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Lullingstone Castle

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# Welcome!

The British coast is a wonderful place. In the last year, our shores have been increasingly regarded as a boundary, in the political sense at least, yet as a child I always thought the opposite was true. On annual family holidays to Cornwall, the coast felt like a place without limits; somewhere the sky opened out, the oceans stretched further than my tiny eyes could see, and the possibilities for adventure were endless. **Coastal Jewels (p8)** reveals 16 locations where that sense of wonder remains particularly acute.

Elsewhere in our coastal special, I spoke to photographer Martin Parr (p26), who first made his name documenting the British seaside in the 1980s. His theory is that the beach is to Britain what the city street is to America: our natural habitat, a place in which we feel most at home and stop tensing our stiff upper lip. After researching this issue, I think he may just have a point.

STEVE PILL *Editor*



On the cover: Summer dawns on St. James' Park in Ilfracombe, Devon – discover more of the county in our guide on page 82



## Letters

### Shedding new light

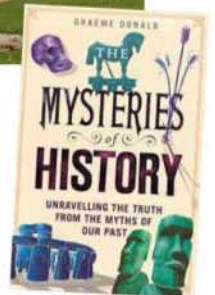
I am an 80-year-old widow who has lived in Australia for 23 years so it was lovely to read an item on Bisley [The Quiet Life, Issue 201], the village I emigrated from.

The text about the hexagonal pedestal in the church [above] gave a slightly different account from the story told by my mother. She came from the neighbouring village of Chalford Hill and told me that in the Middle Ages, a young clergyman was appointed vicar of Bisley by the Pope.

The pedestal was supposed to light the way through the churchyard so that strangers would not fall into the adjacent well. Someone forgot to light the candle, however, and the new vicar fell in and drowned. The Pope duly punished Bisley diocese, including making all services be held in a church 20 miles' walk away.

*Mrs Win Lander, Southern River, Australia*

Thanks for sharing, Win. As writer of our star letter, you win a copy of Graeme Donald's *The Mysteries of History* (Michael O'Mara).



### Louis, Louis? Oh baby...

Prior to the announcement on 27 April that the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's third child would be named Louis Arthur Charles, we asked you for predictions on Facebook. Your top choices included James, Albert and Edward. Honourable mentions go to Spencer ("A nod to Diana" said Maria Nicholson Smithson) and Dumbledore (thank you, Michael Spenard). Follow us on Facebook today at @DiscoverBritainMag.

### GET IN TOUCH!

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# Travel notes

The latest news, events and openings from across the British Isles



## CHANGING ROOMS

What did early wallpaper look like? Experts renovating the interiors of Lindisfarne Castle on the Northumberland coast might have found the answer, after uncovering stylish flower motifs from the 17th century in the kitchen. It had been thought that the castle was solely used by soldiers guarding the Anglo-Scottish border before architect Sir Edwin Lutyens converted it into a holiday retreat for *Country Life* magazine founder Edward Hudson in 1903.

The 'wallpaper', drawn in charcoal with areas of red pigment, suggests the castle might have had another use in its early days, too. The mystery deepens. Sections of the wall paintings will be on show when the castle reopens this spring after its £3 million renovation. [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lindisfarne-castle](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lindisfarne-castle)



## LIFE THROUGH A LENS

Lee Miller was one of the most original photographic artists of the 20th century, taking extraordinary pictures of the Second World War for *Vogue* and counting Pablo Picasso among her close friends.

Now a new exhibition explores the American photographer's post-war life in England and, in particular, her involvement in the surrealist art movement. *Lee Miller & Surrealism in Britain* will feature photos and portraits by Miller alongside sculptures, paintings and collages by her artist friends, including Henry Moore [below] and Salvador Dalí.

*Lee Miller & Surrealism in Britain* runs from 22 June to 7 October at the Hepworth Wakefield, Yorkshire. [www.hepworthwakefield.org](http://www.hepworthwakefield.org)



## LIVE LIKE A DUKE

Country houses don't get more archetypal and elegant than The Langley – and now you can stay here. The Duke of Marlborough's old hunting lodge in Buckinghamshire will open as a stunning boutique hotel in June. Sister hotel to the glamorous Wellesley Knightsbridge, the Grade II-listed Palladian mansion will offer 41 rooms, decorated – naturally – to the height of sophistication.

Expect ornate doorways and baroque fireplaces. There will also be an Art Deco cognac and cigar bar, and a luxury spa. Enjoy afternoon tea in the courtyard as the duke's guests might have done, or roam around 500 acres of the 'Capability' Brown-designed grounds. [www.thelangley.com](http://www.thelangley.com)

## STAR QUALITY

A short walk from Edinburgh's Palace of Holyroodhouse (HM The Queen's official Scottish residence), The Balmoral Hotel [right] is one of the city's most luxurious places to stay. Now father-and-son celebrity chefs, Alain and Michel Roux, are to launch an as-yet-unnamed restaurant at the five-star hotel. The duo's signature bistro-style dishes promise local ingredients and flavours. Might the Queen be tempted to dine here? [www.roccofortehotels.com](http://www.roccofortehotels.com)



## THE HARD CELL

A new museum dedicated to law and order has opened in the county with the lowest crime rate in England.

At the heart of Dorset's Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum is the 1797 building's original cells and courtroom, preserved as they were in Georgian times. It was here that the Tolpuddle Martyrs, the society of farm labourers seen as a forerunner to modern trade unions, were brought to trial, while Thomas Hardy is thought to have based his controversial 1892 novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* on the hanging of a murder suspect who was tried at the courthouse. These stories and more are explored through displays and related artefacts. ■

[www.shirehalldorset.org](http://www.shirehalldorset.org)



Visitors explore the eccentric Minack Theatre in Cornwall



A scenic view of a coastal cliffside. In the foreground, a stone structure with a circular platform and a staircase is visible. Several people are walking on the stone steps and platform. The middle ground is dominated by a vast expanse of turquoise sea. In the background, a rugged cliffside with green vegetation and a small sandy beach is visible under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

# COASTAL JEWELS

From blue lagoons and sea stacks to outdoor theatres and historic lighthouses,  
**Steve Pill** charts a course around 16 gems found on the British coast

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## For natural engineering feats... Durdle Door

### Lulworth, Dorset

According to the Jurassic Coast Trust, the independent charity that manages the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, Durdle Door was formed as a result of the same geological process that gave us the Alps. It is thought that when the African and European tectonic plates collided some 25 million years ago, the pressures not only created the central European mountain range but also rippled outwards to form more gentle rifts along the British coast.

The frame of the Door is a hard limestone layer rising up from the English Channel between the resort towns of Swanage and Weymouth. Less resilient rock at the centre was eroded to create this most unlikely natural aperture at the end of Durdle Cove's sweep of sand-and-shingle beach. While many photographers favour the viewpoint from the chalky lower cliffs around the cove or even flat shots across the beach to the Door, Swyre Head offers a more comprehensive view of this particular stretch of Jurassic coastline, allowing you to place Durdle Door in the context of the dramatic slopes at St Oswald's Bay and the haphazard rocks of Dungy Head.

Durdle Door is part of the 12,000-acre Lulworth Estate that also contains the luminous blue-green waters of Lulworth Cove and the 17th-century Lulworth Castle with its rose garden and excellent tearoom.

### Also try...

The picturesque Moray Firth harbour village of Portknockie looks out onto **Bow Fiddle Rock**, a remarkable sea arch seemingly constructed at a 45-degree angle to the waves. Visit at sunrise to see the quartzite structure silhouetted against the horizon. ➤



This image: Twilight  
at Durdle Door  
Below left: Bow  
Fiddle Rock

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## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### Jeremy Gardiner, artist

"I have been visiting Durdle Door for more than 50 years. The name 'Durdle' is derived from the Old English word 'thirl' meaning drill. When I painted this subject recently, I climbed up on top of the arch and looked down the coast to Bat's Head.

"The best time to visit is in January, on a cold, clear sunny day – there are very few people, so that is when I try to paint outdoors. I also like to visit Lulworth Cove nearby. I tell my kids there is a 'Tree of Lost Children' to stop them wandering off."

*Jeremy's Durdle Door painting features in *Geology of Landscape* (9 June to 7 July) at Candida Stevens Gallery, Chichester. [www.jeremygardiner.co.uk](http://www.jeremygardiner.co.uk)*



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## Lovely contemporary homely beach house

This is a lovely beach house 2 minutes from the beach, plus cafes bars & shops in an ideal location. This lovely homely beach house has a beautiful kitchen & lovely south facing bright sunroom leading onto the garden to enjoy. Two lovely large double bedrooms one with large ensuite bathroom and possible 3rd bedroom, with room for 4-6 people. Additional photos provided with any enquiries.



## Lovely 4 bed seaside house

This is a lovely modern 4 bedroomed house with four double beds, a contemporary kitchen and bathroom, and 5 minutes walk from Cleethorpes train station. You have the beach a few minutes walk away, and the shops restaurants & bars even closer. A garden to take in the sun or enjoy barbecues. Free parking right outside. Additional photos provided with any enquiries.



Dogs permitted upon request



## For dramatic light... Tarbat Ness

### Easter Ross, Scotland

Around 130 bottlenose dolphins are thought to live in the Moray Firth, an inlet to the northeast of Inverness, yet spotting them is tricky. A far more reliable sight can be found further up the coast on the Tarbat Ness peninsula. Here, the Tarbat Ness Lighthouse has been shining out continuously for 188 years, guiding ships past the sandbar of Gizzen Briggs.

With its two distinctive red bands, the lighthouse was commissioned following the loss of more than a dozen vessels in the storms

of 1826. At 41 metres, Tarbat Ness is the third tallest lighthouse in Scotland and one of 16 designed by famed engineer Robert Stevenson.

The setting truly makes this a jewel of the coast, however. A pleasing nine-mile circuit can be walked from Portmahomack and there is a rich history to the area, too. Previously, the site of a Roman fort and an 11th-century Viking battle, the more dubious tales of witch covens meeting here simply add to the mystique.

### Also try...

Another Stevenson lighthouse sits in dramatic surrounds at **Cape Wrath**. The headland rises to 281 metres, the tallest sheer cliffs in Britain.



Above: The Tarbat Ness peninsula  
This image: Minack Theatre at night

## For distracting views... Minack Theatre

### Porthcurno, Cornwall

Staring at the scenery during a play is normally a damning verdict. At the Minack Theatre, however, it is entirely understandable. This 750-seater venue was dug out the Cornish cliffs so performances play out over the sounds of the Atlantic Ocean – imagine a quainter, coastal version of Colorado’s Red Rocks Amphitheatre.

We have the extraordinary vision of Rowena Cade to thank for this incredible venue. Inspired by a local performance of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, she decided the cliffs below her garden at Minack House would provide a far grander setting. During the mild winter of 1931, Cade and her gardener set about lifting granite boulders to create the grassy stage and terrace seating that remain largely the same today.

Cade died in 1983, yet the Minack Theatre Trust ensures a summer season of shows in all weathers. This year’s highlights include, suitably for the setting, Gilbert & Sullivan’s *The Pirates of Penzance* (17-21 September).

### Also try...

The Cornish town of **Marazion** has golden sands, but it’s the views across to St Michael’s Mount that keep the tourists coming back. ➤

JOHN DEVILIN/ALAMY/CORBIS

## For heady heights... Seven Sisters

### Near Seaford, East Sussex

In the 17th and 18th centuries, smugglers could often be found navigating the channels at Cuckmere Haven and Birling Gap. All manner of French contraband, from brandy to lace, would pass through these two narrow gaps in the Sussex cliffs, having made its way across the English Channel away from prying eyes.

Standing on the shallow ridge at Cuckmere Haven today, next to the Coastguard Cottages whose former tenants helped put an end to such illegal activity, it is hard to imagine a more conspicuous place for pirates to frequent. After all, it is between these two inlets that the Seven Sisters cliffs rise and fall, a beacon of chalky white that gleams brightly against even the greyest skies that England can muster.

The White Cliffs of Dover, Kent, may be Britain's most iconic stretch of chalk coastline, particularly following the Second World War when it became a symbol of resistance, yet it is a difficult sight to truly see without venturing out to sea and the ridge is a rather uniform height. The undulating Seven Sisters, by contrast, can be viewed in its entirety from miles around, whether looking east from Seaford or west from Beachy Head. The latter, in particular, offers widescreen views to Kent and the Isle of Wight from the top of the headland, as well as 162 metres down to the rocky shore and a lighthouse below.

The Seven Sisters Country Park offers wide-ranging possibilities for walkers, including heading inland to the dense Friston Forest, though the most popular route picks up part of the 100-mile South Downs Way national trail and takes you across the chalk cliff crests. From west to east, they are: Haven Brow (the tallest at 77 metres), Short Brow, Rough Brow, Brass Point, Flagstaff, Flat Hill, Bailey's Hill and Went Hill. The more observant will note eight names rather than seven, the extra peak having occurred following erosion.

At either end, Seaford Head Nature Reserve is 83 hectares of grassland dotted with nesting birds and wildflowers, while Birling Gap has a well-appointed National Trust café at which you can admire the view from the veranda.

#### Also try...

**Dunnet Head** lighthouse in Caithness marks the most northerly point on the British mainland. From here the layered cliffs plunge 91 metres to the Pentland Firth below. The west-facing **Hunstanton Cliffs** in Norfolk, meanwhile, reveal millions of years of stratified sandstone and chalk in reds, oranges and whites. ▶

The most striking view of Seven Sisters can be found at the Coastguard Cottages near Cuckmere Haven



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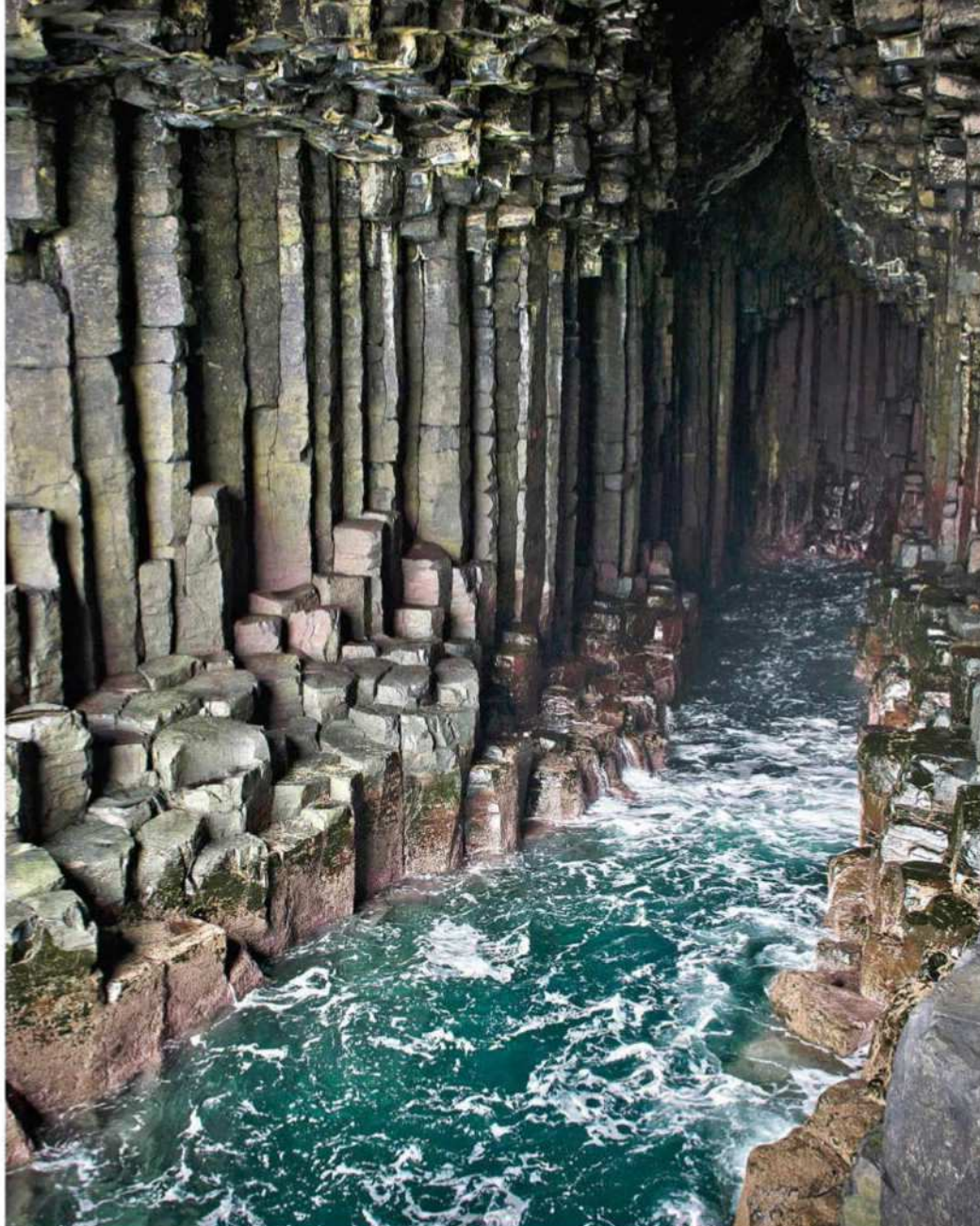
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## For those who rock... Fingal's Cave

### Staffa, Inner Hebrides

The tiny island of Staffa is uninhabited, unless you count the various guillemots, fulmars and puffins that nest here. For non-avian visitors, the main attraction is Fingal's Cave, an 82-metre-deep sea cave made distinctive by the hexagonal basalt pillars of its interior walls.

The cave was discovered in 1772 and named after the hero of James Macpherson's *Fingal – An Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books*, an apparent translation of 3rd-century texts by Ossian that inspired the Romantic movement and have since been dismissed as a literary hoax. Nevertheless, by the Victorian era, the cave had become quite the destination with visits by artist JMW Turner, *Treasure Island* author Robert Louis Stevenson and even Queen Victoria.

Following an 1829 trip, the cave's unique acoustics led the German composer Felix Mendelssohn to write one of his most stirring works, *The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave)*. The contrasting dramatic melodies and calmer passages provide an awesome soundtrack to a visit, with Staffa Tours organising daily boat rides from several other Hebridean islands.

### Also try...

The **Giant's Causeway** in County Antrim was created by the same lava flow as Fingal's Cave. **Cwm Colhuw** beach near Llantwit Major in the Vale of Glamorgan also has geometric cliffs.

## For wild swimmers... Abereddy

### Near Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire

What initially appears to be a natural oasis on the west Wales coastline is, in fact, an old quarry breached by the sea. Rather than being blessed by a tropical climate, the deep cerulean waters – known as the 'Blue Lagoon' – are a reflection of the pounded slates once mined at St Brides quarry, which was active until 1910.

The surrounding landscape is dotted with reminders of this time, from derelict workers' cottages to the overgrown tramway lines that linked St Brides to nearby Porthgain. The remnants of the quarry's old wheelhouse on the side of the sea inlet provides locals with a three-tiered platform from which to dive into the lagoon. Spectators can watch divers jumping from a far higher board constructed on the quarry side for the annual Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series, which has been held here several times since 2012.

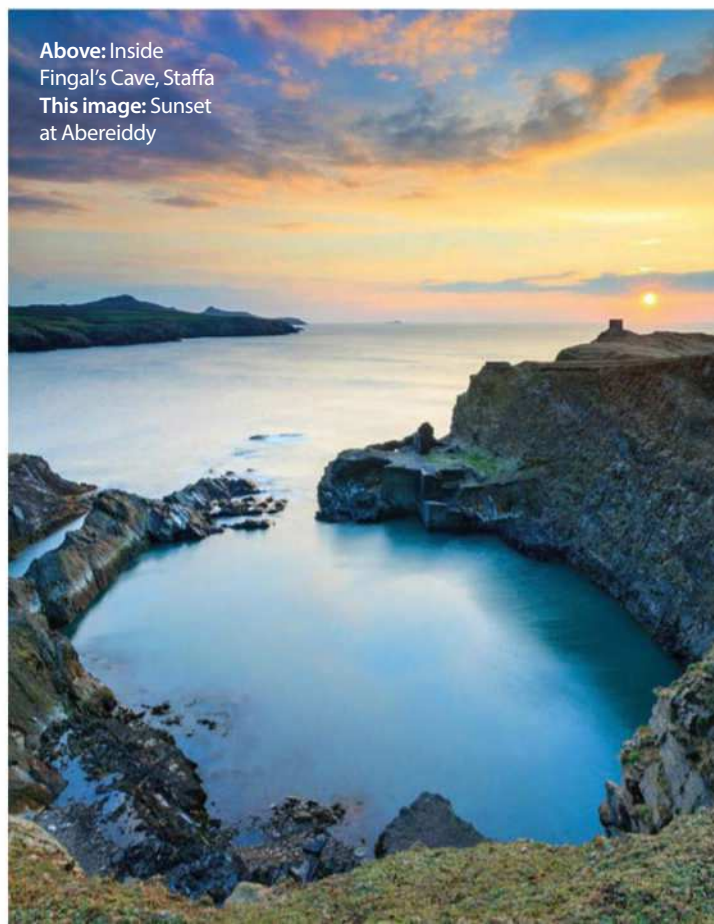
While in the area, be sure to enjoy the bluebell woods of Abermawr beach and the bracing views across Abercastle harbour.

### Also try...

Another blue lagoon can be found along the coast at Bosherton.

**Confucius Hole** is a collapsed sea cave that offers a challenge to experienced wild swimmers and a dramatic sight for the rest of us. ►

Above: Inside Fingal's Cave, Staffa  
This image: Sunset at Abereddy





## For stacks of fun... The Needles

### Isle of Wight

The name of this particular coastal jewel is rather misleading. While ‘needles’ conjures up images of slender pin-like points, these three chalk stacks are far more muscular and substantial, worn tough by the Atlantic currents drifting into the Solent. The name actually came from a finer, fourth stack that collapsed in 1764. (As the National Trust poetically puts it: “You can see the gap very clearly, like a missing tooth.”)

What the remaining trio lacks in refinement, it more than makes up for with sheer audacity. Towering 30 metres above the waves, these white outcrops are the remnants of a chalk ridge that is thought to have once connected the Isle of Wight with the mainland.

The best views can be had from the Old Battery, a Victorian coastal fort used during both world wars, while the adjacent grassy ridge was named Tennyson Down after the Romantic poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson. He lived for almost 40 years at the nearby Farringford House (now a splendid museum to his life and work) and famously declared the fresh local air to be worth “sixpence a pint”.

### Also try...

**Old Man of Hoy** is a 137-metre sea stack that stands proud of the sandstone cliffs on the Orkney island of Hoy. Originally part of an arch partially destroyed by storms, geologists believe the rickety fella may collapse one day. ■

The Needles rise 30 metres from the sea off the Isle of Wight's west coast

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# Heritage Coast

Florence Sheward heads to the resort towns along the North Welsh coast to uncover a trail of charming stately homes, gardens and historic sites





The Grand Hotel Llandudno looks over a charming Victorian seafront

TRAVELLINGLIGHT/ALAMY/ILLUSTRATION: ELLY JAHNZ



**T**he north Wales coast is a place of subtle pleasures. It may lack the dramatic peaks and ancient castles of the Snowdonia National Park to the west, and the urban buzz of Liverpool to the east, yet the 25-mile stretch between the estuaries of the rivers Conwy and Dee is dotted with fascinating heritage sites aligned on a perfect tourist trail – a golden thread that, with a little unpicking, reveals much about this under-appreciated corner of the world.

