

# PLACES TO VISIT

Guy Sjögren



## 1 HARDWICK HALL



Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury – or Bess of Hardwick, as she became known – is probably best remembered for two things: first, for surviving four husbands and, second, for building Hardwick Hall. Married for the first time at the age of about fifteen, each subsequent marriage took Bess further up the social ladder. When she married for the fourth time, to the Earl of Shrewsbury, she reached the very top. Hardwick was built between 1590 and 1597 and remains an impressive statement of the power and wealth of its creator. The house contains a fine collection of sixteenth-century furniture, paintings and tapestries. Of particular note are Hardwick's massive windows, causing Elizabeth I's adviser Robert Cecil to quip, 'Hardwick Hall? More window than wall'.

Hardwick Hall, Doe Lea, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S44 5QJ  
 Website: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hardwick](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hardwick)  
 Phone: + 44 (0) 1246 850430

## 3 BLANCHE MORTIMER'S TOMB



Lovers of English country churches passing through south-east Herefordshire should consider dropping in to St Bartholomew's church at Much Marcle, a village lying just off the A449 between Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye. 'Much Marcle contains my favourite English effigy', wrote Simon Jenkins, 'an effigy as lovely as any bequeathed us by a medieval church'. The effigy forms part of the tomb of Blanche Mortimer (c.1317-1347). Blanche was the eleventh child of Sir Roger Mortimer, Earl of March and wife of Sir Peter Grandison. The tomb has recently been restored. During its restoration, a 'coffin', consisting of lead sheets wrapped around what are believed to be the remains of Blanche Mortimer, was discovered – somewhat unusually – lying in the tomb itself, rather than below it.

St Bartholomew's Church, Much Marcle HR8 2PL  
 Website: [www.muchmarcle.net/st-bartholomews-church](http://www.muchmarcle.net/st-bartholomews-church)

## 2 LADY GODIVA IN COVENTRY



Although perhaps the stuff of legend, the story of Lady Godiva nevertheless remains an attractive one. Godiva, taking pity on the people of Coventry, who were suffering grievously under her husband Earl Leofric's oppressive taxation, constantly appealed to him to remit the tolls. Eventually, weary of her entreaties, he said he would grant her request if she would ride naked through the streets of the town. This she did, and Leofric kept his word and abolished the onerous taxes. In addition to the statue of Godiva and the Godiva Clock – both in Coventry's Broadgate – the Herbert Museum and Art Gallery's collection contains a number of paintings by prominent Victorian artists, such as Sir Edwin Landseer, showing scenes from the story.

The Herbert Museum & Art Gallery, Jordan Well, Coventry CV1 5QP  
 Phone: + 44 (0) 24 7623 7521  
 Website: [www.theherbert.org](http://www.theherbert.org)

## 4 SISTER DORA IN WALSALL



As Mark Curthoys' article explains, Sister Dora is commemorated in Walsall for her devotion to the people of the town, particularly as a nurse. Among its collections, the Walsall Museum houses artefacts relating to Sister Dora and other local heroes. After a visit to the museum, why not seek out the bronze statue in Park Street, which was erected in her memory in 1886? Look especially for the four bronze reliefs on the plinth. One depicts Sister Dora with Samuel Cox, a founder of Walsall's hospital, whilst another shows Sister Dora at work during the 1871-1872 smallpox epidemic. The remaining two portray her working at the scene of two industrial disasters – the Pelsall Hall Colliery disaster (1872) and the Birchills boiler explosion (1875).

Walsall Museum, Lichfield Street, Walsall WS1 1TR  
 Phone: + 44 (0) 1922 653116  
 Website: [www.walsall.gov.uk/walsall\\_museum](http://www.walsall.gov.uk/walsall_museum)  
 Sister Dora's Statue, Park Street, Walsall WS1 1QS

## 5 ERDDIG HALL



Lying just outside the Shropshire border with Powys, and two miles south of Wrexham, is Erddig Hall. Built by 1687, Erddig is widely acclaimed as one of the country's finest stately homes and, for this reason alone, is well worth a visit. But it is not the state rooms and their furnishings that are the real treasure at Erddig. For the Yorke family did something remarkable; they created a record of the domestic servants who worked and lived in the great house and on the estate. Through paintings, printed documents, even poems, they created an unmatched record of domestic life in a stately home. So we can see not nameless servants, but the individual people who served at Erddig, who they were, and how they lived.

