

4th EDITION

Guide to Rural England **WORCESTERSHIRE**



WHERE TO GO | WHAT TO SEE | WHAT TO DO
WHERE TO STAY | WHERE TO EAT | WHERE TO BUY

Fully illustrated with detailed directions and maps

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Worcestershire

In the southern part of the county lies the spectacular ridge of the Malvern Hills, with marvellous walking and breathtaking views. Moving eastwards we reach the towns of Upton-upon-Severn, Pershore and Evesham, along with many charming villages and ancient sites. The Vale of Evesham is one of the country's most important and prolific horticultural regions, and in springtime the Vale is alive with colour from the blossom of the fruit trees. High-quality fruit and vegetables are distributed from here throughout the country, and motorists will come across numerous roadside stalls selling a wonderful array of produce. At the eastern edge of this part of the county lies Broadway, a quintessential Cotswold village of outstanding beauty, beloved of tourists and not to be missed on any visit to this most delightful part of the world.

Set on either side of the curving River Severn, Worcester is a bustling county capital and cathedral city. Its architecture spans many centuries and there are some marvellous examples from all of them. In the heart of England, this is an area characterised by red earth, apple orchards, hop yards, quiet inns, stone farmhouses and black-and-white timbered dwellings. As a visible legacy of the ancient forest that once surrounded Worcester, the half-timbered buildings lend colour and variety to the villages around this historic city.

Most of Worcestershire's industry was centred in the northern part of the county,

and there are numerous examples of industrial archaeology to interest the historian. Salt and scythes, carpets, porcelain and needles all contributed to the local economy, along with ironworks and corn mills, and many fine old buildings survive as monuments to industries that have dwindled or disappeared.

Canals were once as important a means of transport as the roads, and in this part of the county the Worcester & Birmingham Canal, the Staffordshire & Worcester Canal and the Droitwich Canal were considered to be more reliable than the roads and quicker than the Severn. They lost a good deal of their practical advantages when the railways arrived. Then, as the railway network shrunk over the past 40 years, it's back to the roads for most local communications. However, the Severn Valley Railway, from Kidderminster to Bridgnorth, has survived and flourished, and today people come from far and wide for the chance to ride behind a steam engine through some incredibly beautiful scenery.

Enthusiasts have also ensured that much of the canal system has survived, finding a new role as a major leisure and tourist attraction. The route north from Droitwich towards Bromsgrove takes in much that is of interest to the industrial historian, including the Worcester & Birmingham Canal. Opened in 1815 and 30 miles in length, the canal passes Stoke Works and Stoke Prior, where John Corbett set up his salt works after leaving Droitwich.

Great Malvern

-  Priory Church of St Mary & St Michael
-  Museum  St Anne's Well  Theatres
-  Malvern Hills  The Worcestershire Way

Beneath the northeastern slopes of the **Malvern Hills**, Great Malvern is known for its porcelain, its annual music and drama festivals, Malvern water and Morgan cars. Though invaded by tourists for much of the year, Great Malvern has retained its dignity and elegance, with open spaces, leafy avenues and handsome houses. Close to the start of the Malvern walking trail, on a path leading up from the town, is a Regency cottage

housing one source of the famous water – **St Anne's Well** – where one can enjoy a sample and take in the views. Great Malvern was for many centuries a quiet, little-known place with a priory at its heart, and even when the curative properties of its spring waters were discovered, it took a long time for it to become a fashionable spa resort. Hotels, baths and a pump room were built in the early 19th-century, and the arrival of the railway provided easy access from the middle of the century. The station is one of many charming Victorian buildings, and with its cast-iron pillars, stone ornaments and beautifully painted floral designs, is a tourist attraction in its own right.

GREAT MALVERN DELI & COFFEE HOUSE

*11 Abbey Road, Great Malvern,
Worcestershire WR14 3ES
Tel: 01684 899091*

Aruna Buxton's **Great Malvern Deli & Coffee House** stands in a Georgian building just below street level in the heart of town. In the cosy main room or sitting outside visitors can enjoy a fine variety of home-made fare, including soups, sandwiches and panini, hams and other cooked and cured meats, pâtés, cheese, cakes, ice creams, iced yoghurt and fruit juices. Dietary food is available with a little notice. The Deli also sells a selection of olives and olive oils, chutneys, jams, honey and pasta, and home-made English chocolates make a lovely treat or present. This excellent place is open from 9.30 to 5 Monday to Saturday.



THE KNITTING PARLOUR

*12 Graham Road, Great Malvern,
Worcestershire WR14 2HN
Tel: 01684 892079*

Pat Jones and her daughter Vicki own and run the **Knitting Parlour**, a modern knitting shop that attracts customers from as far afield as Birmingham and Bristol. Behind the big window display the shelves and tables of the 2009 winner of the Knitting Retailer of the Year are filled with a wide variety of wools, yarns, threads, cotton fabrics, books, patterns and accessories from leading brands including Rowan and Rowan Classic, Debbie Bliss, Sublime, Sirdar, Noro, Colinette, Gedifra and Amy Butler. The Parlour holds monthly Rowan workshops and courses on a variety of knitting and related topics. Shop hours are 9.30 to 5 Monday to Saturday.



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CRIDLAN & WALKER

PURVEYOR OF ORGANIC MEATS

Abbey Gateway, 23 Abbey Road, Great Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 3ES

Tel: 01684 573008 Fax: 01684 566017

e-mail: newventure3@aol.com website: www.cridlanandwalker.com



Quality has always been a byword at **Cridlan & Walker**, a long-established purveyor of organic meats with a reputation that extends far beyond the neighbouring communities. Owners and staff pride themselves on the range of meat, game and poultry, and on their home-produced sausages, bacon and burgers. They also produce South African specialities including Ostrich, Boerewors, Biltong, Droewors & Kassler rib along with a variety of superb home-made pies, pasties, quiches and sausage rolls either freshly baked or to 'take and bake'. And for a quick, tasty snack to go, a country roll filled with roast pork & all the trimmings is hard to beat. Meat is king, but customers in the know also take their pick from the eye-catching displays of prime seasonal fruit and vegetables.

COWLEIGH PARK FARM

Cowleigh Road, Great Malvern, Worcestershire WR13 5HJ

Tel: 01684 566750

e-mail: info@cowleighparkfarm.co.uk

website: www.cowleighparkfarm.co.uk



Cowleigh Park Farm is a delightful timber framed, former farmhouse, nestling at the foot of the Malvern Hills. This 400 year old, Grade II listed home is set within its own grounds and is peacefully located in a tranquil setting ensuring a relaxing stay. It offers 3 comfortable, bed and breakfast rooms each with colour TV, Wi-Fi and ensuite bath/ shower rooms. Owners Ruth and John Lucas offer sumptuous breakfasts featuring prime local produce. Also available on a self catering basis are the adjoining Cider Press (sleeps 2) and the Farmhouse Cottage (sleeps 6). Car parking available within the grounds of the property, and guests are welcome to share the pleasant gardens. Cowleigh Park Farm is on the Worcestershire Way with footpaths leading onto the hills and towards the Teme Valley and Herefordshire.

The **Priory Church of St Mary and St Michael** is a dominant feature in the centre of the town. Its windows, the west a gift from Richard III, the east from Henry VII, contain a wonderful collection of 15th-century stained glass. Another unique feature is a collection of more than 1,200 wall tiles on the chancel screens, which also date from the 15th century. The Victorian bell-frame on which the bells are hung has recently been the subject of much discussion: English heritage insist that the frame is of special historic interest and

therefore must be restored and not replaced. Among many interesting graves in the cemetery is that of Jenny Lind, The Swedish Nightingale, who was born in Stockholm in 1820 and died at Wynd's Point, Malvern, which she used as a summer retreat, in 1887. In the churchyard at West Malvern Peter Mark Roget (the Thesaurus man) is buried - "interred, entombed, coffined, laid to rest, consigned to earth". The 14th-century Abbey Gateway, whose huge wooden gateposts can be seen in the archway, houses the **Malvern Museum**. Open Easter to

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THE RAILWAY INN

78 Wells Road, Malvern Wells, Worcestershire WR14 4PA
Tel: 01684 572168
e-mail: misscawley@aol.com

Since arriving here in October 2008 Russell and Theresa have been building a great reputation for hospitality and good food at the **Railway Inn**. It's equally popular with the local community, with visitors to the local showground and theatres and with tourists. Open from 12 to 10 seven days a week for food and drink, the inn enjoys a delightful hilltop setting with fantastic views over open countryside, rivers, forests and villages. The cosy locals bar is a great place to meet for a drink and a chat, and the snugs are quiet retreats to relax with a drink and a newspaper. The inn also has a charming terrace and patio.

Prime meat from local farmers and butchers feature strongly on Russell's menu, with Aberdeen Angus steaks, pork from Woodland Pigs, steak & ale pie, sausages & mash, liver & bacon, home-cooked gammon and the Sunday roasts among the favourites. The fish specials are always popular, there are always several vegetarian main courses, and treacle sponge is a great way to round off an excellent meal. The Railway Inn is also a fine base for touring the region: the three en suite rooms alongside the inn comprise two twins and a family room. Free Wi-Fi is available.



October, its displays include the geology of the Malvern Hills, the history of Malvern spring water and the development of Morgan cars. In Tanhouse Lane stands the factory of Boehm of Malvern, where the remarkable American, Edward Marshall Boehm (call it 'Beam'), founded the centre that has become known worldwide for the quality of its porcelain. Great Malvern has a distinguished tradition of arts and culture, much of it the legacy of Sir Edward Elgar and George Bernard Shaw, and The **Malvern Theatres** are an exciting setting for performances of music and drama including pre-West End runs. Malvern is the home of the excellent English Symphony Orchestra, formed in 1980 by William Boughton. In addition, The Malvern Theatres host many superb performances by notable singers, actors and speakers.




Great Malvern is the largest of six settlements that make up the Malverns: to the

south are Malvern Wells and Little Malvern, to the north North Malvern, and to the northeast Malvern Link. The **Worcestershire Way** is a 31-mile walking trail that links Great Malvern with Bewdley, through Abberley, Knightley and Markwick and the valleys of the Teme and Severn.

