

# Explore Great Malvern: Route to the Hills



**Free  
guide**



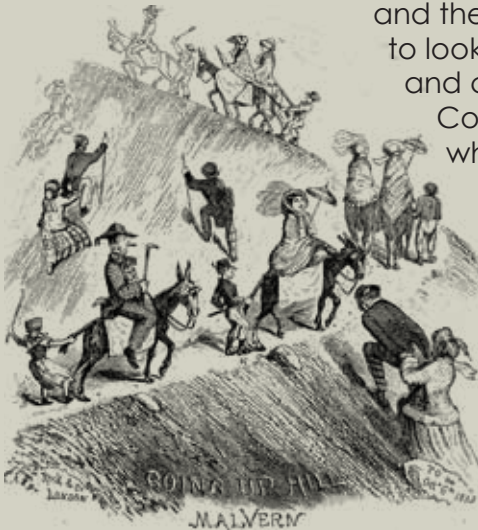


## Great Malvern: Route to the Hills

This is your free guide to Great Malvern. Come and explore our town and the Route to the Hills trail. It takes in beautiful parks, amazing views, ancient buildings and fascinating history.

Find out about the hardships of the Victorian water cure, the life and inspiration of Edward Elgar, secret Second World War research projects, our medieval monks and a royal donkey!

The trail begins at Great Malvern railway station. From there it's a steep but short walk towards the town centre and the hills. You'll find plenty to look at (and lots of benches and cafés) along the way. Come for the day and see what you discover.



Enjoy your walk



**LOTTERY FUNDED**



01

## The Railway Station

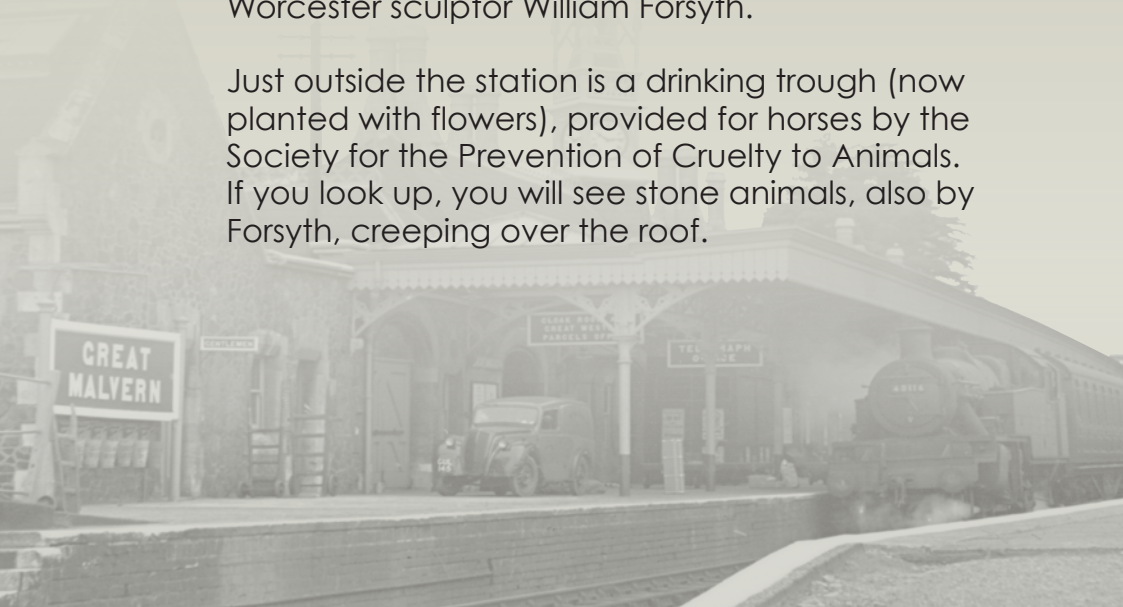
**An exceptionally elegant piece of Victorian Gothic architecture with all sorts of unusual details**

### **A railway station for the discerning passenger**

Great Malvern station, completed in 1863, was designed by the architect E.W. Elmslie with wealthier passengers in mind. The excellent tea-room was originally a private waiting room for local landowner Lady Emily Foley.

