

PLACES TO VISIT

Guy Sjögren



1 RENISHAW HALL



F. Slop Press

Sitting in the northern reaches of our region, eight miles north of Chesterfield, is Renishaw Hall, a house once described in *The Guardian* as 'the ancestral home of the English eccentric'. Built by George Sitwell in 1625 on the proceeds of a fortune derived from the coal and iron industries, Renishaw has been in the Sitwell family ever since and was the childhood home to the unconventional Sitwell siblings, Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell. Aside from the house and a museum dedicated to the literary trio, there is an extensive Italianate garden, originally laid out in the late nineteenth century. The garden is divided into a series of 'rooms' by yew hedges, each filled with an impressive collection of plants, beyond which lie ornamental ponds, woodland, lakes, and the national collection of Yuccas.

Renishaw Hall, Eckington, Derbyshire S21 3WB
Website: www.renishaw-hall.co.uk
Phone: + 44 (0) 1246 432310

2 HAWKSTONE PARK FOLLIES



S. Hutchinson

Hawkstone Park in north Shropshire was originally laid out during the early eighteenth century. In 1774, while reminiscing about a visit to Hawkstone, Samuel Johnson recalled 'the awfulness of its shades, the horrors of its precipices, the verdure of its hollows, and the loftiness of its rocks' – hardly a ringing endorsement to encourage the prospective visitor. After a century of neglect, the park was restored in the 1990s and now offers an historic woodland fantasy. With cliffs, crags and caves; with intricate meandering pathways; and with ravines, arches and bridges, Hawkstone presents visitors with a fascinating and very different landscape from the others referred to in this section. Please note that reasonable levels of physical fitness and mobility are required, and stout footwear and a torch are desirable!

Hawkstone Park Follies, Weston-under-Redcastle, Shropshire SY4 5UY
Website: www.hawkstoneparkfollies.co.uk
Phone: + 44 (0) 1948 841777

3 NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM



National Memorial Arboretum

The National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) is not a cemetery; neither is it a purely military memorial. Rather, the Arboretum was conceived as a place that would act as a national focus for remembrance. The NMA extends over some 150 acres of reclaimed gravel workings. Planting began in 1997 and the NMA officially opened in 2001. The site hosts more than 50,000 trees, an abundance of wild plants, woodland areas, grassland, reed beds and wetland. Among this greenery stand the memorials: the Falklands memorial, the Police memorial garden, the Gallipoli memorial, the particularly poignant Shot at Dawn memorial, and many more besides. Symbolism is everywhere at the NMA, and is best appreciated by joining a guided tour, details of which can be found on the website below.

National Memorial Arboretum, Croxall Road, Alrewas, Staffordshire DE13 7AR
Website: www.thenma.org.uk
Phone: + 44 (0) 1283 792333

4 THE BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS



Birmingham Botanical Gardens

In the 1950s, a rather bad-tempered cockatoo used to greet visitors to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, alerting people to the fact that these were no ordinary urban gardens. The Botanical

Gardens were opened in June 1832 and, although anticipating the ascent of Victoria to the throne by a few years, they bear all the hallmarks of a Victorian public park – including a bandstand. Plants from tropical rainforests and desert climates can be found among the fifteen acres of gardens and glasshouses. There are historic gardens, wildlife walks...and even an edible hedge. Look out for the two Himalayan cedars near the fountain, planted from seeds donated to the garden in the 1840s by James Watt jnr, son of the famous Birmingham industrialist.

Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Westbourne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3TR
Website: www.birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk
Phone: + 44 (0) 121 454 1860

2 WINTERBOURNE HOUSE AND GARDEN



A mile or so away from Birmingham's Botanical Gardens sits Winterbourne House. Built in 1903 for John and Margaret

Nettlefold, the house was designed as a small country estate. Both the house and gardens follow the style of the Arts & Crafts movement with examples of local craftsmanship throughout. Designed by Margaret Nettlefold, the garden was inspired by the books and garden designs of Gertrude Jekyll. Following the departure of the Nettlefolds, the property changed hands on two occasions and, in 1944, was bequeathed to the University of Birmingham. Although the garden acts now as the University's Botanic Garden, it is open to the public.