Around Great Malvern











LITTLE MALVERN

4 miles S of Great Malvern on the A449

-  Little Malvern Court
-  Little Malvern Priory
-  St Peter's Church

At Little Malvern stands the Church of St Wulstan, where a simple headstone marks the grave of Sir Edward Elgar and his wife Caroline. Their daughter is buried next to them.

Little Malvern Court, off the A4104, enjoys a glorious setting on the lower slopes of the

-  historic building
-  museum and heritage
-  historic site
-  scenic attraction
-  flora and fauna
-  stories and anecdotes
-  famous people
-  art and craft
-  entertainment and sport
-  walks

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Malvern Hills. It stands next to **Little Malvern Priory**, whose hall, the only part that survived the Dissolution, is now incorporated into the Court. Of the priory church, only the chancel tower and south transept remain. The Court was once a Catholic safe house, with a chapel reached by a secret staircase. The Court and gardens are open Wednesday and Thursday afternoons from mid-April to mid-July.

Just to the north at Malvern Wells, where the first medicinal wells were discovered, stands **St Peter's Church**, dating from 1836 and notable for some original stained glass and a William Morris window of 1885.

The showground at Malvern Wells hosts major spring and autumn garden shows as well as antiques and crafts shows.

Around the Malverns

British Camp

The whole area is glorious walking country, with endless places to discover and explore. **British Camp**, on Herefordshire Beacon, two miles west of Little Malvern, is one of the most important Roman settlements in Britain, and a little way south is Midsummer Hill, site of another ancient settlement.

COLWALL

2 miles SW of Great Malvern off the B4218

Picton Garden

On the west side of the Malverns, Colwall lies just across the border in Herefordshire. Its chief claim to fame is the enormous lump of limestone that stands at its centre. How it got there no one knows, but the Devil and a local giant are among the suspects. Less mysterious are the attractions of the **Picton Garden**, which contains a National Collection of Michaelmas daisies that flower

in September/October. The 14th-century poet William Langland, author of *Piers Plowman*, lived at Colwall.

BIRTSMORTON

7 miles S of Great Malvern off the B4208

In the Church of St Peter and St Paul are monuments to the Nanfan family, owners of the nearby Birtsmorton Court. Other notable residents of this magnificent building (not open to the public) include William Huskisson, a former colonial secretary, who in 1830 became the first person to be killed in a railway accident.

HANLEY CASTLE

6 miles SE of Great Malvern on the B4209

The village takes its name from the castle, which was originally a hunting lodge for King John, and which disappeared, except for its moat, many centuries ago. There's still plenty to see in this attractive little spot, including picturesque cottages, a 15th-century inn (The Three Kings), a 16th-century grammar school and the Church of St Mary, built in stone and brick.

UPTON-ON-SEVERN

7 miles SE of Great Malvern on the A4104

The Pepperpot The Tudor House

An unspoilt town that gained prominence as one of the few bridging points on the Severn. The first records indicate that it was a Roman station, and it is mentioned in the Domesday Book. It became an important medieval port, and its strategic position led to its playing a role in the Civil War. In 1651, Charles sent a force to Upton to destroy the bridge, but after a long and bloody struggle the King's troops were routed and Cromwell regained the town. A Dutch gabled building used for stabling

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during the conflict still stands. The medieval church, one of the most distinctive buildings in the whole county, is affectionately known as **The Pepperpot**, because of its handsome tower with its copper-covered cupola, the only surviving part of the church. This former place of worship is now a heritage centre, relating the Civil War battles and the town's history. The Church of St Peter and St Paul, built in 1879, has an interesting talking point in a large metal abstract hanging above the altar. The **Tudor House**, which contains a museum of Upton past and present, is open daily on summer afternoons. The White Lion Hotel, in the High Street, has a history going back to 1510 and was the setting for some scenes in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*. The commercial trade has largely left the Severn, replaced by a steady stream of summertime pleasure craft.

RIPPLE

10 miles SE of Great Malvern off the A38

Giant's Grave

The village square with its stocks and whipping post is tiny, making the Church of St Mary seem even larger than it is. Note the series of 12 misericords each depicting the seasonal activities of country life. They are full of detail and wondrously carved. In the churchyard is the **Giant's Grave**, the final resting place of Robert Reeve who was said to be 7ft 4in tall when he died in 1626, aged 56. On his well-preserved gravestone the epitaph reads:

*Ye who pass by behold my length
But never glory in your strength*

EARLS CROOME

6 miles SE of Great Malvern on the A4104

Croome Park

There are several attractions in the area of Earls Croome. **Croome Park** was Capability

Brown's first complete landscape.

Commissioned by the 6th Earl of Coventry in 1751, the Park made Brown's reputation and set a pattern for parkland design that lasted half a century. At Croome he established the English Landscape Style, a vision of Ideal Nature that was admired and copied throughout the Western world. The restoration of the park, one of the largest landscape restoration projects undertaken, included the replanting of many unusual trees and shrubs, the establishment of a wildflower meadow and pasture, and the creation of pathways to the ice house through the Wild Walk shrubbery. The buildings have equally distinguished pedigrees, with Robert Adam and James Wyatt as architects. The Hill Croome Dovecote is a very rare square building next to the church in Hill Croome. Dunstall Castle folly at Dunstall Common is a folly in the style of a Norman castle, put up in the 18th century and comprising two round towers and one square, connected by arches.

At Croome d'Abitot, a little way north of Earls Croome, the 18th-century Church of St Mary Magdalene is filled with memorials to the Coventry family – it stood on their estate.

ECKINGTON

10 miles SE of Great Malvern on the B4080

Bredon Hill

The small village of Eckington can be traced back to AD172; it was originally a Roman settlement on land belonging to the British tribe of Dobuni. The bridge over the Avon, which dates from the 15th century, has an adjacent car park that is a popular picnic site.

The area south of Pershore towards the boundary with Gloucestershire is dominated by **Bredon Hill**, which is surrounded by charming villages such as Great and Little

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ECKINGTON MANOR

*Manor Farm, Eckington, Pershore
Worcestershire WR10 3BH*

Tel: 01386 751600

e-mail: info@eckingtonmanor.co.uk

website: www.eckingtonmanor.co.uk

website: www.lowerendhouse.co.uk

Visitors to **Eckington Manor** can look forward to outstanding hospitality provided by owner Judy Gardner and her staff, whether they're here on a cookery course or enjoying a break in a luxurious 13th century timber-framed hall house (or both!). The cookery school, with our resident head chef and tutor at the helm, is contained within the framework of a Dutch barn on a 260-acre working livestock farm in a quiet country setting, south of Pershore. The school runs a number of hands-on cookery courses lasting one, two or three days and catering for all levels of experience, as well as cookery demonstrations. The aim of the courses is to teach the art of cooking using fresh local seasonal produce wherever possible, and also imparting an appreciation and awareness of the provenance of food ingredients. Raw materials used in the school include the outstanding produce from the farm, including lamb, Aberdeen Angus and Highland beef and Gloucester Old Spot pork and fresh fruit, vegetables, herbs and honey from the orchards and kitchen gardens. Teaching is usually done in small groups, but one-to-one master classes are also available. Challenging and fun, the courses cover a variety of topics, including Great British Classics, Easy Entertaining, Cooking with Fish, Bread Making and Aga Cooking. Teaching is carried out in a spacious, air-conditioned state-of-the-art classroom equipped with ten individual kitchens. The school can also organise team building events and private parties. Students on the courses can buy first-class produce such as preserves, chutneys, pies and home-reared meat from the farm.

Luxurious accommodation is available in Lower End House, a 13th century timber-framed hall house situated in the grounds of the farm. The whole place has been beautifully restored and renovated, providing up-to-date comfort and amenities while retaining period features such as inglenook fireplaces, flagstone floors and exposed wooden beams. Each of the four guest bedrooms has its own charm and character; three are doubles/twins with beautiful Fired Earth en suite bathrooms with the White Company toiletries and sumptuous fluffy towels; the fourth, equally well appointed, is a twin with a separate, dedicated bathroom. All the rooms have the finest Egyptian cotton bed linen, flat-screen TV with Freeview digital channels and free broadband internet access. The whole place can be booked for corporate and private groups. Lower End House provides a supremely comfortable and civilised retreat, a rural sanctuary where guests can relax, unwind and recharge their batteries. It is also an ideal base for a walking or sightseeing holiday – or of course as the perfect place to stay while on an Eckington Manor cookery course.



WALK | 1

Great Comberton and Little Comberton

Distance: 3.5 miles (5.6 kilometres)

Typical time: 120 mins

Height gain: 25 metres

Map: *Explorer 190*

Walk: www.walkingworld.com ID:2627

Contributor: Ron and Jenny Glynn

ACCESS INFORMATION:

On unclassified road off the A44 south of Pershore. Considerate parking on the village streets, please.

DESCRIPTION:

A gentle little walk in Worcestershire farmland from Great Comberton to Little Comberton, and to the edge of Bricklehampton with the splendid backdrop of Bredon Hill for most of the way. The old and lovely thatched and timbered Tudor cottages of Little Comberton are quite breathtaking, and the church with its large tower is another pleasure to behold.

FEATURES:

Pub, Church, Wildlife, Birds, Flowers, Great Views, Butterflies, Mostly Flat.

WALK DIRECTIONS:

1 | From the junction, a few yards from the War Memorial, walk along the road signed to Little Comberton and Elmley Castle, and take the public footpath on the right. Head diagonally left over field where there is a footbridge by a telegraph pole. Go on over it and continue in same direction to a gate, then over a field following a line of telegraph poles. Take footbridge and walk across meadow to far corner, then a stile to walk between houses in Little Comberton.

2 | Turn right past pretty cottages and houses. Turn right into Manor Lane and pass beautiful

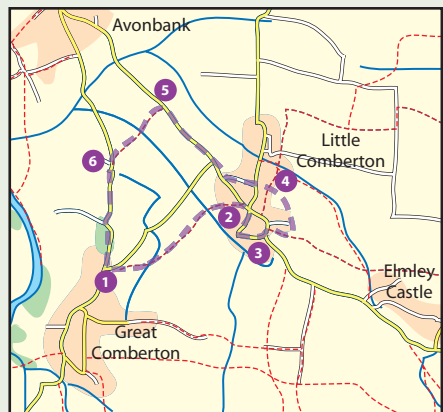
Tudor half-timbered houses, following lane round to pass the lovely church. Turn left, then follow the road for few yards.