The trail begins in Llandudno, a town that esteemed travel writer Bill Bryson named “my favourite of all seaside resorts” and remains the largest of its kind in Wales. Best viewed from Llandudno Bay beach, the sweep of grand Victorian houses and hotels along the promenade are painted in various jolly, pastel colours.

Sitting apart at the end is the Grand Hotel Llandudno, a vast 1901 institution that has hosted Winston Churchill and The Beatles. It overlooks one of Llandudno’s biggest attractions: the pier. This 140-year-old structure stretches out some 700 metres into the Irish Sea and is undergoing a £1 million restoration project. Cross the peninsula to the West Shore for a more secluded beach that looks out towards the isle of Anglesey and the Menai Strait.

Away from the seafront, Llandudno is a cultured resort. MOSTYN comprises six galleries of contemporary art, hiding behind a Edwardian façade, while the Venue Cymru stages touring music, theatre and comedy shows. Both venues will also play a key role in *LLAWN06* (14-16 September), the sixth annual Llandudno Arts Weekend. ‘Llawn’ is Welsh for ‘full’ and features a programme that ranges from pop-up art events to performances by the Welsh National Opera. Elsewhere, the Home Front Museum, housed in an unassuming pebbledash building, provides a nostalgic look at British life during the Second World War via recreated 1940s shop fronts and displays. ▶

## NORTH WALES

For a true measure of this historic resort town, head for the Great Orme Tramway. Opened in 1902, it hauls passengers up the headland in original hand-painted cars. At the Halfway Station is the Great Orme Mines, believed to be the largest prehistoric site of its kind in the world. Although only discovered by archaeologists in 1987, the original excavations date back to the Bronze Age. Five miles of underground tunnels have been unearthed and there is the opportunity to wander along several sections. If claustrophobia prevents you delving too far, you can still explore the open cast site, watch demonstrations of how the ore is smelted into copper and look at original Bronze Age tools in the visitor centre.

From the mines, a second tram completes the mile-long route to the summit, a spot blessed with breathtaking views as far as England and Ireland on good days, and also the chance to get acquainted with the wild Kashmir goats grazing in the Great Orme Country Park. For variety, the tram isn't the only route back into the town – a cable car offers a pleasing aerial perspective. Look out the right-hand window and you may spot Haulfre Gardens, the one-time home of Henry Pochin, a Victorian chemist and founder of the next stop on our heritage trail.

Seven miles south of Llandudno, Bodnant Garden is now looked after by the National Trust, yet it began life as Pochin's private estate. Flush from the success of

### Bodnant Garden's Laburnum Arch is a 55-metre path of trees often referred to as 'golden rain'

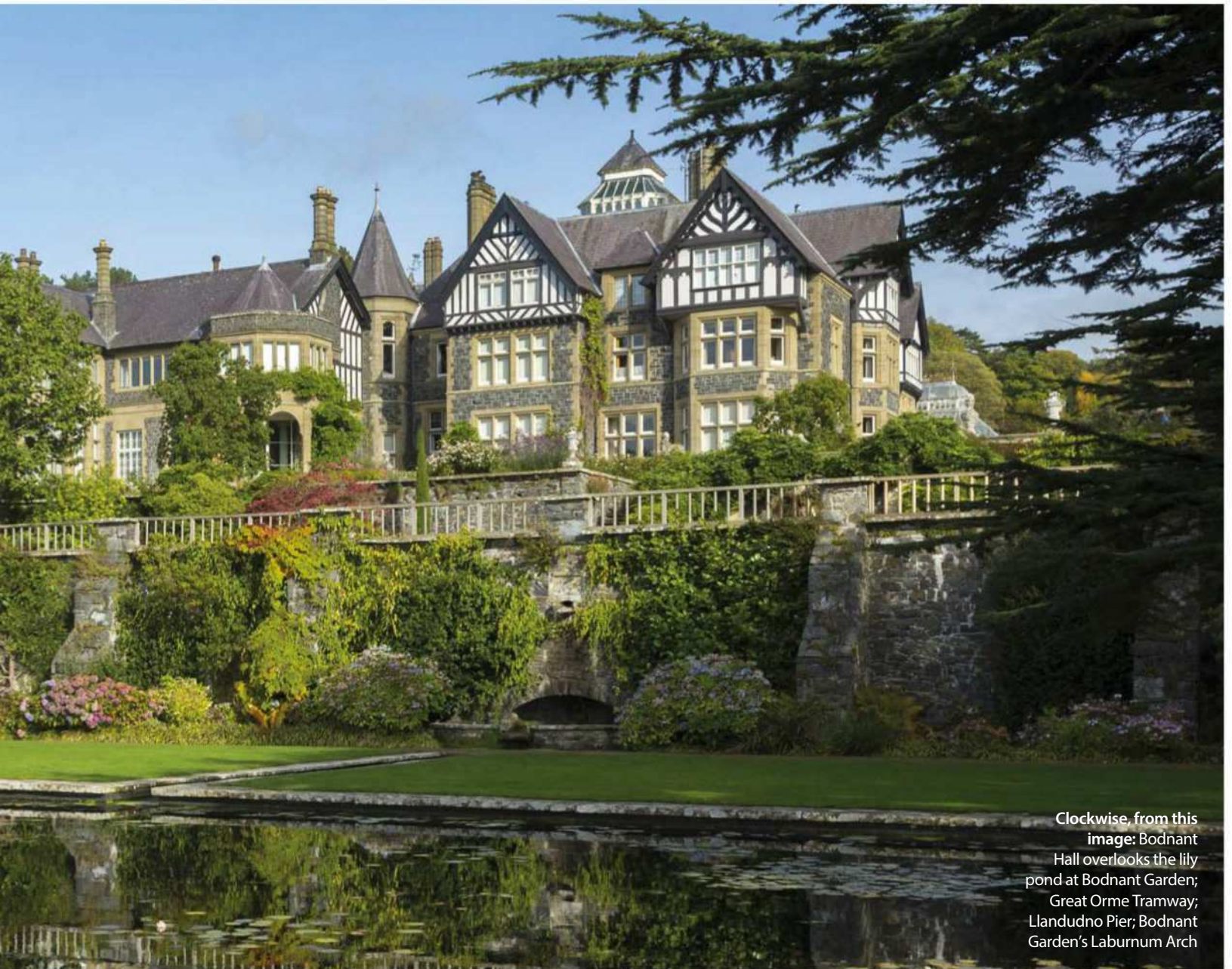
inventing a chemical process to whiten soap, he commissioned landscape architect Edward Milner to develop the pastures around his newly-acquired Georgian mansion, Bodnant Hall.

One of the garden's boldest features is the Laburnum Arch, a 55-metre curved path over which hangs plentiful laburnum trees – a species often referred to as 'golden rain'. Visit on the cusp of summer to see the 1880 arch in full bloom and that nickname truly justified. Over the years, adventurous botanists such as George Forrest and Ernest Wilson further forged the exotic nature of the garden by donating specimens gathered overseas. Himalayan poppies and Chinese magnolias are just a few of the common sights among the wild plantings and formal terraces. The garden was passed down via Pochin's daughter, Laura McLaren, a baroness and noted women's suffrage campaigner, to his grandson, Henry, 2nd Baron Aberconway. In 1938, Henry installed Pin Mill, a Georgian building lifted brick by brick from its original Gloucestershire home, and gave the entire garden to the National Trust 11 years later.

Unlike many heritage gardens, Bodnant continues to develop. Recently, more than 20 acres have been added to the public site allowing room for a yew dell, a furnace wood and a winter garden among others. Heading back towards the north coast and the resort town of Colwyn ▶



JOHN MILLER/EYESPIX/OLIVER HOFFMANN/CHRIS LACEY/NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES/ALAMY



Clockwise, from this image: Bodnant Hall overlooks the lily pond at Bodnant Garden; Great Orme Tramway; Llandudno Pier; Bodnant Garden's Laburnum Arch

## NORTH WALES

Bay takes you past the Welsh Mountain Zoo. While you can see endangered creatures such as red pandas and snow leopards here, the zoo is also home to a herd of Welsh mountain goats, which are rarely seen in the wild.

Head east on the North Wales Expressway for Gwrych Castle, an imposing, late Georgian folly built on an estate that once stretched as far the English Midlands. It stayed in the Bamford Hesketh family for a century before being left to the Welsh church in 1924 by heiress Winifred Cochrane (née Bamford Hesketh), the Countess of Dundonald. Something of a renaissance woman, the countess founded a harp competition, commissioned art and was inducted as a bard at the National Eisteddfod – an annual celebration of Welsh culture and language that has been held since the 12th century and still takes place today (this year's Eisteddfod runs from 3-11 August).

Today, visitors can explore a few recently restored parts (the Countess's antique-filled writing room in the Gardener's Tower is a highlight) or wander the gardens, famed for its monkey puzzle trees. The derelict main castle, now owned by the Gwrych Castle Preservation Trust, is off limits to the public, however, unless you book a private guided tour.

A few miles east over the Denbighshire county border sits another fascinating castle, Bodelwyddan (pronounced 'bod-el-with-an'). The original house underwent many minor alterations, before Sir John Hay Williams, a local high sheriff, used his local mining wealth in the 1830s to instigate the Gothic stylings that remain today.

Bodelwyddan is now geared towards families with a hall of mirrors, woodland trails and a hedge maze, yet the interiors remain charming thanks to furniture on loan from the V&A, while Warner Leisure runs a modern hotel and spa on site. Art has always played a large part in Bodelwyddan's appeal too, with partnerships forged

with several major London galleries resulting in key works going on display here. That focus changed slightly last year so that a Welsh art collection takes precedent.

The final stop on our heritage trail is Bodrhyddan Hall, the Grade I-listed home of Lord Langford and his family for more than 500 years. The 9th Baron Langford, Geoffrey, was a Second World War major who celebrated his 93rd birthday in 2005 by buying himself a quad bike. He died last November aged 105, leaving his estate and title to his son, Owain. Open in summer, Bodrhyddan's eight-acre garden includes a formal parterre, a well by architect Inigo Jones, and some impressive pieces of yew topiary, while indoors the family's collection of art and artefacts features a 3,000-year-old mummy. An unlikely historical find in unexpectedly picturesque surroundings, this ancient Egyptian relic is the perfect analogy for this underappreciated corner of Wales. ■

**Below:**  
Grade-I listed  
Bodrhyddan Hall  
**Bottom:** Gwrych  
Castle is a late  
Georgian folly





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# MY BRITAIN

Portrait by Gareth Iwan Jones

**Martin Parr**  
Photographer

**I was recently asked to photograph beaches in Essex.** The National Maritime Museum wanted pictures for its new *The Great British Seaside* exhibition. It was exciting to discover and document all these different communities using beaches at Clacton and Southend.

**The British seaside is utterly charming.** I guess we have a lot of it because we are completely surrounded by water. It's slightly fraying at the edges, which is appealing as a photographer. It doesn't feel homogenised like Disneyland. Even being at the seaside in the rain has a certain appeal – it's a very British thing to do.

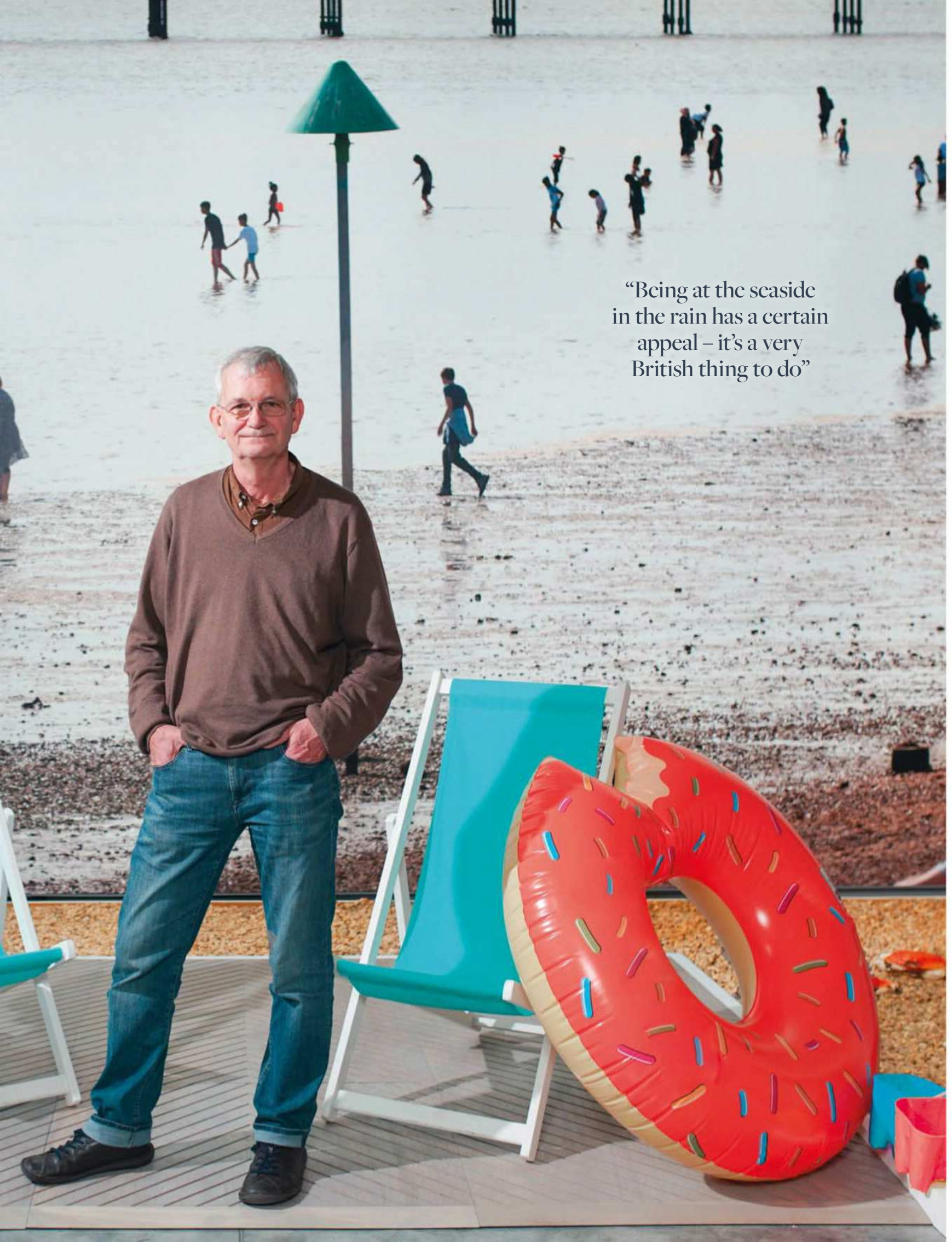
**In 2017, I opened the Martin Parr Foundation in Bristol.** I've lived there for 25 years and it's a great city, very independent and near to nice countryside. The foundation will preserve my own archive and we have an exhibition space to show the work of other British documentary photographers.

**There are many nice galleries in the UK.** I love Tate Britain and Tate Modern. The Hepworth Wakefield in Yorkshire is a very beautiful space, too. I did a show there recently [2016's *The Rhubarb Triangle and Other Stories*], so I like to support them.

**I still visit the British coast regularly.** This year I'm going to the Isle of Wight to take photographs. It's a charming place, like stepping back into the 1950s. They have deckchairs and canopies there that I haven't seen anywhere else.

**For beaches, I'd recommend Tenby in Wales.** It's the prettiest seaside town in the UK but no tourist magazine would ever recommend it. It's a secret. Your readers are getting info here that I have been hiding from the general public for years. ■  
*The Great British Seaside: Photography from the 1960s to the Present runs until 30 September at the National Maritime Museum, London. [www.rmg.co.uk](http://www.rmg.co.uk)*





“Being at the seaside  
in the rain has a certain  
appeal – it’s a very  
British thing to do”



Clockwise, from left:  
Robin Knox-Johnston  
on *Suhaili* in 1969;  
*SS Great Britain* in  
Bristol; Captain James  
Cook and the Armada  
Portrait of Elizabeth I,  
both from the National  
Maritime Museum,  
Greenwich

**F**ifty years ago, nine intrepid men competed in the first solo non-stop sailing race around the world. One by one they dropped out. Donald Crowhurst, the subject of the recently released film *The Mercy* (in which he is played by Colin Firth), having fooled everyone with transmissions of fake position reports, apparently drowned himself. Frenchman Bernard Moitessier, rather than return to Europe and possible victory, simply kept on sailing “to save my soul”. Other competitors sank or retired.

Only Englishman Robin Knox-Johnston, aboard the yacht *Suhaili*, completed the gruelling round-the-world challenge via the five great capes. After 312 days at sea, Knox-Johnston arrived back in Falmouth, Cornwall, on 22 April 1969 to a hero’s welcome, a trophy and a £5,000 prize (he later donated the money to a fund supporting Crowhurst’s family and was knighted in 1995).

In the 50th anniversary year of the original, this summer’s Golden Globe Race 2018 is set to test sailors from 14 countries on the 30,000-mile course. In the spirit of the Golden Age of ‘one sailor, one boat’ against the elements, competitors are limited to sailing similar yachts to those available 50 years ago, with modern navigational aids replaced by sextants and paper charts. Before setting sail, a special *Suhaili* Parade of Sail will take place in Falmouth on 14 June, the day in 1968 that Sir Robin, who will appear aboard *Suhaili* at this year’s event, set out. ➤

# ALL AT SEA

In a year of Britain maritime anniversaries from Blackbeard to Captain Cook, **Diana Wright** pays tribute to our island nation’s greatest seafaring pioneers





TONY WATSON/ALAMY/PPL PHOTO AGENCY/NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM, GREENWICH



Clockwise, from this image: Plymouth harbour; Blackbeard the pirate; Brunel's *SS Great Eastern*; National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

TERRY MATHEWS/GL ARCHIVE/WORLD HISTORY ARCHIVE/NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM, GREENWICH/ALAMY





The Golden Globe Race is a timely reminder of the daring and skills of British sailors who have pushed the boundaries of endurance and exploration in the past.

An island nation so heavily dependent on the sea for defence and trade, Britain has naturally produced many ocean-going heroes (and villains) and in 2018 a wave of anniversaries calls to mind a variety of notable men and moments: it is 400 years since the death of the swashbuckling Sir Walter Raleigh; 300 years since the notorious pirate Blackbeard met his end; 250 years since Captain James Cook began his map-altering voyage to the South Pacific; 175 years since the launch of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's pioneering *SS Great Britain*. Discoverers, adventurers and builders such as these became icons of their times.

Italian-born John Cabot had set the pace for Britain in the 15th century when, with the backing of Henry VII, he sailed from Bristol in 1497 to look for a westerly trading route to Asia and stumbled across Newfoundland.

It was also in the Tudor era that a standing 'Navy Royal' grew and there is no more glorious image of Elizabeth I than the Armada portraits, painted after superior English seamanship helped see off Philip II of Spain's 'invincible' Armada in 1588. One of the heroes of the hour, Sir Francis Drake, had already become the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe in 1580, as well as "singeing the King of Spain's beard" by destroying Spanish vessels at Cadiz seven years later.

In an age when state-sponsored privateers wreaked economic havoc on national enemies without the inconvenience of an official declaration of war (although that might result), Sir Walter Raleigh was the most flamboyant seadog of all. Witty, handsome, daring and ambitious, the Devon-born son of a squire possessed all the attributes to succeed in Elizabeth I's world – without any need of legends that he cast his cloak across a puddle to protect the royal toes.

Aside from fighting the Spanish, in the 1580s Raleigh organised expeditions to North America in search of gold and commerce, and named the state of Virginia in honour of the Virgin Queen. Attempts to colonise Roanoke Island failed, but helped to inspire later travellers to head for the New World.

Always one to sail close to the wind, Raleigh was imprisoned in the Tower of London by both Elizabeth and her successor James I, and the latter also sent him to the executioner's block in 1618 after an ill-fated mission

to find the fabled gold of El Dorado. Ever the showman, Raleigh opined that the axe was "a sharp medicine, but it is a physician that will cure all my diseases".

Britons throughout the reign of James I continued to be lured by the New World. A business venture sponsored by the Virginia Company of London saw the first permanent English-speaking settlement established at Jamestown, Virginia in 1607. The Pilgrim Fathers, seeking religious freedom, departed Plymouth, England on the *Mayflower* in 1620 and settled in New Plymouth, Massachusetts – plans for major celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the historic voyage are well under way on

both sides of the Atlantic (see [www.mayflower400uk.org](http://www.mayflower400uk.org)).

Increasing trade with overseas colonies attracted unwanted attentions too and the Caribbean (as Johnny Depp fans know) became a hotbed of seaborne banditry in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The most notorious pirate of all was Blackbeard, who embellished his swarthy appearance by tying lit fuses beneath his hat, surrounding his face in smoke and fire more frightful than "a Fury from Hell".

Hailing from Bristol, Blackbeard – born Edward Teach or Thatch, depending on which records you consult – sailed as a privateer against the Spanish during the War of the Spanish Succession that concluded in 1713 and later set up a pirate base in the Bahamas, a strategic haven

from which he and contemporaries ruthlessly disrupted Atlantic trade with the West Indies, North America and West Africa. Yet some in Britain and British America saw Blackbeard and his ilk as Robin Hoods of the high seas, skirmishing against corrupt ruling classes who controlled the colonial empires. Many slaves found aboard captured ships joined the outlaws.

In the end Blackbeard – latterly settled in North Carolina and secretly sharing his spoils with the state's governor and collector of taxes – was killed in 1718 during a sea battle off Ocracoke and brought to justice at the instigation of Virginia's governor, Alexander Spotswood.

Just 10 years after Blackbeard's death, the man who would become one of the world's greatest navigators was born in North Yorkshire and learned his mariner's trade in Whitby before joining the Royal Navy. In the 18th century, the Pacific Ocean was virtually uncharted, but James Cook changed all that on three epic voyages, the first from 1768 aboard the *HMS Endeavour* when he circumnavigated New Zealand and surveyed the east coast of Australia, helping to open the way to both for ➤





RICHARD BURDON/COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND TE PAPA TONGAREWA

later settlement. On his second expedition he sailed the icy fringes of the Antarctic and dispelled the myths of the southern continent.

He would be tragically killed in 1779 in a confused affray with islanders on Hawaii during his last voyage in search of the Northwest Passage – a sea route linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Nevertheless, the legacy of Cook's voyages lived on in new standards in map-making and reshaped perceptions of world geography, while insights into exotic Pacific botany and culture fired imaginations.

By happy coincidence, London's Royal Academy of Arts was founded in the same year (see page 56) as Cook set sail for the South Pacific and its forthcoming *Oceania* exhibition (29 September to 10 December) marks the shared 250th anniversary with a celebration of the art of that region.

