



Four family adventures
exploring bloody
deeds, ghastly ghosts &
fearsome folklore

HEREFORDSHIRE

Get Ready for

FOLKLORE FROLICS
LEGENDARY ADVENTURE
MYTHICAL MISCHIEF
WILD SCAMPERS
CREEPY CAPERS
OUTDOOR ANTICS






FOUR FAMILY ADVENTURES

Get to know the 'dark' side of Herefordshire...beyond the pretty black and white houses and lush green fields, you'll find ruined castles, spooky caves and centuries of bloody deeds, ghastly ghosts and fearsome folklore!

The Hideous Histories of Herefordshire will guide you on a journey through the county's past. As you uncover our gory stories, you'll also discover some fantastic places to play, imagine, create and learn.

Each of the four adventures brings history and places to life. And they even link to Key Stage 2 and 3 curriculum topics, including Prehistoric Britain, the English Civil War, The Tudors and The Plague.

Share your adventures with us on social media!

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HIDEOUS HISTORIES of HEREFORDSHIRE

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HEREFORDSHIRE

visitherefordshire.co.uk/hideous-histories

Beheadings, Bewitched Bells & The Black Death

A TINY HISTORIC CITY WITH A TUMULTUOUS PAST

1 Beheaded in High Town - The Green Dragon Hotel

The Green Dragon is one of the oldest buildings in the city and there has been an inn on this site for over 900 years. Today, it makes a stylish stop for a bite to eat. Around the corner (in front of Marks & Spencer) an execution plaque is set into the pavement. To see Owain Tudor's sword and other treasures, book a visit to Hereford Civic Museum.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

After losing the Battle of Mortimer's Cross in 1461 (see North Herefordshire) - itself a bloody and muddy chapter in our county's history - Owain Tudor met his grisly fate in Hereford. The founder of the royal Tudor dynasty and grandfather of King Henry VIII was held prisoner at the Green Dragon Hotel. He thought his family ties would save him from death and was expecting imprisonment. But he was out of luck. He was brutally beheaded in the centre of town and his severed head was placed on the steps of the market cross for all to see.

It is said a mad woman washed the blood from Tudor's face, combed his hair and lit 100 candles around the cross.

The Green Dragon Hotel,
Broad Street, Hereford,
HR4 9BG

Hereford Civic Museum,
Town Hall,
St Owen Street,
Hereford HR1 2PJ
Free entry,
Appointment required



Hereford Cathedral

2 The Mischievous Mermaid of Marden - Hereford Museum & Art Gallery

Just along the street lies Hereford Museum & Art Gallery. Inside this gothic-revival building there's all manner of wonders, from a hive of bees to a two-headed calf. Seek out the Marden Bell which lies at the heart of a local legend.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

In 1848, workmen were dredging the River Lugg near Marden Church when they found an ancient Celtic bell, dating from the 800s AD. This precious find recalled a local tale: it was said that the church bell fell into the river and a mermaid appeared. She seized the bell and took it down into the deep. Locals were told that the only way to recover it was to yoke 12 white oxen and pull it free in complete silence - any noise would wake the mischievous mermaid now sleeping inside it. The villagers successfully pulled the bell to the water's edge before one man cried out, "In spite of the Devils in hell, now well land Marden's great bell". The mermaid awoke and dived back into the river, carrying the bell with her. And so there it lay on the river bed - perhaps with a mermaid residing inside - until recovered by those Victorian workers.