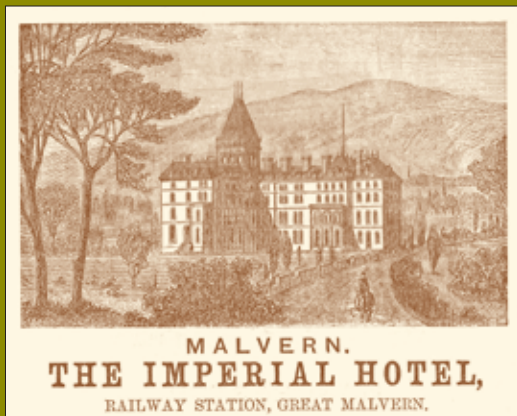
It's worth looking up at the cast iron columns as you leave, as each one has its own individual steel moulding of flowers or foliage designed by Worcester sculptor William Forsyth.

Just outside the station is a drinking trough (now planted with flowers), provided for horses by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. If you look up, you will see stone animals, also by Forsyth, creeping over the roof.





## The Imperial Hotel



An 1862 advert for the newly opened Imperial Hotel

When you leave the station, turn right. Across Avenue Road, just beyond the railway bridge, you can see Malvern St James School, built as the Imperial Hotel. A tunnel from the end of Platform 2 led directly to the hotel and allowed passengers to walk there under the cover of its corrugated iron roof (quite a novelty back then).

You can see the roof of 'the Worm', as it's known locally, next to the railway tracks, as you look over the parapet of the bridge.



Inside 'the Worm' today

The weighing scales on Platform 1 were used to weigh parcels being sent away by train.

Now follow Avenue Road uphill towards the town centre



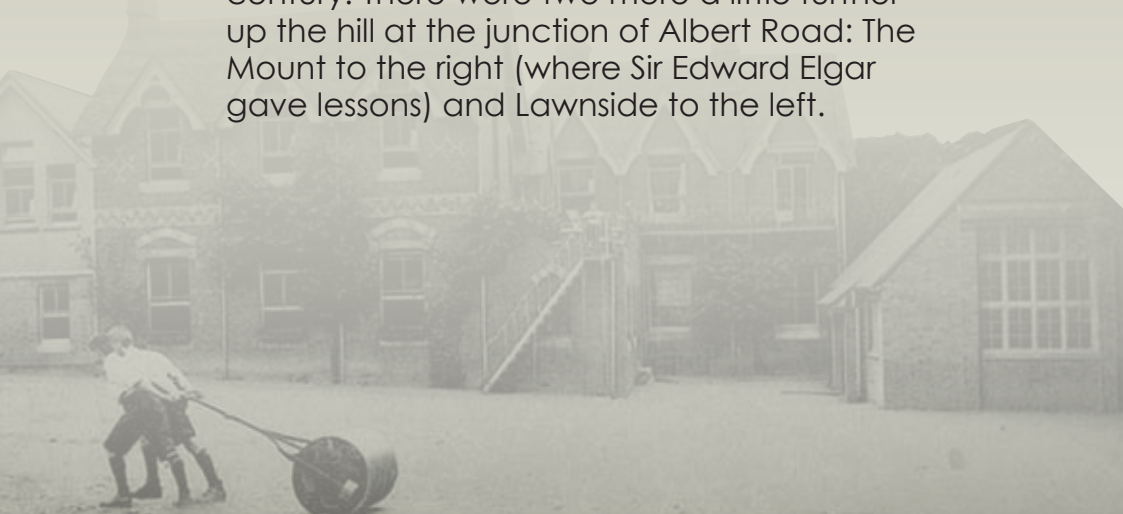
## Avenue Road

**Independent schools, an innovation in concrete, and the home of the railway station's architect**

### **The Mount and Lawnside Schools**

As you follow Avenue Road uphill towards town, the domed sports hall of Malvern St James School is on your right. The sports hall was built in the 1970s, using an ingenious construction method. A layer of concrete was sandwiched between two neoprene sheets. The neoprene was then inflated into a dome shape. When the concrete had set the dome could stand unsupported.