3 | Turn right into a large lawned area and head for the right of a large lime at far end. Take the gate beneath its branches and turn left, then right, to walk round edge of field with the tree-clad Bredon Hill opposite. Continue over a stile, turning left, then right, beside hedge. Pass two stiles on the right and continue round edge of field and into another, with Nash's Farm on the left. Eventually reach an obscured stile in corner, and climb over it to walk on an overgrown path by Old House Farm, taking another stile into an orchard. Take stile on left and walk over to a gate beside a bungalow on a narrow, overgrown path.

4 | Come out into Little Comberton and turn left to walk along to telephone kiosk, then turn right along main road through village, leaving it to walk on past pretty cottages.

5 | Turn left through a large gate and walk along the field to the corner, through a gate, then over a footbridge into pastures. Go on to climb a stile out onto road.

6 | Turn left along it, the magnificent Bredon Hill ahead, and follow road round, and along to Great Comberton.



BLUE GECKO PLANTS

*Tewkesbury Road, Eckington, Pershore,
Worcestershire WR10 3DE*

Tel: 01386 751802

e-mail: catb@bluegeckoplants.com

website: www.bluegeckoplants.com

After studying Plant Sciences and working at large wholesale nurseries for a number of years, Catherine Thorpe revived an old nursery on the B4080 Tewkesbury Road out of Eckington when she established the delightfully named **Blue Gecko Plants**. Since the enterprise opened in 2006 it has built an enviable reputation for an interesting range of high-quality plants presented in a stylish, inviting environment. Set in seven acres in the heart of the Vale of Evesham Blue Gecko Plants sells a wide variety of hardy shrubs, herbaceous perennials, climbers, ornamental trees, camellias, conifers, bamboos, grasses, ferns, herbs and vegetable plants. The majority of plants in stock are grown on site by Catherine with the help of her parents. The nursery also sells compost, ceramic and terracotta pots, garden ornaments, garden-related gifts and greeting cards. National Garden Gift Vouchers are also sold and accepted. Catherine and her team are always ready with help and advice on planting matters at Blue Gecko Plants, which is open from 10am to 5pm every day except Monday.



Comberton and Elmley Castle on the north side, and Bredon, Overbury and Kemerton to the south. Bredon Hill is almost circular, a limestone outcrop of the Cotswolds covering 12 square miles, accessible from many of the villages that ring it, and rising to over 900 feet. On the crest of its northern slope, best accessed from Great Comberton, are the remains – part of the earthworks – of the pre-Roman settlement. Much more visible on the top is a curious brick tower called Parsons Folly, built by a Mr Parsons in the 18th century.

ELMLEY CASTLE

13 miles SE of Great Malvern on a minor road

Just one of the many enchanting villages around Bredon Hill, no longer boasting a castle but with this memorandum of 1540: “The late Castle of Elmley standing on high

and adjoining the Park, compassed in with wall and ditch is uncovered and in decay.”

The village’s main street is very wide and lined with trees, with a little brook flowing to one side. Picturesque cottages with thatched roofs lead up to a well-preserved 15th-century cross, then to St Mary’s Church with its handsome tower and battlements. Inside are some of the finest monuments to be found anywhere in England, most notably the 17th-century alabaster tomb of William Savage, his son Giles and Giles’ wife and children.

BREDON

14 miles SE of Great Malvern off the B4080



Bredon Barn

Plenty to see in this sizeable village, notably the Church of St Giles with its 14th-century stained glass and some very elaborate stone monuments; an Elizabethan rectory with

stone figures on horseback on the roof; and some fine 18th-century stables. **Bredon Barn**, owned by the National Trust, is a huge 14th-century barn built of local Cotswold stone. 132 feet in length, it has a dramatic aisled interior, marvellous beams and two porches at the wagon entrances. Open April - November.

PERSHORE

9 miles E of Great Malvern on the A4104

 Abbey  Pershore College

A gem of a market town, with fine Georgian architecture and an attractive setting on the banks of the Avon. Its crowning glory is the **Abbey**, which combines outstanding examples

FOUR ACRES NURSERIES

Great Comberton Road, Pensham, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 3DY
Tel: 01386 550357

Linda Davies owns and runs **Four Acres Nurseries**, which she established in 2002 in a peaceful, attractive location under Bredon Hills. Gardeners and plant-lovers will find an excellent range of lavenders, salvias, foxgloves, geraniums, phlox and other annuals and perennials, along with patio and bedding plants, garden accessories and hanging baskets, ready made or assembled to individual requirements. Linda and her staff are always ready with help and advice at the nurseries, which can be found off the B4084, east of Pershore on the road to Evesham.



OAKLANDS FARMHOUSE

Oaklands House, Oaklands Farm, Pershore Road, Bricklehampton, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 3JT
Tel: 01386 861716

For many years Barbara Stewart has been welcoming guests to her top-quality B&B establishment at **Oaklands Farmhouse**. The house stands in attractive gardens off the B4084, signposted between Pershore (2 miles) and Evesham (3 miles). The River Avon is an easy walk away, the surrounding fields are filled in summer with market gardeners' produce, and the house commands far-reaching views to the Bredon Hills.

The accommodation in the recently refurbished 200-year-old farmhouse comprises two lovely bedrooms, one with en suite shower, the other with a private bathroom with bath and separate shower. Both rooms have TV, radio-alarm clock, tea tray, electric blanket and hairdryer. There's a lovely country feel to the décor and furnishings that's entirely appropriate for the age of the building and its rural setting. Day rooms include a snug with a log-burning stove and a pleasant dining area where a delicious English, Scottish or Continental breakfast is served.

The Malvern and Bredon Hills provide excellent walking amid magnificent scenery, and it's an easy drive to Cheltenham, Worcester and Stratford for a great variety of culture, leisure and shopping. She welcomes children of 12 or over, but not pets.






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of Norman and Early English architecture. The Abbey was founded by King Oswald in AD689, and in AD972 King Edgar granted a charter to the Benedictine monks. Only the choir remains of the original church, but it is still a considerable architectural treasure. The south transept is the oldest part, while among the most impressive features is some superb vaulting in the chancel roof.

Pershore Bridge, a favourite picnic spot, still bears the marks of damage done during the Civil War. A mile east of town on the B4084 is **Pershore College**. Originally part of the Wyke Estate, the college has been developed round an early 19th-century mansion and is the Royal Horticultural Society's Centre for the Midlands and the Regional Centre of Excellence for the food and drink industry. The grounds contain many unusual trees and shrubs, and in the glasshouses are tropical, temperate and cool decorative plants. The College houses the National Collections of Penstemons and Philadelphus.

Pershore's main horticultural claim to fame are its plums, and a new variety called Pershore Emblem joins the long-established Pershore Purple and Pershore Yellow Egg.


Tewkesbury

 Abbey  Museums  Battle of Tewkesbury











Actually just across the border into Gloucestershire, Tewkesbury is a town of historic and strategic importance close to the confluence of the Severn and Avon rivers. At the centre of the town is **Tewkesbury Abbey**, the cathedral-sized parish church of St Mary. Founded in the 8th century and completely rebuilt in the 11th, it was one of the last to be dissolved by Henry VIII, and in 1540 it was saved from destruction by the townspeople,

who raised £453 to buy it from the Crown. Many of its features are on a truly grand scale, and the vast main tower is the tallest surviving Norman main tower in the world. Three museums tell the story of the town and its environs: the **Little Museum**, laid out in a typical old merchant's house, part of Abbey Row Cottages dating from 1450; **Tewkesbury Museum**, with displays on the social history and archaeology of the area; and the **John Moore Countryside Museum**, a natural history collection of preserved mammals and birds, hand tools and wildlife sculptures made from scrap metal, displayed in a 15th-century timber-framed house. The **Battle of Tewkesbury**, one of the fiercest in the Wars of the Roses, took place in 1471 in a field south of the town, which ever since has been known as Bloody Meadow. The 17-year-old son of Henry VI was killed in the conflict, and a plaque marking his final resting place can be seen in the Abbey.

Evesham

 Almonry Heritage Centre  Spring Blossom Trail
 Country Park

A bustling market town at the centre of the Vale of Evesham, an area long known as the Garden of England, with a prolific harvest of soft fruits, apples, plums and salad vegetables. The **Spring Blossom Trail** is a circular driving trail around the Vale of Evesham, taking in the sights and smells of springtime blossom. The River Avon performs a loop round the town, and the Abbey park is a good place for a riverside stroll; it is also the start point for boat trips. The magnificent 110-foot bell tower is the only major building remaining of the Abbey, which was founded around AD700 by Egwin, Bishop of Worcester, and

 historic building  museum and heritage  historic site  scenic attraction  flora and fauna
 stories and anecdotes  famous people  art and craft  entertainment and sport  walks



Bell Tower, Evesham

was one of the largest and grandest in the whole country. It was knocked down by Henry VIII's men at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The story of the town is told in vivid detail at the **Almonry Heritage Centre**, which was formerly the home of the Abbey Almoner and was built around 1400. The almoner was responsible for the distribution of alms to poor pilgrims and townspeople during the 850-year lifetime of the Abbey. It now houses a unique collection of artefacts as well as exhibitions showing the history of the Abbey, the defeat of Simon de Montfort at the Battle of Evesham (the Leicester Tower stands on the site of the Battle), the involvement of the town in the Civil War, and stories from more recent campaigns. The Almonry gardens have more exhibits, including agricultural equipment and a cannon from the Crimea campaign of 1854.

The Centre is open Monday to Saturday all year, also Sundays March to October.

There are many other interesting buildings in Evesham, including the neighbouring churches of All Saints and St Lawrence. The former is entered through a porch built by Abbot Lichfield in the 16th century, and the Lichfield Chapel, with a lovely fan-vaulted ceiling, contains his tomb. Much of the building, as well as the stone pulpit, dates from Victorian times, when major restoration work was carried out. The latter, declared redundant in 1978, was also the subject of extensive restoration in the 1830s and again in the 1990s. In the market place is a free-standing grand old timbered building called the Round House – a curious name, because it is actually square. One theory claims that it was so called because “you can walk all round it”.