Hereford Museum & Art Gallery,
Broad Street, Hereford HR4 9AU
Free entry



Hereford Museum & Art Gallery



MINI QUEST

TREASURE HUNT

It's time for i-spy in the Hereford
Museum & Art Gallery.
Can you spot:

- ☐ ROMAN MOSAIC
- ☐ 2 METRE LONG FISH
- ☐ MARDEN BELL
- ☐ PUPPET THEATRE
- ☐ FIVE SWORDS
- ☐ VICTORIAN KITCHEN

BEST BITS FOR KIDS

In Hereford, make time to:

- > Try the amazing eats at Burger Shop
- > Pop into the shops on Church Street including Hey, Honey! and Seedling
- > Go back in time at the Black & White House Museum
- > Discover the story of cider at The Museum of Cider



Black & White House Museum



Hereford Cathedral

3 Razed to the Ground & a Plague Pit - Hereford Cathedral

Let off steam on the Cathedral lawns, before admiring the stained glass and ancient shrines. Visit the Mappa Mundi exhibition to see the world's largest surviving medieval map with its fantastical illustrations.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Today the Cathedral is a tranquil, welcoming space but that hasn't always been the case. In October 1055, seven priests were killed when the original Cathedral was burnt to the ground. The entire city was left in ruins following the defeat of English Earl Ralph who had battled Gruffudd, self-proclaimed King of Cymru, leader of the rebel Welsh army. Meanwhile, when the foundations for the Mappa Mundi museum were being excavated in 1993, three 14th-century burial pits were discovered. They contained nearly a thousand skeletons of Black Death victims!

Hereford Cathedral & Mappa Mundi,
Cathedral Close, Hereford, HR1 2NG.
Free entry to Cathedral, paid entry to Mappa Mundi



4 The Original Game of Thrones - Sutton Walls

Five miles from the Cathedral is Sutton Walls, a famous Iron Age hillfort. Fill your lungs with fresh air as you walk (or run) around and imagine the grisly battles that took place here.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

'Game of Thrones' fans will be familiar with the shocking 'Red Wedding' episode which has strong parallels to what happened here in the 700s AD. King Offa ruled this region and offered his daughter's hand in marriage to King Ethelbert. Travelling for days, the husband-to-be reached Offa's palace but the wedding never went ahead as, soon after arriving, Ethelbert and his courtiers were brutally murdered.

It's not known why Offa treated his fellow king so callously - was it to gain power, to subdue rebellion or, as some say, to pacify the jealous Queen Cynethryth? Archaeological digs on this site have since unearthed 24 decapitated skeletons, which are possibly the remains of the wedding party. Meanwhile, Ethelbert was buried near the river in Marden and a sacred well rose up on the spot. And this happens to be the place where the bell was found in The Mischievous Mermaid story!

Sutton Walls, Sutton St Nicholas, Hereford, HR1 3AY Free entry

THINGS TO DO NEARBY

- > Go to Marden Church to see where the mermaid stole the bell from
- > Stroll around the pretty ponds at Kenchester Water Gardens
- > Run around the trails and adventure playground at Queenswood Country Park
- > Tour the castle and gorgeous gardens at Hampton Court Castle (April to Sept)



MINI QUEST

STICK SWORD

On guard! Transform two sturdy sticks into a trusty sword.

YOU WILL NEED:



Two strong sticks, one around 50cm long and the other around 20cm long. Plus a ball of wool or string.

HOW TO:

The long stick will act as the handle and blade, whilst the shorter stick will be the guard which protects your hand. Cross the sticks at a suitable point and then wrap the wool around lots of times in an 'x' shape to bind them into position. Once they are firmly in place, you can wind around more wool to decorate the rest of the handle and guard.

Savage Battles, Spectres & Free Speech North Herefordshire

A LAND OF LEGEND AND BITTER CONFLICT. DOTTED WITH INDEPENDENT MARKET TOWNS. HISTORIC HOUSES AND FANTASTIC WOODS

5 A Very Bloody Battle - Wigmore Castle

Believe it or not, this area was once ferociously fought over by the English and Welsh. Travel back in time at the dramatic ruins of Wigmore Castle: roam the walls, duck under arches and imagine seeing off invaders!

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Blood was spilled nearby at the famous Battle of Mortimer's Cross during the War of the Roses. Edward Mortimer, future king of England, was only 18 when he led his troops into battle. On a bitterly cold day in 1461, Edward faced opposing forces, led by Jasper Tudor, half brother of Henry VI. Jasper marched from South Wales, joined by his father Owain Tudor. Meanwhile, Wigmore Castle was prepared if things went wrong for Edward.