Great Malvern was a particularly popular location for independent schools in the 19th century. There were two more a little further up the hill at the junction of Albert Road: The Mount to the right (where Sir Edward Elgar gave lessons) and Lawnside to the left.





## Elmslie House

E.W. Elmslie, the architect of Great Malvern Station, also built several grand houses on Avenue Road, including one for himself.

Lady Foley, the local landowner, imposed strict restrictions on new developments – all houses needed at least an acre of land around them. At a time when Great Malvern was expanding rapidly, her regulations prevented overdevelopment and maintained the town's character. Elmslie's creations included Lindfield, Enderley and his own house, Falston, now known as Elmslie House.

In the 1920s the house was bought by Lawnside School. During the summer holidays it was used by producers, writers and actors taking part in the Malvern Festival. Visitors here have included George Bernard Shaw, Elgar, Tennyson and J.B. Priestley.

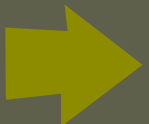


This view up Avenue Road towards town shows horse-drawn cabs waiting for fares



George Bernard Shaw was a keen amateur photographer as well as a distinguished playwright

At Priory Road turn left and enter  
Priory Park at the entrance next  
to Malvern Splash



## Priory Park

**The park was once the garden of a Victorian mansion, and before that, the grounds of a monastery**

### **From fishponds to park**

The monks who lived at Great Malvern Priory from the 11th to the 16th century grew their own vegetables, herbs and fruit around the monastery. They also kept fish, taking advantage of a natural spring to create fishponds, which survive as Priory Park's ornamental lake.

By the 19th century, the area that is now the park was in private ownership and served as the grounds of a Gothic mansion (the house with a large conservatory, just up the slope to your right). It now houses Malvern Hills District Council. The impressive Victorian pile was built by Alfred Speer. His family made its fortune by selling bird and bat droppings imported from Peru. Known in polite circles as 'guano' the droppings were used as fertiliser.





## Lazing on a sunny afternoon

In the early 20th century, Speer's home became yet another school. What is now the Splash Leisure Centre started out as its outdoor swimming pool.



Great Malvern's open air swimming pool in the 1930s

The spring that used to fill the monastery fishponds is still flowing. It rises in the south-west corner of the park.

## The purest spring water

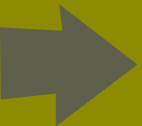
To the south and west you can see the Malvern Hills. They were formed over 650 million years ago and contain some of the oldest rocks in Britain, dating from the Precambrian geological period. Its health-giving properties have been written about since at least the 16th century.

Rainwater gradually filters through to springs all around the hills. Very low levels of minerals are dissolved in the water, owing to the hardness of the rock, making Malvern Water one of the purest spring waters in the world.



Playing at the fishponds in the 1970s

Follow the path uphill and cross the bridge, heading for the bandstand





## The Bandstand

**The bandstand once stood at the heart of Great Malvern's popular Pleasure Gardens**

### **Music in the park**

The bandstand was probably put up in around 1875, when the Pleasure Gardens (as Priory Park was then known) were in private ownership, and a great tourist attraction for crowds visiting Great Malvern from the big cities.

From 1929-39 the bandstand was used for performances during the Malvern Festival, earning the tag the 'theatre in a garden'. It was relocated to Victoria Park after the Second World War but a campaign in the 1980s succeeded in bringing it home. Every summer, the bandstand is used for a series of Sunday concerts, supported by Malvern Town Council.





