-wall walk when tides are high or the sea is rough.

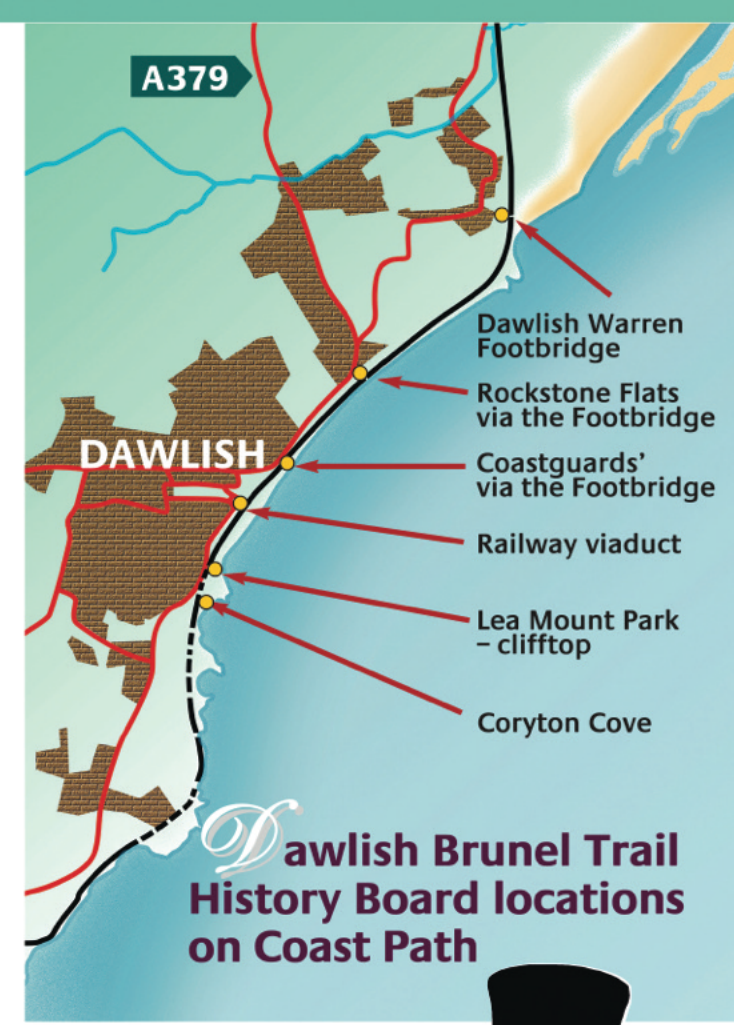
The board carries notes on the construction of the sea wall, the part played by 'navvies', and the occasional disruption caused by heavy seas. You will also find notes about long distance travel at the beginning of the 19th century and how railway journeys cut the costs for those used to travelling by stage-coach. The new railways brought many to the seaside on short excursions from the overcrowded cities.

Further material on the impact of the railway on Dawlish can be found in Dawlish Museum. A more specialist railway collection is in Newton Abbot Town Museum, while a Railway Studies Library is located in Newton Abbot Central Library. The most complete single reference book is "Exeter to Newton Abbot - a railway history" by Peter Kay, available in most Devon Libraries. Acknowledgement is made to publications by the Dawlish Local History Group. Reproduction of the William Dawson watercolours is by permission of the Institution of Civil Engineers and with the co-operation of the Devon Records Office. The preparation of these boards has been carried out by Robert Vickers for the Dawlish Community Trust, with a grant from Dawlish Regeneration Project, and kindly supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund through Brunel200. Brunel200 is an initiative of Bristol Cultural Development Partnership - Arts Council England South West, Bristol City Council and Business West. Design and layout of the boards by Mel Lim. Printed by Swift Print, Dawlish. The co-operation of South West Coast Path and Teignbridge District Council is gratefully acknowledged.

SAFETY ADVICE

Between here & Dawlish (or Dawlish Warren) the Coast Path is on the sea wall and during stormy weather waves break over it, making walking very hazardous. If you are in doubt about the conditions, turn back or cross one of the footbridges and divert on to the alternative paths along the cliff top. This section is impassable at high tide and during stormy conditions walkers must divert inland over the railway using one of the footbridges. Information regarding the state of tide can be found by visiting www.tide-forecast.com. Please be aware that there isn't a safety rail along the sea wall between Coastguards and Dawlish Warren and there is a steep drop onto the beach.

The Brunel Trail Dawlish ~ Dawlish Warren Coast Path



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The main story being told here is of the development of the ATMOSPHERIC RAILWAY. It was called, by some, "Brunel's Atmospheric Capar" because it was made to work but did not survive much more than a year. The nearest relic of this brave (or foolhardy) experiment is the pumping station at Starcross. The red sandstone building is prominent in the village, although the chimney has been reduced in height after storm damage. It is not open to the public and the machinery has long since been removed.



THE ATMOSPHERIC CAPER

The peace and quiet changed when the railway came, first with navies to build the sea walls and railway embankments, then with steam engines to draw trains. The history boards are located close to the footbridge (a Listed structure, recently restored) on the seaward side of the track.

WARREN FOOTBRIDGE Rabbits & Silence

The Warren spit lies between the river Exe and the sea and was home to little more than rabbits until the railway came. Being part of the protective entrance to the Exe estuary, it is home to many species of native and migrating birds and an important wildlife site.

THE BRUNEL TRAIL is a series of history boards placed along the Coast Path and which can be sampled at leisure. They are placed at between ten and fifteen minutes walk apart, with a slightly longer interval to Dawlish Warren footbridge.

There is no fixed sequence for visiting the history boards, but the content covers the town and coastline of Dawlish in the period of change in the middle of the 19th century when railways were developing. The general theme is "When the railway came to Dawlish" and considers the impact on the town and transport.

At the southernmost end, in Lea Mount Park, the board shows how Dawlish appeared in the early years of the 19th century. A sequence of views from this location show the gradual spread of housing onto higher ground, giving good sea views, and the appearance of the railway separating the town from its beach.

One of the attractions of Dawlish is its setting at the northern end of the red sandstone coast of rolling cliffs, with their erosion into weird rock forms. This can be seen at Coryton Cove where a board describes the geology.

At the Viaduct the board sets out the cast of Brunel's family and his key collaborators in the development of the South Devon Railway.

At Coastguards approach, the board shows how the railway was able to overthrow the improved turnpike route into central Dawlish and turn it to its own advantage, but to our considerable inconvenience.

At Rockstone flats the board describes the 'labour and materials' needed for the construction of the sea wall, and the similarity of methods to those used in building canals in the previous century.

The northern end of the trail (at present) is the pair of boards mounted by the old footbridge over the railway at Dawlish Warren. From here it is possible to look up the track to Starcross and see the old pumping station of the atmospheric railway. The material describes that innovative enterprise, that ran for seven months under atmospheric pressure alone.

Exploration need not be limited to walking the trail.

RAILWAY EXCURSIONS FROM DAWLISH WARREN

It is possible to take a circular tour of the Exe estuary. Regular train services run via Exeter Central to Exmouth, where river excursions are possible and a passenger ferry operates to Starcross. From Starcross station the train or bus can be used to return to the starting point.

In a westerly direction, trains run to Totnes, Torquay and Paignton. At Paignton the Dartmouth Steam Railway operates steam driven services to Kingswear, on the river Dart. Ferries connect Kingswear to Dartmouth and at certain states of the tide it is possible to take

a river boat to Totnes and return from there by train.



For more information please visit visitsouthdevon.co.uk/things-to-do or www.discoverdawlishanddawlischwarren.co.uk