On the day, Edward's archers unleashed fatal arrows upon the enemy, inflicting heavy casualties. The battle was tough. Soldiers fought as knights rode into battle in full suits of armour. Jasper's army was pushed back to the river, fleeing men drowned in the freezing water and those who made it across were cut down by reserves on the other side. Jasper escaped on horseback, but his father was less fortunate... see the City & Central Herefordshire trail.

Wigmore Castle, Wigmore, HR6 9UB Free entry

6 The Most Haunted House in the Midlands - National Trust Croft Castle

Arriving at Croft Castle, have fun in the natural play area or visit the 1000-year-old oak tree. Then it's time to talk ghosts! Tiptoe around the Castle and see if you spot any of its spectres.

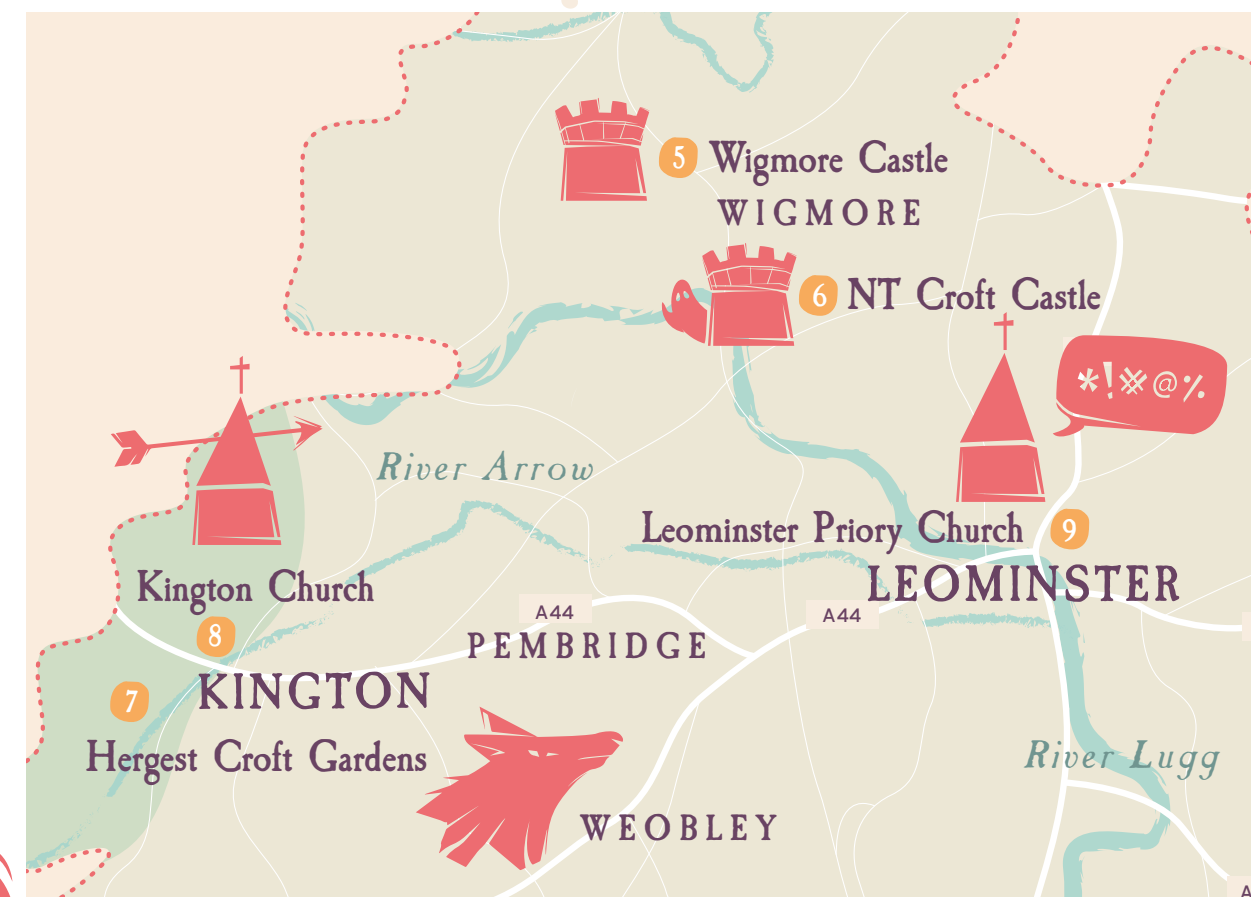
WHAT'S THE STORY?