## Inspiring Malvern

Poets and writers, from William Langland back in the 14th century to Wordsworth and Elizabeth Barrett Browning in the 19th century, and Siegfried Sassoon, W.H. Auden, Evelyn Waugh and C.S. Lewis in the 20th century, have visited Great Malvern.



George Bernard Shaw planting a mulberry tree in Priory Park in 1936

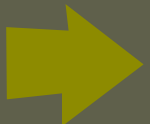
Shaw's tree blew down in a gale in 2000. See its replacement, and read about its journey from Australia, near Malvern Theatres.

## Great Malvern's gas lamps

Great Malvern is one of only a handful of places in Britain where gas lamps survive in working order. In C.S. Lewis's book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Lucy's first encounter with the magical creatures of Narnia takes place under a lamp-post in a dark, snowy forest. In print and on film, the lamp-post has always been depicted as a Victorian-style gas lamp, just like those in Great Malvern.



Now head for Malvern Theatres, the white building up the slope



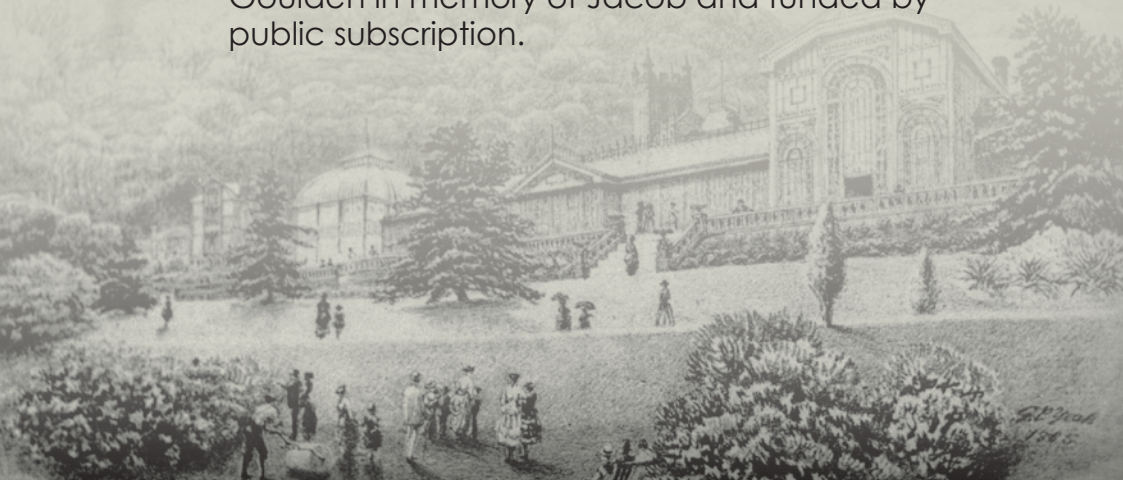
## Malvern Theatres

**Great Malvern has an exceptional arts centre for a small town**

### **A theatre for everyone**

The Malvern Theatres building was constructed around the Assembly Rooms where Victorian locals and tourists gathered to socialise. Doctor Henry Jacob, who moved to Great Malvern in 1896, was determined that the privately-owned Park and Assembly Rooms should belong to the town. After an excruciatingly long struggle, they became council property in 1927. This was the beginning of the modern Malvern Theatres but the end of Jacob who, worn out from the stress of his project, passed away in 1928.

A bronze fountain was created by Richard Goulden in memory of Jacob and funded by public subscription.





## Theatre in Malvern

In 1929, Sir Barry Jackson, director of the Birmingham Rep theatre company, founded the Malvern Drama Festival. He built the festival programmes around the leading playwright of the day, George Bernard Shaw. The festival became an annual event and only the outbreak of war in 1939 brought an end to the tradition. Jackson later played an important part in setting up the Royal Shakespeare Company.

A new Malvern Festival was founded in 1977, and for 20 years it attracted top touring theatre companies, including the RSC, and classical performers including Yehudi Menuhin and the London Symphony Orchestra.