Horatio Nelson, just 10 years old at the time of Cook's first epic voyage, would carry Britain's renown for mastery of the seas into the next century with victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Britain's sea power was at a height during the early Victorian era and by 1900 the nation would boast the world's largest navy and a flourishing shipbuilding industry.

Speed became a new byword, not least in the famous 19th-century clipper ship races in the China tea trade. Yet steam power and technological innovation were



**Above:** Captain Cook spent his early years in the Yorkshire seaside town of Whitby  
**Left:** Maori artist Tene Waitere's *Ta Moko* carving, part of the *Oceania* show at the Royal Academy of Arts





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## MORE TO SEA

Other nautical exhibitions around Britain in 2018

As Wales celebrates its Year of the Sea in 2018, **Swansea's National Waterfront Museum** presents the swashbuckling – and free – *Pirates: The Truth Behind the Tales* (until 30 September). [museum.wales/swansea](http://museum.wales/swansea)

Chart a course to London's **British Library** for *James Cook: The Voyages* (until 28 August) to see objects collected on his travels, including decorated paddles, feather god heads and drawings made by his Polynesian navigator Tupaia. [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

*View from the Deck: Sue Jane Taylor* (until 28 October) compiles 30 years of drawings about Scotland's offshore industries at the **Aberdeen Maritime Museum**. Her sketchy style delivers acute observations. [www.aagm.co.uk](http://www.aagm.co.uk)

From conspiracy theories to migration tales, *Titanic Stories* (until 7 January 2019) explores our enduring interest in the doomed British ship at the **National Maritime Museum** in Falmouth, Cornwall. [www.nmmc.co.uk](http://www.nmmc.co.uk)



about to overtake the Great Age of Sail, bringing fresh heroes in the shape of entrepreneurial engineers and above all Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Launched in 1843, Brunel's *SS Great Britain* was the first major ocean-going vessel to boast screw propellers and an iron hull, making it the forerunner of modern passenger liners. After an eventful career, the ship rests in Bristol's Great Western Dockyard where she was built, providing visitors with fascinating glimpses of the contrasting life on board for first-class and steerage passengers, not to mention close-up views of her pioneering propeller beneath a protective water-covered glass 'sea'.

Opening to coincide with the ship's 175th anniversary, the nearby Being Brunel museum and visitor experience features the ground-breaking engineer's authentically refurbished drawing office and tells his story through interactive exhibits and never-before-seen personal

possessions, including his sketchbooks and pictures of the Thames Tunnel on which he worked alongside his engineer father Marc and almost lost his life.

Brunel's record of building bridges, railways and ships is breathtaking, with Bristol a showcase for some of his most noted designs from the Clifton Suspension Bridge to Bristol Temple Meads railway station.

Each ship he built also surpassed the last: 1837's *SS Great Western* was the first steamship to engage in regular transatlantic service; 1843's *SS Great Britain* was the world's largest vessel at the time of launching, while 1858's *SS Great Eastern* was even larger.

Eventually, ill health and overwork would catch up with Brunel, who died aged just 53, but he had already fulfilled the early ambition he had confided in his diary to be "the first engineer and an example to future ones". So too, all Britain's sailing heroes have inspired successive generations to answer the call of the sea. ■

**Top left:** The hull of Brunel's *SS Great Britain* can be seen beneath a "glass sea" in Bristol's Great Western Dockyard

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# From Midlands to Middle-Earth

Ahead of a new exhibition dedicated to JRR Tolkien, **Nancy Alsop** explores the real places that inspired *The Lord of the Rings* author's imaginative worlds



**I**n author JRR Tolkien's trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, the diminutive protagonist, Frodo Baggins, is on his quest to destroy the ring and thus save humanity. "There is no real going back," he laments. "Though I may come to the Shire, it will not seem the same; for I shall not be the same."

It is an onerous load for anyone to bear, let alone one so diminutive, yet he and his faithful friend Sam soldier on, their intrinsic goodness shielding them from the ring's near irresistible temptations.

For John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, known as Ronald to his familiars, the creation of the Shire often did indeed require him to go back, at least in his mind, to plumb his

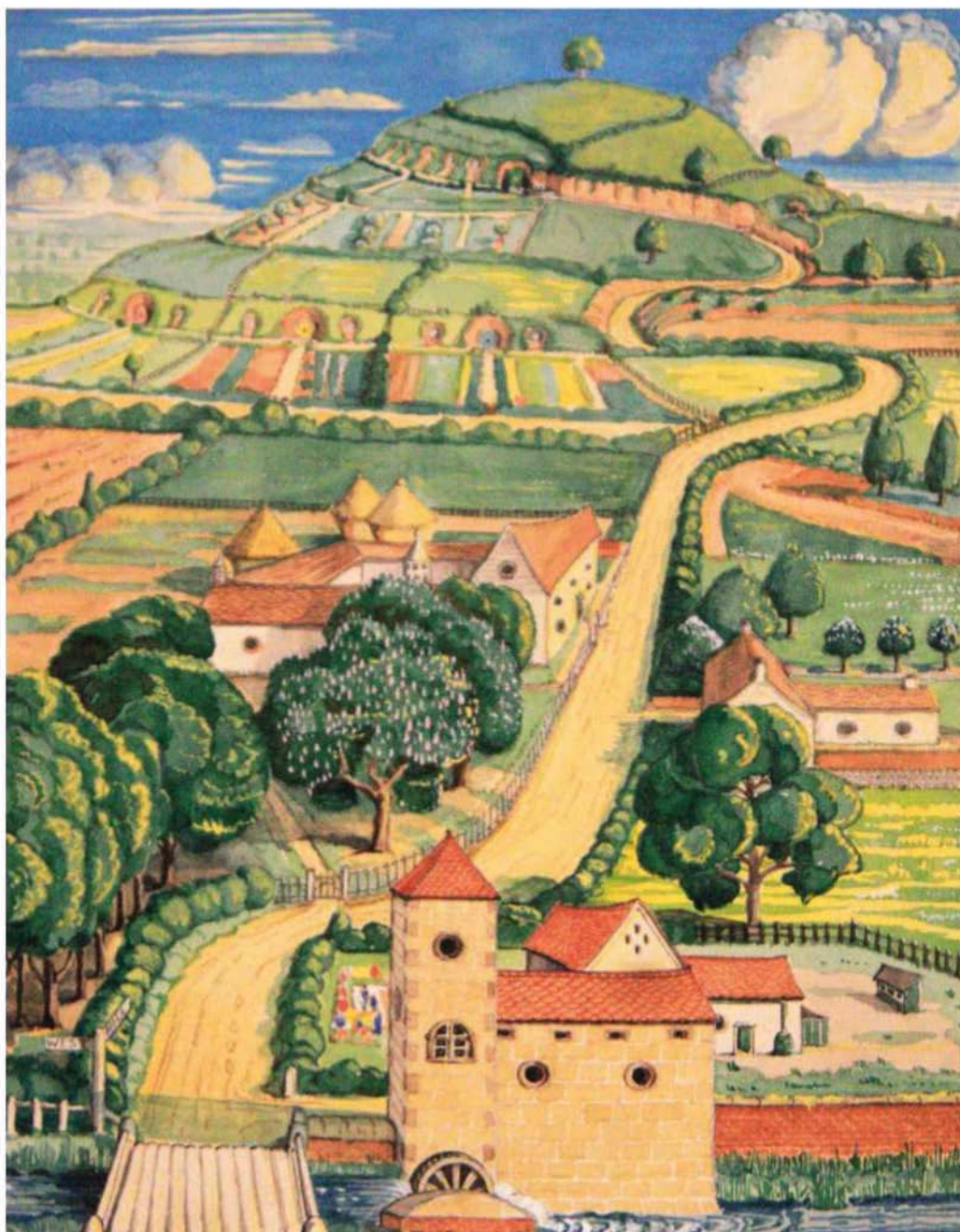
memory for details of the English idyll in which he grew up. And undoubtedly he was not the same either.

Born on 3 January 1892 in South Africa to English bank manager Arthur and his wife Mabel, the young Tolkien's early life in the Orange Free State would soon be exchanged, aged three, for the less exotic surrounds of the British Midlands. Mabel, John and his younger brother Hilary moved first, yet Arthur died unexpectedly of rheumatic fever before he was able to join them.

Left alone and without an income, the new widow did what most would and moved to be close to her parents. Thus it was that in 1896, the depleted family moved



Clockwise, from bottom left: JRR Tolkien; Sarehole Mill; Perrott's Folly; Tolkien's painting, *The Hill, Hobbiton-across-the-Water*



to Sarehole Mill, a Worcestershire village later annexed to Birmingham.

Tolkien fans have long suspected that the enchanting cottages, the 250-year-old watermill and the surrounding pastures acted as the author's muse when he later created the Shire and Hobbiton, such is the charm of the area. Indeed, the author and Oxford don loved the mill so much that, when it required restoration in the 1960s, he helped to pay for the work. Today, hobbit seekers can still visit the Birmingham Museums-run site, which is open to visitors for parts of the year.

Baggins' fictional home in Hobbiton is modelled on Tolkien's aunt Jane's farm, some 25 miles south of Sarehole Mill in the

village of Dormston. The name, Bag End, is shared by both the real incarnation and the literary one it inspired.

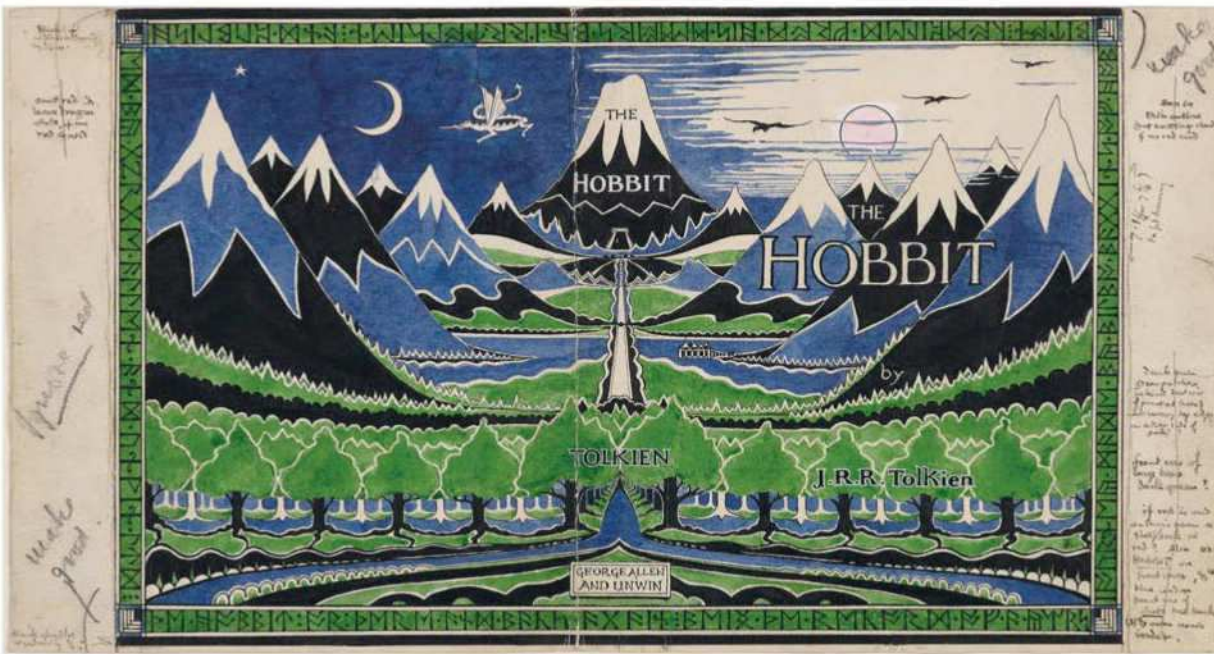
While Tolkien spent his days in a quaint hamlet, nearby Birmingham remained the industrial heart of Britain, exposing the young boy to both extremes: the Arcadian fantasy and a world dominated by machinery and skylines into which great sooty plumes of smoke were routinely belched. In microcosm, such polar opposites describe the worlds of which he writes in his fiction: the exquisitely idealised and the corrupted.

As such, his childhood would also supply inspiration for the darkness of Middle-earth. Anyone familiar with

trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings* will know that the chilling towers of Orthanc in Isengard and Barad-dûr in Mordor are the utterly strange and otherworldly representations of pure evil.

For these, Tolkien was likely influenced by Perrott's Folly, an 18th-century tower in the rather less terrifying surroundings of Edgbaston, an upmarket suburb of Birmingham, to which he moved aged 12, shortly after his mother's death left him orphaned in 1904.

Designed by wealthy local landowner John Perrott in 1758, the folly's original use has been much debated; some claim that he longed for views beyond the industrialising city to the green spaces



## Oxford's The Eagle and Child pub was where JRR Tolkien first began to read *The Lord of the Rings* to an audience

beyond. More romantic accounts argue that he, in fact, wanted to see the site of his wife's grave, which lay 15 miles away.

Following a restoration in the early 1980s, Perrott's Folly is proudly shown to visitors to the city as inspiration for Tolkien's imagination. Now owned by a local art collective, the much-loved landmark is occasionally opened to the public for Tolkien-related events.

Some still maintain that while Perrott's Folly might have inspired Orthanc, it was the tower at Edgbaston Waterworks that planted the seeds in the young Tolkien's mind that would later be used for Mordor's Barad-dur; its industrial clanking and spluttering rendering the whole tableau chillingly sinister. The influences seen in

the many hundreds of pages devoted to the astonishing worlds Tolkien created continued to be garnered long after his childhood days – most notably in Oxford, where he lived and worked for the whole of his adult life.

There are many places throughout the city of dreaming spires that are associated with the great author, ranging from Exeter College (where he studied from 1911 to 1915, before serving in the trenches in the First World War) to 13th-century Merton College, where he spent 14 years teaching English language and literature, notably Middle English, and finally to Wolvercote Cemetery, where he was buried in 1973.

Many fans have also made pilgrimages to Tolkien's homes in Oxford, including two



Clockwise, from bottom left: *The Hobbit* dust jacket, annotated by Tolkien; Oxford's Exeter College; The Eagle and Child; Radcliffe Camera;



houses on Northmoor Road. He lived first at number 22, then at a larger house at number 20 from 1930 to 1947, during which time he wrote *The Hobbit* and the majority of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

He later moved to the east Oxford suburb of Headington. There is a famous story about a particularly unwelcome guest arriving here on his doorstep in the 1960s, an American hippy who was inspired by the counter-cultural aspects of Tolkien's books – Gandalf's pipe-weed in particular – and demanded both a photo and to see the great writer's pipe. He was soon sent on his way with some suitably Anglo-Saxon curses ringing in his ears.

A far more welcoming destination is The Eagle and Child pub on St Giles,

a short walk from the centre of Oxford. Colloquially known as the 'Bird and Baby', it attracted a group of writers, including Tolkien, *The Chronicles of Narnia* author CS Lewis and Tolkien's son Christopher, who were collectively known as the Inklings. The idea behind these weekly pub get-togethers during the 1930s and 1940s was to read works-in-progress aloud, and to allow their fellow scribes to critique them.

It was in this context that Tolkien began to read *The Lord of the Rings* to an audience, who were not always as responsive as subsequent readers have been. Lewis himself revealed that fellow Inklings and Merton College professor Hugo Dyson, bored to tears by what he saw as the repetitive elements in Tolkien's sagas,

was known to heckle: "Oh no, not another f\*\*\*ing elf!" When Tolkien wasn't teaching, writing or drinking – devoted as he was to all three pursuits – he often found time to go to Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum, where he would sit and reflect propped up by his favourite tree.

Once photographed in just such repose, it has since been accepted that the contorted branches of the mighty Austrian pine must surely have served as inspiration for the Ents in *The Lord of the Rings*, chiming uncannily as it does with his descriptions of the walking, tree-like creatures.

No Tolkien pilgrimage would be complete without a visit to the Bodleian Library, where he both worked as an academic and consulted a wide variety of ancient

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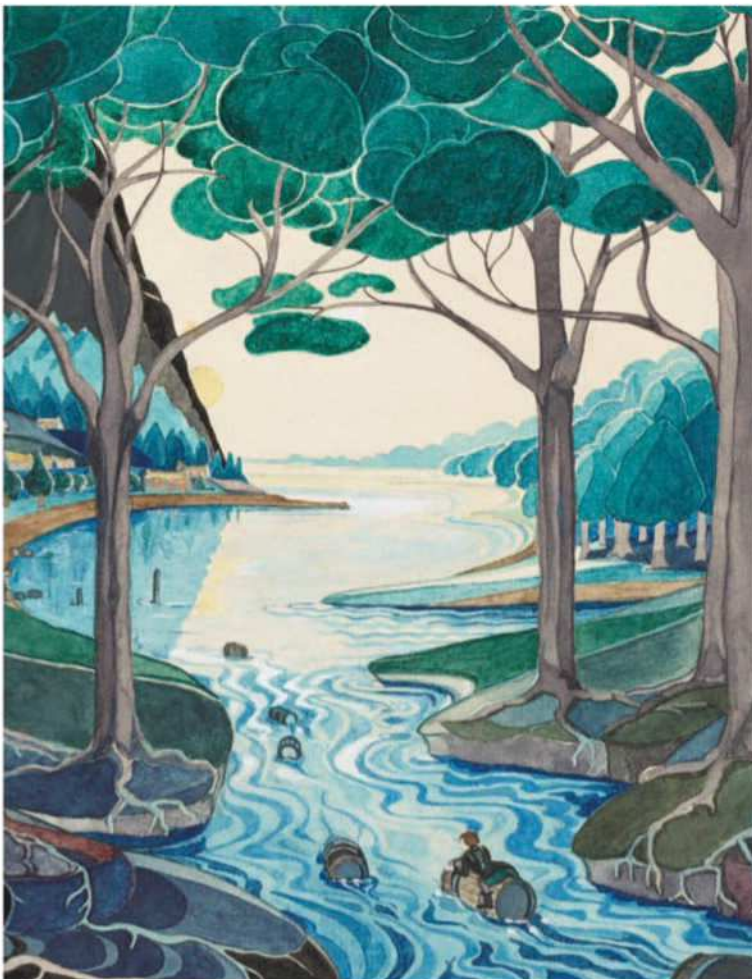
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# Tolkien

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TICKETS to the exhibition are **free** but booking online is recommended at [tolkien.bodleian.ox.ac.uk](http://tolkien.bodleian.ox.ac.uk)

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For JRR Tolkien, the creation of the Shire required him to plumb his memory for details of the English idyll in which he grew up



Top: JRR Tolkien and wife Edith are buried at Wolvercote Cemetery, Oxford  
This image: Oxford Botanic Garden

books and documents himself, including the 15th-century book of Welsh history, *The Red Book of Hergest*, which appeared in his writing, lightly fictionalised as *The Red Book of Westmarch*.

Here visitors can see some of his original manuscripts and artwork, which are kept in the special collections section – and never has there been a better time than this summer, when the Bodleian’s Weston Library will stage *Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth* (1 June to 28 October), an exhibition set to reunite materials associated with the writer from around the world for

the first time. Objects will include draft manuscripts and annotated maps, as well as several unseen artworks created by Tolkien himself and private stories he wrote to entertain his own children.

For Tolkien, it was the idea of home and the cosy world of the hobbits that most appealed to him – an inclination that accounts for his chosen surrounds being those of great beauty.

As he said of himself in a letter to writer Deborah Webster Rogers: “I am in fact a hobbit (in all but size). I like gardens, trees, and un-mechanized farmlands;

I smoke a pipe, and like good plain food (unrefrigerated), but detest French cooking; I like, and even dare to wear in these dull days, ornamental waistcoats. I am fond of mushrooms (out of a field); have a very simple sense of humour (which even my appreciative critics find tiresome); I go to bed late and get up late (when possible). I do not travel much.”

Luckily for many millions of readers the world over, it would seem that Tolkien conserved his imagination for his much-loved high fantasy novels. ■ [tolkien.bodleian.ox.ac.uk](http://tolkien.bodleian.ox.ac.uk)

# 24 hours in... BELFAST

Discover gin palaces, Titanic stories and tropical ravines in the Northern Irish capital

That Belfast is now so keen to lay claim to building the *RMS Titanic* is one of those quirks of history. The tourist board proudly encourages visitors to “uncover the true legend of *Titanic* in the city where it all began”, despite it being one of the worst maritime disasters in modern times.

Yet 106 years after the “unsinkable” liner fatally collided with an iceberg, what was once a taboo subject is now a major tourist attraction, not least thanks to James Cameron’s 1997 blockbuster. Memorials and museums abound in Belfast harbour, an area renamed the Titanic Quarter despite shipbuilders Harland and Wolff completing many more successful ships here.

Such a turnaround is representative of the city as a whole. A United Nations report ranked Belfast one of the safest cities in the world (second only to Tokyo, in fact) and it is focused on sharing its many delights with the wider world. The Cathedral Quarter represents the cultural heart of modern Belfast, while the leafy Queen’s Quarter to the south offers a more sedate pace of life.

## Morning

### Stroll among rare flowers

The Botanic Gardens open daily at 7.30am, making them perfect for a morning stroll. Situated near Queen’s University to the south of the city, the gardens were founded 190 years ago, yet only opened to the public in 1895. The Palm House conservatory features exotic birds and plants, while the Tropical Ravine reopens this spring following a £3.8 million restoration. [www.belfastcity.gov.uk](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk)

### Meet Peter the polar bear

Within the Botanic Gardens is the Ulster Museum, which mixes Irish heritage with a more global look at natural history (Peter the taxidermy polar bear, who once lived in Belfast Zoo). A current highlight is the *Game of Thrones* tapestry, a 77-metre



retelling of the show’s seven seasons in the style of the medieval Bayeux Tapestry (on display until 27 August). [www.nmni.com](http://www.nmni.com)

### Bet on a Dark Horse

Continuing the *Game of Thrones* theme, The Dark Horse is home to one of 10 doors depicting scenes from the TV series that were carved from Dark Hedges trees and distributed to filming locations across Northern Ireland. Non-Thronies can simply enjoy a cuppa served in an atmospheric bar dotted with antique mirrors and lanterns. [www.dukeofyorkbelfast.com](http://www.dukeofyorkbelfast.com)

## Afternoon

### Lunch on the go

St George’s Market is the last of its kind in Belfast. Around 250 stallholders hawk their wares in this sprawling Victorian space with a different focus on each of the three days: Friday is a ‘variety market’ dating back to 1604, Saturday includes live music, and Sunday puts emphasis on local arts and crafts. Food dominates across all three, from street eats to fresh Portavogie fish. [www.belfastcity.gov.uk](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk)

### Take a tour

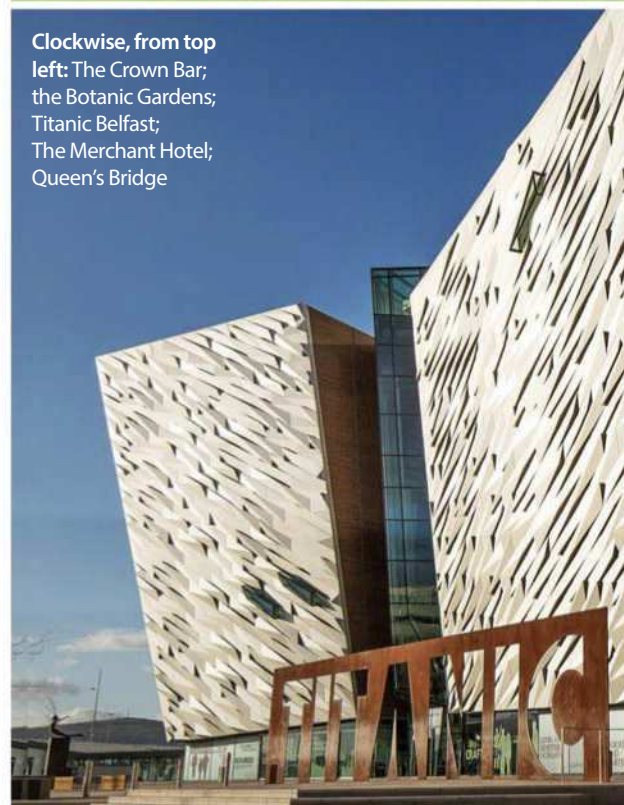
Painted on the gable ends of terraced houses, west Belfast’s political murals are a poignant reminder of the Troubles. Book a guided taxi tour for an empathetic local perspective. Over in the east, the Connswater Community Greenway has a number of downloadable, self-guided walking trails themed around famous locals, including Van Morrison and CS Lewis. [www.taxitrax.com](http://www.taxitrax.com), [www.communitygreenway.co.uk/trails](http://www.communitygreenway.co.uk/trails)

### Get that sinking feeling

The ill-fated *RMS Titanic* was built in Belfast’s Harland and Wolff shipyard, which is now the site of a visitor experience.