There are seven ghosts that supposedly haunt this historic house. Staff have heard ghostly wailing babies whilst visitors have sighted a woman wearing a crinoline who walks into rooms then disappears. Croft's most famous phantom is the seven-foot tall ghost of Owain Glyndwr. A Welsh hero, Glyndwr wanted to forge an independent Welsh state to include Herefordshire. He led a revolt against the King and was the last native Welshman to be crowned the Prince of Wales. His sister, Morfudd, married into the Croft family but there is no record of what became of Glyndwr himself. Some say he never died but sleeps in secret locations, waiting for the day when his country needs him again.

National Trust Croft Castle & Parkland, Yarpole, Leominster, HR6 9PW Paid entry



NT Croft Castle



MINI QUEST

WOODLAND CROWN

YOU WILL NEED:



HOW TO:

Cut a strip of card which fits around your head. Cover it in double sided sticky tape and then hunt for gorgeous things to attach. Try seasonal leaves, flowers and feathers, as well as bark, twigs and acorns.

Become a magnificent king or queen of the forest.





Hergest Croft Gardens

7 A Terrifying Black Dog - Hergest Croft Gardens

Our next stop is the tiny town of Kington where there are plenty of great places for a snack. Or stretch your legs with a walk up Hergest Ridge, home to wild ponies. Hergest Croft Gardens is a colourful place for a stroll or visit the nearby Small Breeds Farm Park & Owl Centre.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Sir Thomas Vaughan of Hergest Court was nicknamed Black Vaughan on account of his evil streak. And his sinister legend inspired Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. He was decapitated in combat in 1469, and his faithful bloodhound bounded onto the battlefield. He snatched his master's bleeding head in its jaws and ran home. Vaughan's headless body was laid to rest in Kington Church, but his evil spirit had already been released. It took the form of a terrifying black bull that rampaged around the area accompanied by a black hound. Locals were afraid to leave their homes. Finally, 12 priests performed the exorcism that banished Black Vaughan's spirit, trapping it inside a snuff box and burying it near his home. You can peek at Hergest Court from the grounds of Hergest Croft Gardens or see it from the Hergest Road (which runs to Brilley).

Hergest Croft Gardens, Ridgebourne Road, Kington, Herefordshire, HR5 3EG. Paid entry for adults, children free



Hergest Ridge

8 A Bleeding Heart - Kington Church

And there's more to tell about the Vaughan family...

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Vaughan's wife Ellen Gethin was known as Ellen the Terrible! Her brother was murdered by their cousin following an argument and Ellen decided to exact revenge. Dressed in men's clothing, she entered an archery tournament and shot an arrow straight through his heart. Visit Kington Church to see the alabaster tomb of Ellen and Thomas, with a dog curled at their feet.

St Mary's Church
Church Road, Kington, HR5 3AG



Grange Court

9 A 19th Century hero of free speech - Leominster Priory

And on to Leominster, famed for its antique shops. The Priory is a church which contains a unique object of English social history.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

In the past, speaking truth to power had very different consequences as the town's famous resident, Jenny Pipes, knew only too well. She was the last recorded woman in England to suffer the humiliation and terror of a ducking stool. In 1809 she was accused of being a "common scold", a so-called nag. Her punishment was barbaric - she was strapped to a wooden stool, ducked and held under dirty water. But Jenny would not be silenced! Each time she was brought out of the water, gasping for air, she loudly cursed the magistrates who had sentenced her and the mayor who let it happen. You can see the remains of the ducking stool in the Priory.