The festival tradition continues with the Elgar Festival in June and the Autumn in Malvern Festival.



George Bernard Shaw, with fellow playwright John Drinkwater (on Shaw's right), and other writers, performers and directors at Malvern Drama Festival in the 1930s



Taking the waters at the Jacob memorial fountain

You can see the Jacob memorial inside the Malvern Theatres restaurant on the first floor.

Head towards the playground, then look uphill for a large green building



## A Victorian hotel for patients taking the 'water cure' during Great Malvern's heyday

### The Hydropathic Establishment

The health-giving properties of Malvern's pure spring water were extremely big business in the 19th century. The central portion of Park View, with bay windows facing the park, was built by Dr James Wilson in around 1848 as a 'Hydropathic Establishment' for his Water Cure patients.

It wasn't until the early 20th century, following an outbreak of typhoid, that the practice closed.

In 1920 the building became The County Hotel, a glamorous party venue during the Malvern Drama Festivals. The author Evelyn Waugh often stayed here.





## Accommodation for scientists

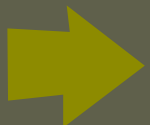
In 1942, Malvern was chosen as a safe and secret location for government scientists. Their research and development of radar made a major contribution towards winning the Second World War.

Almost overnight, several hundred scientists were brought to Malvern and billeted in schools, hotels and private houses. They secretly worked on improving bombing accuracy and developing decoys to deceive the enemy. Radar and radio navigation was used to defend and position forces for the D-Day landings. WAAFs (members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force), who worked testing equipment at a nearby airfield, and American scientists from Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, stayed at Park View, which was then The County Hotel.



Civilians learning about radar at Malvern College in 1944

Your next stop is Priory Church,  
via the theatre or Grange Road –  
follow the sign in the pavement



## Priory Church



**This church was part of a medieval monastery until it was bought by the people of Malvern in the 16th century**

### **Great Malvern Priory was founded in around 1085**

For nearly 500 years, the Priory was home to a community of around 30 monks. They grew vegetables and herbs, created the fishponds in Priory Park and tended the poor and the sick.

Monks were supposed to remain standing for services but were provided with misericords, or 'mercy' seats, with narrow ledges they could lean on to take the weight off their feet. Characterful carved scenes on the Priory Church's misericords depict people, animals and mythical beasts.

The priory's most famous head, Prior Walcher, was a keen astronomer. Fluent in Arabic, Walcher introduced Arabic mathematical methods to Britain, including the use of degrees, minutes and seconds for measuring angles.





## Saved by the town

When Henry VIII closed down England's monasteries in the 1530s, Great Malvern was no exception. Not wanting to see the church torn down for building materials, local people clubbed together and bought the church for the town. They paid £20 – a small fortune in the 1530s. Having survived Henry VIII and the Civil Wars of the 1640s, the church slowly deteriorated. It was not until the 19th century that it was restored, with the advice of Augustus Pugin, most famous for designing the interior of the Houses of Parliament.



The sundial in the churchyard originally sat on top of the stone pillar

## Darwin's daughter

In 1851, Anne Elizabeth Darwin was buried here. Locals still place flowers on the grave. A favourite child of Charles Darwin

and his wife Emma, Anne was brought to Great Malvern in the hope that she would be cured by its famous waters. She was probably suffering from tuberculosis. The poignant inscription on the tombstone reads simply, 'A dear and good child'. Darwin was so grief-stricken that he was unable to face the funeral.



Anne Darwin

Inside the church, look out for Prior Walcher's tomb and a wonderful collection of medieval tiles on the wall behind the altar.