Clockwise, from top left: The Crown Bar; the Botanic Gardens; Titanic Belfast; The Merchant Hotel; Queen’s Bridge





Nine galleries feature reconstructed rooms, archive photos and the original 33-foot wide hand-drawn plans (but no artefacts from the 1912 wreck). Visit the adjacent Titanic Hotel for a vintage afternoon tea.

[www.titanicbelfast.com](http://www.titanicbelfast.com),  
[www.titanichotelbelfast.com](http://www.titanichotelbelfast.com)

## Evening

### Make a date with culture

Since opening in 2012, The MAC has become a hub for Belfast's creative community. The NATIVE café is a popular meeting point, the theatre mixes touring shows with original productions and the galleries stay open to 7pm. Don't miss the *MAC International 2018* (9 November to 31 March 2019) open exhibition – at £20,000, it is Ireland's largest arts prize.  
[www.themaclive.com](http://www.themaclive.com)

### Eat like a Parisian

Belfast-born chef Stephen Toman met sommelier Alain Kerloc'h in the Michelin-starred kitchens of Paris and they've put that training to great effect at OX. This 40-cover restaurant overlooks the River Lagan and offers an ever-evolving tasting menu filled with seasonal produce. Visit OX Cave next door for a more informal selection of wine and sharing platters.  
[www.oxbelfast.com](http://www.oxbelfast.com)

### Enjoy a night at the opera

The first performance at the Grand Opera House came two days before Christmas in 1895. Since that time, the likes of Gracie Fields, Laurel and Hardy, and a young Pavarotti have graced the Frank Matcham-

designed stage. A restoration is planned for 2020, while highlights include NI Opera's *Rigoletto* (30 September to 6 October).

[www.goh.co.uk](http://www.goh.co.uk)

## Night

### Drink in a national treasure

The National Trust doesn't make a habit of buying bars, but then there aren't many that look like The Crown Bar. This 1826 gin palace on Great Victoria Street retains many gorgeous period features from colourful tiles to gas lighting. The atmosphere, however, is far from museum-like, with cosy snugs making it a perfect spot for a nightcap.

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/the-crown-bar](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/the-crown-bar)

### Bank on a stylish stay

Housed in a former bank HQ, the Merchant Hotel is unmatched for grandeur. The plush Victorian suites are named after Irish writers, the Great Room restaurant boasts Ireland's largest chandelier and the Art Deco Berts Bar has live jazz every night. There's even a chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce that can be booked for tours or transfers.

[www.themerchanthotel.com](http://www.themerchanthotel.com)

### Sleep at the rectory

The Old Rectory was built in 1896 for Reverend Richard Seaver by his architect brother Henry. Now a four-star guesthouse, it retains much of that period charm with stained-glass windows and lush gardens. Round off a night's stay with a breakfast that includes whiskey marmalade and a full Ulster fry-up. ■

[www.anoldrectory.co.uk](http://www.anoldrectory.co.uk)





# WILDER SHORES

As a major film adaptation of Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* opens in cinemas, **Steve Pill** explores the majestic stretch of Dorset coastline with a key role to play





The view from Abbotsbury to Chesil Beach and Portland  
Below left: Saoirse Ronan and Billy Howle in *On Chesil Beach*




GRAHAM HUNT/ALAMY/ROBERT VIGLASKY PHOTOGRAPHY

An English beach on a grey summer's afternoon. There's a stillness in the air, broken only by the waves that peter out as they try and fail to scale the steep banks of shingle. A wedge of swans flies low over the shallow Fleet Lagoon, while cows graze idly by the water's edge. Soundtracked by Sil Austin's bluesy, sax-driven *Slow Walk*, the opening scenes to the new film adaptation of Ian McEwan's novella *On Chesil Beach* are supremely evocative of this particular corner of Dorset coastline.

*On Chesil Beach* is a rather revealing story for several reasons. Set in July 1962, before Beatlemania and the teenage

revolution, it hones in on an almost comically repressed – and particularly English – attitude towards sex in the post-war era.

The plot centres on chaste newlyweds Florence (Oscar nominee Saoirse Ronan) and Edward (Billy Howle) as they embark upon their Dorset honeymoon. She has nervously consulted a *Love, Sex and Marriage* manual and seems repulsed by the anatomical realities of consummating their union; he is simply concerned about getting overexcited so focuses his thoughts on Harold Macmillan, the then-Prime Minister, instead. What should be a momentous occasion is weighed down by expectation. ►

An aerial photograph of Chesil Beach, a long, narrow strip of sand that separates the Atlantic Ocean from the English Channel. The beach is a light tan color and shows signs of erosion with some small depressions. The ocean is a deep blue, and the English Channel is a lighter blue. In the background, there are green hills and some buildings. The sky is clear and blue.

“There’s something about Chesil Beach that feels untouched, untainted by human hands. It’s the closest you can get to something 100% natural”

**Left:** Chesil Beach separates Fleet Lagoon on the right from the English Channel  
**Right:** The village church in Abbotsbury

“And what stood in their way?” asks McEwan in the original book. “Their personalities and their pasts, their ignorance and fear, timidity, squeamishness, lack of entitlement or experience or easy manners, then the tail end of a religious prohibition, their Englishness and class, and history itself. Nothing much at all.”

The second, more intriguing aspect of the novella is the way in which the eponymous beach almost becomes a living, breathing character in its own right. As Florence and Edward dine in their hotel room on the fateful wedding night, the landscape looms large outside the patio doors, an elemental presence in all its grey majesty. And when the couple leave the confines of the hotel, Chesil’s unique shingle spit plays a rather symbolic role in the drama.

This was a deliberate ploy on the author’s part. In a *Spectator* interview to promote the book back in 2007, McEwan noted, “Landscapes are so powerful, I think, to people in love... I mean, the city obviously has its attractions, too, but there is something that I remember as thrilling to be in love in a beautiful place where all those pathetic fallacies really do reign.”

When it came to filming, the cast were equally attuned to the unique power of Chesil Beach. “There’s something about that coastline, and the beach itself, that feels untouched, untainted by human hands. It’s the closest you can get to something 100 per cent natural,” recalls Howle. “Looking out over that beach, it can be tempestuous, it can be serene. But even in its serene stillness there’s something very disconcerting. I think that encapsulates the human condition quite well.”



It isn’t just romantic, literary types drawn to Chesil Beach today, however. The 18-mile stretch is officially part of the larger Jurassic Coast, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site thanks to the richness of the rock formations on display.

Geologists estimate that approximately 185 million years of the Earth’s history can be seen in eight different exposures stretching between Dorset and East Devon. In places, the layers of rock can be attributed in turn to the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous eras, the later being the most recent at a mere 66 million years old.

To explore this further, you can pick up the South West Coast Path – at 630 miles, the longest National Trail in Britain – on the opposite side of the Fleet Lagoon for stunning views across the beach itself. The Coast Path runs from Studland in the east,

right around the peninsula via Devon and Cornwall, and it has a dedicated website ([www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk](http://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk)) with maps and suggested walks that vary from gentle saunters to longer excursions.

The north end of Chesil Beach connects with the mainland by Abbotsbury, a small West Dorset village comprised almost entirely of honey-coloured cottages, several of which were built using stones from a 7th-century abbey that was dissolved in 1539 by order of Henry VIII. The village has long been a destination for lovers of flora and fauna, thanks to a children’s farm, the Abbotsbury Swannery (the world’s only managed colony of nesting mute swans) and the Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens.

The latter began life in 1765 as a walled kitchen garden for the Fox-Strangways family’s castle. By the 19th century, ➤



Ancient cannons on the terrace of Portland Castle

the 4th Earl of Ilchester, William Fox-Strangways, an Oxford-educated foreign diplomat and keen botanist, introduced plenty of rare foreign plants that benefited from the warm, sheltered climate. While only a section of the castle's outer wall remains, the garden is thriving, with the formality of the original kitchen garden's planting contrasted by wilder Himalayan glades and jungle-like ropewalks beyond the walls on the 20-acre site.

To the south end of Chesil Beach lies the isle of Portland, connected by the original tombolo and the Portland Beach Road. Inhabited since the Stone Age, this tied island makes for a fascinating afternoon out, not least thanks to the Portland Castle.

Built in the 1540s by order of Henry VIII as a means of defending against potential French and Spanish invasions, it was besieged repeatedly during the English Civil War some hundred years later. Now maintained by English Heritage, it boasts a well-stocked armoury, a captain's tearoom

**At the end of Chesil Beach, the tied island of Portland has been inhabited since the Stone Age and makes for a fascinating day out**

and a garden filled with windswept grasses. Elsewhere on the island, the Portland Museum has a ramshackle charm, with Jurassic fossils and artefacts recovered from shipwrecks crammed into two adjacent thatched cottages. If the hazardous waters surrounding the island are the museum's gain, we also have them to thank for the Portland Bill lighthouse at the southern tip. The current beacon was built in 1906 and manned for 90 years. After automation, a visitor centre was installed in the keeper's quarters with guided tours including a climb to the lantern at the top.

Portland is widely renowned for a number of reasons. Jacobean architect Inigo Jones surveyed the area before designing his masterpiece, the Banqueting House in London's Whitehall, leading to that building's white façade material becoming known as Portland stone. Christopher Wren was famously impressed and returned to this small, four-mile long island to quarry limestone for St Paul's Cathedral.

Portland is also one of the 31 designated 'sea areas' used on BBC Radio's gently comforting daily weather report, *The Shipping Forecast*. Like Chesil Beach itself, this is a uniquely English location that has a reputation and elemental pull that far exceeds its modest size. ■

*On Chesil Beach opens nationwide on 25 May. [www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfilms](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfilms)*

## OFF THE BEACH

Three of the film's other locations

### Wigmore Hall, London

This 1901-built Marylebone venue is a key repository for Florence's musical ambitions. Sample its varied classical programme via the BBC Radio 3's lunchtime concerts broadcast live from here every Monday at 1pm. [www.wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://www.wigmore-hall.org.uk)



### Broadway Market, London

Though intended to represent Camden, the scene outside Edward's record shop was in fact filmed around this East London street where it meets Regent's Canal. Visit on Saturdays to taste food from more than 130 stalls. [www.broadwaymarket.co.uk](http://www.broadwaymarket.co.uk)



### The Chilterns, Oxfordshire

Author Ian McEwan is fond of Pishill and the Stonor Valley, southeast of Oxford, so both main characters walk in the woods here. Tie in a visit to the National Trust's nearby 16th-century manor Greys Court [below]. [www.visitchilterns.co.uk](http://www.visitchilterns.co.uk)





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# WIN a luxury break in Dorset

Enter our competition for the chance to head to the Jurassic Coast and celebrate the new *On Chesil Beach* film

The film adaptation of Ian McEwan's 1960s-set novel *On Chesil Beach* opens this month and – as revealed over the last five pages – it will draw attention to stunning stretch of English coastline.

To celebrate the film's release, *Discover Britain* has teamed up with Lionsgate, Vintage and The Manor House to create a fantastic competition prize. Enter below for your chance to win a luxury break in Dorset, complete with a stay in a 16th-century manor with rooms overlooking Chesil Beach.

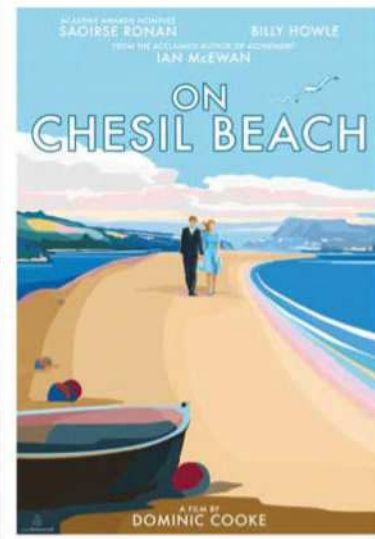
On top of that, our winner will be invited to dine with a guest in the hotel restaurant as well as taking home a copy of the novel and a limited edition Art Deco-style print that is unavailable to buy anywhere in the shops.

## The Prize

One lucky winner drawn at random from the entries received will enjoy the following:

- A two-night stay for two adults in a premium room at The Manor House, Bridport, Dorset
- Dinner for two at the The Manor House
- A limited edition *On Chesil Beach* lithograph print on 250gsm paper [right] by artist Becky Bettsworth
- A copy of Ian McEwan's 2007 novel *On Chesil Beach* (Vintage, RRP £9.99)

Four runners up will also receive copies of the book.  
[www.manorhoteldorset.com](http://www.manorhoteldorset.com),  
[www.penguin.co.uk/vintage](http://www.penguin.co.uk/vintage)



## HOW TO ENTER

Visit [www.discoverbritainmag.com/chesilcomp](http://www.discoverbritainmag.com/chesilcomp) or fill in the coupon below with your answer to the following question:

In what year is *On Chesil Beach* set?

- a) 1740
- b) 1851
- c) 1962

The closing date for all entries is **9 August 2018**. The prize is subject to terms and conditions. For details, please visit [www.discoverbritainmag.com/chesilcomp](http://www.discoverbritainmag.com/chesilcomp)

ROBERT VIGLASKY PHOTOGRAPHY

## ENTRY FORM

SEND YOUR COUPON TO: **US readers** – *On Chesil Beach* Competition, *Discover Britain*, c/o Circulation Specialists, 2 Corporate Drive, Suite 945, Shelton, CT 06484

**UK and Rest of World readers** – *On Chesil Beach* Competition, *Discover Britain*, Jubilee House, 2 Jubilee Place, London SW3 3TQ, United Kingdom

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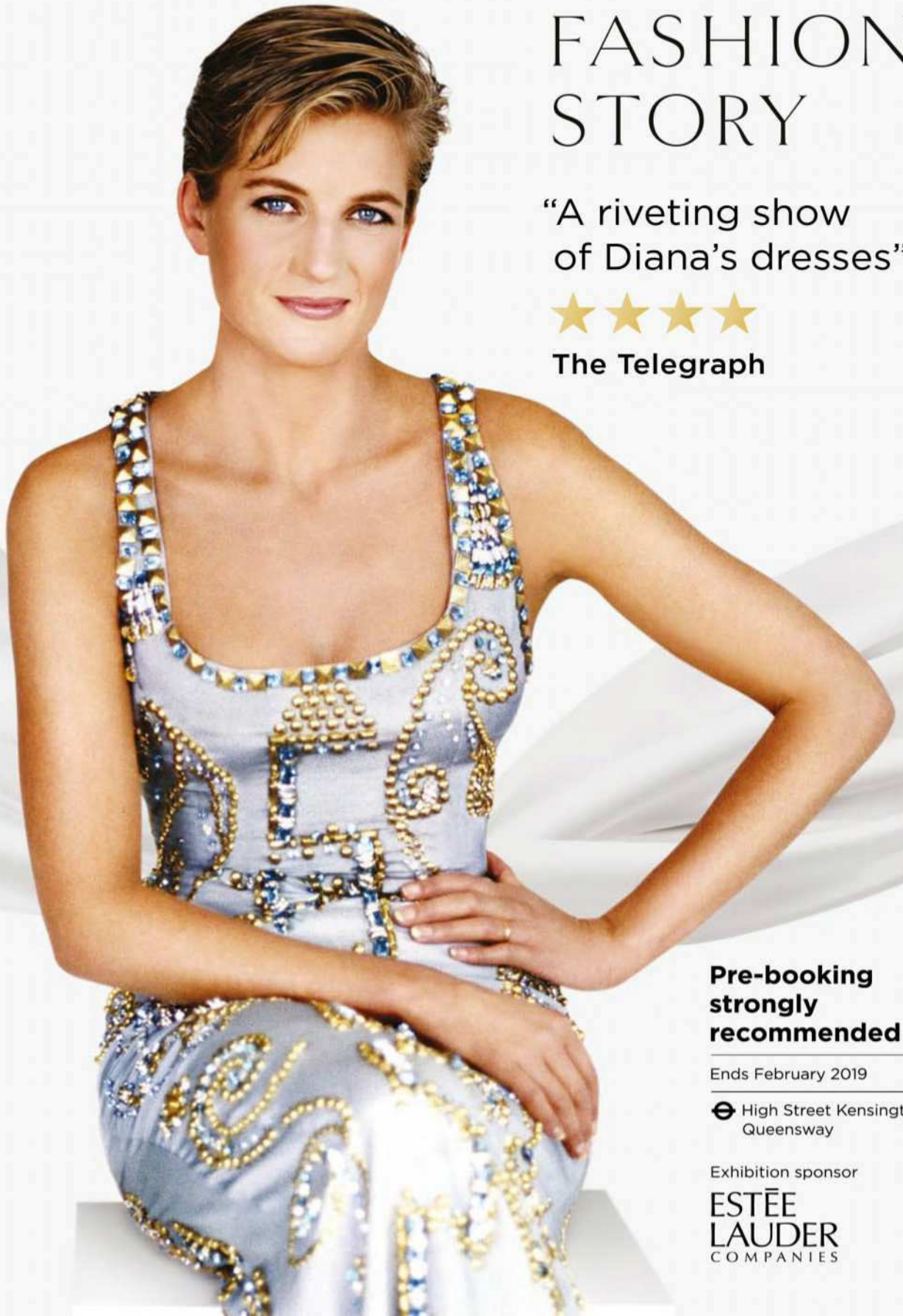
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## HISTORY IN BLOOM

The Royal Horticultural Society's annual flower show at Hampton Court Palace is the world's largest event of its kind, with more than 140,000 people visiting the 34-acre site every year. The floral marquee alone is big enough to house an entire football pitch.

First staged in 1990, this year's 29th festival will feature several new strands among the regular mix of marquees, pavilions and gardens. An 'Iconic Horticultural Heroes' section will celebrate the work of Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf via a walkthrough filled with his trademark herbaceous perennials, while 'Evolve: Through the Roots of Time' digs back across 500 million years of greenery to the lush jungles of the Jurassic period. *RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show 2018* runs from 2-8 July at Hampton Court Palace. [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)



## ROYAL STANDARD

Welsh chef Bryn Williams first made headlines on the BBC's *Great British Menu* series in 2006 when his culinary skills earned him the chance to cook for HM The Queen at her 80th birthday celebrations.

His first venture in central London, Bryn Williams at Somerset House, is a "vegetable-focused" restaurant overlooking the Thames in the South Wing of the historic venue. Far from vegetarian, it simply puts the emphasis on the healthy, soil-grown ingredients.

The chef's proud national heritage has been acknowledged via Welsh-printed upholstery and a menu heavy on produce from his home country. "Wales has one of the greatest larders on Earth," he says. [www.bryn-somerset-house.co.uk](http://www.bryn-somerset-house.co.uk)

## NIGHT OWLS

How would you survive in a world without light? This slightly existential question lies at the heart of the Natural History Museum's new show, *Life in the Dark*. Far from being a sinister subject matter, it is incredibly relevant. As museum professor Geoff Boxshall cheerfully reasons, "At any one time, half the world is in darkness".

The exhibition charts how nature has adapted so that animals can flourish at night or in environments deprived of light entirely. Exhibits will include a deep-sea light show and specimens of some of the planet's most elusive creatures.

*Life in the Dark* runs from 13 July to 6 January 2019 at the Natural History Museum. [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk)



## BOOM AND BUST

Director Sam Mendes is best known for movie blockbusters like *American Beauty* and the previous two James Bond films, yet he returned to the theatre last year for Royal Court's acclaimed *The Ferryman*.

While the latter has since embarked on an award-winning West End run, Mendes has turned his attentions to a new production at the National Theatre. *The Lehman Trilogy* is an epic retelling of US financial company Lehman Brothers, from its origins in 1844 to its crash 11 years ago. Legendary stage actor Simon Russell Beale is among the stars.

*The Lehman Trilogy* opens on 4 July. [www.nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk)

## TRADING PLACES

A new boutique hotel in the heart of the City of London is set to take inspiration from the historic trading guilds.

Opening this summer, the 92-room Vintry & Mercer is named after the twin centres for London wine merchants (Vintry) and textile sellers (Mercer), both established in the 14th century. That link will be further echoed in the rooms, thanks to the use of bespoke fabrics and old trading maps as part of the decor.

Dining options will include the Mercer Roof Terrace, with a menu big on sustainably sourced British produce and views of the skyline towards St Paul's Cathedral, while the basement will be home to Do Not Disturb, a 1920s-style speakeasy. ■ [www.vintryandmercer.com](http://www.vintryandmercer.com)





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# BROAD STROKES

As London's Royal Academy of Arts draws up plans for its 250th anniversary celebrations, **Steve Pill** pays tribute to its colourful history

All art is subjective, yet there is no denying that a little competition has brought out the best in some of the world's greatest creative talents. In 1768, King George III founded the Royal Academy of Arts, but what began life as a place for the promotion, exhibition and education of art in Britain very soon became a gladiatorial arena in which our finest artists were metaphorically duelling with paintbrushes.

Over the past 250 years, the roll call of Royal Academicians reads like a who's

who of art in Britain, from Thomas Gainsborough and John Singer Sargent to David Hockney and Tracey Emin.

The Royal Academy of Arts was born out of the ashes of another organisation, the Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain, which was granted a Royal Charter in 1765. It quickly fell apart when several of the 211 named members tended their resignation and pleaded with the king to instead recognise a core number who were keen to further art education in this country. When renowned painter Joshua





William Powell Frith's  
*A Private View at the  
 Royal Academy, 1881*  
 Below: The entrance to  
 6 Burlington Gardens

“my Academy” could move in. From 1837 it would then spend 31 years in the east wing of the National Gallery, before moving in its centenary year to its current location in Burlington House on bustling Piccadilly.