Leominster Priory, 24 Church Street, Leominster, HR6 8NH

BEST BITS FOR KIDS IN LEOMINSTER:

- > Uncover the past at Grange Court and Leominster Museum
- > Check out the toys at Martin's Models & Crafts
- > Pick up a new read in Rossiter Books
- > Indulge in the cakes at The Flying Dutchman or Coffee #1

Mythical Cave, Battle-Scarred Castle & A Murderous Dragon

ROAM THE DRAMATIC WYE VALLEY. UNCOVERING TALES OF
MYTH, MAGIC AND A HUGE CANNON CALLED MEG!



King Arthur's Cave

10 Magic & Mammoth Bones - King Arthur's Cave

Curious kids will love roaming the woods of The Doward, a nature reserve in the Wye Valley. Spot fungi, ferns and birds as you follow the trails. Head to the nearby Seven Sisters Rocks for awesome views over the river (be careful, it's a very steep drop).

WHAT'S THE STORY?

This magical prehistoric cave is shrouded in superstition. The remains of a woolly mammoth and a gigantic man have been unearthed here, as well as the bones of exotic animals, from sabretooth tigers to hyenas and lions. According to legend, King Arthur hid from invaders in the limestone cave and buried treasure which is still protected by one of Merlin's spells. Others believe the cave is linked to tales of King Vortigern. Will you unravel the secrets that this cave keeps?

King Arthur's Cave, Great Doward,
HR9 6DZ Free entry

Make
like
Merlin

MINI QUEST

NATURE WAND



Cast your own magic spells and charms! Make a wand using beautiful natural finds.

YOU WILL NEED:



HOW TO:

First, choose your stick. Not too short, not too long but just right. Tie the wool at one end of the stick and wrap it around, from top to bottom. To bring the magic to life, find your favourite feathers, flowers and leaves. Simply tuck them under the strands of wool and let your imagination run wild!

11 The Wrath of Roaring Meg - Goodrich Castle

One of the best preserved medieval fortresses in England, Goodrich is the perfect place to play knights. Pick up a free audio guide to find out about the Civil War siege.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

In the 1640s, Goodrich Castle (managed by English Heritage) was called upon to be a Royalist stronghold. Like many other castles, it hadn't seen action since the Middle Ages. Despite its excellent defensive position, it wasn't best prepared for 'modern' warfare. The weapon that was instrumental in turning Goodrich into the ruin we see today was Roaring Meg. The largest - and only surviving - mortar cannon of the English Civil Wars, this terrifying weapon can today be found inside the castle walls. Roaring Meg could fire a lethal gunpowder-filled shell weighing 200 pounds - that's the same weight as an adult Black Bear!

Goodrich Castle, Castle Lane, Goodrich,
Ross-on-Wye, HR9 6HY Paid entry



THINGS TO DO NEARBY

- > Climb to the top of Symonds Yat Rock
- > Glide down the river with Wye Valley Cruises
- > Visit the Wye Valley Butterfly Zoo
- > Mooch around the pretty town of Ross-on-Wye
- > Canoe or paddleboard along the River Wye (visitherefordshire.co.uk/canoe)



Goodrich Castle

MINI QUEST

TREASURE HUNT

Keep your eyes peeled on your
visit to Goodrich Castle.
Can you spot:

- ☐ ROARING MEG
- ☐ CANNONBALLS
- ☐ STAINED GLASS WINDOW
- ☐ MURDER HOLES
- ☐ THE PRISON (bonus point for stepping inside!)
- ☐ MEDIEVAL LOO

MINI QUEST

SCAVENGER
HUNT

Who can resist a wander around the woods? Just outside Mordiford you'll find Haugh Woods. Turn left after the Moon Inn (HR1 4LW), the car park up on the left after 2 miles.