A little way north of Evesham is **Evesham Country Park**, where the attractions include a stretch of the River Avon, a wildlife visitor centre, shops, a garden centre and the charming Evesham Vale Light Railway. Nearby, in the village of Offenham, is a rare sight – a terrace of seven half-timbered medieval cottages from the 1460s, which share one long continuous thatched roof. They stand on Main Street at the end of which is another rarity – a permanent maypole of red, white and blue crowned by a golden cockerel.

Around Evesham



ASHTON UNDER HILL


5 miles SW of Evesham off the A46

Ashton under Hill sits at the foot of Bredon Hill, its main street flanked by stone, half-timbered black and white buildings. At the crossroads stands an unusual survival, an 18th-century cross with a sundial.

BROADWAY

6 miles SE of Evesham on the A44

 Broadway Tower  Broadway Beacon

 Snowhill Lavender

One of the most beautiful villages in England and a magnet for tourists throughout the year. The quintessential Cotswold village, its eponymous broad main street is lined with houses and cottages built of golden Cotswold stone. Broadway was settled as far back as 1900BC, and later the Romans came and occupied the hill above the village. Broadway was probably re-established after the Battle of Dyrham in AD557 by conquering Saxons advancing towards Worcester. The parish records tell of hospitality being offered at a Broadway hostelry as early as 1532. This was

the time of the advent of the horse-drawn carriage, when Broadway became an important staging post. A journey from London to Worcester took about 17 hours including stops and a change of horse, and at one time Broadway boasted an incredible 33 public houses.

In the centre of Broadway is a wide village green from where the main street continues gently upwards for nearly a mile, with the surrounding hills always in view. The gradient increases at Fish Hill, then rises to more than 1,000 feet above sea level at **Broadway Beacon**. At the top of the Beacon is **Broadway Tower**, standing in a delightful country park with something to interest all ages, from animal enclosures and an adventure playground to nature walks and barbecue sites.

THE GOLDSMITHY

JEWELLERY DESIGNERS, MAKERS & REPAIRERS

High Street, Broadway, Worcestershire WR12 7DT
Tel: 01386 853297

website: www.goldsmithy.co.uk

Jewellery is always a special purchase and having something hand-made makes it especially so. **The Goldsmithy** is the retail outlet for exclusive bespoke jewellery designed and hand-made by the father-and-son team of Terry and Simon Waldron – Terry started the business in the 1970s. Most pieces on display are crafted in their own workshop in a classic Cotswold stone building overlooking the Green in Broadway.

They produce pieces to suit all budgets and tastes, from simple wedding and signet rings to large, dramatic pieces, in a variety of metals and many featuring precious and semi-precious stones including diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, aquamarines, tanzanites, tourmalines, jade, opals and pearls. Clients are invited to feel very much part of the whole process, from the design stage, choosing the metals and the gems to seeing the completed article. The Goldsmithy also remodels and repairs customers' pieces and will give assistance with insurance and replacement matters.

The owners are members of the National Association of goldsmiths; they are three times winners of the de Beers Diamonds International Award and Academy members – the most prestigious awards for jewellery design in the industry.



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The tower was built as a folly by the 6th Earl of Coventry in 1799 as part of the great movement of the time towards picturesque and romantic landscapes. James Wyatt designed the tower, which now contains various displays and exhibitions including the William Morris Room – Morris used the Tower as a country retreat.

Broadway's St Michael's Church (1839) boasts an intricate Elizabethan pulpit that came from the nearby St Eadburga's Church and was installed in a thanksgiving service marking the end of World War I.

In the late 19th century, Broadway was a haunt of artists, musicians and writers, including JM Barrie, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Henry James, Edward Elgar and John Singer

Sargent. It was later a centre of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

South of Broadway, at Snowhill, **Snowhill Lavender** has 53 acres of rolling lavender fields, with more than 30 varieties.

CHILDSWICKHAM

4 miles SE of Evesham off the A44

Cider Mill Museum

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, its tall, slender spire a prominent landmark, is a good place to start a walk round the old part of the village. Close by, on the Broadway road, is the Barnfield **Cider Mill Museum**, where visitors can see a display of cider-making down the years before sampling cider, perry or one of the wines produced from local plums and berries.

BRETFTON

4 miles E of Evesham on the B4035

Fleece Inn

A pub in the care of the National Trust is a rarity indeed, and it's well worth a trip to Bretforton to visit the **Fleece Inn**, a medieval half-timbered building that was originally a farmhouse. It has changed very little since being first licensed in 1848, and an interesting feature is the Witches' Marks carved in the hearth to prevent witches coming down the chimney. It also has a precious pewter collection. The Thatched Barn is available to hire for functions and has a civil ceremony wedding licence. It hosts the Vale of Evesham Asparagus Festival. The Church of St Leonard boasts a number of interesting and intricate carvings, notably a scene depicting St Margaret emerging (through a hole she made with her cross) from the side of the dragon that had just swallowed her.



Broadway Tower

RIDING CENTRE BRETFTON EQUESTRIAN

Lower Hind Farm, Station Road, Bretforton, Evesham,
Worcestershire WR11 7HX

Tel: 01386 833369

e-mail: riding@bretfortonequestrian.co.uk

website: www.bretfortonequestrian.co.uk

Bretforton Equestrian Riding Centre offers a wide range of lessons for all levels of rider, from starting out on a new interest to improving riding skills and equestrian knowledge. The aim of the owners is to make the lessons both educational, challenging and enjoyable, and all the lessons are conducted by BHS qualified instructors. The wellbeing of the horses is paramount: they are regularly checked by vets and schooled by the centre's instructors, as well as leaving the centre from time to time to compete in outside events. Lessons are preceded by a half-hour assessment so that riders can be put in the correct group for their level and ability. Most lessons are in small groups, but individual lessons are available at certain times of the week for those who require one-to-one tuition.

Riding lessons are the main offering, but care of horses is also very important and Bretforton Equestrian encourages its clients to attend the stable management courses to acquire a basic understanding of the needs of a horse and the commitment required to own a horse. The centre has indoor and outdoor arenas, a lecture room and a small shop stocked with riding essentials.



HONEYBOURNE

4 miles E of Evesham on minor roads off the
B4035

Domestic Fowl Trust and Honeybourne Rare Breeds

The **Domestic Fowl Trust and Honeybourne Rare Breeds** is a conservation centre for rare breeds of poultry and livestock. Over 100 breeds are on view on the 29-acre farm. Visitors can wander along the grass pathways to see breeding flocks of chickens (including British and American bantams), ducks, geese and turkeys. The farm animals include the rare Irish Moiled cows and some of the rarest breeds of sheep and goats. Books, gifts and animal equipment and feedstuffs are available from the shop, and the centre also has an activity room for children, a poultry museum,

the Speckled Hen tearoom and an information centre.

MIDDLE LITTLETON

3 miles NE of Evesham off the B4085

Tithe Barn Windmill Hill Nature Reserve

The Littletons – North, Middle and South – lie close to each other and close to the River Avon. In Middle Littleton is a huge and wonderful **Tithe Barn**, built in the 13th century and once the property of the Abbots of Evesham. Now owned by the National Trust, it is still in use as a farm building, but can be visited.

Nearby, a bridleway leads off the B4510 to **Windmill Hill Nature Reserve**, an area of fertile limestone that continues up to Cleeve Prior, where the Church of St Andrew is well worth a visit.

Worcester

-  Cathedral  Greyfriars  City Museum
-  Royal Worcester Porcelain
-  Commandery Civil War Centre
-  Museum of Local Life  Three Choirs Festival
-  Worcester Woods Country Park

The **Cathedral**, with its 200-foot tower, stands majestically beside the Severn. The 11th century crypt is a classic example of Norman architecture and was built by St Wulstan, who is remembered in a stone carving. He was the only English bishop not to be replaced by a Norman after the Conquest. To many of the local people the task of building the Cathedral must have seemed endless; the central tower collapsed in 1175 and a fire destroyed much of the building in 1203. The Cathedral had only just been re-dedicated after those disasters when Bishop Blois began pulling it

down again, only to rebuild it in the fashionable Gothic style. The nave was rebuilt in the 14th century under the auspices of Bishop Cobham, but the south side was not completed until much later, and in a far less elaborate style. King John requested that he be buried in the choir, and his tomb stands near the high altar. It is a masterpiece of medieval sculpture, showing the King flanked by the Bishops Oswald and Wulstan. Prince Arthur, elder brother of Henry VIII, is also entombed near the high altar. One of the many stories about the Cathedral concerns the 'Grumpy Monk', so grumpy that his brothers decided to get their own back when he died. They buried him under a step in the cloisters so they could have the satisfaction of treading on him whenever they passed by. He lies there to this day, still being trodden on by visitors.

There's a great deal more to see than the

The Greyfriars

Friar Street, Worcester WR1 2LZ

Tel: 01905 23571

e-mail: greyfriars@nationaltrust.org.uk

website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Built in 1480, The Greyfriars is a beautiful timber-framed merchant's house located in Worcester city centre. Throughout its history the house has been home to some of the city's most affluent merchant families.

Saved from demolition in the 1940s, it now houses the fascinating, and somewhat unusual collections of the siblings who rescued the house - Matley and Elsie Moore.

Visitors can enjoy the beautiful interior, featuring the oak panelled Great Hall, Library, Bedroom and Parlour. The house contains a rather eclectic collection, including the Copeland and Garrett toilet service in the Dining Room and screens made from antique leather. Throughout the house are delicate tapestries and a variety of 16th and 17th century furniture. In the charming walled garden visitors can relax with light refreshments in the summer and purchase plants cultivated at nearby Hanbury Hall.



GRAYS AT THE NORTHWICK INTERIORS & LIFESTYLE

142 Ombersley Road, Worcester WR3 7HA

Tel: 01905 754040 Fax: 01905 757676

e-mail: Northwick@btconnect.com

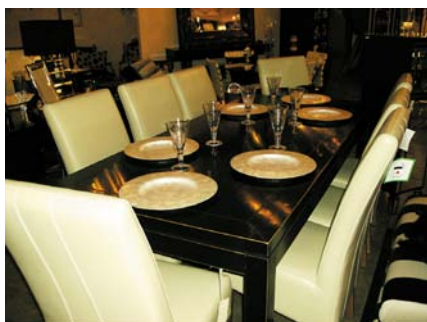
website: www.thenorthwick.co.uk

From traditional to contemporary, a complete interiors service awaits visitors to **Grays at the Northwick Interiors and Lifestyle**.