Erddig Hall, Wrexham, LL13 0YT  
 Website: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/erddig](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/erddig)  
 Phone: + 44 (0)1978 355314

## 6 GEORGE MARSHALL MEDICAL MUSEUM



George Marshall (1906-2002) was a Scot who came to Worcester in 1931 to work as a general practitioner. With the creation of the NHS in 1948 he became a consultant surgeon at the former Worcester Royal Infirmary. Marshall was an enthusiastic collector of old medical and surgical items. The George Marshall Medical Museum at the Worcestershire Royal Hospital illustrates the way that medical and nursing professions have changed over the past 250 years. This fascinating collection of artefacts includes items such as a nurse's call bell from the 1950s, chilling obstetric instruments used in the early 1900s, and a collection of death masks, believed to have been found in the basement of the Infirmary in the 1930s.

George Marshall Medical Museum, Newtown Road, Worcester WR5 1DD  
 Phone: + 44 (0) 905 760738  
 Website: [www.medicalmuseum.org.uk](http://www.medicalmuseum.org.uk)

## 7 SHUGBOROUGH HALL



Previously the home of the earls of Lichfield, Shugborough Hall is now cared for by the National Trust. Whilst the state rooms are a treasure trove of fine porcelain and French furniture, of ornate plasterwork ceilings and the family silver, the focus is on life 'below stairs'. The servants' quarters, the servants' hall, the kitchen, laundry and brewhouse all form part of this 'living museum' of domestic service. The Country Museum, co-located in the servants' quarters, covers a wide range of subjects, with a particular emphasis on domestic cooking, cleaning and laundry. There is also a fine costume collection featuring women's costume, wedding dresses, samplers and servants' costume from the past 400 years. Do check the websites below for opening times.

Milford, near Stafford ST17 0XB  
 Phone: + 44 (0) 845 459 8900  
 Websites: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/shugborough-estate](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/shugborough-estate) [www.shugborough.org.uk](http://www.shugborough.org.uk)

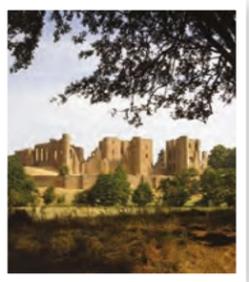
## 8 THE BIRMINGHAM BACK-TO-BACKS



'Back-to-back' housing characterised the Victorian expansion of industrialised Birmingham, and other large British cities. Thousands of these three-storey houses, closely packed around communal courtyards, were home to generations of lower-income Birmingham people. One small set of back-to-backs – permanently occupied from 1840 until 1977 – survives, just a stone's throw from the city centre. Be aware that visits to the Birmingham back-to-backs are by guided tour only. It is essential to pre-book spaces on the tours as spaces are limited to a maximum of eight visitors. Bookings can be made by telephone (but not by email) using the booking line below.

The Back-to-Backs, 55-63 Hurst Street/50-54 Inge Street, Birmingham B5 4TE  
 Phone: + 44 (0) 121 666 7671  
 Website: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/birmingham-back-to-backs](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/birmingham-back-to-backs)

## 9 KENILWORTH CASTLE



Kenilworth Castle was founded in the early twelfth century. Three hundred years later, Elizabeth I gave Kenilworth Castle to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (1563). Elizabeth visited several times, and in 1575 she and her entourage were lavishly entertained for three weeks with pageants, music, dancing, fireworks, hunting and feasting, leaving the Earl almost bankrupt. Today visitors can view an exhibition on the story of their relationship. The castle has recently undergone a multi-million pound investment project. The gate-house has been renovated, and the Elizabethan garden – complete with fountains and ornate borders – has also been painstakingly restored to replicate its original glory in the late sixteenth century. As always, check the website for opening times and admission fees.

Kenilworth Castle, Castle Road, Kenilworth CV8 1NE  
 Phone: + 44 (0) 1926 852078  
 Website: [www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/kenilworth-castle](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/kenilworth-castle)

## 10 ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE



Anne Hathaway was born in about 1555 and, at the age of twenty-six, married the eighteen-year-old William Shakespeare...in a hurry. Little is known about Anne Hathaway. Her name appears a few times in historical records, but we don't have any real sense of what type of woman she was. She grew up in a farmhouse in Shotton, a village just outside Stratford-upon-Avon, a residence that remained occupied by descendants of her family until the late nineteenth century. The thatched cottage is an interesting period piece, containing rare family furniture dating back to Anne's day. The cottage is open throughout the spring and summer. Anne outlived William, dying in 1623. Her grave lies next to that of her husband in the churchyard of Holy Trinity Church.

Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Cottage Lane, Shotton, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 9HH  
 Phone: + 44 (0) 1789 297240  
 Website: [www.shakespeare.org.uk/visit-the-houses/anne-hathaways-cottage](http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/visit-the-houses/anne-hathaways-cottage)  
 Holy Trinity Church, Old Town, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6BG