

SHIRLEY

TOWN CENTRE



POWERGEN

11



SHIRLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

10



PROCESSION FOR THE OPENING OF SHIRLEY RECREATION GROUND (LATER SHIRLEY PARK) 10TH SEPT 1927

9

12

RED LION



8

SARACENS HEAD



7



POST OFFICE

6

13

ODEON



14

ST JAMES' CHURCH



5

PLUME OF FEATHERS



15

4

3

BILLS LANE



SHIRLEY INSTITUTE

LONGMORE ROAD



SYDNEY MITCHELL CHATTOCK HOUSE

STRATFORD ROAD

B4102



THOMAS BRAGG FUNERAL DIRECTORS

2



OUR LADY OF THE WAYSIDE CHURCH

1

B4102



Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL



SHIRLEY HERITAGE TRAIL

This route is 2.07 miles (3.3km) and should take 30 – 40 minutes on foot, mainly along the Stratford Road, Shirley. Allow up to two hours to look at each point.

- 1 Start at **Our Lady of the Wayside Church** on the Stratford Road, with its fibreglass tower. Built in 1965/6 it replaced the original church built in 1937, which is now the Parish Hall. The local architect was Brian Rush, who went on to design many modernist churches in the Midlands.
- 2 Walk down the Stratford Road to **Thomas Bragg & Sons Funeral Directors**, founded in 1869 as one of a number of local trades then run by the Bragg family. Both Thomas and Gordon Bragg were former presidents of Shirley Institute.
- 3 Further along is **Sydney Mitchell Solicitors**, founded in 1763 by Sydney Mitchell and Richard Chattock. It is reputed to be one of the oldest legal firms in the country.
- 4 Turn down Church Road on the left until you reach **The Shirley Institute**, founded in 1901. The land was given by Mr Burman for a building to be erected for education and entertainment for the people of Shirley.
- 5 Return down Church Road to **St James' Church** on the left, built in 1831 as the first church in Shirley. It is rumoured that the reason the altar is positioned at the west end of the building was to avoid facing the Plume of Feathers pub, known at the time for its bull baiting and cock fighting. The graveyard includes the resting place of Rem Fowler, who won the first Isle of Man TT race in 1907. The war memorial was erected in 1921, when the population of Shirley was 3,073.
- 6 Return to the Stratford Road to reach the **Post Office**, originally housed in the Plume of Feathers and opened on its current site in 1954. Adjacent is Park Surgery, a doctor's that has been in Shirley since the 1920s and the Community Centre, opened by Princess Anne in 1985.
- 7 Continue to **Shirley Park**, opened in 1927 by Dr James Coole Kneale as part of the grounds to his house, which stood next to the Saracens Head. The Park has hosted many events over the years including the Donkey Derby and Shirley Festival.
- 8 Next is the **Saracens Head** pub, dating back to 1747 as a coaching inn, where tolls were paid to use the road from Birmingham to Stratford-upon-Avon until 1872. A 'to let' sign in the Birmingham Gazette in 1851 described the pub as "an old established and well situated Inn, with 16 acres of rich old turf," when the population of Shirley was 1,131.
- 9 Carry on to Parkgate and **The Pump House**, named after the garage which was once there with hand-operated pumps on the forecourt. The garage was opened before the First World War by Joseph Wood, followed by a number of other garages that earned a local reputation for Shirley in 1929 as 'a village of petrol pumps'. Later it was used by the Sea Cadets and had a helicopter on site.
- 10 Walk down to **Shirley Baptist Church**, originally on the corner of Haslucks Green Road in 1845 and moved to its current location in 1911. A time capsule which was buried under the foundation stone was found in 2013 when renovations were made.
- 11 Continue down to **Solihull Village** where the former 'Powergen' building once stood, a 1960s building by Birmingham architect John Madin who also designed the old Birmingham Library. In 2015 it became the filming location for a zombie movie starring Glenn Close, 'The Girl with all the Gifts' (released 2016) before it was demolished in 2017. In the 1940s and 50s a fair and circus would often arrive at Shirley Railway Station where the animals were then transported to this site. Elephants walked along the streets in a procession.
- 12 Now cross over the Stratford Road to Red Lion Square, home to the **Red Lion** pub, which is rumoured to be haunted by a poltergeist after local people witnessed objects falling off shelves. Dating back to 1751, a zeppelin bomb fell in the fields behind the pub in 1917.
- 13 Further along, just past Solihull Road, once stood the **Odeon Cinema**, which opened on 15 April 1935 with "One Night of Love" starring Grace Moore. The Odeon was one of the original cinemas in the Oscar Deutsch chain of Odeon Theatres Ltd but closed in 1977.
- 14 Continue to '**Dove Tree Court**', named after Ernest Henry 'Chinese' Wilson, a famous botanist and plant collector from the late 1800s who was brought up in Shirley where his parents ran a floristry business. An apprentice at Birmingham Botanical Gardens, he went on to work at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew Gardens and introduced 2,000 Asian plant species to the West, with sixty still bearing his name.
- 15 Next is the **Plume of Feathers** pub, built in the early 1800s and known for its cock fighting, bull baiting and bare knuckle boxing (see number 5). The pub was rebuilt in 1923 and the stables became the **Plume Garage**.

Special thanks to local historians and long-standing Shirley residents
Ann and Malcolm Turner for their contribution to this trail.

VISIT **SOLIHULL**

"The Lion ate the Saracens Head and drank the Dragon dry, turned the Union upside down and made the Feathers fly" – poem about the five pubs in Shirley.

For local parking options in Shirley please see: Shirley car parks (solihull.gov.uk)

Find local events, dining options and retailers at visitshirley.co.uk

 Visit Shirley  Visit Shirley