☐ STICK☐ FLOWER☐ FEATHER☐ WORM☐ MOSS☐ SPIDER'S WEB☐ PRETTY STONE☐ SPIKY LEAF☐ PINE CONE☐ LOG☐ LADYBIRD☐ ACORN☐ SOMETHING
YELLOW☐ CLOVER LEAF☐ ANT☐ BLADE OF GRASS☐ BIG LEAF

How many
can you
find?

12 The Legend of the
Mordiford Dragon -
Mordiford Church

This small village can lay claim to the oldest bridge in Herefordshire, its nine arches span the River Lugg.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

A young girl called Maud desperately wanted a pet. On a walk in Haugh Woods, she found an incredible thing: a baby dragon. Maud kept the creature safe and brought it milk. However, he grew very fast and so did his appetite. At first, he feasted on animals but then he sought out humans. Maud pleaded with her secret friend to stop the killing but his blood-thirsty rampage continued. The villagers were petrified but a local man called Garson took action. He discovered the spot on the riverbank where the dragon came to drink every day. He hid inside a barrel, lying in wait. When the dragon appeared, he shot an arrow through the beast's heart...the villagers were saved but Garson was incinerated by the dragon's final fiery breath. A portrait of the dragon can today be found in Mordiford Church.

Mordiford Church, Wallflower Row, Mordiford, HR1 4LN



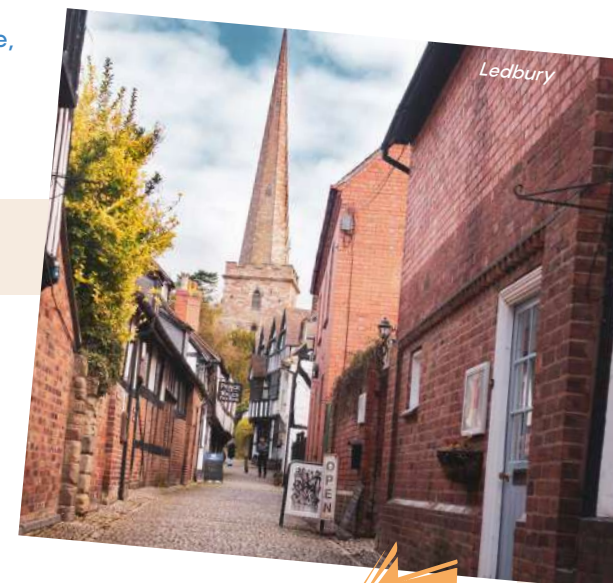
13 Blood on the Streets - Ledbury

Ledbury is a pretty town, lined with independent shops and cafes. Play in the Walled Garden and wander around the nearby woods. Dog Hill Wood, Frith Wood and Coneygree Wood, are all within walking distance.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Ledbury was the scene of horror and bloodshed in 1645. Civil War raged and not even this quiet town could escape as Cavaliers and Roundheads clashed. Prince Rupert of the Rhine brought 1,500 men to town and a skirmish ensued - the shadows of which still remain. Walk up the cobbles to Ledbury Church where the old wooden doors of the north porch bear the scars of musket shot. Meanwhile, at the Talbot Inn on New Street, see if you can spot the brass plug which marks the spot where a musket ball reportedly passed through the neck of a serving girl and into the oak panelling.

Ledbury Church, Church Lane,
HR8 1DR

BEST BITS
FOR KIDS

*In and around Ledbury,
don't miss to:*

- > Browse the toys and books in Blandfords
- > Call in at Choccotastic for chocolate and ice cream treats
- > Book a creative experience at Eastnor Pottery
- > Meet the animals and enjoy a tractor ride at Newbridge Farm Park
- > Take a trip to Eastnor Castle (April to September) or Hellens Manor (April to mid October)
- > Hike up the Malvern Hills

