

PLACES TO VISIT

Guy Sjögren



1 ST WYSTAN'S CHURCH, REPTON



Jackie Stubbs Photography

Not surprisingly, opportunities to see examples of Anglo-Saxon architecture are rare. One such opportunity is to be found in the Derbyshire village of Repton, a mile or two off the A38 between Derby and

Burton-on-Trent. It was at Repton in 653 AD that Christianity was first preached in the Midlands. An abbey was built there and, early in the eighth century, construction of the famous Repton crypt was begun. Twelve centuries later, Sir Nikolaus Pevsner wrote: 'the chancel... and the crypt form one of the most precious survivals of Anglo-Saxon architecture in England'. An added bonus for visitors making the trip to Repton between 7 October and 27 November 2014 will be the presence in the church of the Staffordshire Hoard Touring Exhibition, which uses high-quality replicas and activities to tell the story of the discovery of the hoard.

St Wystan's Church, Willington Road, Repton DE65 6FH Website: www.reptonchurch.org.uk

2 THE STAFFORDSHIRE HOARD AT THE POTTERIES MUSEUM & ART GALLERY



The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery

The exhibition of selected pieces from the Staffordshire Hoard on permanent display at The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery in Stoke-on-Trent has an interesting twist. Not only does the exhibition attempt to answer the question 'What can the Staffordshire Hoard tell us about Anglo-Saxon life and death?' but, by looking through the other end of the telescope, it also tries to answer another question: 'What can everyday Anglo-Saxon objects tell us about the Staffordshire Hoard?' This fascinating exhibition sets pieces from the hoard in context among items from the museum's collection of Anglo-Saxon finds, many never displayed before. Thus the display offers an intriguing glimpse into our ancestors' lives.

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Bethesda Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3DW Phone: +44 (0) 1782 232323 Website: www.stokemuseums.org.uk

3 TAMWORTH CASTLE

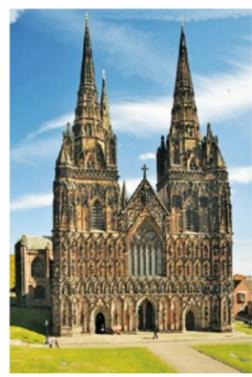


Tamworth Borough Council

Tamworth, in South Staffordshire, was the ancient capital of Mercia and was once home to the King of Mercia's palace. Quite apart from the castle's intrinsic historical interest, there is a permanent exhibition in the Long Gallery devoted to the 'Tamworth Story', a substantial part of which relates the history of Tamworth in the Mercian era. If you intend visiting Tamworth Castle, be aware that opening hours vary depending upon the time of year. Visit the website or phone for up-to-date information.

Tamworth Castle, The Holloway, Tamworth B79 7NA Phone: + 44 (0) 1827 709 626 or (0) 1827 709 629 Website: www.tamworthcastle.co.uk

4 THE MERCIAN TRAIL



Lichfield Camera Club

The Mercian Trail is being developed to link venues across Staffordshire and the West Midlands, and to tell the story of the Staffordshire Hoard and the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of

Mercia. In addition to Tamworth and the Touring Exhibition, there are three permanent and complementary exhibitions. These are at The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent (Anglo-Saxon life and the importance of Mercia); Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (the craftsmanship of the hoard makers, and Mercia's international links); and the Chapter House, Lichfield Cathedral (the Christianisation of Mercia, featuring the Lichfield Angel and the St Chad Gospels, as well as a small number of pieces from the hoard). Further information, including locations, opening times and contact details, can be found on the website below.

Website: www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk



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5 OFFA'S DYKE



Shropshire Tourism (UK) Ltd

Doubt exists about the actual length of Offa's Dyke, as Damian Tyler's article suggests. But, short or long, this massive linear earthwork

unquestionably passes through the very western extremities of the West Midlands region. Offa's Dyke forms one of the English National Trails. In Shropshire, there are two sections of the trail for which circular walks have been devised: one is a ten-kilometre walk starting at Llanymynech; the other, of just over seven kilometres, starts and finishes at Oswestry. More adventurous walkers might want to attempt all, or part of, the National Trail. Either way, the websites below will help you with your planning before you reach for your boots.