Pass under the gas lamp and up the steps, then cross the road to Belle Vue Island





## Belle Vue Island

**Malvern's exceptionally pure spring water brought wealth and fame to the town**

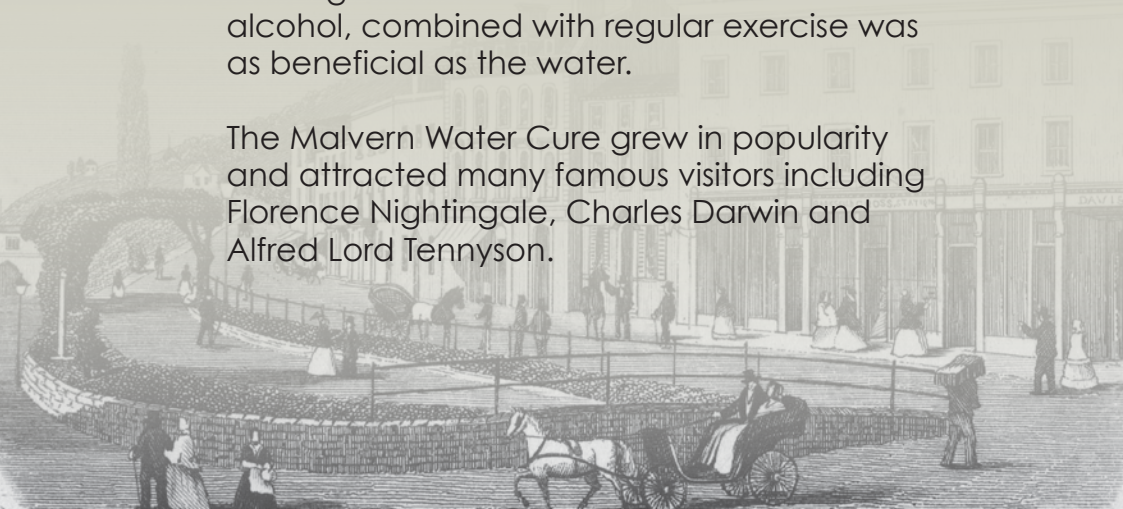
### **The Victorian Water Cure**

Stand by the Malvhina Fountain and look across the road to Lloyds Bank. This building was previously the Crown Inn, and it was here that Doctors Wilson and Gully launched their Water Cure in 1842.

Within months Dr Wilson had treated 350 patients and soon more than a dozen doctors were vying for custom.

Often, their wealthy patients had no identifiable illness, but were almost certainly eating and drinking too much. A break from rich food and alcohol, combined with regular exercise was as beneficial as the water.

The Malvern Water Cure grew in popularity and attracted many famous visitors including Florence Nightingale, Charles Darwin and Alfred Lord Tennyson.





## Doctor's orders

Treatments lasted two weeks or more. Patients were woken at 5 a.m. and tightly wrapped in a cold wet sheet, or doused with a pitcher of cold water. Before breakfast they walked up to St Ann's Well, to drink the water.

Later in the day patients could enjoy the 'sitz bath', sitting waist-deep in cold water, or the 'descending douche', in which a tank of icy water was emptied over them. They emerged 'as warm as toast and red as a lobster'.



19th century cartoons show the Water Cure as more of a trial than a pleasure

## Belle Vue Terrace

Belle Vue Terrace is the road that runs above Belle Vue Island. The buildings date from the 19th century when Great Malvern was a fashionable destination for Water Cure guests. Malvern Goldsmiths was once a chemist shop, owned by John Lea and William Perrins, inventors of Worcestershire Sauce. The recipe was discovered when a failed experiment was left to ferment and ended up as something unexpectedly delicious.

