

# PLACES TO VISIT

Guy Sjögren



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# Waterloo in the West Midlands

## 1 The Queen's Own Hussars Museum



© James Kerr

Formed in 1689, the 7th (Queen's Own) Hussars was, surprisingly, the only West Midlands regiment to have fought at Waterloo. Drawn from Warwickshire and Worcestershire, this cavalry regiment was one of sixteen such British regiments that formed part of the allied cavalry corps at Waterloo. Although not committed to the battle until late in the afternoon, the 7th Hussars made more than a dozen charges against Napoleon's forces, suffering the highest percentage of casualties of any British cavalry unit. Housing exhibits from the battle and subsequent periods of the regiment's history, the museum is located in the ancient and impressive Lord Leycester Hospital in Warwick - a building worthy of a visit in its own right.

**The Queen's Own Hussars Museum,**  
60 High Street, Warwick CV34 4BH  
Phone: + 44 (0)1926 492035  
[www.qohmuseum.org.uk](http://www.qohmuseum.org.uk)

## 3 Lord Hill's Column, Shrewsbury



© Guy Sjogren

## 2 The Shropshire Regimental Museum



© Mike Hayward

The 53rd Regiment of Foot was formed in 1755 and was later designated 'The Shropshire Regiment'. Having served in numerous conflicts, the regiment sailed for India in 1805 and remained there for nearly twenty years. However, such was the demand for troops during the early 1800s that a second battalion was formed in 1804. This battalion served with Wellington throughout the Peninsular War but was in England at the time of Waterloo. Following Napoleon's detention, the battalion accompanied him to St Helena where it was to act as his guard until 1817. The Shropshire Regimental Museum, housed in the border fortress of Shrewsbury Castle, is beautifully presented and, amongst other items, contains exhibits relating to the regiment's time on St Helena - including a lock of Napoleon's hair.

**Shropshire Regimental Museum, The Castle,**  
Castle Street, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AT  
Phone: + 44 (0)1743 358516  
[www.shropshireregimentalmuseum.co.uk](http://www.shropshireregimentalmuseum.co.uk)

As Nick Lipscombe's article suggests, General Lord Hill was one of Wellington's most trusted commanders, both during the Peninsular campaign and at Waterloo. It can also be argued that Hill is Shropshire's most famous soldier. So highly esteemed was he that almost £6,000 was raised by county subscription to pay for a monument in his honour. Completed in 1816, Lord Hill's column, as it is known, stands in an appropriately commanding position at the eastern end of Shrewsbury's Abbey Foregate. The Doric column, surmounted by a statue of the General, is 133 feet in height, and thus exceeds Nelson's Column by some fifteen feet. The elements have not been kind to the statue and plans are afoot to replace it with a replica.

**Lord Hill's Column, Abbey Foregate,**  
Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND  
[www.friendsoflordhillscolumn.co.uk](http://www.friendsoflordhillscolumn.co.uk)

#### 4 The Birmingham Gun-Barrel Proof House



© Birmingham Gun-Barrel Proof House

The Birmingham Proof House was established by Act of Parliament in 1813 and was paid for by members of the then prosperous Birmingham gun trade. Its purpose was to provide a testing and certification service for firearms in order to prove their quality of construction. Two hundred years on, the Proof House remains largely unchanged in both purpose and construction. In 2000, a museum was opened at the Proof House with the aim of reflecting the role which the arms and ammunition trades played in the industrial heritage and expansion of Birmingham. Guided tours of the museum can be arranged for groups of between four and ten people. Go to the website below, click on 'Museum' and follow the link to 'Visits'.

**The Birmingham Gun-Barrel Proof House,**  
Banbury Street, Birmingham, B5 5RH  
Phone: + 44 (0)121 643 3860  
[www.gunproof.com](http://www.gunproof.com)

#### 5 Lucien Bonaparte in the West Midlands

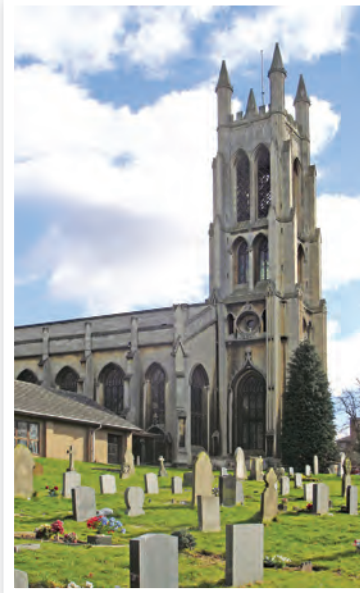


© Ron Hoo

Lucien Bonaparte was a younger brother of the more famous Napoleon. Lucien's revolutionary political views led to an abrasive relationship with his older sibling. The brothers eventually fell out over Lucien's marriage, forcing Lucien into self-imposed exile in Rome. In 1809, he attempted to sail to the United States, but his ship was intercepted and he was brought to England. Prisoner as Lucien was, the government allowed him and his family to live comfortably. He spent six months at Dinham House in Ludlow before moving to Thorngrove House in Worcestershire. Thorngrove is not open to the public. However, Dinham House, although currently occupied by Clearview Stoves Ltd, is accessible. The company generously allows individual visitors to wander through the house, where there is a small museum dedicated to Lucien Bonaparte and other occupants of the house.

**Dinham House, Dinham, Ludlow, SY8 1EH**  
Phone: + 44 (0)1584 878100  
[www.clearviewstoves.com/ludlow](http://www.clearviewstoves.com/ludlow)

#### 6 The Waterloo Churches



© Mattie Underhill

A combination of an expanding urban population and an inadequate supply of church seats led to the passing of the Church Building Act in 1818: legislation that allocated one million pounds for the construction of new churches. Some of the new churches were known as 'Waterloo churches', and were built in an act of national thanksgiving for

the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. At least three were built in the West Midlands. Of the two Birmingham churches, St Peter's, Dale End was demolished in 1899, and St Thomas, Bath Row was partially destroyed during an air raid in 1940. However, the church of St George, Kidderminster is still a flourishing parish church and has a commanding position overlooking the town.

**St George's Church, Radford Avenue, Kidderminster, DY10 2ES**  
Phone: + 44 (0)1562 822131  
[www.kidderminstereast.org.uk](http://www.kidderminstereast.org.uk)