Websites: www.shropshirewalking.co.uk/offas-dyke www.nationaltrail.co.uk/offas-dyke-path

6 CHURCH OF ST MARY AND ODDA'S CHAPEL, DEERHURST



Courtesy J.Hunt

Strictly speaking, the Gloucestershire village of Deerhurst lies outside the West Midlands – but only by a mere two-and-a-half kilometres. Most unusually, Deerhurst has two Saxon churches:

the ninth-century parish church of St Mary and, 200 metres away, the eleventh-century Odda's Chapel, with St Mary's being regarded as one of the most complete Anglo-Saxon churches in England. For further information on St Mary's, go to the Cotswolds website below and scroll down the list on the right-hand side to find Deerhurst. For information on Odda's Chapel, go to the English Heritage website below.

Church of St Mary and Odda's Chapel, Deerhurst, GL19 4BX Websites: www.cotswolds.info/places www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/oddas-chapel

7 ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, BRIXWORTH



Richard Chappell/Friends of Brixworth Church

Lying a few miles to the east of our regional boundary is the church of All Saints in the Northamptonshire village of Brixworth. This hilltop church, in continuous use as a place of Christian worship since its foundation by the monks of Peterborough c. 680 AD, is one of superlatives. It is the largest surviving Anglo-Saxon building in England, and has been labelled as 'perhaps the most imposing architectural memorial of the seventh century yet surviving north of the Alps'. At the west end of the church an external stair turret is one of only four similar ones to be found in England, whilst the ring crypt around the apse at the east end is one of only three of its kind in Europe.

Church of All Saints, Church Road, Brixworth NN6 9DF

Website: www.friendsofbrixworthchurch.org.uk

8 WORCESTER CATHEDRAL



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A visit to Worcester Cathedral will satisfy both Anglo-Saxon generalists and specialists alike. The generalist, keen to discover the Cathedral's Anglo-Saxon roots, will find

an exhibition in the Crypt and on the main floor entitled 'Worcester Cathedral - Telling the Story' an excellent place to start. There, visitors will find a number of newly-designed storyboards and interactive touchscreens recounting the story of the Cathedral. For the specialist, a visit to the Cathedral library and archive, both of which have formed an integral part of the life of the cathedral since Anglo-Saxon times, will be a rewarding experience. Guided tours of these resources are available, although by prior appointment only. For further information on the library tour – and for tours of the Cathedral – please ring the appropriate telephone number below.

Worcester Cathedral, Worcester WR1 2LA Phone: Library tours + 44 (0) 1905 732922 Cathedral tours + 44 (0) 1905 732900 Website: www.worcestercathedral.co.uk

9 SAXON CROSS-SHAFT, ST PETER'S CHURCHYARD, WOLVERHAMPTON



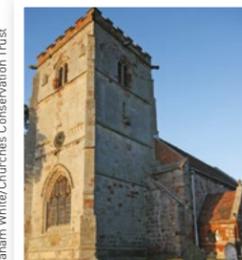
Courtesy Sue Whitehouse

Situated in the heart of Wolverhampton, and at the town's highest point, is the Collegiate Church of St Peter. The church was founded in 994 AD by Lady Wulfruna and, in the churchyard, stands a 14-foot high Saxon cross-shaft. Although its precise origin is unknown, it is probably a re-

used Roman column from Wroxeter or Wall. Originally thought to have carried a cross-head, the column is elaborately carved and combines acanthus leaf decoration characteristic of the late-tenth century with friezes of birds and beasts pecking fruit. Pollution and exposure have caused the decoration to deteriorate over the centuries. However, if you are in Wolverhampton, it is worth searching out the column.

The Collegiate Church of St Peter, Exchange Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1TS Phone: + 44 (0) 1902 422642 Website: www.wulfruna.org.uk

10 ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, WROXETER, SHROPSHIRE



Graham White/Churches Conservation Trust

Wroxeter is on the site of the Roman city of Viroconium, with the redundant church of St Andrew lying a quarter of a mile or so to

the south. The earliest parts of the church are Anglo-Saxon, although the precise date of its foundation remains uncertain. Evidence suggests that a church was built in the area of the Roman bath in the fifth or sixth century. A preaching cross was erected in the churchyard in the eighth century. It is thought that the oldest existing fabric in the present church dates from the eighth or ninth century. This consists of large stones which came from the public buildings of the Roman town. The Churches Conservation Trust – the national charity protecting historic churches at risk, including St Andrew's – refers to the church as 'an archaeologist's delight'.

St Andrew's Church, Wroxeter SY5 6PH Website: www.visitchurches.org.uk (The Churches Conservation Trust)