Find the statue of Edward Elgar at the north end of Belle Vue Island



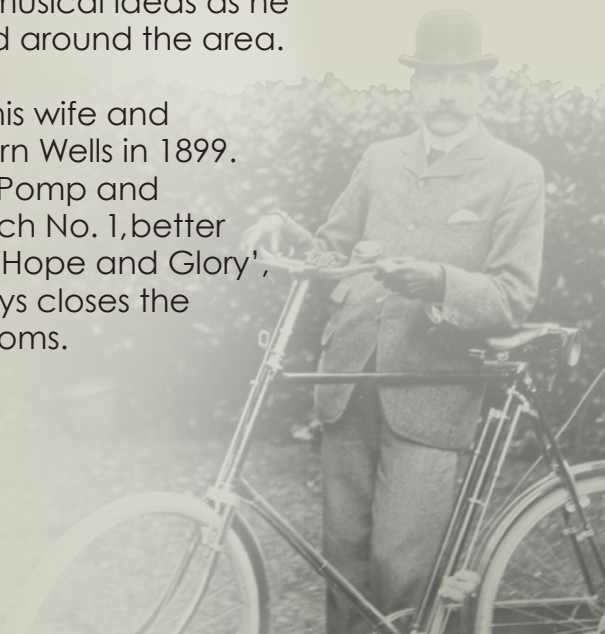
## **Edward Elgar, one of the great English composers, lived in Malvern for many years**

### **Remembering Elgar**

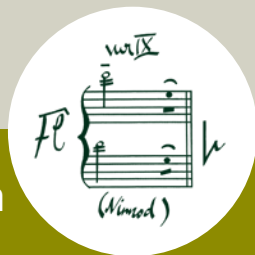
Edward Elgar lived in Malvern from 1891 to 1904. He wrote his famous Enigma Variations here – a set of 14 musical portraits of some of his closest friends.

Elgar supplemented his income by teaching at The Mount, one of several girls' schools off Avenue Road. The Malvern Hills and countryside were a source of inspiration and Elgar formulated many musical ideas as he walked and cycled around the area.

Elgar moved with his wife and daughter to Malvern Wells in 1899. There he wrote his Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1, better known as 'Land of Hope and Glory', which almost always closes the Last Night of the Proms.



## Elgar's lasting mark on Malvern



This postcard featuring Elgar and the opening bars of his famous composition *The Dream of Gerontius* is in the collection of Malvern Museum

Elgar inspired Malvern as much as Malvern inspired Elgar. The bronze statue on Belle Vue Island by sculptor Rose Garrard shows him looking towards the Bluebird Tea Rooms which he often visited.

The Enigma fountain nearby incorporates the initials of all the friends depicted in the Enigma Variations carved into the base in Elgar's handwriting.



Elgar at home in his library

In 1903 Elgar formed the Malvern Concert Club which still organises an annual programme of chamber music concerts. He also performed in the Assembly Rooms as a violinist and conductor.

Cross the road onto Belle  
Vue Terrace and turn right  
towards the Unicorn Inn



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## Happy Valley

**The steep hill next to the Unicorn Inn leads to Happy Valley, once home to many of Great Malvern's famous donkeys**

### **Donkey business**

Donkeys have a long association with Great Malvern and the hills.

For centuries, donkeys carried salt from the brine springs at Droitwich to South Wales via Malvern and the high pass over the hills known as Wyche Cutting. The 'wich' part of many place names, as in Droitwich, is a clue to a salt connection.

As the popularity of the Malvern Water Cure grew, so did businesses carrying reluctant walkers up the hills. A group of enterprising 'Donkey women' employed children to lead donkeys and their passengers up and down the slopes. Two of the stables were once located here in Happy Valley.

The Unicorn Inn is where C.S. Lewis and his literary friends met up for drinks in the 1950s.



## Riding with royalty

Queen Adelaide, the wife of William IV, rode a donkey called Moses on one of her visits. The honoured animal was swiftly re-christened 'Royal Moses' and immediately saw a huge boost to his popularity.



Young children who were too small to ride alone were carried in wicker panniers



A group of riders pauses for a photograph on the way up the hill

## Bottled water

Coming back along Bellevue Terrace, go through the archway next to W.H. Smith to find a spring. This is just one of over 100 dotted around the hills.