David and Helen Gray deserve an Oscar for creating a new starring role for what had been a sad, derelict cinema. A classic 1938 Art Deco cinema two miles north of the city centre lay neglected for 12 years before they turned it into a vibrant, glamorous setting for displaying a wide variety of furniture, fabrics, lamps, cushions, accessories, gifts and collectables – an eclectic collection well sourced and well priced.

Much of the furniture is in keeping with the spirit of the cinema, including mirrored cabinets and dressers, monochromatic dining sets, pieces in pale wood and glass and striking crystal chandeliers. Supporting the furniture (but definitely not B features) are fabrics by the best-known makers (also a fabric library and a great choice of wallpaper and paint), plants and decorative cast-iron garden seats and tables, gifts and lifestyle items to suit all pockets and a splendid 16-seater café serving all-day breakfasts, sandwiches, snacks and excellent coffee.

Grays also offers a complete design service. Clients come from near and far to this splendid place, which is open from 9 to 5.30 (Sunday 10 to 4.30).





Greyfriars, Worcestershire

Cathedral, of course, and in the **City Museum and Art Gallery** are contemporary art and archaeological displays, a 19th-century chemist's shop and the military collections of the Worcestershire Regiment and the Worcestershire Yeomanry Cavalry. Friar Street has many lovely old timber houses. **Greyfriars** (see panel on page 64), in the care of the National Trust, is a medieval house that has managed to survive right in the heart of the city, and passing through its archway visitors will come across a pretty walled garden. The imposing Guildhall in the High Street is a marvellous example of Queen Anne architecture, designed by a local man, Thomas White. The **Commandery Civil War Centre** is a stunning complex of buildings behind a small timber-framed entrance. At the Battle of Worcester in 1651, the Commandery was used as the Royalist headquarters, and today is the country's only museum devoted to the story

of the Civil War. The story takes in the trial of Charles I, visits a Royalist encampment on the eve of the battle and enacts the last battle of the war narrated by Charles II and Oliver Cromwell. Period rooms offer a fascinating glimpse of the architecture and style of Tudor and Stuart times.

The **Royal Worcester Porcelain Visitor Centre** is an absolute must on any sightseer's list. Royal Worcester is Britain's oldest continuous producer of porcelain and is world-famous for its exquisite bone china. The factory was founded in 1751 by Dr John Wall with the intention of creating "a ware of a form so precise as to be easily distinguished from other English porcelain". The collection in the museum contains some of the company's finest treasures, and visitors can take a guided tour of the factory to observe the many stages of production. The premises include a shop and a restaurant where the food is, naturally, served on Royal Worcester china. In the 1930s the company was acquired by (Charles William) Dyson Perrins, the grandson of William Perrins, founder of the Worcester Sauce company. Closed Sundays and Bank Holidays.

The **Museum of Local Life** reflects the history of Worcester and its people, with displays covering the past 700 years. There's a Victorian kitchen scene and schoolroom, and a variety of changing exhibitions throughout the year. The site is a 16th-century timber-framed building in wonderful Friar Street. Famous sons of Worcester, where the **Three Choirs Festival** was first held in 1717, include Sir Edward Elgar, born at nearby Broadheath; his statue is a notable landmark opposite the Cathedral.

To the east of the city, and signposted from the M5 (J6) and from the city centre via the A44, **Worcester Woods Country Park**, open

daily, has 50 hectares of ancient oak woodland, 10 hectares of traditional wildflower meadow, waymarked trails, a picnic area, children's play area, visitor centre, café and shop.

Around Worcester

POWICK

2 miles S of Worcester on the A449

Powick Bridge was the scene of the first and last battles in the Civil War; the last, in 1651, ending with Charles hiding in the Boscobel Oak before journeying south to a nine year exile in France. Cromwell's power had been overwhelming, and the long years of strife were at an end. Powick Bridge's skyline is today dominated by Worcester's first power station, built in 1894.

SPETCHLEY

3 miles E of Worcester on the A422

Church

All Saints Church, 14th century with a 16th-century chapel, is home to a fine collection of monuments to the Berkeley family, who owned adjoining Spetchley Park. The park, which extends over 12 hectares, has lovely formal gardens, wooded areas, lawns and a lake with an ornamental bridge.

HUDDINGTON

6 miles E of Worcester on minor roads

Huddington Court

Two buildings of particular note: the simple little Church of St James, with a timber-framed bell turret; and **Huddington Court**. The Court has been described as the most picturesque house in Worcestershire. An excellent example of a 16th-century timber-framed building, it was once the home of the

Wintours, a staunchly Catholic family who were involved in the Gunpowder Plot. When the plot was exposed and the conspirators finally arrested, both Thomas and Robert Wintour, cousins of Robert Catesby, confessed their guilt and were executed. The Court is a private residence, but you can get a good view of it from the churchyard.

A mile or so north of Huddington lies the village of Himbleton, where the Church of St Mary Magdalene has a picturesque bell turret with a memorial clock.

ROUS LENCH

7 miles E of Worcester on a minor road

Rous Lench Court

The Lenches are attractive little villages in an area known for its particularly rich soil. Rous Lench church has a chapel with monuments to the Rous family and an oil painting of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee. The road to the hilltop village of Church Lench (a mile south), with the church at the very top of the hill, passes by **Rous Lench Court**, the seat of the Rous family for many centuries from 1382. The Court is a splendid half-timbered mansion with a tall Italianate tower in the beautiful gardens.

INKBERROW

8 miles E of Worcester off the A42

Old Bull Inn

A very pleasant and pretty spot to pause awhile, with the Church of St Peter (note the alabaster of John Savage, a High Sheriff of Worcester who died in 1631), the inn and other buildings round the village green, some in red brick, others black and white half-timbered. The **Old Bull Inn** has two claims to fame - one that William Shakespeare stayed there in 1582, the other that it is the original

of The Bull at Ambridge, home of *The Archers*. Photographs of the cast adorn the walls, and the inn has become a place of pilgrimage for fans of the programme.

The Old Vicarage, a handsome 18th-century building in the Tudor style, was host in an earlier guise to King Charles I, who stayed there on his way to Naseby; some maps he left behind are kept in the church.

At nearby Dormston, a timber-framed dovecote stands in front of the Moat farmhouse.

One mile south of Inkberrow is the village of Abbots Morton, whose dwellings are mainly 17th-century yeomen's houses. The village was once the site of the Abbot of Evesham's summer residence, but only some mounds and fishponds now remain.


ODDINGLEY


5 miles NE of Worcester on minor roads


The parish church of Oddingley stands on a hill overlooking the Worcester & Birmingham Canal. Its principal treasure is the mostly 15th-century stained glass in the east window, which is regarded as some of the finest of that period. Behind the communion rail is a memorial to a rector, George Parker, who was murdered in 1806 because of a dispute over tithes.

DROITWICH

6 miles NE of Worcester on the A38

 Church of the Sacred Heart

 Heritage & Information Centre

 Salwarpe Valley Nature Reserve

This was Salinae, the place of salt, in Roman times. Salt deposits, a legacy from the time when this area was on the seabed, were extracted for 2,000 years until the end of the 19th century. The natural Droitwich brine contains about 2.5 pounds of salt per gallon -

10 times as much as sea water - and is often likened to the waters of the Dead Sea. The brine is pumped up from an underground lake that lies 200 feet below the town. Visitors do not drink the waters at Droitwich as they do at most other spas, but enjoy the therapeutic properties floating in the warm brine. The first brine baths were built in the 1830s and were soon renowned for bringing relief to many and effecting seemingly miraculous cures. By 1876, Droitwich had developed as a fashionable spa, mainly through the efforts of John Corbett, known as the Salt King.

This typical Victorian businessman and philanthropist introduced new methods of extracting the brine and moved the main plant to Stoke Prior. The enterprise was beset with various problems in the 1870s and Corbett turned his attention to developing the town as a spa resort. He was clearly a man of some energy as he also served as an MP after the 1874 General Election. Many of the buildings in present-day Droitwich were owned by Corbett, including the Raven Hotel (a raven was part of his coat of arms) in the centre. His most remarkable legacy is undoubtedly Chateau Impney, on the eastern side of town at Dodderhill. It was designed by a Frenchman, Auguste Tronquois, in the style of an ornate French chateau, with soaring turrets, mansard roof and classical French gardens. It was intended as a home for Corbett and his wife Anna, but she apparently didn't like the place; their increasingly stormy marriage ended in 1884, nine years after the completion of the flamboyant chateau, which is now a high-class hotel and conference centre.

The **Heritage and Information Centre** includes a local history exhibition (Salt Town to Spa) and a historic BBC radio room (01905 774312).

In the centre of the town is St Andrew's

Church, part of whose tower was removed because of subsidence, a condition that affected many buildings, some of which stand at fairly alarming angles. One of the chapels, dating from the 13th century, is dedicated to St Richard de Wyche, the town's patron saint, who became Bishop of Chichester. On the southern outskirts of Droitwich is the **Church of the Sacred Heart**, built in Italianate style in the 1930s and remarkable for its profusion of beautiful mosaics made from Venetian glass. Many of these mosaics also commemorate the life of St Richard.

One of Droitwich's most famous sons is Edward Winslow, born the eldest of eight children in 1595. He was one of the pilgrims who set sail for the New World to seek religious freedom and later became Governor of the colony. A bronze memorial to Edward

Winslow can be seen in St Peter's Church.

Salwarpe on the southwest fringes of Droitwich, is truly a hidden hamlet, approached by a stone bridge over James Brindley's Droitwich Canal. Opened in 1771, the canal linked the town to the River Severn at Hawford. The Church of St Michael, by the edge of the canal, has several monuments to the Talbot family, who owned nearby Salwarpe Court. **Salwarpe Valley Nature Reserve** is one of very few inland sites with salt water, making it ideal for a variety of saltmarsh plants and very well worth a visit.

HAWFORD

4 miles N of Worcester off the A449

The site of another amazing dovecote, this one half-timbered, dating from the 16th century and owned by the National Trust.

