



Old Town Railway Path

Discover Swindon's rich transport heritage, landmarks and attractions

Swindon Travel Choices



Swindon Travel Choices was part of Swindon's Local Sustainable Transport Fund project and offers advice on sustainable travel in the borough through its website, guidance, leaflets, maps and other resources.

For more information about walking and cycling routes, visit the website at www.swindontravelchoices.org.uk.

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StreetSmart

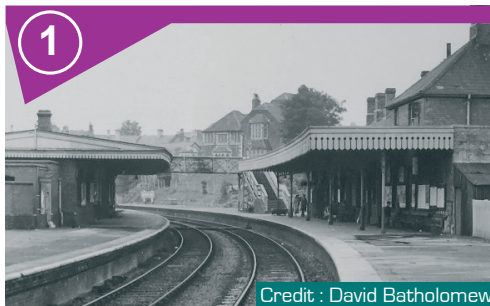
Report any maintenance issues [such as broken glass, fallen trees, potholes etc] along the route to Swindon Borough Council's StreetSmart team online at www.swindon.gov.uk



Design, cartography and print by Pindar Creative
www.pindarcreative.co.uk

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Credit : David Batholomew

Signal Way Industrial Estate

What is now home to several industrial units used to be the site of the Swindon Town Station, a railway station that served fare-paying passengers for 80 years. The station nearly didn't get built - the original plan in 1870 was to tunnel 700 yards through the Old Town Hill and have the first station at Chisledon. However, the tunnel did not succeed and the line came from Rushey Platt, and a station was created. It opened in 1881.

As well as two signal boxes and a turntable, the station had a goods shed and a loco shed located just to the east of where the Marriott roundabout is today, three platforms (the longest over 500 feet long), waiting rooms and a main station building, including a very fine refreshment room.

Swindon Town station was used by thousands of Swindon residents during the annual Great Western Works Trip fortnight break to travel to the coast and other holiday destinations.

It was also used for letting off homing pigeons from the north, including Manchester.

The line closed to passengers in September 1961. For more information, visit www.swindonsotherailway.co.uk



Town Gardens

The Town Gardens are a superb, Grade II listed Victorian pleasure garden. Music events are often held in the gardens in either the Grade II listed bandstand or the Art Deco music bowl, set in a natural amphitheatre.

There is also an aviary, bowling green, rose garden and cafe.

Today the Gardens still retain the feeling of their original Victorian splendour. Spanning over six hectares, they have been laid out to create an environment where visitors can stroll and relax.



Stone sculptures

There are five stone sculptures along the path. Some think they are wheels, some dials or discs. They start at the Old Town end and heading towards the west, they represent Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Conceive. They were commissioned by the Swindon Bike Group in 1995 and created by artist Alec Peever, who specialises in sculpture and carving.

Each sculpture was made from Portland stone and has two parts, a small wheel showing the Element, and a large wheel with a short piece of poetry. In addition, there is a length of wood crossing the path between each of the wheel pairs. Each of these lengths of wood has two words written on them. Poet Fiona Sampson was responsible for the words.

See if you can spot all five for yourself.



Link to East Wichel

The railway path has a set of steps onto a steep path that leads into East Wichel. This development was first conceived in 1995 but it took until 2009 before the first resident moved in. The land was fondly nick-named "Swindon's front garden" since it was a stretch of open land which separated the town from the motorway.

East Wichel is now built out, with 800 households, a pub, convenience store and restaurant, a primary school, playpark, stretch of canal and lakes.



Link to Mill Lane

Mill Lane can be accessed from the railway path and provides access to Middle Wichel to the south and the residential area of Old Town (Westlecot Road) to the north. As part of the Canalside expansion, the plan is to close off Mill Lane to through traffic, although pedestrian and cycle access is permitted.



Link to Field Rise

Field Rise can be accessed from the railway path, although the linking path is quite steep! This provides access to the residential area around Field Rise, including the Angel Ridge Playground with its popular sand pit park. The bones of an Ichthyosaur (marine dinosaur) were once discovered nearby, and this pre-historic relic inspired the use of fossils throughout the play site.



Credit: D. & M. Ball

Pasteur Drive area

The white buildings around Pasteur Drive were built on the site of the former Princess Margaret Hospital. This was Swindon's main hospital prior to the Great Western Hospital being built. The Princess Margaret Hospital opened in phases from 1959, and was officially opened by Princess Margaret in 1966. The hospital was closed in 2002 and demolished a couple of years later. The new houses, shops and care home were then built, with many of the streets named after famous scientists and physicians. Apart from Pasteur, how many can you spot?



Skew Bridge

Skew Bridge, when built in the 1880s, carried the then Midland and South West Junction Railway over the canal. The railway line closed again circa 1961 and the track was finally removed in 1978. It is now a footbridge and cycle route over the restored section of the Wilts & Berks Canal. From the railway path you can access the canal, although cyclists are recommended to push their bikes along the towpath due to its restricted width.

Further along the railway path you can use the steps and wheeling channel to access Redposts Drive and the western end of Wichelstowe.



Canalside

The canalside in Middle Wichel has bloomed in the last decade following the opening of Waitrose and the enabling works for the communities of Middle and West Wichel. The canal has been extended towards the M4, and a vibrant community is rising up around it. The stunning Hall and Woodhouse pub (complete with canal barge in the bar!) is the focal point, with the Deanery and Kingfisher schools located in the heart of the community.

On the water, canal boat Dragonfly is moored alongside Waitrose. Run by the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust, trips along the newly restored canal take place throughout the year. Dragonfly can hold 12 passengers and 2 crew, and the trips last around 50 minutes.



Rushey Platt Nature Reserve

Managed by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, this nature reserve sits alongside the canal just south of Kingshill Road. Sandwiched between the River Ray, Wilts and Berks Canal and the former Old Town railway line, it is a vital area for wildlife. Be careful not to step on a handsome slow worm basking in the sun!

Here you can discover the wetland plants and animals that have evolved to suit those special conditions. If you listen carefully you may hear the 'plop' of the water vole as it dives into the river or canal. Birds you may spot include the Jack Snipe and Reed Warbler. Dragonflies can be abundant in the pond.



Credit: D. & M. Ball

Mannington Retail Park

The Old Town Railway Path splits at its western end and you can continue to follow the path around to Wootton Bassett Road. Alternatively you can continue underneath the railway line and pop out at the Mannington Retail Park. With a collection of shops, the park also provides a useful link to the path that links to Blagrove, or follow the Route 45 signs to continue towards north Swindon and beyond!



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Old Town Railway Path

The Old Town Railway Path is a useful connection between Old Town and West Swindon. In 2020 it was chosen for improvement works as part of the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund, and the surface and drainage has been improved in places as a result.

The path is just two miles in length between Signal Way to Mannington Retail Park. There are connecting routes on and off the path at various places so that you can explore points of interest nearby - we hope this map will help you discover some new places!

The path is perfect for summer commuting and exercise on foot or by bike, or family wandering and dog walking to explore the countryside in the area.

The benefits of cycling and walking include:



- Improves general health, helping to lower blood pressure and heart rate, as well as improving mental health and wellbeing
- Helps with weight and stress management
- Improves fitness
- In congested areas cyclists and pedestrians breathe in less fumes than drivers
- Saves money
- Produces no pollution so is good for the environment and tackling climate change
- Often quicker to get around in towns and cities
- Fewer cars on the road and more cyclists and pedestrians means safer roads
- Have fewer days being ill each year

So whether you cycle or walk for your whole journey, or simply part of it, you know you will be healthier as a result!

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