Originally a private mansion in the Palladian style, it was later extended around a vast courtyard that has provided a stage in recent years for eye-catching temporary sculptures by the likes of American artist Jeff Koons and Anish Kapoor (himself a Royal Academician, something denoted by the initials RA after one’s name), famed for his giant shiny pebble-like Cloud Gate in Chicago’s Millennium Park.

The Royal Academy is set to open a brand new ‘cultural campus’ on 19 May, which will extend into the adjacent Grade II\*-listed gallery at 6 Burlington Gardens. Architect David Chipperfield RA designed a bridge between the venues and three new day-lit galleries will be devoted to contemporary art and architecture. The Royal Academy Schools is also set to benefit from the anniversary developments with a 257-seat lecture theatre, a learning centre and a public project space for student artworks.

Back in the main building, blockbuster exhibitions have been a feature of the Royal Academy’s public programme in recent years, with David Hockney RA’s 2012 exhibition of landscape paintings, *A Bigger Picture*, attracting more than 600,000 paying visitors. Nevertheless, the undoubted highlight of the calendar remains the annual *Summer Exhibition*, which also celebrates its 250th anniversary this year.

First opened on 25 April 1769, it has been staged every year since and has grown ➤



Reynolds accepted the role of president, the king signed a founding document known as the ‘Instrument’ on 10 December 1768. Many of the laws laid down in the Instrument remain in tact today, not least the stipulation that the sovereign provides the academy with rooms in return for the artists providing free education.

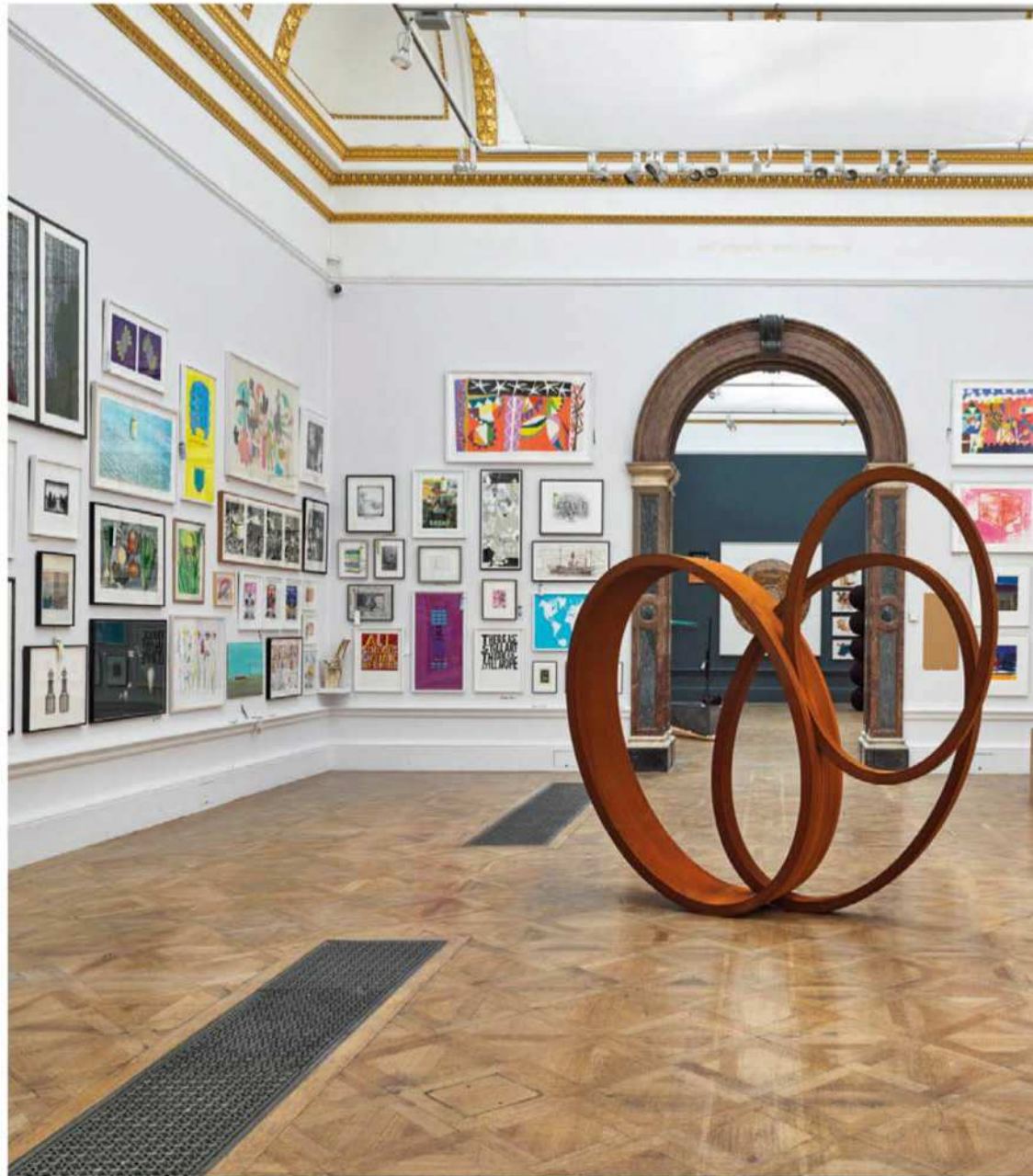
Rooms in Pall Mall and the old Somerset House were used until 1780, when the new Somerset House was completed and the institution that its generous young patron George III would refer to as

to become the largest open exhibition in the world. In the early days it was initially known as *The Exhibition* and saw society portraits and romantic landscapes arranged in the cramped 'salon hang' style with frames butting up against each other sometimes four or five pictures high.

Arguably our nation's greatest ever painter, JMW Turner, got his big break in this environment when, as a Royal Academy Schools student, his modest watercolour of Lambeth Palace was accepted into the 1790 show. His work would then be featured every year until his death in 1851.

For the most gifted artists, the annual exhibition was a chance to impress your peers in a very public arena. For the less successful, it would also provide a source of frustration, anguish and disappointment. As JE Hodgson and Fred A Eaton eloquently put it in their potted 1905 history, *The Royal Academy and its Members*, these annual exhibitions exist as a strange record "of mad strivings after the unattainable, of futile efforts on the part of weak, inarticulate, human nature to express the unutterable... a record of high aims gone astray, of sordid cares, of unavailing groans and blank despair... revelling in its fool's supper of worthless praise".

Nevertheless, this year's 250th *Summer Exhibition* (12 June to 19 August) received more than 20,000 submissions, which have been whittled down by a panel of Academicians led this year by the eccentric ceramic artist Grayson Perry RA. Part of the appeal of entering is not only to test yourself against your peers but also to experience the ceremony of the event.





© JOHN BODKIN/DAWKINS COLOUR/SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM, LONDON/TRISTAN FEWINGS/GETTY IMAGES

For the most gifted artists, the *Summer Exhibition* is a chance to impress your peers in a very public arena

Even refusal letters are held up as badge of honour, while the non-members Varnishing Day has become something of party. In years gone by, this time allowed artists to make final tweaks to still-drying paintings, whereas today it has become a celebration for all the thousand or so selected artists. A steel band strikes up in the courtyard before a traffic-halting procession of participating artists is lead along Piccadilly to St James's Church for a special service, before festivities resume in the galleries for a first look at the selected artworks.

Showing alongside *Summer Exhibition 2018* will be *The Great Spectacle* (12 June to 19 August), a collection of some of the finest artworks featured over the years and also several paintings that capture the drama of the show itself, including Victorian artist William Powell Frith's *A Private View at the Royal Academy*. In it we see lords and ladies turned out in all their finery, while a top-hatted gentleman makes notes on the paintings and another pulls out a monocle to examine in more detail.

So while 2018 provides a remarkable milestone to celebrate through exhibitions and gallery developments, it also provides a chance to ask where next for such a lauded institution. With painting no longer the primary outlet for many of Britain's most creative talents, the Royal Academy is under pressure to adapt while still attempting to remain true to its origins.

Diversity was also long lacking in almost all of our prestigious art societies (only two of the Royal Academy's 34 founding members were women and one of those – Mary Moser – was the daughter of another member), yet steps have been taken recently to correct these biases. In 2011, the Royal Academy Schools elected its first female professors, when artists Tracey Emin and Fiona Rae were put in charge of the drawing and painting departments respectively.

Yet if the patronage remains in tact and the institution continues to make decisions as bold as the artworks contained on its walls, there is every chance the Royal Academy will be celebrating its quincentenary in 2268. ■  
[www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk)




**Above:** Nigel Hall RA's *Natural Pearl* sculpture takes pride of place in *Summer Exhibition 2017*  
**Left:** An 1818 Joseph Gandy watercolour from *A Great Spectacle*  
**Far left:** The RA's 2018 exhibition committee



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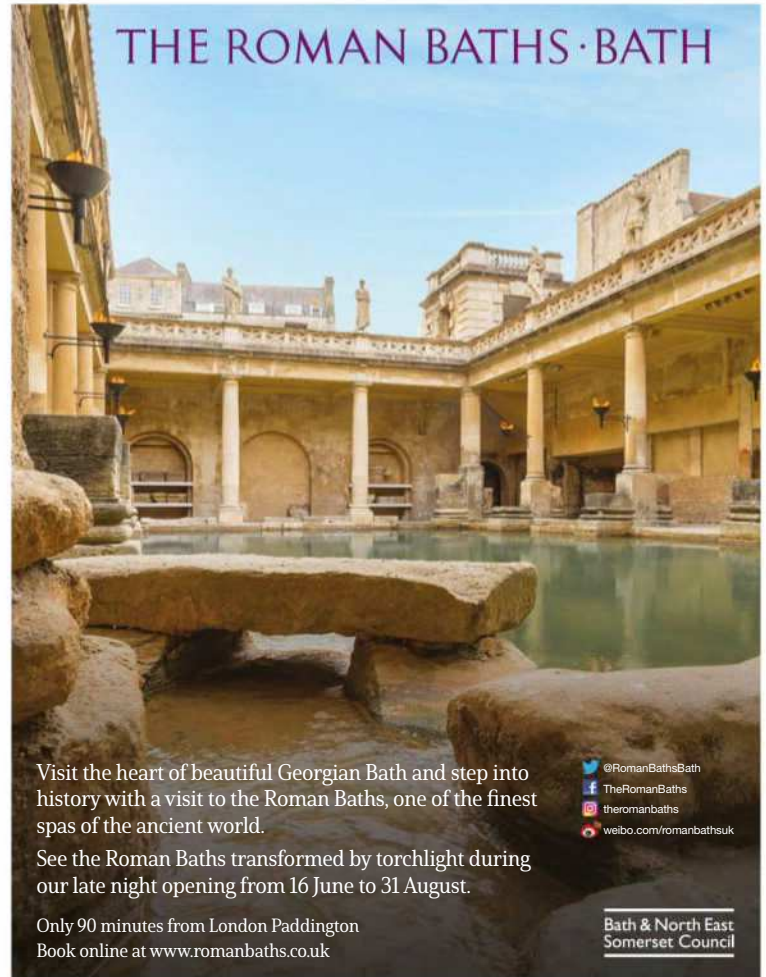
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# High Society

From swanky Mayfair to suburban Fulham, the London of William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* reveals a very English obsession with class that has endured since Victorian times, as **Laura Silverman** explains

GL ARCHIVE/CHRONICLE/ALAMY



**P**oor William Thackeray. Today, it is Charles Dickens that has the apparent monopoly on Victorian novelists who wrote about London: *The Pickwick Papers* features 101 locations in the capital, *Nicholas Nickleby* 86 and *David Copperfield* 79.

Yet it is Thackeray's masterpiece, first published 170 years ago, which encapsulates the very essence of London and the great British obsession with class. *Vanity Fair* is set in Regency England during the Napoleonic Wars of 1803-1815, but its satirical bite also applied to the time in which it was written, some three decades later.

The story follows the loves and losses of the wealthy yet passive Amelia Sedley and her poor, ambitious friend Becky Sharp. Locations played a big part in Thackeray's aim "to indicate, in cheerful terms, that we are for the most part an abominably ➤

**Above:** William Thackeray  
**This image:** Vauxhall Gardens in 1820



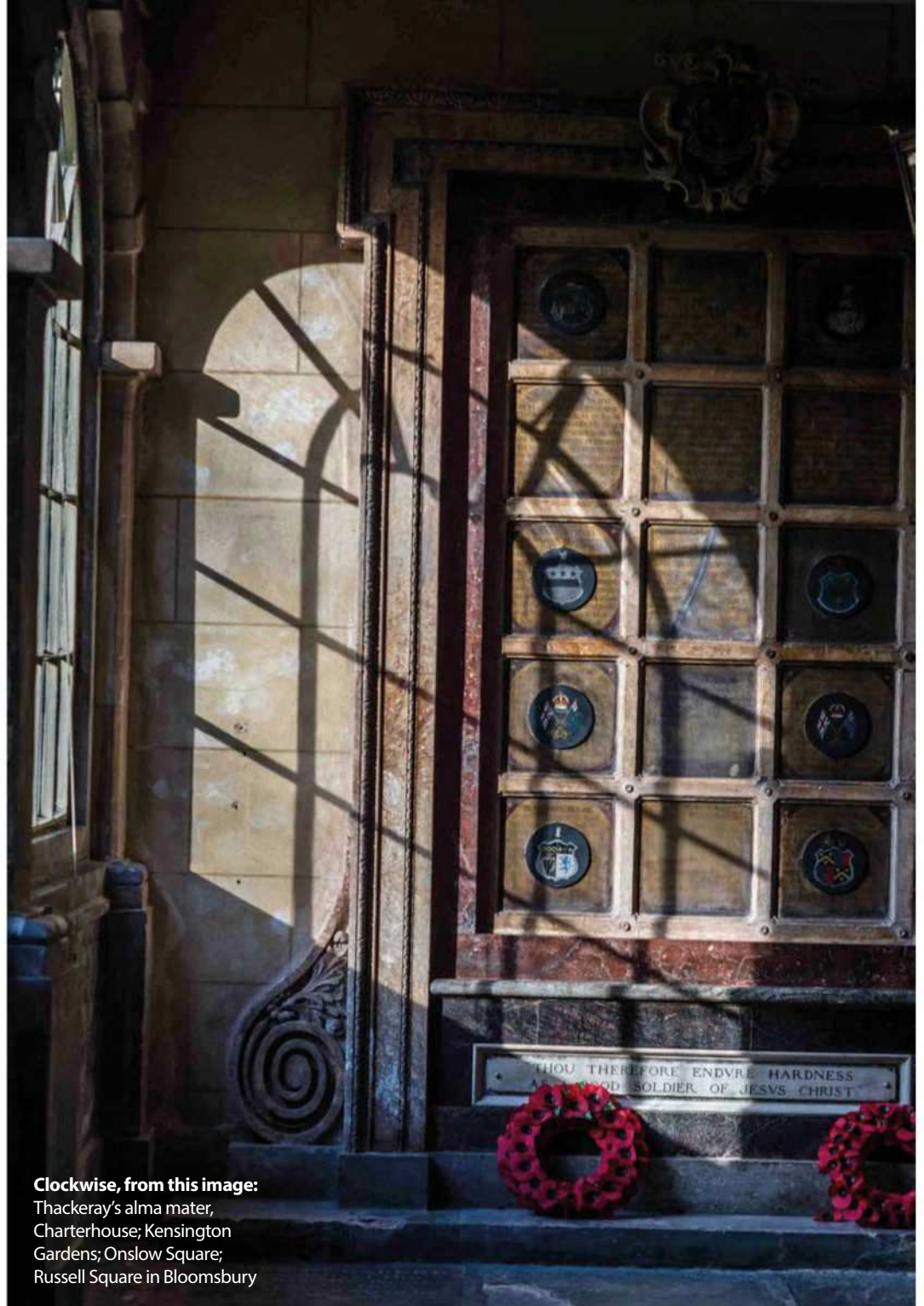
foolish and selfish people... all eager after vanities". The residence of each character reveals a very English obsession with social standing, while one of the key settings, Vauxhall Gardens, with its sophisticated appearance and murky undercurrent, says much about certain strands of society.

Thackeray was born in Calcutta, India in 1881. His father, an administrator for the East India Company, died in 1815, and the young Thackeray was sent home to England. His mother joined him a year later. After a miserable time at Charterhouse – one of the leading London private schools and now the site of a new museum telling the story of its 14th-century almshouse and monastery – he went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, before studying law at Middle Temple in London. Law, however, wasn't for him. Aged 21, he inherited £20,000 from his father and considered ditching it all to become a painter.

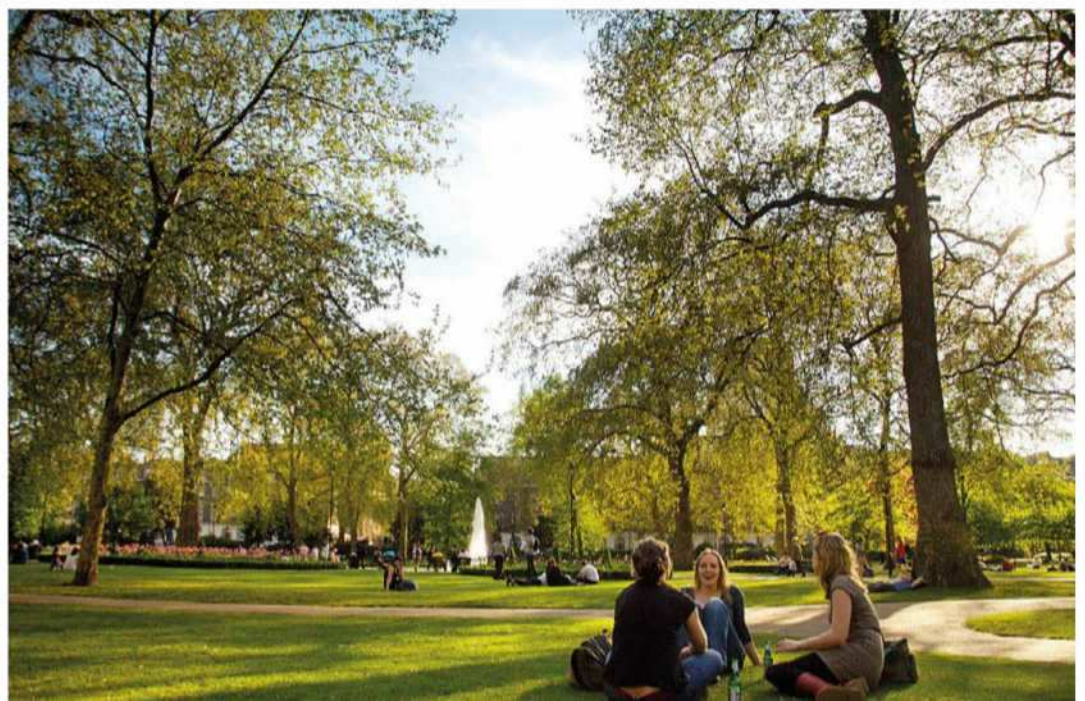
Thackeray quickly lost his fortune through gambling and poor investments, but scooted off to Paris to study art anyway. There, he married Isabella Gethin Shawe and became a newspaper reporter, before they both moved to London in 1837, taking a property in Bloomsbury. Thackeray's journalism career then picked up, just as his personal life deteriorated. The couple had three daughters, Anne, Jane and Harriet, but the middle child died as a baby. Isabella subsequently sank into depression, before being declared insane. She was moved to an asylum, leaving Thackeray a single father in London. *Vanity Fair* was to be his saviour. Published as a serial in *Punch* between 1847 and 1848, it brought him fame and fortune.

To explore Thackeray's London in his most successful years as an author, the literary fan should head to the southwest borough of Kensington and Chelsea. From 1846 to 1853, Thackeray lived at 16 Young Street, just off Kensington High Street. Today, the area is exclusive and expensive, with smart shops and brasseries lining the main street, as well as Kensington Palace, the Royal Albert Hall and the new Design Museum all within 10 minutes' walk. Back then, it was respectable but affordable – tradesmen and shopkeepers occupied more than half the houses of Young Street.

No 16 (then No 13) was built in the 1690s, acquiring its double-bow front in the early 19th century, about 40 years before Thackeray moved in. The author lived in the yellow-brick, detached house with his two surviving daughters, three servants and, crucially for a writer, a small black cat.



**Clockwise, from this image:**  
Thackeray's alma mater,  
Charterhouse; Kensington  
Gardens; Onslow Square;  
Russell Square in Bloomsbury





Thackeray wrote *Vanity Fair* in Young Street. His study overlooked the garden, which was described as “not tidy... but full of sweet things”



Thackeray described the house in a letter to his mother in 1846. “There are two capital bedrooms and a little sitting room for you and GP [Thackeray’s stepfather] – a famous bedroom for BM [Thackeray’s grandmother] on the first floor – two rooms for the children on the second, very airy and comfortable; a couple of rooms big enough for servants, and two little ones quite large enough for me,” he wrote.

“There’s a good study for me downstairs and a dining room and drawing room and a little courtyard or garden and a little greenhouse: and Kensington Gardens at the gate, and omnibuses every two minutes. What mortal can want more?”

Thackeray was to write *Vanity Fair* in Young Street. His study overlooked the garden, which one of his daughters described as “not tidy... [but] full of sweet things. There were verbenas — red, blue and scented; and there were lovely stacks of flags ... and bunches of London Pride”.

In 1854, following the success of *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray and his family moved to 36 Onslow Square, a white stucco-fronted building in nearby Chelsea. His neighbours included Henry Cole, the founding director of the Victoria & Albert Museum, and William Railton, the architect behind Nelson’s Column. Thackeray was going up in the world.

In 1860, while still at Onslow Square, he bought 2 Palace Green, nearer his Young Street house. A bit of wreck, the author rebuilt it, with the help of architect Frederick Hering, at a cost of more than £8,000 (a vast amount at the time). Delighted with the result, Thackeray described the neo-Georgian building as “one of the nicest houses I have ever seen,” ►

adding, “[I have] a strong idea at in the next world I shan’t be a bit better off.”

He spent his final days furnishing and decorating the house, dying there on Christmas Eve, 1863. The building, altered in the 1880s, is now the home of the Israeli Embassy. Thackeray is buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, west London.

The locations within *Vanity Fair* encompass a broader sweep of London. Amelia, whose father is a City stockbroker, lives in Russell Square, the Duke of Bedford’s 18th-century housing project. Thackeray meant this address to convey a slightly snobbish opinion of new money. Becky, a social climber, is delighted to escape the household for a better address when she is appointed governess in the house of Sir Pitt Crawley in Mayfair.

“I suppose he [Crawley] will be awfully proud, and that I shall be treated most contemptuously,” thinks Becky. “Still I must bear my hard lot as well as I can –

at least, I shall be amongst gentlefolks, and not with vulgar city people.” Not that everyone would have been displeased with Russell Square. When the Sedleys fall on hard times, they move to even worse surroundings: Fulham, southwest London. Today, Fulham is a highly desirable area, but in Thackeray’s day it was considered to be out in the sticks and away from the hub of civilised London society.