BUTTERMILK BED AND BREAKFAST

Four Gables, Longlands, nr Worcester WR3 7SX

Tel/Fax: 01905 451588

e-mail: enquiries@buttermilk-bandb.co.uk

website: www.buttermilk-bandb.co.uk

Martyn and Caroline Jones welcome Bed & Breakfast guests to **Buttermilk**, their home in a quiet country setting in the village of Ladywood. The well appointed accommodation consists of three generously sized rooms decorated and furnished to a very high standard. On the ground floor are a twin with en suite bath and shower and wheelchair access and a double with en suite shower, its own side entrance, private garden and full wheelchair access; upstairs is a double with en suite shower. Wireless-free access is provided. Disabled aids are available upon request. Excellent breakfast which is sourced locally and seasonally offers cereals, juices, yoghurt and fresh fruit and a choice of Continental platter or full English with home-made preserves and eggs from the owners' free-range hens. For the winter visitor, there is a welcome pot of coffee on the Breakfast Room's wood burning stove. Dinner is available, by prior arrangement, for groups of 4 or more

Though secluded, Buttermilk is certainly not remote: Droitwich is a mile and a half away, it's 4 miles to Worcester and 3 from J6 of the M5. It's an ideal base for touring, walking or just relaxing and enjoying the stunning views over the Salwarpe and Severn Valleys maintaining an air of tranquillity, so welcome after a busy day of sight seeing or business.



OMBERSLEY*6 miles N of Worcester off the A449***St Andrew's Church**

A truly delightful and very English village with some superb black and white timbered dwellings with steeply sloping roofs. **St Andrew's Church**, rebuilt in 1825, contains memorials to the Sandys family and their family pew. Large and square, it stands beside the pulpit and is comfortably furnished with cushioned seats, matching blue embroidered kneelers and an ornate open fireplace. For heating, the congregation had to rely on the impressive Howden Heating Stove, set against the north wall. Installed in 1829, it rises some 12 feet and is in the shape of a miniature church tower complete with buttresses, arched top and a fuel opening

just like a church doorway.

The Sandys family lived at nearby Ombersley Court (private), a splendid Georgian mansion that can be seen from the churchyard.

WICHENFORD*5 miles NW of Worcester on the B4204***Dovecote**

A famous landmark here is the National Trust's **Wichenford Dovecote**, a 17th-century timber-framed construction with a lantern on top. With its 557 nesting holes, it is the largest surviving dovecote in England. When it was constructed, only the Lord of the Manor had the right to build one and to kill the birds for winter meat – a source of resentment to the villagers whose crops were pillaged by these voracious birds.

CHECKETTS MASTER BUTCHERS & FISHMONGERS*Main Road, Ombersley, Worcestershire WR9 0EW**Tel: 01905 620284**e-mail: enquiries@checketts.co.uk**website: www.checketts.co.uk*

For over a century **Checketts** has been selling top-quality meat, most of it sourced from within 30 miles.

Throughout that time the name of Checketts has been synonymous with quality, service and hygiene, and that remains true for all the meats on display, from British beef joints, steaks and mince to English lamb, outdoor-reared pork, free-range poultry, seasonal game, home-cured bacon, burgers, flavour-packed pies, brilliant sausages with their unique secret seasoning and a section of deli products.

The same high standards that have earned Checketts Butcher of the Year Awards now extend to Checketts Fresh Fish, opened at the end of 2007 behind the butchers and deli. David Checketts and his colleague Ian Dugmore present what is probably the largest fresh fish display in



Worcestershire. The range includes traditional British favourites like cod, haddock, plaice, sole, salmon, turbot, sea bass, scallops and lobster along with seafood from distant waters such as tuna, swordfish, yellow-tailed snapper and enormous tiger prawns. They also sell a selection of pre-prepared products – seafood soups and pâtés, fishcakes, ready-battered cod and haddock, rollmop herrings and speciality seafood platters. Orders for meat and fish can be placed on the hot line 01905 620750 or through the comprehensive website.



CLIFTON

10 miles NW of Worcester on the B4204

Church of St Kenelm

In lovely countryside near the River Teme, the village boasts a number of charming dwellings around the green and the **Church of St Kenelm**. Parts of the church go back to the 12th and 14th centuries. Collectors of unusual tombstones will find two here. Just inside the porch is the grave of “Elizabeth Taylor, Gent.” who “Lived and dyed A Virgin”; on the north wall a marble tablet includes an inscription recording that “William” achieved the intriguing feat of being born on August 22nd 1714 and dying on November 23rd 1713.

There are other interesting churches at nearby Shelsey Beauchamp, in red sandstone, and Shelsey Walsh, which has many treasures, including the tomb of Sir Francis Walsh. The name of Shelsey Walsh will be familiar to fans of motor sport as the location of a very famous hill climb.

LOWER BROADHEATH

3 miles W of Worcester off the A44

Elgar Birthplace Museum

The **Elgar Birthplace Museum** is a redbrick cottage that is crammed with items from the great composer's life. He was born here in 1857 and, despite long periods spent elsewhere, Broadheath remained his spiritual home. The violin was his first instrument, though he eventually succeeded his father as organist at St George's Church in Worcester. He played at the Three Choirs Festival and began conducting locally. He married in 1889 and was soon devoting almost all his time to composing, making his name with *The Enigma Variations* (1899) and *Dream of Gerontius* (1900). He was knighted in 1904 and, when in

1931 he was made a baronet by King George V, he took the title 1st Baronet of Broadheath. The **Elgar Centre** beside the cottage hosts regular recitals, lectures, exhibitions and other events. In March 2009, the distinguished conductor Sir Mark Elder unveiled a bronze sculpture by Jemma Pearson at the bottom of the cottage garden showing the composer sitting on a bench looking out towards his beloved Malvern Hills. Jemma also created the sculpture of Elgar that stands in Hereford Cathedral. The 40-mile Elgar Route is a circular driving route passing through West and great Malvern. It takes in 40 places of interest associated with Sir Edward.

LEIGH

5 miles W of Worcester off the A4103

Church Leigh Brook

The **Church of St Eadburga** is very fine indeed, with some imposing monuments and a marvellous 15th-century rood screen. A curious legend attaches to the church. A man called Edmund Colles is said to have robbed one of his colleagues who was returning from Worcester and known to be carrying a full purse. It was a dark, gloomy night, and as Colles reached out to grab the man's horse, holding on to the bridle, the other struck at him with a sword. When he visited Edmund the next day, the appalling wound testified to the man's guilt; although forgiven by his intended victim, Colles died shortly after and his ghost once haunted the area. A phantom coach pulled by four fire-breathing steeds would appear and race down the hill to the church by Leigh Court, where they would leap over the tithe barn and disappear beneath the waters of the River Teme. A midnight service attended by 12 clergymen eventually laid the ghost to rest. Leaping over the tithe barn was

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SHARON MCSWINEY

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Worcestershire WR6 5JB*

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e-mail: info@sbaronmcswiney.co.uk

website: www.sbaronmcswiney.co.uk

Sharon McSwiney & her husband Tim design and make extensive collections of quirky, imaginative, stylish jewellery and metalwork for the home and garden. A visit would be a unique opportunity to see a working jewellery & metalwork studio in Worcestershire.

A selection of distinctive jewellery in various metals & finishes is shown together with a large range of greetings cards. Decorative copper and brass wall panels are displayed alongside one-off metalwork block pictures, these pieces can also be made to commission.

Sharon & Tim's shop also exhibits a range of unusual and affordable gift ideas from UK designer makers including glass, ceramics and textiles. You are welcome to call into the studio Tues – Sat 10am until 5pm where it may be possible to see the artist at work, view designs in progress or even chat about commissioning a unique piece for yourself!

The studio is located half way between Malvern and Worcester on the A4103 within a craft centre including a licensed cafe and large free car park.

It's sure to be a fascinating and inspiring visit.



no mean feat (though easier of course if you're a ghost), as the 14th-century barn is truly massive, with great cruck beams and porched wagon doors. Standing in the grounds of Leigh Court, a long gabled mansion, the barn is open for visits on summer weekends.

Leigh Brook is a tributary of the Teme and wends its way through a spectacular valley cared for by Worcestershire Nature Conservation Trust. The countryside here is lovely, and footpaths make the going easier. Up on Old Storridge Common, birch, ash, oak and bracken have taken a firm hold, and there is a weird, rather unearthly feel about the place. Nearby, the hamlet of Birch Wood is where Elgar composed his *Dream of Gerontius*.






ALFRICK

7 miles W of Worcester off the A44

Nature Reserves

Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) once preached at the village Church of St Mary Magdalene, which enjoys a delightful setting above the village green. In the vicinity are two major attractions for nature-lovers. A little way to the northwest is **Ravenshill Woodland Nature Reserve** with waymarked trails through woodland that is home to many breeding birds, while a mile south of Alfrick is the **Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve**, with 25 hectares of woodland and meadows rich in flora and fauna.

Bromsgrove

-  Avoncraft Museum of Historic Buildings
-  Museum  AE Housman
-  BT National Telephone Kiosk Collection
-  Church of St John the Baptist

A visit to the **Avoncraft Museum of Historic Buildings**, just south of Bromsgrove, is a walk through seven centuries of English history, with each building providing a snapshot of life in its particular period. The first building, a timber-framed merchant's house from Bromsgrove, was brought to the site in 1967, since when over 20 more have been installed. In addition to the buildings themselves, the Museum has regular demonstrations of such crafts as wood-turning, windmilling, racksawing, brick-making, chain-making and nail-making. There's also a shop, refreshment area, picnic site, a children's area, horse-drawn wagon rides and farm animals wandering around freely. One of the most treasured exhibits is the original 14th-century beamed roof of Guesten Hall



Bromsgrove Museum

from Worcester Cathedral, now covering a modern brick building. In an area behind the shop is another unique collection, the **BT National Telephone Kiosk Collection** (01527 831809).

Bromsgrove Museum, near the town centre, has displays of local crafts and industries, including glass, salt and nail, and the Bromsgrove Guild, an organisation of craftsmen founded in 1894. The Guild of highly skilled craftsmen had its finest hour when commissioned to design and make the gates and railings of Buckingham Palace. Another popular exhibit is a street scene of Victorian shops.