Love-Lorn Kings, Legendary Killings & Fairy Kidnapping

FEEL A WORLD AWAY IN THE MAGICAL
GOLDEN VALLEY AS YOU EXPLORE
ITS WILD LANDSCAPES AND
ANCIENT HISTORY

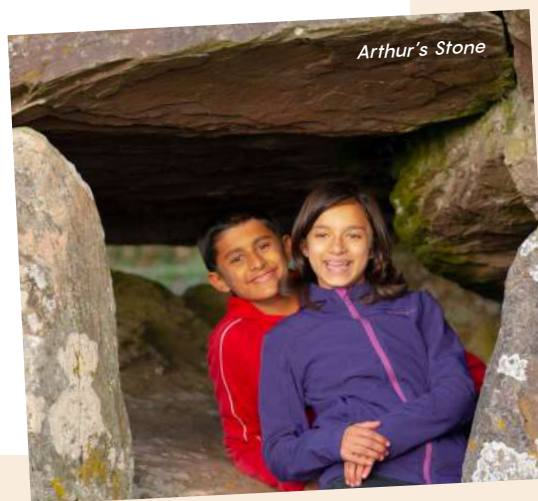
14 A Mysterious Burial - Arthur's Stone

On a quiet rural road near the village of Dorstone lies Arthur's Stone. Atmospheric and mysterious, it is the site of a Neolithic burial chamber which is 1000 years older than Stonehenge.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

These sacred stones are the source of many myths and legends. Some say it's where King Arthur killed a giant who, as he fell, left the impression of one of his elbows in the stone. The ancient tomb also served as inspiration for the writer C. S. Lewis: the table on which Aslan the Lion is sacrificed in 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe' was based on Arthur's Stone. Recent excavations have revealed that the chamber was part of a much larger ceremonial landscape and was very important to early man.

Arthur's Stone,
Arthur's Stone Lane,
Dorstone, HR3 6AX
Free entry



16 Killing of a King for Love - Clodock Church

Wind along country lanes to find the tiny hamlet of Clodock. It's a sublime spot in the shadow of the Black Mountains. The River Monnow runs alongside the church, you can picnic on the flat stones and treat your toes to a paddle.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Despite its beauty, there's a murderous tale behind St Clydawg's Church. According to history, sixth-century Welsh King Clydawg was betrothed to be married when he was murdered by a love rival in a fit of jealousy. Clydawg's body was being transported for burial, but when the oxen pulling his coffin refused to cross the River Monnow he was laid to rest on the riverbank - and this is where the church in his name now stands.

Clodock Church, Clodock, HR2 0NY



THINGS TO DO NEARBY:

- > Stop for a bite to eat at The Hub in Peterchurch
- > Survey the landscape from the top of Longtown Castle
- > Take a trek with a difference, with Golden Valley Llamas
- > Sample luxury ice cream at Rowlestone Court Farm
- > Taste award-winning fish & chips in Ewyas Harold

MINI QUEST

MAKE A FAIRY HOUSE



Find some small twigs and then tie them together with string into a tipi shape. Look for a secluded place which fairies would like. Place your tipi here and then weave in grass, leaves and other natural finds to create the perfect shelter.



17 Kidnapped by Fairies - Garway Hill

Walk the gentle climb to the top of the hill to be rewarded with 360-degree views to the Malvern Hills, the Black Mountains and the Bristol Channel. There's endless room to roam and you may see the wild mountain ponies who graze here too!

WHAT'S THE STORY?


"There'll be nine witches from the bottom of Orcop to the end of Garway Hill as long as water flows...". This area has long been associated with witches. According to legend, a local man mourning the death of his wife was sent to see the wise women of Garway Hill, in the hope they could lessen his misery. One of the women looked intently into his eyes. "Your wife is not dead", she said, claiming that fairies had in fact taken his beloved. The witch told the man where to find his wife and, following her instructions, he hid by the spring next to Garway Church at dusk. Mysterious music soon began to play and he was amazed to see his dead wife - alive and dancing! He rushed towards the group of dancers and grabbed his wife, running as fast as he could. The blood curdling calls of those chasing him echoed behind. The couple lived together for many years, recounting their astonishing story to all who would listen.


Garway Hill, Garway, HR2 8RU Free entry



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HM Government



Herefordshire
Council