Vauxhall Gardens is also a key location in *Vanity Fair*, the scene of a turning point in Becky’s fortunes. The pleasure gardens near Lambeth were the height of nightlife in 18th- and 19th-century London, the site of music, dancing, eating and drinking. Running from 1661 to 1859, they attracted 100,000 visitors a year. Laid out as formal gardens, they provided a backdrop for operas, illuminations and fireworks.

The gardens at Vauxhall also displayed great architecture and art, including paintings by William Hogarth and Francis

Hayman. While they were aimed at aristocrats with naturally sophisticated tastes, the gardens also had a slightly dubious reputation. Alleys and woods provided the ideal place for clandestine meetings and – shock – prostitution. Some revellers enjoyed themselves a little too much. Jos Sedley, in *Vanity Fair*, endures an especially heavy hangover after a night of Vauxhall punch.

Thackeray did, of course, write more than *Vanity Fair*. *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* tells the story of a member of the Irish gentry trying to break into the English aristocracy, while *The Book of Snobs* offers more satire about London society and *The History of Pendennis* centres on a young man born in the countryside who, yes, goes to London to seek his place in society.

However, it is *Vanity Fair* that both made the author’s name and gives the real insight into the capital and the history of the buildings that stand today. ■

JEFF GILBERT/LAMY



*Vanity Fair*'s Becky Sharp lived on Curzon Street, an upmarket Mayfair address home to high-end stores



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Shortly after the Second World War, Minister of Health Aneurin Bevan, proposed ambitious reforms giving all UK residents access to comprehensive healthcare, free at the point of delivery. Despite post-war austerity, the National Health Service (NHS) came into being on 5 July 1948. For the past 70 years this treasured institution has continued along these principles.

The NHS is part of Britain's long history of healthcare innovation, part of which can be uncovered at any of the 26 museums and gardens dedicated to health and medicine in London. This may seem a surprising number, until you consider that, in the capital alone, there are currently seven medical schools, 14 teaching hospitals and 11 Medical Royal Colleges.

Just five minutes' walk from St Paul's Cathedral, St Bartholomew's Hospital Museum tells the story of the oldest hospital in Britain, where free healthcare was originally given by monks. Established in 1123 by Rahere, a courtier of King Henry I, 'Barts' survived both the Great Fire of London in 1666 and the wartime Blitz.

It was at this City of London hospital that royal physician William Harvey devised the first complete description of blood circulation in 1628 and surgeon Percivall Pott first identified an environmental cause to cancer when he discovered that exposure to soot resulted in more chimney sweeps developing the disease.

The museum's permanent exhibition includes Rahere's grant of 1137, and the 1546 agreement between Henry VIII and the City of London to manage the hospital after the Protestant Reformation. On the walls of the original entrance hall, visible from the museum, are two enormous murals by celebrated 18th-century painter William Hogarth.

The adjacent Barts Pathology Museum was recently declared one of the world's weirdest medical museums. Only occasionally open during special events, the shelves are lined with human specimens in glass jars that were originally used for medical student teaching.

Another institution dating back to the 12th century, St Thomas' Hospital, now sits on the bank of the River Thames. Here, the visitor will find the Florence Nightingale Museum, dedicated to the life and work of the woman who pioneered modern nursing. As a well-born woman, little was expected of Florence beyond a good marriage and children. When she announced her decision to become a nurse, her family were appalled as nursing was considered a disreputable occupation.

During the Crimean War, reports reached Britain of the horrendous conditions for casualties. In 1854, Minister of War Sidney Herbert sent Florence with a female staff to the military hospital in Istanbul, Turkey. There, she found poor care, poor sanitation, overworked medical staff, official indifference and mass infection, often fatal.

Florence implemented hand-washing and other hygiene practices, and called for the sanitation commission who flushed out the sewers and improved ventilation. The government commissioned a prefabricated hospital that was sent to the Crimea in pieces to be built there. The new hospital had a tenth of the infection rate. Florence became known as the 'Lady of the Lamp', visiting wards at night to check on her patients' welfare.

On her return to Britain, she used her influence as a war heroine to pioneer nursing as a respected profession and push for healthcare reforms, producing charts to demonstrate that more men had died of disease than their wounds in the Crimea. (She is credited with the creation of the polar area diagram, a variation of the pie chart.) With public donations, she set up the Nightingale Home and Training School for Nurses at St Thomas', emulated worldwide and still exists as the Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Palliative Care.

St Thomas' left its original site in Southwark in 1862, but some of those old buildings still remain. Hidden away in the roof of the old St Thomas' Church, you'll find the Old Operating Theatre Museum. Originally a 300-year-old garret used to cure and store medicinal herbs, the attic space was converted into an operating theatre in 1822, ➤

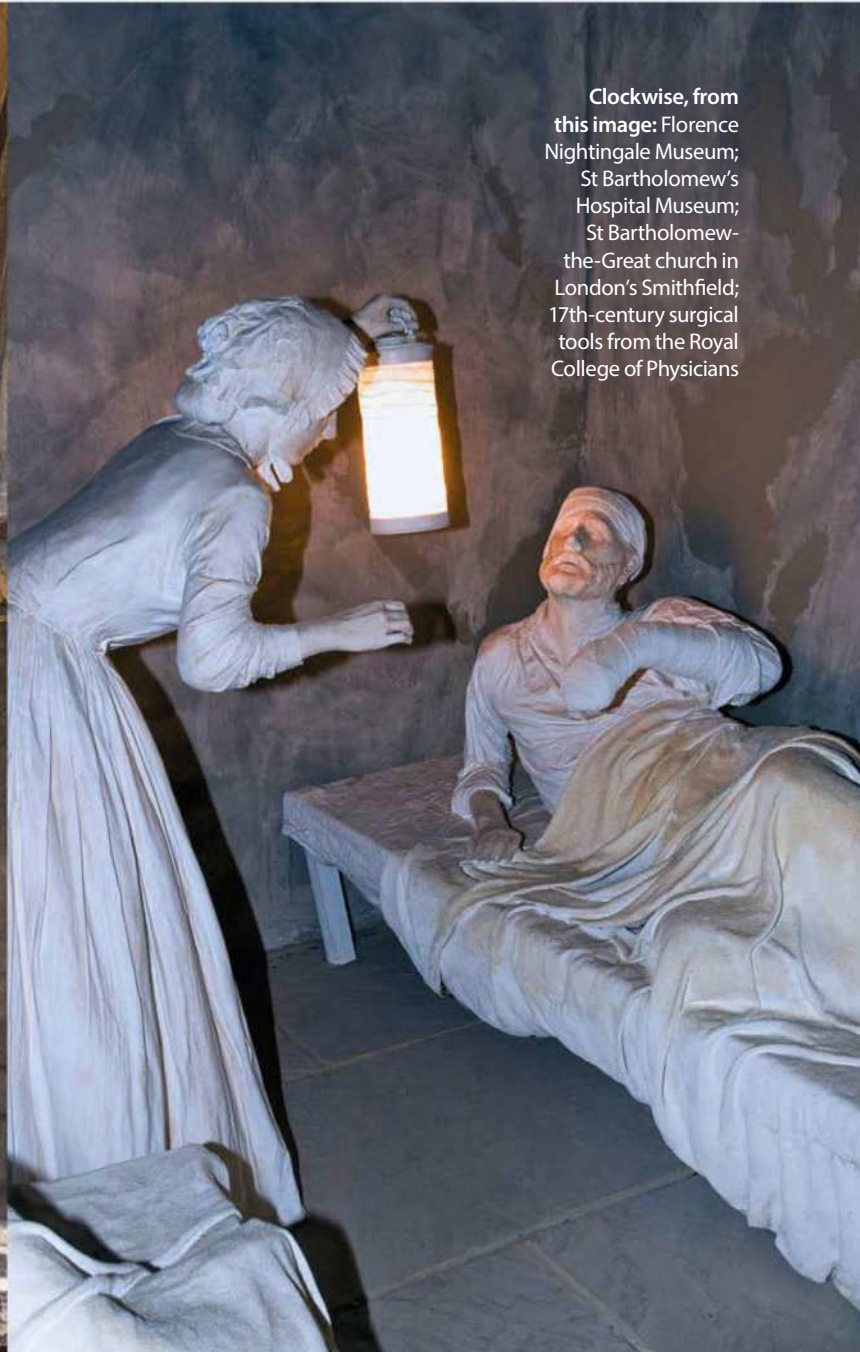
# Doctor, DOCTOR

On the 70th anniversary of the NHS, **Sophie Beal** tours London's many medical museums to celebrate our achievements in healthcare and beyond



BENJAMIN JOHN/PAUL TUCKER/JOHNNY JONES/ALAMY





Clockwise, from this image: Florence Nightingale Museum; St Bartholomew's Hospital Museum; St Bartholomew-the-Great church in London's Smithfield; 17th-century surgical tools from the Royal College of Physicians





complete with operating table and stands for students to observe. At the time, patients were awake throughout and, if they survived, likely to die afterwards from infection anyway. Surgery was seen as a last resort and surgeons concentrated on speed rather than skill. The theatre remains intact and can be viewed alongside the old oak apothecary counter and dubious Victorian cures.

The Anaesthesia Heritage Centre tells the story of anaesthetics from its early beginnings to the modern day and contains more than 4,500 artefacts including large anaesthetic machines. Britain's early contributions to the specialty include polymath Joseph Priestley's discovery of nitrous oxide and chemist Humphry Davy's realisation of its anaesthetic properties. Infection was still rife, even with improved ward hygiene and ventilation. With no awareness of germs or their transmission, surgeons often arrived in theatre straight from dissecting bodies and didn't consider washing their hands between patients. They took pride in the 'good old surgical stink' of their unwashed operating gowns.

In 1928, Fleming, a brilliant but similarly untidy researcher, left some of his bacterial cultures stacked up in a corner of his Paddington laboratory while he went away on holiday. He returned to find mould growing on one of them and noticed that the colonies of bacteria surrounding the mould had been destroyed. He realised

## London's long history of healthcare innovation can be uncovered at 26 dedicated museums and gardens

the penicillium mould was producing a toxic substance, which he eventually called penicillin. It immediately reduced deaths from killers such as scarlet fever, pneumonia, diphtheria and meningitis. Fleming later shared the Nobel Prize for his discovery. The Alexander Fleming Laboratory is reconstructed in situ at St Mary's Hospital. Displays tell the story of the discovery and development of penicillin and explain its importance.

In London today, the Medical Royal Colleges are responsible for the training and development of doctors in their individual specialties. The Royal College of Physicians was founded by Royal Charter 500 years ago this year. In its current home on St Andrew's Place facing Regent's Park, the college's permanent display of artefacts include portraits, sculptures, instruments, William Harvey's demonstration rod and the college's mace. The college library, meanwhile, contains many rare medical and non-medical books, including the oldest printed in the English language.

Just a short walk from here down the Euston Road leads to the Wellcome Collection, home to more than a million medical artefacts that Henry Wellcome collected. These include a 4,000-year-old trepanned skull, Charles



Darwin's walking stick and an early X-ray machine. It forms a tiny part of his overall legacy. Wellcome was born on the American frontier in 1853, but moved to the UK with his friend Silas Burroughs. In 1880, they set up a pharmaceutical company that soon became multinational, despite Burroughs' early death in 1895. Wellcome was one of the first to employ a scientific approach to developing medicines.

By his death in 1936, company-funded scientists had isolated histamine, enabling production of antihistamines, standardised insulin and developed anti-toxins for diphtheria, tetanus and gas gangrene. His will established the Wellcome Trust that funds medical research worldwide today. The Trust also runs a popular gallery, where exhibitions include *Teeth* (17 May to 16 September), a first look at the dentistry profession.

With this and many more medical museums across London, the choice may seem overwhelming. Taken in regular doses, however, they can prove a wonderful cure for curiosity, a spare afternoon and much more. ■

### Above:

A diagram by the 16th-century anatomist Vesalius from the Royal College of Physicians

### Opposite page, from top:

The Old Operating Theatre Museum; the Alexander Fleming Laboratory at St Mary's Hospital



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# ANGEL OF THE NORTH

Our insider guide to the steel sculpture that lights up a journey along the A1 road

## IN NUMBERS

**53**

The width (in metres) of the Angel of the North's wingspan

**33,000,000**

Number of people who see the Angel of the North each year

**200**

Sculpture's weight (in tonnes)

**800,000**

Total cost (in pounds) of the original project



## STRANGE BUT TRUE

While the Angel cost £800,000, several 1/20th scale models Gormley (pictured) made to test his design have sold for much more: one fetched £3.4 million at auction in 2011.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Gateshead's Art in Public Places panel actually shortlisted two sculptors. The other was Sir Anthony Caro, who later co-designed London's Millennium Bridge.

VISITENGLAND/NEWCASTLEGATESHEAD INITIATIVE/AMER GHAZZAL/ALAMY

**T**he story of the Angel of the North is the story of a place. During the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, Tyneside capitalised on coal mining, steel manufacture and shipbuilding, leading Gateshead's population to rise by 100,000 in 100 years. And after the boom came the bust. By the early 1990s, the decline in heavy industry in this northeast English region was such that, as the *Financial Times* put it, "Gateshead turned to art as a means of economic regeneration".

The story of the Angel of the North is the story of a person: the London-born sculptor, Antony Gormley. A Turner Prize winner, he was commissioned in 1994 by Gateshead Council to create a post-industrial totem. Like much of his work, he used a plaster cast of his own body as the basis for the figure. So why an angel? "No one has ever seen one," Gormley reasoned, "and we need to keep imagining them."

The story of the Angel of the North is the story of an icon. It was Gormley's attempt to translate religious iconography into late

20th-century forms and create an enduring figure that would define a city, like Rio's Christ the Redeemer or New York's Statue of Liberty. The Angel offered hope. Crowds cheered its piecemeal arrival by police escort before the corten steel structure was poignantly unveiled on the site of a local colliery's former baths in February 1998.

"Is it possible to make a work with purpose in a time that demands doubt?" Gormley asked. Twenty years on, the resounding answer is yes. ■

[www.antonygormley.com](http://www.antonygormley.com)

**This image:**  
Bluestockings  
Society founder  
Elizabeth Montagu  
**Opposite:**  
An 1821 cartoon of  
a bluestocking



Elizabeth Montagu  
was strict about the  
intellectual nature of her  
gatherings: “I never invite  
idiots to my house”





When considering great feminist milestones or historic periods, one is unlikely to call to mind Georgian England – an era during which women were mostly expected to complete intricate needlework, wear rib-crushing corsets and be preoccupied by marrying well. Yet surprisingly this period was graced by one Elizabeth Montagu – an academic who was both a patron of the arts and a social reformer; an enthusiastic writer and a celebrated figure in Georgian society. It seems a happy coincidence that in this year fraught with change and a shift in societal behaviours, we will mark the 300th anniversary of Montagu's birth.

Despite having such a rich life – both literally and metaphorically – and having sat for no fewer than 11 portraits currently owned by the National Portrait Gallery, Elizabeth Montagu is a relatively obscure figure in British history. Born Elizabeth Robinson on 2 October 1718 in the city of York, our heroine didn't start life as an aristocrat but her family were both wealthy and well connected.

It seems inevitable that this little girl, known as 'Fidget' thanks to both her inability to keep still and her love of dancing, should develop a passion for literature. Her formative years were spent living with her grandmother, whose second husband, Dr Conyers Middleton, was librarian of Cambridge University. This undoubtedly contributed greatly to her love of reading and writing, while also giving an insight into the type of conversation and level of education she would have been enjoyed from a young age. Elizabeth was an

## Queen of the BLUES

Bluestockings Society leader Elizabeth Montagu was one of Georgian England's sharpest minds. To mark her 300th anniversary, **Martha Alexander** salutes a pioneering talent

avid writer of letters, a practice that she loved and honed for the rest of her life. It was in one letter to Lady Margaret Harley, a childhood friend who would become the Duchess of Portland and remain a trusted correspondent for more than half a century, that she revealed her ambivalence to the idea of marriage. However, in 1742, despite her apparent reservations, Elizabeth married Edward Montagu, a grandson of the first Earl of Sandwich and

an extremely wealthy colliery owner some 27 years her senior.

The marriage was said to have lacked passion, with both parties living rather individual lives. After her first and only child, John, passed away when he was just 18 months old, Elizabeth was shattered by grief, which further increased when her mother and a brother died in the years that followed.

By 1750, Elizabeth divided her time between Edward's Sandleford Priory estate in Berkshire and the couple's home on Hill Street in London's Mayfair. It was at the latter that she began to throw what were initially literary breakfasts, at which intellectual, fashionable people would gather to talk mainly about writing. These gatherings developed into evening soirées, although no gambling, card games or heavy drinking were allowed – these meetings were meant for women to engage in more than just parlour-game pastimes. It is thought that she would arrange chairs in a semi-circle, all the better to encourage vigorous, flowing discussion.

These assemblies became popular across London and those who attended became known as 'bluestockings'. This term was



rife during the 1960s to describe women who plumped for the status of university student rather than suburban housewife, yet its origins reach right back to the 18th century.

For formal occasions in Georgian England, anyone of means would wear black silk stockings. However, when Benjamin Stillingfleet was bidden to attend a group hosted by the wealthy Irish intellectual Elizabeth Vesey, he was embarrassed to admit he only had a blue

pair. His hostess graciously allowed him to wear the ordinary blue woollen legwear and so the name became synonymous with these informal literary conversations.

The meetings were not just the Georgian equivalent of a housewives' book club fuelled by Oyster Bay and Kettle Chips. Montagu and co. attracted some of the most influential and celebrated writers, artists and thinkers of the time, including Horace Walpole, son of Britain's first Prime Minister and the creator of the magnificent Strawberry Hill House, as well as artist Sir Joshua Reynolds and writer Samuel Johnson. Elizabeth had her portrait painted by the former, while the latter was the one who dubbed her 'Queen of the Blues'. She was strict about the nature of the gatherings: there was to be an emphasis on intellectual conversation, learning and literature. The host was also careful with her guest list, once remarking, "I never invite idiots to my house."

Despite the inclusion of men, the Bluestocking Society get-togethers were particularly focused on encouraging and nurturing female talent. Many writers in attendance – including Hannah More, Frances Burney and Sarah Fielding – would go on to enjoy Elizabeth's patronage, akin to a golden ticket, allowing them artistic freedom and the kind of backing that was (and still is) hard to come by for fledgling writers.

Yet Elizabeth herself could never be accused of being all talk and no action. She had work published, including three sections within George Lyttleton's *Dialogues of the Dead* in 1760. Then, in 1769, she published a startling, strident defence of Shakespeare in response to Voltaire's potent criticism. *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* [sic], which had its roots deep in patriotism, was widely read and received plenty of critical acclaim.

Although her salon evenings initially took place in the capital, Elizabeth was far from London-centric. She adored Bath and lived in various addresses all over this beautiful West Country city, including the now-iconic Royal Crescent, which she deemed "the most beautiful in its form of anything I ever beheld". Her home at number 16 was also the backdrop for many a bluestocking gathering and today is half of the fashionable Royal Crescent Hotel and Spa.

In spring, Elizabeth still frequented Sandleford Priory, where she had the celebrated Lancelot 'Capability' Brown design a walled

## Elizabeth's home on the Royal Crescent, Bath was the backdrop for many a bluestocking gathering and today it is a fashionable hotel



kitchen garden and several other features. Letters between them reveal a warm friendship, with the landscape architect describing her correspondence as being an "exact picture of your mind, full of compassion and good will to all". She would also head up north periodically with her husband as he oversaw his collieries and visited his family home at East Denton Hall in Newcastle.

Elizabeth had proven her stripes when it came to writing, wit and networking, but following her husband's death in 1775 she proved to be a formidable businesswoman, too. Shrewd and calculating, she was left a vast estate yet was always thoughtful to the point of frugality when it came to parting with her cash. She did commission architect James Stuart to build Montagu House in Portman Square, however. This vast property in the heart of London held many a bluestocking gathering, though it was sadly decimated during the Blitz.

When Elizabeth died in 1800, she left everything to her nephew, Morris, who was one of the people closest to her. More valuable than any bricks and mortar are the collection of letters she left behind that have been analysed by academics and historians. From this correspondence, a picture can be painted not only of Elizabeth herself, but also of Georgian society as a whole – from celebrated writers and thinkers to miners in England's North East.

These precious words are what remains of Elizabeth Montagu: this extraordinary early feminist who spoke her mind and encouraged other women to use theirs. ■



Clockwise, from this image: Frances Burney; Royal Crescent; Samuel Johnson; and Strawberry Hill House, the home of Horace Walpole



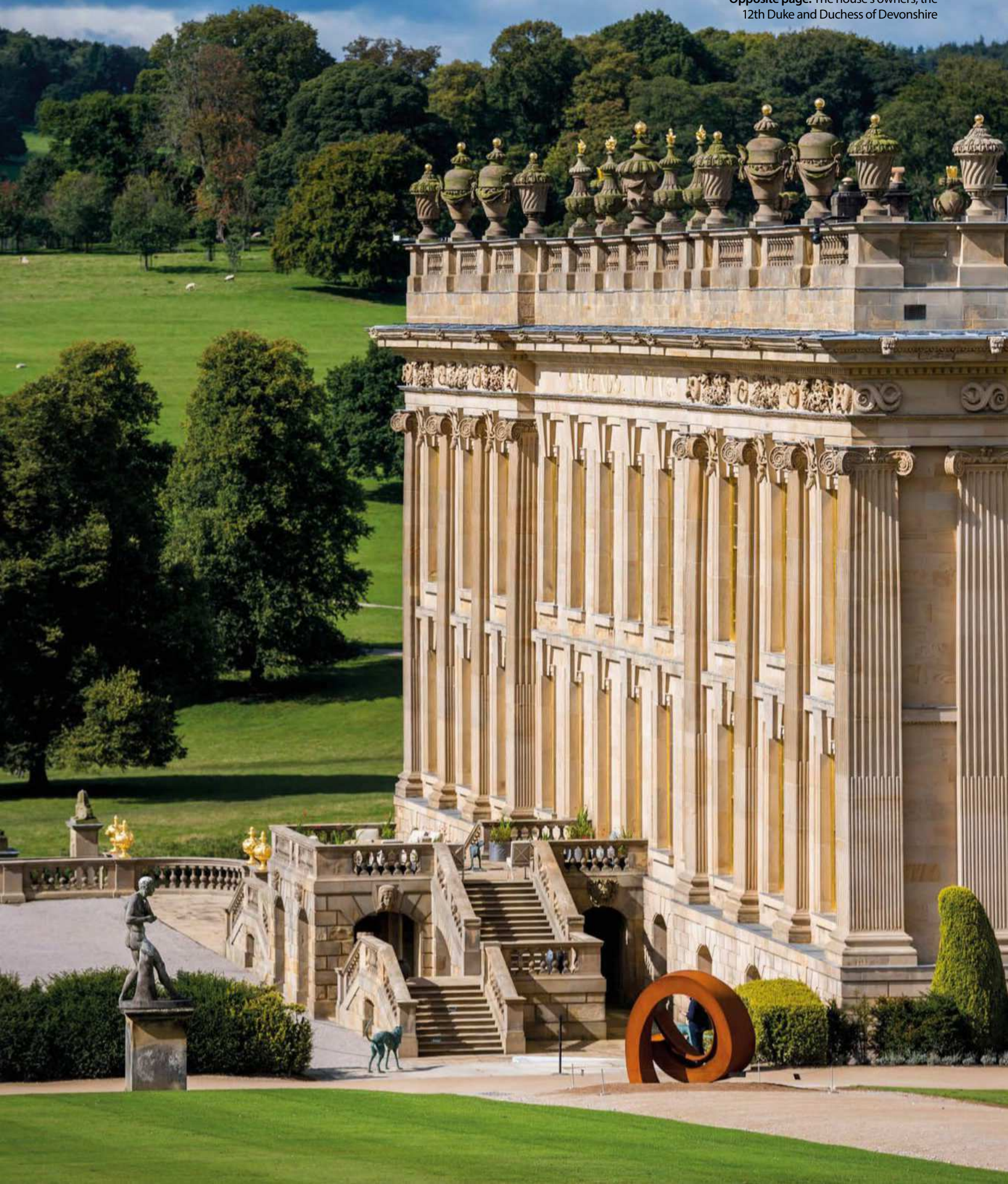
TRAVELBUK/LOVATTPICS/ART COLLECTION/LAMY

An elderly couple stands in front of the grand, classical architecture of Chatsworth House. The man on the left is wearing a dark green double-breasted suit jacket over a light pink shirt and a bright blue tie. The woman on the right is wearing a light green textured jacket over a white turtleneck sweater and grey trousers. The background shows the stone facade of the house with its many windows and decorative elements under a cloudy sky.