Besides the museums, there is plenty to see, including some very handsome timber-framed buildings in the High Street, where stands a statue of **AE Housman**, the town's most famous son. Alfred Edward Housman was born one of seven children at Fockbury, Bromsgrove, in 1859, and spent his schooldays in the town. After a spell at Oxford University, and some time teaching at his old school, he entered the Civil Service in London, where he found time to resume his academic studies. He was appointed Professor of Latin at University College, London, in 1892 and soon afterwards he published his first and best-known collection of poems – *A Shropshire Lad*. His total output was not large, but it includes some of the best-loved poems in the English language. He died in 1936 and is buried in the churchyard of St Lawrence in Ludlow. The forming, in 1972, of a Housman Society brought his name to the forefront of public attention, and in the region of Bromsgrove walking and motoring trails take in the properties and places associated with him.

Bromsgrove has a prestigious annual music festival held during the month of May, when


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the town plays host to a wide range of musical entertainment from orchestral concerts to jazz, and featuring many well-known artists. Another annual event is the revival of the Court Leet, an ancient form of local administration. A colourful procession moves through the town and there's a lively Elizabethan street market.

The **Church of St John the Baptist** – see his statue over the south porch entrance – contains some superb 19th-century stained glass and an impressive collection of monuments, notably to members of the Talbot family. Side by side in the churchyard are the tombs of two railwaymen who were killed in 1840 when the boiler of their engine exploded while climbing the notorious Lickey Incline (see Burcot below).

BURCOT

3 miles NE of Bromsgrove on the B4184

 Locks at Tardebigge

Burcot was long associated with the Floyd family of blacksmiths, who had been blacksmiths in Ireland for 500 years before coming here to work at the long-established forge. During World War I, three members of the Floyd family and one employee made 25,000 shoes for cavalry horses.



The stretch of railway that includes the Lickey Incline is, at 1 in 37.7, the steepest gradient on the whole of the British rail network. One specially powerful locomotive, 58100 (better known as Big Bertha), spent its days up until the late 1950s helping trains up the bank, a task that was later performed by massive double-boilered locomotives that were the most powerful in the then British Railways fleet. The steepness of the climb is due to the same geographical feature that necessitated the construction of the unique flight of **Locks at**

Tardebigge, between Bromsgrove and Redditch. In the space of 2.5 miles the canal is lifted by no fewer than 30 locks. In the actual village of Tardebigge, on the A448, the Church of St Bartholomew enjoys a lovely setting with views across the Severn lowlands. Built in 1777 to the design of Francis Horn of Warwick, it has a slender tower capped by a delicate needle spire.

Around Bromsgrove – South

HANBURY

3 miles S of Bromsgrove off the B4090

 Hanbury Hall  Jinney Ring Craft Centre

Hanbury Hall is a fine redbrick mansion in William & Mary style, completed by Thomas Vernon in 1701. Internal features include murals by Sir James Thornhill, known particularly for his Painted Hall in the Royal Naval Hospital, Greenwich, and frescoes in the dome of St Paul's. See also a splendid collection of porcelain, the Long Gallery, the Moorish gazebos at each corner of the forecourt and the formal gardens with orangery and an 18th-century ice house.

In beautiful rural surroundings a mile north of the village of Hanbury stands the award-winning **Jinney Ring Craft Centre**, based on converted old timbered barns. Craftspeople with many diverse skills can be seen at work in their own studios, including ceramicists, two potters, a violin-maker, a wooden pen maker, a jeweller, a picture-framer, a leatherworker, a glass-maker, a sign-maker, a chocolate maker and an antiques restorer. Also on the premises is a craft gallery with changing exhibitions by British

craftsmen and artists, a clothes and knitwear department, a plant centre and falconry at the end of the garden. The Centre hosts many events throughout the year, including cookery courses, beer festivals and blues festivals.

FECKENHAM


7 miles SE of Bromsgrove on the B4090

A pretty village with half-timbered, redbrick and Georgian houses and the fine Church of St John the Baptist. Inside the church a board displays the benefaction that Charles I bestowed upon the village in 1665 - 6 pounds 13 shillings and fourpence, payable out of forest land to the school. The forest in question once surrounded the village, but the trees were all felled for fuelling the saltpans and no trace of the forest now remains.

REDDITCH

6 miles E of Bromsgrove on the A448

 Forge Mill Needle Museum

 Arrow Valley Country Park

A New Town from the 1960s, but there is plenty of history here, as well as some great walking. The **Arrow Valley Country Park**, is a vast expanse of parkland with nature trails, picnic areas and lovely walks. Sailing, canoeing, windsurfing and fishing are popular pastimes on the lake. There is a café, shop and countryside centre. One walk follows the river upstream to the ruins of Bordesley Abbey, a medieval Cistercian Abbey. Nearby is the **Forge Mill Needle Museum**, opened by the Queen in 1983, telling the fascinating story of the Redditch needle-making industry (01527 60806).

HUMPHRIES SHOES

30-32 Evesham Walk, Kingfisher Centre, Redditch, Worcestershire B97 4HH

Tel: 01527 62416

e-mail: sales@humpbriesshoes.co.uk

website: www.humpbriesshoes.co.uk

Humphries Shoes is a traditional family business established in 1862 at Redditch by Walter Humphries and run today by the fourth and fifth generations of the family. Walter began the business by handcrafting individually measured boots which were fitted for each of his customers. He was able to make three pairs of boots every two days. Over the years the small business became a first-class shoe store, stocking a wide range of styles from all the top British manufacturers together with some overseas brands. The emphasis has always been on fitting, quality and value for money and it was one of the very first shoe stores to offer fitted shoes for children.

Today, being the Main Fitting Centre, Humphries Shoes is the top destination in the region for fitted children's shoes, with an unrivalled range that includes Clarks, Start-Rite, Lelli Kelly, Geox, Timberland and Skechers – all **professionally fitted** with the **friendly service** expected from a family business.

Naturally, there's also an unbeatable selection for adults: Clarks, Rieker, Ecco, Lotus, Hotter, Gabor, Geox, Anatomic Gel, Josef Seibel, Equity, Rihde, Van Dal, Riva, Timberland, Skechers, Pikolinos, Tamaris, Barker, Loake and Grenson. The shop also stocks a selection of handbags from Radley, Tula, Gigi and Bullaggi. Shop hours are 9 to 5.30 (Sunday 10.30 to 4.30). Other Humphries Shoes branches are in Alcester, Warwickshire and Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire.



ALCOTT FARM B&B AND SELF-CATERING*Ickenield Street, Weatheroak, Alvechurch, Worcestershire B48 7EH**Tel: 01564 824051 Fax: 01564 829799**e-mail: alcottfarm@btinternet.com**website: www.alcottfarm.co.uk*

For many years Jane and John Poole have been welcoming guests to **Alcott Farm**. Breakfast accommodation comprises four large ensuite bedrooms - two doubles, one being on the ground floor, and two twins. Adjacent to the farmhouse is a self catering cottage which sleeps two people. There are many good pubs and restaurants nearby, as well as access to the motorway network, Birmingham city centre and airport. Alcott Farm is an ideal place for business people, tourists & walkers. It is also a perfectly located venue for those working or visiting the NEC.

**WYTHALL***10 miles NE of Bromsgrove on the A435*
 Transport Museum

Right on the other side of Redditch, and well on the way to Birmingham, is the **Transport Museum**. Founded in 1977, the museum's two large halls house a marvellous collection of almost 100 buses and coaches, battery vehicles and fire engines, many having seen service in Birmingham and the West Midlands. It includes the largest collection of buses from the Midland Red fleet and many Bristol vehicles. Open weekends March to end November, also Wednesdays May to August.

WASELEY HILL*5 miles N of Bromsgrove of the B4551*
 Lickey Hills

Five miles north of Bromsgrove lies Waseley Hill where open hillside and woodland offers great walking and spectacular views from the top of Windmill Hill. There is also a visitor centre. Just to the east there is more great walking and views in a varied landscape around the **Lickey Hills**, which also has a visitor centre.

BELBROUGHTON*6 miles N of Bromsgrove on the B4188*
 Clent Hills

This village was once a centre of the scythe-making industry. Holy Trinity Church occupies a hillside site along with some pleasing Georgian buildings.

A little to the north are the village of Clent and the **Clent Hills**, an immensely popular place for walking and drinking in the views. On the top are four large upright stones that could be statement-making modern art but for the fact that they were put there over 200 years ago by Lord Lyttleton of Hagley Hall. Walton Hill is over 1,000 feet above sea level.

HAGLEY*8 miles N of Bromsgrove off the A491*
 Hagley Hall

In 1756, George, 1st Lord Lyttleton, commissioned the creation of what was to be the last great Palladian mansion in Britain, **Hagley Hall**. Imposing without, exotic and rococo within; notable are the Barrell Room with panelling from Holbeach Hall, where two of the Gunpowder Plotters – the Wintour

brothers – were caught and later put to death in the favourite way of hanging, drawing and quartering. Temples, cascading pools and a ruined castle are some of the reasons for lingering in the park, which has a large herd of deer.

Another attraction at Hagley is the Falconry Centre on the A4565, where owls, hawks, falcons and eagles live and fly.

DODFORD

3 miles W of Bromsgrove off the A448

Not far out of Bromsgrove, north of the A448, lies the village of Dodford, whose Church of the Holy Trinity and St Mary is an outstanding example of an Arts and Crafts church, designed in 1908 by the Bromsgrove Guild in their interpretation of the neo-Gothic style.


CHADDESLEY CORBETT

4 miles W of Bromsgrove on the A448

A fairly sizeable village, dominated at its southern end by the 14th-century Church of St Cassian. It is the only church in England to be dedicated to this saint, who was born in Alexandria in the 5th century and became a bishop in Africa. He was also a schoolmaster and was apparently killed by his pupils.

HARVINGTON

5 miles W of Bromsgrove near junction of A448/A450

 Harvington Hall


Harvington Hall is a moated medieval and Elizabethan manor house with a veritable maze of rooms. Mass was celebrated here during times when it was a very dangerous thing to do, and that is perhaps why the Hall has more priest holes than any other house in the land.