Winterbourne House & Garden, 58 Edgbaston Park Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2RT
Website: www.winterbourne.org.uk
Phone: + 44 (0) 121 414 3003

Coombe Country Park, Brinklow Road, Binley, Coventry CV3 2AB. Website: www.coventry.gov.uk/coombe
Phone: + 44 (0) 24 7645 3720

Spetchley Park Gardens, Spetchley, Worcestershire WR5 1RS
Website: www.spetchleygardens.co.uk
Phone: +44 (0) 1905 345106

Westonbury Mill Water Gardens, Pembridge, Herefordshire HR6 9HZ. Website: www.westonburymillwatergardens.com
Phone: + 44 (0) 1544 388650

www.historywm.com



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6 COOMBE COUNTRY PARK



Originally, the park formed part of the monastic estate of the old 'Abbey of Cumbe', a Cistercian house founded in 1150. Following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539, the abbey became a royal property. It changed hands many times during the ensuing centuries and is now a modern hotel. The parkland, covering almost 500 acres, was landscaped in the early 1770s by 'Capability' Brown. Brown created a large lake and planted the surrounding parkland and woodland. Since 1964, the park has been run by Coventry City Council and offers a range of recreational activities for young and old alike: walk through the woods and the arboretum; stroll along the paths of the Victorian garden and the wild flower garden. And for the more adventurous visitor, there is always the Climbing Forest.

Coombe Country Park, Brinklow Road, Binley, Coventry CV3 2AB. Website: www.coventry.gov.uk/coombe
Phone: + 44 (0) 24 7645 3720

www.historywm.com

7 LADY HERBERT'S GARDEN



Coventry City Council

Sir Alfred Herbert was described in his obituary in 1957 as 'a distinguished member of the British machine tool industry' and 'a generous benefactor to Coventry'. One of his gifts to the city was a garden in memory of his second wife, Florence, who died suddenly in 1930. Covering about 1.5 acres of Coventry's city centre, the garden was laid out in the early 1930s, a number of vernacular-style almshouses being added in 1935. The garden itself lies astride the remains of the old city wall, between the Swanswell and Cook Street gates: an oasis of calm in one of Europe's major cities of peace and reconciliation.

Lady Herbert's Garden, Hales Street, Coventry CV1 1JQ. Website: www.historiccoventry.co.uk/wall/lh-garden.php

8 SPETCHLEY PARK GARDENS



The Berkeley & Spetchley Estate

Spetchley has been in the Berkeley family since 1605. The original house was burnt down on the eve of the Battle of Worcester in 1651; the current house was built in 1811. The thirty acres of garden have been described as 'a plantsman's paradise'. Whilst not a formal paradise of neatly manicured lawns and beds it offers a fine display of plants, shrubs and trees woven into a garden of many 'rooms' and vistas. The original garden was extended in the early twentieth century by Rose Berkeley and her sister, the great Edwardian gardener, Ellen Willmott. The latter employed only men in her garden and once said that 'women would be a disaster in the border'. Edward Elgar visited Spetchley many times, staying in the Garden Cottage. The pine trees nearby are called 'Elgar's Pines'.

Spetchley Park Gardens, Spetchley, Worcestershire WR5 1RS
Website: www.spetchleygardens.co.uk
Phone: +44 (0) 1905 345106

9 HAMPTON COURT CASTLE GARDENS AND PARKLAND



Sabrina Ruber

The fifteenth-century Hampton Court Castle lies six miles south of the Herefordshire town of Leominster. Built originally in the fifteenth century, the castle was rebuilt during the 1830s and 40s in the early Victorian Gothic style. The core of the Hampton Court gardens is encircled by the original Victorian garden walls, within which there is a wide variety of distinct garden areas, separated by canals, islands, and avenues of pleached trees. There is also a splendid wisteria tunnel, a maze of a thousand yews, and a tunnel leading to a waterfall in the sunken garden. Adjoining the castle is the grand conservatory (now a café) created in 1846 by Joseph Paxton, former head gardener at Chatsworth and designer of the Crystal Palace, built to house the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Hampton Court, Hope-under-Dinmore, Leominster HR6 0PN
Website: www.hamptoncourt.org.uk
Phone: + 44 (0) 1568 797777

10 WESTONBURY MILL WATER GARDENS



Richard Pim

Herefordshire is home to a number of old country houses with their accompanying gardens and parkland. Westonbury Mill Water Gardens is not one of them; they are very much of the current century. The gardens' owner and designer, Richard Pim, was formerly a hydrologist. The magazine *Country Living* records how Pim wrote to a friend from the Libyan desert to say that, should he find a water meadow with a brook and an old mill, would he please buy it for him. In 1969, the friend did just that. Now, in 2015, the Big Pond, the Bog Garden, the Rill and the 'Monet' Bridge are just a few of the features of these beautiful and unusual gardens. Have a look at the website below. If it fails to whet your appetite, then nothing will!

Westonbury Mill Water Gardens, Pembridge, Herefordshire HR6 9HZ. Website: www.westonburymillwatergardens.com
Phone: + 44 (0) 1544 388650