# MIDAS TOUCH

Following a £32 million restoration, Chatsworth House shimmers in the Derbyshire countryside. **Natalie Marchant** meets the Duke and Duchess whose family have lived here for 16 generations

**This image:** Chatsworth in Derbyshire  
**Opposite page:** The house's owners, the  
12th Duke and Duchess of Devonshire





**Above:** The Painted Hall  
**Right:** Sculpture Gallery

When asked what his favourite part of the newly restored Chatsworth House is, the Duke of Devonshire doesn't hesitate. The "17th-century bling", he says, referring to the windows adorned with gold leaf, which catch the sun even on the gloomiest of days. "And you can't beat a bit of bling."

Like most stately homes, Chatsworth was built to impress and the newly completed, £32 million, 10-year restoration project has clearly been a labour of love for the 12th Duke and Duchess. "I'm very proud of it and the more people that are interested, the better I like it," the Duke said.

This grand estate in the Derbyshire countryside has been home to 16 generations of the Cavendish family. Over the centuries, the house has played host to royalty, politicians and celebrities alike, while today a selection of the 300 rooms is open to the public.

Work began on the original property in 1552 and was overseen by Elizabeth Talbot – better known as

Bess of Hardwick, this Derbyshire native was married to Sir William Cavendish and regarded as the second most powerful woman in Elizabethan England after the Queen herself. It was during Bess's time that the house hosted one of its more unlikely 'guests': Mary, Queen of Scots.

Mary was held prisoner here at various times between 1569 and 1584, a fact marked by the rooms on the east side of the house still being known as the Queen of Scots Apartments. Chatsworth was inherited by Bess's second son William Cavendish, who was created Earl of Devonshire in 1618.

The property underwent extensive alterations under the 4th Earl in the late 1600s, including rebuilding of various façades, the addition of rooms such as the Painted Hall, and the designing of a formal garden, including the Cascade Pond that still flows today.

The 4th Earl was created the 1st Duke of Devonshire after helping bring the Protestant



King William III and Queen Mary II to the throne and he built the State Apartment for an anticipated royal visit. Elsewhere, the principal scene on a wall of the Chapel tells the story of Christ healing the sick, which is thought to symbolise the restoration of the country's health by the removal of the Catholic King James II from the throne. However, the king and queen never came, and the rooms had to wait more than 200 years for a royal visit when George V and Mary finally arrived in 1913.

After a makeover under the 4th Duke in the 18th century, Chatsworth entered another colourful age under the 5th Duke, whose wife, Lady Georgiana Spencer, a distant relative of Princess Diana, was immortalised by Keira Knightley in the 2008 film *The Duchess*. The couple mainly lived in London during this time, but they were renowned for filling the house with visitors whenever they returned to Chatsworth.

Georgiana was known for her beauty and political guile, and the couple ended up living in an unusual *ménage à trois* with her friend and his mistress, Lady Elizabeth Foster, also known as Bess. In fact, the Duke married Bess upon Georgiana's early death in 1806.

The Duke and Georgiana's son, the 6th Duke, was known as the 'Bachelor Duke' because he never married. He added the North Wing, which includes the sculpture gallery, the Belvedere tower and a ballroom. In 1826, he appointed head gardener

## Chatsworth has hosted royalty, politicians and celebrities alike... Mary, Queen of Scots was even held prisoner here between 1569 and 1584

Joseph Paxton, who overhauled the garden and built the 200-foot Emperor Fountain and the Great Conservatory. The latter, since demolished, was a forerunner of Paxton's famous Crystal Palace in London and also where he cultivated the Cavendish banana, one of the world's most popular varieties.

Queen Victoria had fond memories of Chatsworth during this time. As a 13-year-old princess she enjoyed her first formal dinner in adult company many years before. The 6th Duke was apparently so nervous at the prospect that he held a full cooked rehearsal the day before. When he died in 1858

without an heir, his title passed via his cousin to the 8th Duke, Spencer Cavendish, a Liberal statesman who served in parliament for more than 50 years and was asked by Queen Victoria to serve as Prime Minister on three separate occasions, but refused each time.

In 1892, the 8th Duke married 'Double Duchess' Louise von Alten, the widow of the Duke of Manchester. The childless couple were known for their lavish entertaining at the house, with King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra regular visitors.

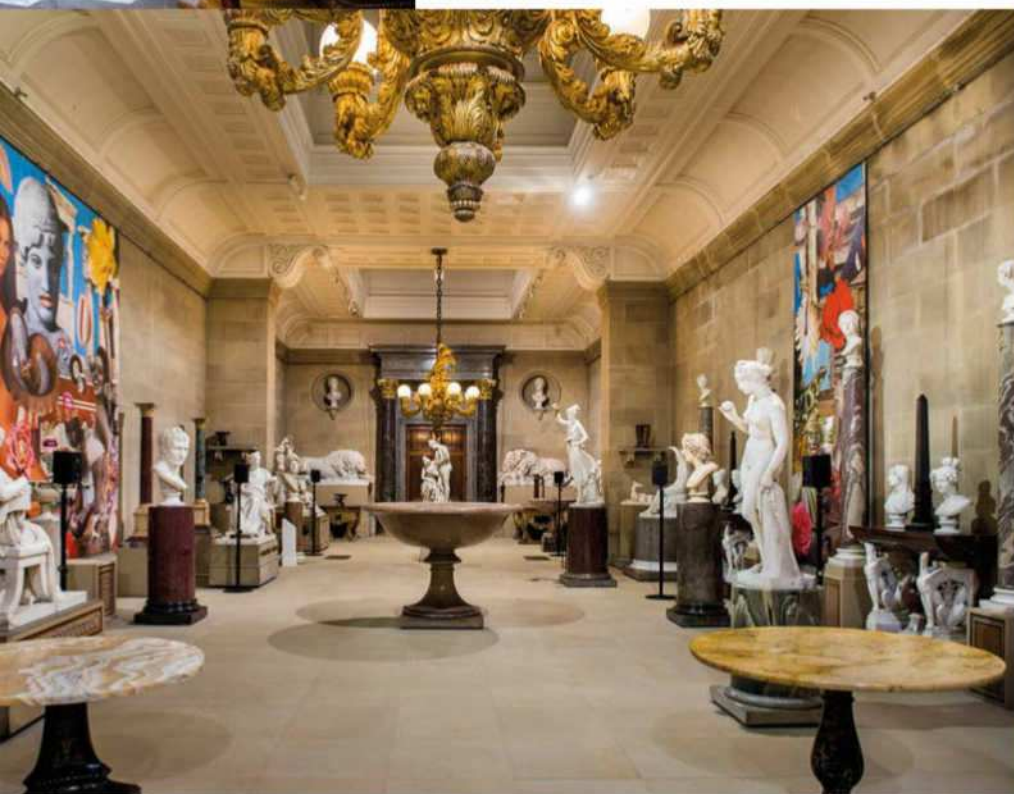
In contrast, the Duke's nephew Victor Cavendish became the 9th Duke and made Chatsworth home to many young children – seven in all – for the first time for almost a century. Victor was also the first Duke to have to pay death duties – a £500,000 bill that was the equivalent of £53 million today and forced the sale of many prized heirlooms.

Victor's eldest son, Edward Cavendish, became the 10th Duke in 1938, and he planned to make many improvements to the house with his wife Lady Mary Cecil. However, when the Second World War broke out a year later Chatsworth instead became home to the girls of Penrhos College, North Wales.

The State Apartment became dormitories for the girls, whose exploits came to light during the recent restoration. When conservationists carefully removed the Renaissance-era Mortlake tapestries, they were somewhat surprised to find sweet wrappers tucked behind them. It was only when Cadbury's confirmed they dated back to the 1940s that the Chatsworth team realised they must have been put there by the mischievous schoolgirls.

Towards the end of the war, the Duke's eldest son William, Marquess of Hartington, married Kathleen 'Kick' Kennedy, American socialite and sister of future US President John F Kennedy. Sadly, the relationship was marred by tragedy. William was killed in action in Belgium just four months later and his wife also died in a plane crash in France in 1948.

In 1950, the 10th Duke died unexpectedly, prompting death duties of 80 per cent. The family





was forced to sell more of the land, artworks and other assets to settle the bill. His second son and William's brother, the 11th Duke Andrew and his wife Deborah, known affectionately as 'Debo', moved into Chatsworth in 1959. Deborah was the youngest of the six Mitford sisters, prominent socialites during the 1930s and 1940s.

It is the 11th Duke and Duchess who are attributed with turning Chatsworth into the visitor attraction it is today. They are also credited with bringing about a renaissance in the family's collecting of contemporary art, which had remained dormant since the 6th Duke's death in 1858. One of the couple's closest friends was Lucian Freud, the celebrated portrait painter and grandson of Sigmund Freud, and several of his works are on display in the house.

Nevertheless, one of Freud's most curious artworks will remain unseen by the general public. On the wall of a private bathroom is a painting of a cyclamen plant. Begun during a visit in 1959, Freud intended to cover the walls with the design, yet left before completing much more than three flowers and a few leaves. Many years later, a box of Freud's paints were discovered on a high shelf at the house with the note "Mr Frued [sic] – Please do not remove from here" written on the side in pencil.

It seems the artist always intended to complete the mural before his stellar career took off.



**Top left:** Mortlake Tapestries hung in the State Room  
**Above:** Maria Cosway's *Georgiana, 5th Duchess of Devonshire* after being cleaned for the restoration

The Devonshire family's passion for art continues today with the appointment of Chatsworth's inaugural artist-in-residence, Linder Sterling. Indeed, one of Sterling's installations in the marvellous Painted Hall – two ceremonial Elvis capes – pays a direct tribute to Deborah 'Debo' Devonshire, a massive fan of the king of rock'n'roll. It also nods to the Painted Hall's original purpose of welcoming William of Orange – the 'king' that never came.

When the current duke, Peregrine 'Stoker' Cavendish, succeeded his father in 2004, a thorough assessment revealed extensive maintenance was required to preserve the building. A 'masterplan' was drawn up and work began in 2008. The exhibition *Chatsworth Renewed* (until 21 October) highlights both the extent of the £32 million restoration and the skills of those who carried it out. It also reveals some more surprising items, such as dentistry tools used to scrape out mortar between blocks in the walls, a pair of boots hidden in the floorboards as a talisman, and notes from 19th-century craftsmen.

Even with its layers peeled back for *Chatsworth Renewed*, one will never truly know all the stories and secrets this house has to tell. For example, look up at the grand State Chamber ceiling and you'll notice the painting of Atropos, one of the three goddesses of fate in Greek mythology, cutting the

'thread of life'. This is, in fact, a representation of the 1st Duke's housekeeper Mrs Hackett, who had fallen out with the artist, Antonio Verrio. In the library, meanwhile, a bullet hole remains in a side table – the result of 'friendly fire' during the Second World War.

Yet perhaps the biggest hint at Chatsworth illustrious past can be found in the theatre. Very rarely open to the public, it was converted from a ballroom in the 1890s by celebrated set designer William Helmsley. King Edward VII was reportedly such a regular guest that Chatsworth became nicknamed the 'Theatre

Royal' and one can only imagine the productions and parties these walls once saw. After all, as the 12th Duke himself says, this is a house that was "built to show off". And following such a gilded restoration, Chatsworth looks dressed to impress for many centuries to come. ■

[www.chatsworth.org](http://www.chatsworth.org)





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# LITTLE SLICE OF DEVON

The county of Sir Francis Drake and the English Riviera is a favourite of Hollywood directors and packed with heritage attractions says **Florence Sheward**





The charming  
Devon fishing  
village of Clovelly

# DEVON

On 20 July 1588, when the first sightings of the invading Spanish Armada were brought to Sir Francis Drake, the second-in-command to the English fleet famously continued with his game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe. The Devon-born vice admiral was perhaps aware of adverse weather conditions, and defeated the Spaniards when he eventually launched the fleet anyway,

yet his unflustered response set the tone for the county as a whole. Locals have a similarly relaxed outlook – provided, of course, you don't ask them to debate their preferred scone etiquette with their neighbours in Cornwall (for the record, the Devonian way is cream first, then jam, not vice versa).

For the casual visitor, Devon can be broadly thought of in three distinct sections. The first is the rugged beauty of the north heritage coast, which is home to the Culm Measures rock formations and the golden beaches of Woolacombe and the fantastically named village of Westward Ho! The second is the interior, where the winding lanes of the outlying farming country give way to the wild expanses of Dartmoor with its granite peaks and steep valleys. And finally, the south coast is renowned for the red sandstone cliffs of Exe Estuary to the east and the historic port of Plymouth to the west, while bustling marinas of the English Riviera nestle in between. Much like Drake on his travels, the main challenge is to simply pick your timing and navigate the best course.

EXPLORE



## BUCKFAST ABBEY

A Benedictine abbey was first established in the town of Buckfast 1,000 years ago in 1018. The current Gothic-styled, Grade II\*-listed building, completed in 1937, is sprightly in comparison, though no less impressive for it. The millennium year celebrations will include a packed programme of recitals, talks and food markets, as well as the opening of a new Millennium Garden with a blessing and summer 'fayre' on 2 June.

The abbey has a somewhat notorious reputation, particularly in Scotland, as the monks have been creating the potent, caffeinated Buckfast Tonic Wine here since the 1880s. Healthy profits sustain a trust that invests heavily in the abbey's upkeep, however, as well as the local community.

[www.buckfast.org.uk](http://www.buckfast.org.uk)



## BEER

Part of the UNESCO World Heritage Jurassic Coast that stretches into the neighbouring Dorset, Beer is a gem of a fishing village. It was once home to notorious smuggler Jack Rattenbury and a prestigious lace industry that contributed to Queen Victoria's wedding dress. These days, simple pleasure can be had wandering the village's independent boutiques and cafés (locally-caught mackerel is often a speciality), hiking along the white chalk cliffs or admiring the colourful fishing boats idling on the shingle beach. Visit during the annual Beer Regatta (11-17 August) to see them in action.

[www.visitsouthdevon.co.uk](http://www.visitsouthdevon.co.uk)

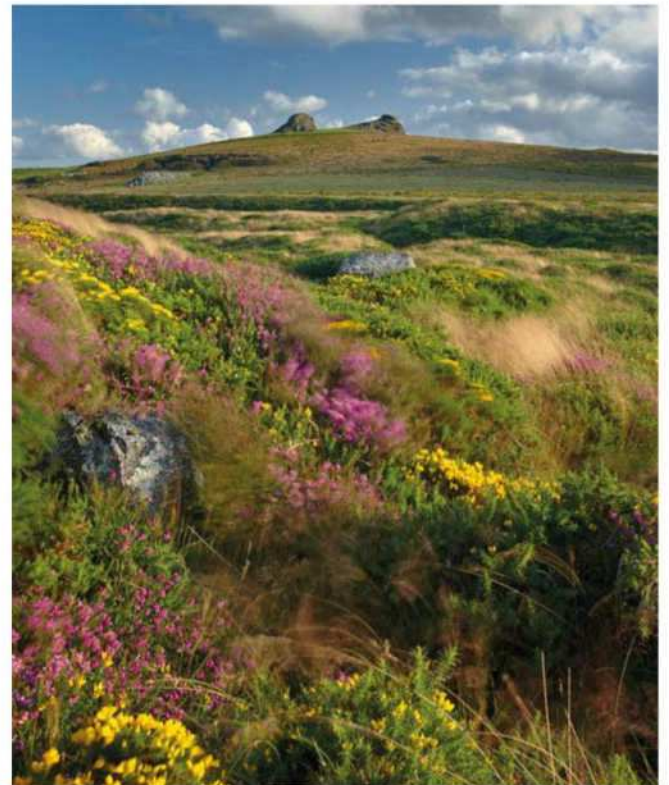


## DARTMOOR

After Steven Spielberg filmed scenes for his 2011 adaptation of *War Horse* in Dartmoor, he said of the area, "I have never before, in my long and eclectic career, been gifted with such an abundance of natural beauty".

Abundance is the right word. This 368-square mile National Park boasts 450 miles of public rights of way, as well as more than 1,000 'scheduled monuments' – archaeological sites or historic buildings afforded heritage protection. Highlights include the Sir Edwin Lutyens-designed Castle Drogo (currently undergoing conservation), the 220-foot Canonteign Falls and the ancient Fingle Woods.

[www.dartmoor.gov.uk](http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk)



## RHS GARDEN ROSEMOOR

This eight-acre garden was first developed in 1959 by the horticulturalist Lady Anne Berry. Born Anne Walpole and now the grand old age of 98, she is a direct descendant of Sir Robert Walpole, who became Britain's first Prime Minister in 1721.

The plot was once known as Rowe's Moor, yet the current name is more befitting a garden that now boasts around 2,000 rose plants. Topography also plays a big part in the character of the garden, the steep River Torridge valley encouraging species normally found in warmer climes. The award-winning Garden Kitchen, meanwhile, pairs hot meals with seasonal salads and vegetables plucked straight from the earth.

[www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/rosemoor](http://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/rosemoor)

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*August 3-10 Sidmouth Folk Week*

*August 18 Last Night of the Proms*

*August 24 Red Arrows & Battle of Britain Memorial Flight*

*August 25-26 Sidmouth Regatta*

*September 15 Classic Car Show*

*September 22 Sidmouth Illuminated Carnival*

*September 22-28 Sidmouth Walking Festival*

*October 6-14 Sidmouth Science Festival*

*November 17 Switching on of the Christmas Lights*

*December 7 Late Night Shopping*

*December 26 Boxing Day Swim*

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[northdevonfoodtrail.co.uk](http://northdevonfoodtrail.co.uk)

## CLOVELLY

Wedged into a small, woodland valley and packed with historic cottages that appear to tumble down the hill towards the quay, Clovelly is the picture perfect north Devon village.

The population is less than 500, yet countless more arrive each year to admire views across the Bristol Channel and visit the famous donkey stables. Historically, the animals lugged herring baskets up the steep cobbled streets, back when Clovelly was a busier fishing port in the 19th century. For a glimpse of domestic life in those simpler times, don't miss the period charms of Fisherman's Cottage, located down the side of the Kingsley Museum, a former home of Victorian author and social reformer Charles Kingsley.

[www.clovelly.co.uk](http://www.clovelly.co.uk)



VISIT

## A LA RONDE

If you visit only one seashell-encrusted, 16-sided house in your life, make sure it is this one. Spinster cousins Jane and Mary Parminster created this glorious hexadecagonal folly in 1796 and their eccentric approach to geometry extends from the diamond windows to the Octagon Room, which has the air of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as visitors are invited to choose which door to open next.

Throughout the lovingly-preserved National Trust house, examples of the Parminsters' artworks can be found alongside random curiosities collected on their travels, including an emu egg, and a chair belonging to Nelson's wife. The *pièce de résistance* is the Shell Gallery, rising up above the Octagon Room and featuring some 25,000 shells set into the luminous green walls.

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/a-la-ronde](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/a-la-ronde)

## ROYAL ALBERT MEMORIAL MUSEUM

There is a festival atmosphere this year to the Exeter museum better known as RAMM, as it celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2018. The museum was built in 1868 as a tribute to Queen Victoria's late husband Prince Albert, with Exeter chosen as the location by Sir Stafford Northcote, a president of the local School of Art and adviser to the prince for the Great Exhibition of 1851, an era-defining London event.

A £24 million redevelopment in 2011 provided a contemporary setting for a permanent collection strong on fine art, natural history and ethnographic artefacts. Forthcoming temporary exhibitions include *Devon Voices 1914-1918* (15 September to 6 January 2019), which uses the firsthand accounts of residents to paint a picture of the county during wartime.

[www.rammuseum.org.uk](http://www.rammuseum.org.uk)





SLEEP

## THE PIG AT COMBE

In many ways, this grandiose Elizabethan manor set in the leafy Otter Valley is a traditional country retreat: the chandeliers throughout, the acres of secluded land to explore, the gilt-framed old portraits in the stairwell, the walled kitchen garden out back.

In truth, things are done a little differently here, as evinced by a design team who converted the entrance hall into the main bar as they were in search of a suitably ornate space. Likewise, The Folly is a restaurant seemingly built entirely out of unfinished planks of wood ('derelict chic'), while two converted potting sheds make for calming spa treatment rooms.

[www.thepighotel.com/at-combe](http://www.thepighotel.com/at-combe)

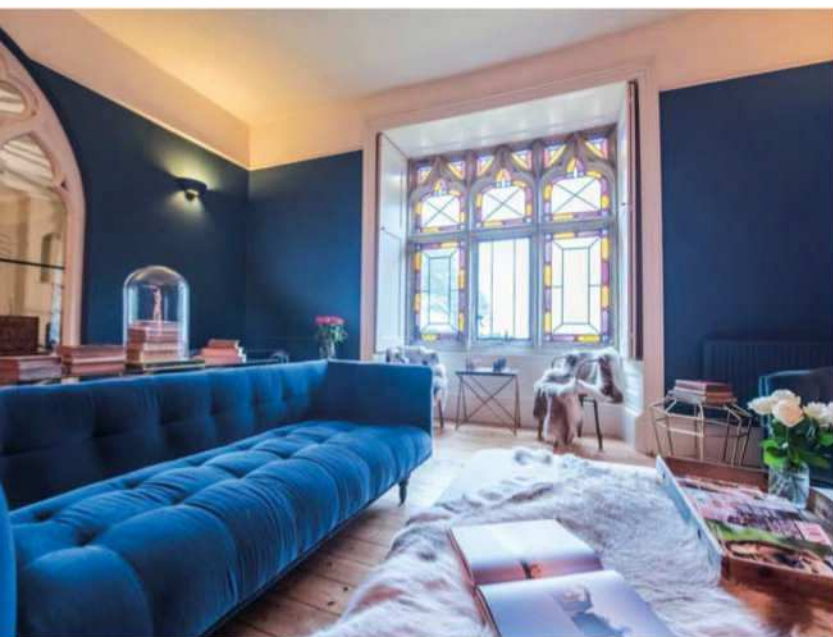
WWW.FEELINSKY.COM/NICKSMITHPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

## OLD PARK HALL

Deer once roamed across parkland where this Grade II-listed Gothic 1860s property now sits. In terms of décor, think Scottish baronial manor as imagined by a Soho creative type, as contemporary touches like the neon signs and blue velvet sofas sit alongside period features. For a truly cosy experience, grab a nightcap from the honesty bar and settle into the snug with a classic board game.