Harvington Hall

Kidderminster

 St Mary's Church  Railway Museum

 Stone House Cottage Garden

Known chiefly as a centre of the carpet-making industry, which began here early in the 18th century as a cottage industry. The introduction of the power loom brought wealth to the area and instigated the building of carpet mills. Standing on the River Stour, the town has a variety of mills, whose enormous chimneys dominate the skyline and serve as architectural monuments to Kidderminster's heritage. **St Mary's Church**, on a hill overlooking the town, is the largest parish church in the county and contains some superb tomb monuments. The Whittall Chapel, designed in 1922 by Sir Charles Gilbert Scott, was paid for by Matthew

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Whittall, a native of Kidderminster who went to America and made a fortune in carpets. Three beautiful windows depicting the Virgin Mary, Joan of Arc and Florence Nightingale, were given by his widow in his memory.

Kidderminster's best-known son is Rowland Hill, who founded the modern postal system and introduced the penny post; he was also a teacher, educationalist and inventor. His statue stands outside the Town Hall. By the station on the Severn Valley Railway is the **Kidderminster Railway Museum** with a splendid collection of railway memorabilia. Run by volunteers, it is housed in an old (1878) GWR grain store and is usually open at the same time as the train operating dates on the Severn Valley Railway (see under Bewdley).




Just outside town, at Stone, on the A448, is **Stone House Cottage Garden**, a lovely walled garden with towers. Unusual wall shrubs, climbers and herbaceous plants are featured, most of them for sale in the nursery.

In the Stour Valley just north of Kidderminster is the village of Wolverley, with charming cottages and pretty gardens, the massive Church of St John the Baptist, and the remains – not easy to see – of prehistoric cave dwellings in the red sandstone cliffs.

Around Kidderminster

HARTLEBURY

7 miles W of Bromsgrove off the A449

 Castle  Museum  Leapgate Country Park

Hartlebury Castle (see panel opposite), a historic sandstone castle of the Bishops of Worcester and a prison for captured Royalist troops in the Civil War, houses the **Worcester County Museum**. In the former servants'

quarters in the north wing numerous permanent exhibitions show the past lives of the county's inhabitants from Roman times to the 20th century. Visitors can also admire the grandeur of the three Castle State Rooms. The Museum is open from 10am to 5pm Tuesday to Friday, 11am to 5pm weekends and Bank Holiday Mondays.

On Hartlebury Common, **Leapgate Country Park** is a nature reserve in heath and woodland, with the county's only acid bog.

SHATTERFORD

3 miles NW of Kidderminster on the A442



 Wildlife Sanctuary  Kingsford Country Park

Shatterford **Wildlife Sanctuary** is home to Sika deer, red deer, goats, sheep, wild boar, pot-bellied pigs and koi carp.











Two miles further north, off the A442, **Kingsford Country Park** covers 200 acres of heath and woodland that is home to a wide variety of birdlife. It extends into Kinver Edge, across the border into Staffordshire, and many waymarked walks start at this point.

BEWDLEY

3 miles W of Kidderminster on the A456

 Museum  Severn Valley Railway

On the western bank of the Severn, linked to its suburb Wribbenhall by a fine Thomas Telford Bridge, Bewdley was once a flourishing port, but lost some of its importance when the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal was built. It's a quiet, civilised but much visited little town with some good examples of Georgian architecture, and has won fame with another form of transport, the **Severn Valley Railway**. Guaranteed to excite young and old alike, the Severn Valley Railway operates a full service of timetabled trains hauled by a variety of steam locomotives. Among those listed as operational

 historic building  museum and heritage  historic site  scenic attraction  flora and fauna
 stories and anecdotes  famous people  art and craft  entertainment and sport  walks

Hartlebury Castle

*Hartlebury, nr Kidderminster,
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ*

Tel: 01299 250416

e-mail: museum@worcestershire.gov.uk

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/museum



Worcestershire County Museum is housed in the servants quarters of Hartlebury Castle, home to the Bishop of Worcester for over 600 years. The museum collection ranges from fascinating toys and domestic items to beautiful costume and ancient archaeological finds. The building also contains room sets such as the Schoolroom as well as original rooms within the Castle including the Scullery, Housekeeper's Room and Nursery. On most days visitors can also view the Bishop's State rooms.

Within the grounds of the Castle you can also visit the Cider Mill and the Transport Gallery housing a fascinating array of horse-drawn vehicles including a fire engine, hansom cab and a large collection of Gypsy caravans.

A café area in the historic Castle Kitchen serves a range of freshly made lunches, afternoon teas and refreshments using both local and fair trade products. The café is also available for private hire and functions. There are also two outdoor picnic areas in Old Moat Coppice and the Orchard. An external glass lift gives all visitors access to the first and second floors of the Museum.

in June 2009 are two ex-Gwr Manors 7802 and 7812; ex-GWR Prairies 5164 and 4566; two Collett-designed ex-GWR 0-6-0 Pannier Tanks, 5764 and 7714; Ivatt 2-6-0 46443; and Stanier 2-6-0 42968. The service runs from Kidderminster to Bridgnorth, home of the railway since 1965, and the route takes in such scenic attractions as the Wyre Forest and the Severn Valley Country Park and Nature Reserve. Each of the stations – Bridgnorth, Hampton Loade, Country Park Halt, Highley, Arley, Bewdley and Kidderminster – is an architectural delight, and there are buffets at Bridgnorth and

Kidderminster, and a tearoom at Bewdley. The Engine House at Highley (in Shropshire) has a large display of steam locomotives, including an ex-LMS 'Jinty', a Stanier 8F and Standard 4-6-0 80079, and a Visitor and Education centre. Visitors can realise a childhood dream by



River Severn, Bewdley

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driving and firing a steam locomotive - call 01299 404740 for all information concerning the railway, the timetables and the special events that take place throughout the year.

Bewdley Museum, which also incorporates the Tourist Information Centre, is a great place for all the family, with exhibitions themed around the growth and trades of the town, including basket and besom makers, charcoal burners, pewterers, brass founders and wheelwrights. There are daily demonstrations of rope-making and clay pipe-making, and a fascinating programme of events throughout the year. Bewdley was the birthplace of Stanley Baldwin, three times Prime Minister between the World Wars. On the A456 between Bewdley and Kidderminster, the West Midland Safari & Leisure Park at Spring Grove provides a fantastic day out for the whole family.

CALLOW HILL

5 miles W of Kidderminster on the A456

Wyre Forest

The **Wyre Forest** Visitor Centre is set among mature oak woodland with forest walks, picnic area, gift shop and restaurant. Wyre Forest covers a vast area starting northwest of Bewdley and extending into Shropshire. The woodland, home to abundant flora and fauna, is quite dense in places. It was once inhabited by nomadic people who made their living from what was around them, weaving baskets and brooms, burning charcoal and making the little wooden whisks that were used in the carpet-making process. Just south of Callow Hill, the village of Rock has an imposing Norman

church in a prominent hillside position with some lovely windows and carving.

STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN

3 miles S of Kidderminster on the A451

At the centre of the Worcestershire waterways is the unique Georgian ‘canal town’ of Stourport, famous for its intricate network of canal basins. There was not much trade, nor even much of a town, before the canals, but prosperity came quickly once the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal had been dug. The commercial trade has gone, but the town still prospers, the barges laden with coal, timber, iron and grain having given way to pleasure craft. Many of the old barges have been renovated and adapted to this new role.


ASTLEY

5 miles S of Kidderminster on the A451


Stanley Baldwin (1867-1947), born in Bewdley, died at Astley Hall, opposite which stands a memorial stone inscribed “Thrice Prime Minister”. (His ashes are buried in the nave of Worcester Cathedral.) Astley is also home to Astley Vineyards, a working vineyard producing award-winning white wines, with a vineyard trail and a shop. Visitors can arrive by car, by bus or by boat as they have mooring facilities.



Abberley Valley

ABBERLEY*7 miles SW of Kidderminster off the A451* Church of St Michael

A truly delightful little place, surrounded by hills. The Norman **Church of St Michael** was saved from complete dilapidation in the 1960s, and the part that survives, the chancel, is well worth a visit, not only for its charming ambience, but also for the treasures it holds. On the other side of the hill is Abberley Hall, now a school, with a Big Ben-like bell tower that can be seen for miles around. Old Boys include former Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe and the late actor Sir Anthony Quayle.

GREAT WITLEY*8 miles SW of Kidderminster on the A443* Church  Witley Court Jerwood Sculpture Path

There are two great reasons not to miss this place. **Great Witley Church**, almost ordinary from the outside, has an unbelievable interior of Baroque flamboyance that glows with light in a stunning ambience of gold and white. Masters of their crafts contributed to the interior, which was actually removed from the Chapel of Canons in Edgware: Joshua Price stained glass, 23 ceiling paintings by Antonio Bellucci, plasterwork by Bagutti.

Next to the church are the spectacular and hauntingly beautiful remains of **Witley Court**, a palatial mansion funded by the riches of the Dudley family. Destroyed by fire in 1937, it stood a neglected shell for years, until English Heritage took over these most splendid of ruins and started the enormous task of making them safe and accessible. If you only see one ruin in the whole county, this should be it. Restoration work on the west wing has made several rooms accessible to the public for the

first time. Across from the ruins is a magnificent fountain, said to be the largest in Britain. Inspired by Bernini's fountains in Rome, it rises 26 feet and is crowned by an opulent sculpture that depicts Perseus rescuing Andromeda from a sea monster. Also within the grounds is the **Jerwood Sculpture Park**, which has a permanent collection including work by Elizabeth Frink and Anthony Gormley and also stages temporary exhibitions during the summer months.

TENBURY WELLS*12 miles SW of Kidderminster on the A456* Museum  Burford House

The A443 leads from Great Witley towards Shropshire and the border town of Tenbury Wells in a delightfully rural setting on the River Teme. The 'Wells' was added when a source of mineral water was discovered, but its heyday as a spa resort was very brief. **Tenbury Museum** tells the spa story and depicts other aspects of local life, including hop-growing and the railway days. In the market place is a curious oval-shaped building with rather ecclesiastical-looking windows. This is the Market House, which was built in 1811 and used as a corn and butter market.

Set in sweeping lawns on the banks of the River Teme, in the village of Burford a mile west of Tenbury (and just in Shropshire) stands **Burford House**, whose four-acre gardens are filled with well over 2,000 varieties of plants. This is the home of the National Collection of Clematis, and in the nursery attached to the garden almost 400 varieties of clematis are for sale, along with many other plants and gifts. The ground floor of the house is open as a gallery of contemporary art. Teas and light meals are served in the Burford Buttery (01584 810136).

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