Old Park Hall is just outside Axminster, a pretty market town that gave its name to a type of carpet, while TV chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's River Cottage headquarters is nearby – perfect for a cookery course or a one-off dining experience.

[www.oldparkhall.co.uk](http://www.oldparkhall.co.uk)



## GIDLEIGH PARK

Navigating the winding, single-track Dartmoor roads that lead you to this elegant 107-acre estate can be hair-raising, yet the pay off is surely worth it. Tucked away in quiet moorland by the banks of the North Teign River, Gidleigh is a charming Tudor-style manor with a tiered garden and its own tennis court and croquet lawn.

Bedrooms are split between the main house and the thatched pavilion, yet it is the food that's made this a sought-after destination. Under chefs Michael Caines and Michael Wignall, Gidleigh's kitchen earned two Michelin stars. Chris Simpson took charge earlier this year and continues the focus on seasonal, locally sourced fine dining.

[www.gidleigh.co.uk](http://www.gidleigh.co.uk)



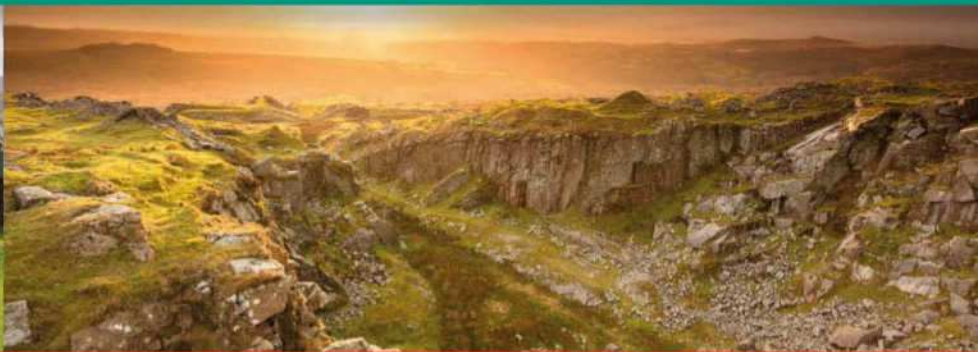
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[www.visitdartmoor.co.uk](http://www.visitdartmoor.co.uk)

[www.visitexeter.com](http://www.visitexeter.com)

## PLYMOUTH

For American tourists, this unassuming port city is where it all began. It was here that on 6 September 1620, the Pilgrim Fathers boarded the *Mayflower* in Sutton Harbour and set sail for the New World. An arch marks the spot on the quay next to the Barbican, a historic area that now boasts waterfront restaurants and cafés (look out for Himalayan Spice, set in a 16th-century eating house), as well as the Mayflower Museum, home to a scale model of the landmark ship.

Plymouth celebrates its maritime past with a statue of Sir Francis Drake glancing across the Hoe, a sea-facing park and promenade that overlooks Smeaton's Tower lighthouse and the Art Deco-style Tinside Lido (right).

[www.visitplymouth.co.uk](http://www.visitplymouth.co.uk)



DON'T MISS

## THE ENGLISH RIVIERA

While it may not rival its Italian or French counterparts for jetset glamour, England's own riviera is far more compact and boasts a less precious, knockabout charm. The name notionally refers to a 22-mile stretch of sandy south Devon coastline that takes in the resort towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham and is dotted with palm-like cabbage trees from New Zealand.

Follow the Agatha Christie Mile to take in Torquay landmarks associated with the internationally renowned crime author or visit in summer for the Paignton Festival (21-30 July), formerly the Torbay Carnival, which has been staging processions for more than a century.

[www.englishriviera.co.uk](http://www.englishriviera.co.uk)

VISITENGLAND/VISITPLYMOUTH/GETTY/ISTOCK/NATIONAL TRUST/DENNIS GILBERT

## COLETON FISHACRE

The Victorian theatre impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte was best known for building London's Savoy Hotel and masterminding the Gilbert and Sullivan partnership that created many much-loved comic operas. His son Rupert inherited the family business in 1913 and a decade later commissioned this beautiful country house just three miles from Brixham.

Opened to the public in 1999, the house retains its period interiors; the glamorous living room is particularly evocative of the high society gatherings that took place here in the Roaring Twenties. Rupert's wife, Lady Dorothy, had a thing for exotic plants so the 24-acre, RHS-accredited garden is still packed with rare specimens from the Mediterranean, South Africa and beyond. ■

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/coleton-fishacre](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/coleton-fishacre)





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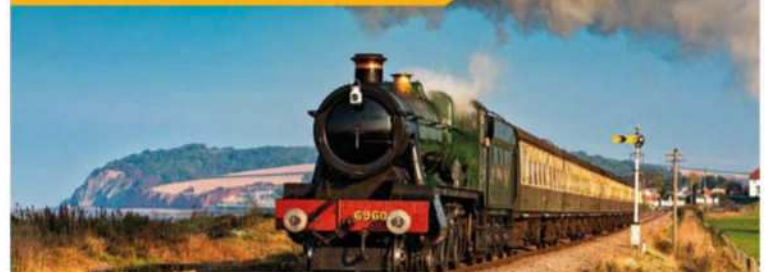
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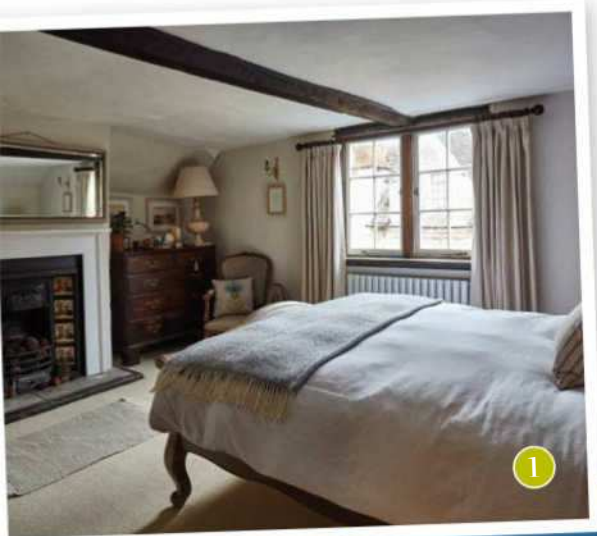


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# Room at the inn

Weary traveller, rest your head at these five historic lodgings



1

## 1 Sign of the Angel Wiltshire

There is an unrefined charm to this early Tudor coaching inn. Wardrobes are built around 600-year-old beams, service is pleasingly eccentric and sturdy logs are yours to throw on the vast hearth. The floorboards, meanwhile, are so warped that one can feel a little drunk as you navigate your way to one of the five en-suite rooms. Cosy woollen rugs and a calming, grey-beige colour scheme (think rustic Laura Ashley) will make it tempting to hide away for days.

Explore you should, though. The inn is situated in the Cotswolds borders village of Lacock, which includes chocolatiers CoCoChemistry, the rustic Lacock Pottery, and Lacock Abbey, home to the Fox Talbot Museum and one for photography buffs (see issue 202 for more details).

[www.signoftheangel.co.uk](http://www.signoftheangel.co.uk)

## 2 Bel and the Dragon Hampshire

One of six establishments dotted across the Home Counties with the same name, Kingsclere's Bel and the Dragon never feels like part of a small chain.

On a Friday night, the bar bustles with locals enjoying the 15th-century ambience of open fires and guest ales, while the restaurant is punchy enough to attract weekenders visiting Highclere Castle – the 'real' Downton Abbey – nearby. Look out for steaks cooked on the 300-degree Jospier Grill.

Upstairs, nine rooms offer White Company linens, Roberts radios and complimentary gin and whisky, while the residents-only drawing room has well-thumbed books on every windowsill to enjoy while stretching out on a sofa.

[www.belandthedragon.co.uk](http://www.belandthedragon.co.uk)

MARC WILSON



### 3 The Drovers Inn

Loch Lomond

Situated on a historic route used by Scottish cattle drovers for centuries, this stone-built lodging house opened in 1705. Folk hero Rob Roy was one of many to stop here and his grave lies 27 miles away.

Since 1980, this cheerful inn has also found itself falling on the newly designated West Highland Way, a 95-mile trail from just outside Glasgow to the foot of Britain's highest mountain, Ben Nevis.

The main 15-room inn is rumoured to be haunted, so the faint-hearted should opt for the modern chalets across the road instead. The restaurant, meanwhile, offers traditional favourites like haggis with “neeps and tatties” (mashed swede and potato) that will leave you more stuffed than the taxidermy bear guarding the front door.

[www.droversinn.co.uk](http://www.droversinn.co.uk)

### 4 The Bell at Skenfrith

Monmouthshire

So unspoilt is the countryside around Skenfrith that one can almost picture the joy on a weary 17th-century traveller's face as they crossed the bridge over the River Monnow toward the lights of this welcoming coaching inn.

Even after two 21st-century renovations, the flagstones and oak beams remain, adding rich character to the 11 rooms and award-winning restaurant here. Head chef Joseph Colman's menus draws on the inn's kitchen garden, while the Dog and Boot bar is, unsurprisingly, canine friendly.

The market town of Abergavenny – the so-called ‘Gateway to Wales’ – is only 12 miles to the west, yet The Bell is proud of the starry skies around Skenfrith, unspoilt by the sodium glow of streetlights.

[www.skenfrith.co.uk](http://www.skenfrith.co.uk)

### 5 The Rose & Crown

County Durham

In the honey-stone village of Romaldskirk, this 18th-century inn stands proudly under a wall of creepers. While the 14 rooms are hotel-guide standard and the restaurant boasts two AA rosettes, the spirit of the venture is still tied to the local community. The family of owners Thomas and Cheryl Robinson has farmed in the area for four generations, a copy of the local *Teesdale Mercury* newspaper is always available in the bar, and you can even buy handmade walking sticks fashioned by nearby craftsman and terrier breeder Ken Horner.

Hire the hotel's own Mercedes or E-type Jaguar during summer months to truly explore the surrounding dales (including the stunning Bowes Museum at Barnard Castle) in style. ■

[www.rose-and-crown.co.uk](http://www.rose-and-crown.co.uk)

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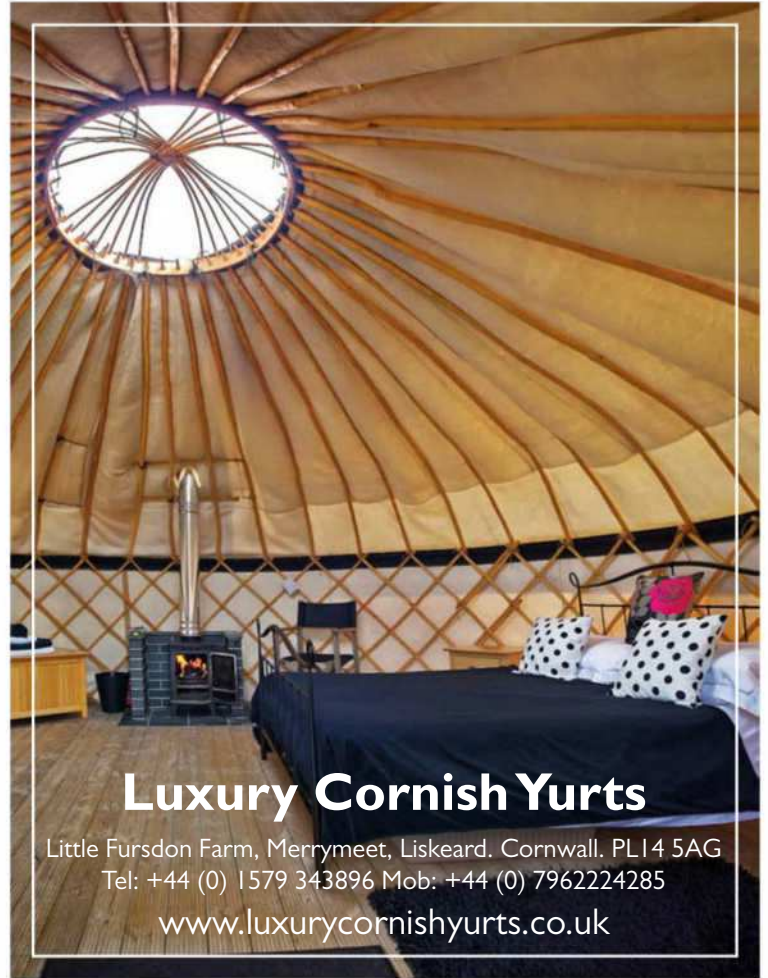
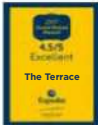
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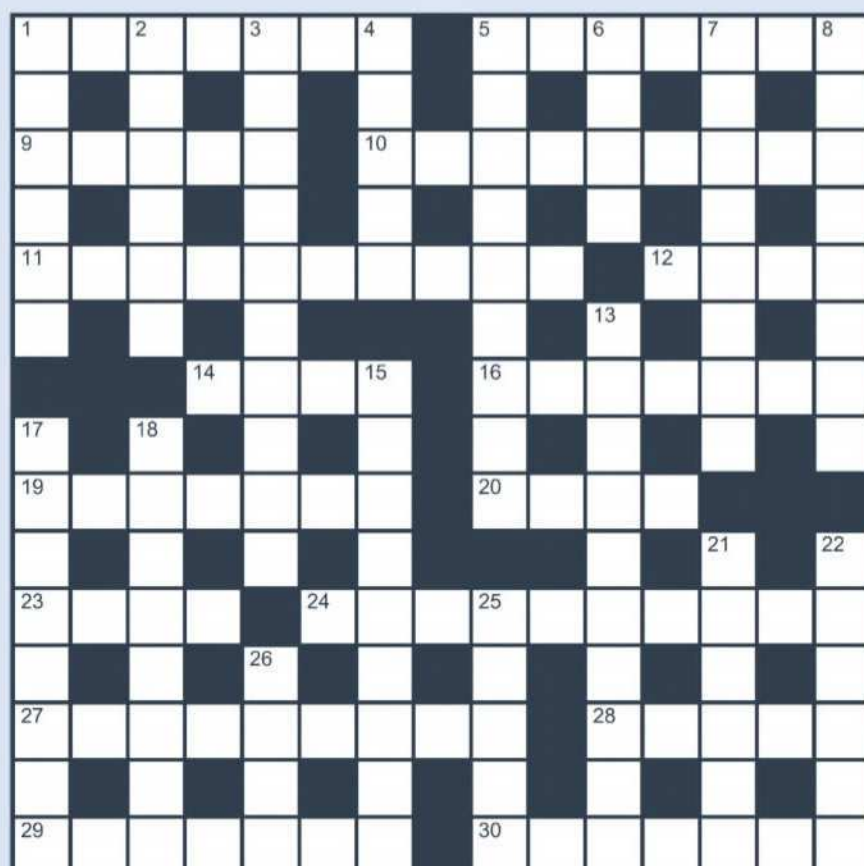
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## Crossword no 204

**Across**

- 1 Capital of the Shetland Islands (7)  
 5 \_\_\_\_\_ Burton, 19th-century architect who designed the Wellington Arch at London's Hyde Park Corner (7)  
 9 Relief carving in onyx, agate, etc. (5)  
 10 Village located on the easternmost point of the Isle of Wight (9)  
 11 Aberdeenshire castle built in 1626 for merchant William Forbes (10)  
 12 Heraldic beast (4)  
 14 \_\_\_\_\_ Gill, renowned English sculptor, engraver and typographer (4)  
 16 Square-mouthed estuary on the northwest margin of East Anglia (3,4)  
 19 George \_\_\_\_\_, 17th-century poet and rector at Bemerton, Wiltshire (7)  
 20 Little \_\_\_\_\_, heroine of Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop* (4)  
 23 Architect of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton (4)  
 24 Lake in London's Hyde Park (10)  
 27 Custodian of a book collection (9)  
 28 British composer of *The Planets* (5)  
 29 Former prison in the City of London, closed in 1902 (7)  
 30 \_\_\_\_\_ Court Palace, former palace of Henry VIII in the London borough of Richmond upon Thames (7)

**Down**

- 1 Wiltshire village near Chippenham, home to Lacock Abbey (6)  
 2 Allan \_\_\_\_\_, prominent 18th-century Scottish portrait painter (6)  
 3 English poet and composer who wrote *Severn and Somme* in 1917 (4,6)  
 4 Oxford college established in 1870 (5)  
 5 Scottish town that was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Strathclyde (9)  
 6 Lytes \_\_\_\_\_, Somerset manor house owned by the National Trust (4)  
 7 Type of unaccompanied song popular in the 16th and 17th centuries (8)  
 8 A dagger worn in the stocking as part of Highland dress (5-3)  
 13 Northumberland village, a popular stop on the Pennine Way trail (10)  
 15 Duchess of Cambridge's first name (9)  
 17 Isle of Wight seaside resort (8)  
 18 A medieval weapon firing bolts (8)  
 21 Spring flower of which 10 species grow wild in Britain (6)  
 22 Cecil \_\_\_\_\_, eminent fashion and portrait photographer (6)  
 25 Humorous illustrated periodical founded in 1841 (5)  
 26 Small town near Dolgellau, a centre of the Welsh Methodist revival (4)

## BOOK REVIEWS

Our selection of the best new books about Britain

***The British Museum* by James Hamilton**

Today London's British Museum is the 10th most visited museum in the world, yet it began life in 1759 as the collection of just three men: Sir Hans Sloane, Sir Robert Cotton and Edward Harley, the 2nd Earl of Oxford.

Historian James Hamilton charts the intervening 250 years with vigour, documenting Victorian power struggles and contemporary approaches to collecting in a respectful yet questioning way. (Head of Zeus, £18.99)

***Urban Rambles* by Nicholas Rudd-Jones**

A nice long walk doesn't just mean heading for the countryside. Twenty city circuits are presented in depth here, from a medieval trail in Lincoln to four separate trips in central London.

Slotted among the walks come handy little primers on everything from Victorian industry to the difference between Cambridge and Oxford universities. (Frances Lincoln, £16.99)

***Spitfire – A Very British Love Story* by John Nichol**

Would Britain have prevailed in the Second World War were it not for the Spitfire fighter plane? It is tempting to attribute Hitler's downfall to this triumph of British engineering, though rather than resolve that unanswerable question, retired RAF officer John Nichol instead explores why we treat the Spitfire as "more than a plane". From dogfights on D-Day to decommissioning, it's a thrilling ride. (Simon & Schuster, £20)

**Solutions to crossword 203**

**Across:** 1 Douglas, 5 Dawlish, 9 Piper, 10 Gunpowder, 11 Norman Shaw, 12 Bain, 14 Tomb, 16 The Naze, 19 Rotunda, 20 Rose, 23 Wigs, 24 Headingley, 27 Sedgemoor, 28 Trent, 29 Aintree, 30 Sandown  
**Down:** 1 Daphne, 2 Uppark, 3 Lorna Doone, 4 Sagas, 5 Doncaster, 6 Wool, 7 Indiaman, 8 Haringey, 13 Kensington, 15 Brasenose, 17 Brownsea, 18 Stagsden, 21 Cluedo, 22 Lynton, 25 Darts, 26 Wear



*Blood Swept Lands  
and Seas of Red  
at the Tower of  
London in 2014*

# The Poppy

As the centenary of the First World War armistice approaches, **Florence Sheward** pays tribute to this potent symbol of remembrance

**T**he First World War ended on 11 November 1918. Much of the fighting had taken place in Western Europe, ravaging otherwise picturesque countryside. One of the few flowers to thrive in this environment was the red Flanders poppy, native to its namesake part of northern Belgium.

It was the Canadian military surgeon Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae who observed the symbolism of the poppy when he penned *In Flanders Fields* as a tribute to a friend lost in the Second Battle of Ypres. The poem begins “In Flanders’ fields the poppies blow/Between the crosses, row on row”, drawing a graceful parallel between the resilient flowers and the individual memorials to lost men.

McCrae’s poem in turn inspired American professor Moina Michael to write her own poem, *We Shall Keep the Faith*, and create silk poppies that were brought to Britain by the French lecturer Anna Guérin. The British Legion (before gaining royal status) was quick to adopt the idea and sold them on 11 November, with proceeds helping war veterans find housing and new jobs. By 1926, production moved to a former brewery in Richmond, London, which continues to make around 36 million poppies each year.

On 17 July 2014, artists Paul Cummins and Tom Piper marked the centenary of Britain entering the First World War by opening the art installation, *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*. For this, the duo filled the Tower of London’s moat

with 888,246 ceramic poppies – one for each British military fatality during the war. The installation proved so popular that two smaller versions have toured the UK ever since as part of the *14-18 Now* programme. Forthcoming sites will include the Imperial War Museum North (8 September to 25 November), with the Manchester venue also hosting a new armistice exhibition, *Lest We Forget?* (27 July to 24 February 2019). “Over the past 100 years, the artificial poppy

has continued to find contemporary relevance in representing not only the dead of the First World War, but those who have lost their lives to conflict ever since,” says curator Emma Harrold. “This exhibition will display a range of objects relating to the poppy, from examples of pressed flowers sent home from the Western Front to early fabric poppies sold in the immediate aftermath of war.”

Yet while the poppy has become a potent symbol of remembrance, there has also been much debate about what else it does and does not stand for. “The meaning of the artificial flower has been often disputed, especially as modern conflicts have generally tended to lack the popular consensus of the world wars,” says Harrold.

The Royal British Legion now states that the poppy is neither a symbol of death nor a sign of support for war, that the red flower was not chosen to represent “the colour of blood” and it should reflect no religious or political bias either. Such firm beliefs simply help to underline what a potent symbol the humble flower has become. ■

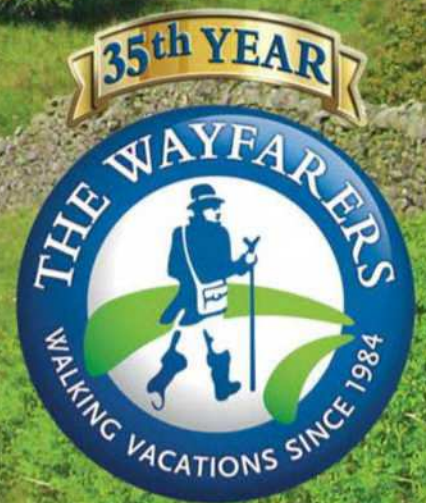


**The Royal British Legion was quick to adopt the poppy and sold them on Armistice Day**

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