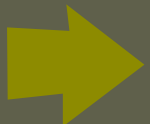
Pure Malvern water from this spring was first bottled by the Burrows Company, suppliers of bottled water to Queen Victoria, in 1850. In 1917 Burrows were bought out by Schweppes.

Today, water is bottled in Malvern Wells by the Holywell Malvern Water Company and is distributed worldwide.



A stoneware bottle for ginger beer made by the Malvern Pure Water Company

Carry on along  
Belle Vue Terrace to  
Rose Bank Gardens



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## Rose Bank Gardens

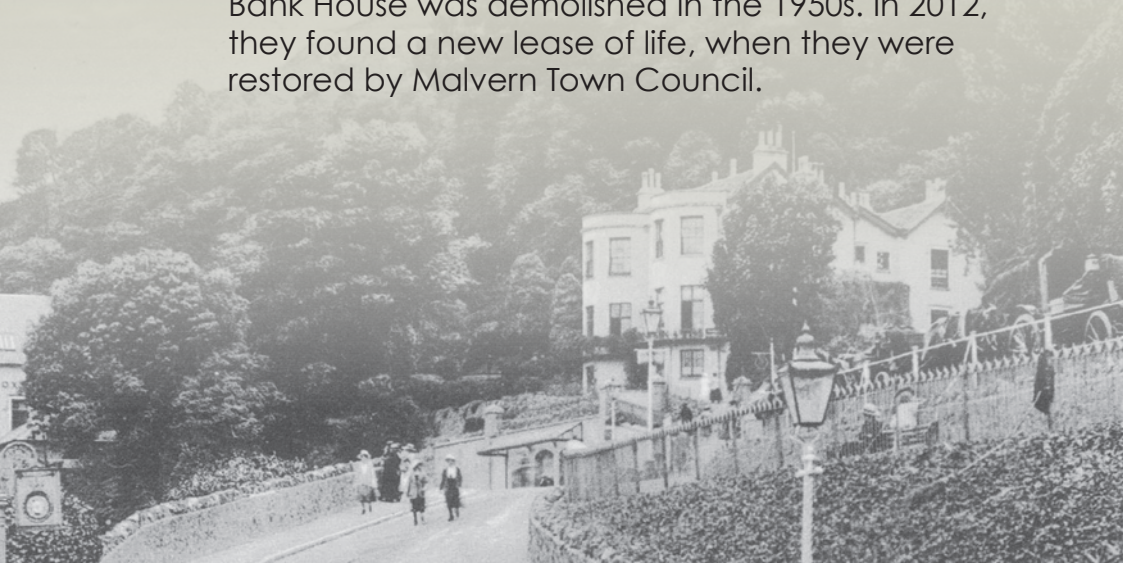
### A gift from Charles William Dyson Perrins to the people of Great Malvern

#### The sauce heir's gift

Rose Bank Gardens were originally the grounds of Rose Bank House, a large private home built in the early 19th century.

In 1918 Charles Dyson Perrins, the wealthy grandson of one of the inventors of Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce, bought the house and grounds and gave them to the town.

The gardens became a popular place to stroll and admire the view, but went into decline after Rose Bank House was demolished in the 1950s. In 2012, they found a new lease of life, when they were restored by Malvern Town Council.





## Invented in Malvern

During the Second World War, Rose Bank House was a social hub, where locals mixed with the scientists who had descended on the town. The research the scientists carried out in Great Malvern has contributed to an extraordinary number of life-changing inventions. They include flight simulators, LCD displays, touchscreens, air traffic control and the X-ray detector crystals used in CAT scans.



A 1940s mobile radar rig

## Heading uphill

The 99 steps near the entrance to Rose Bank Gardens lead to St Ann's Well. The spring had been known since medieval times, but became far better known as a destination for Water Cure patients in the 19th century.



Donkeys and riders pose for a photograph outside St Ann's Well

A small house was built around the spring in 1813. Inside you can still see the spring flowing from an elaborate dolphin-head spout, or visit the St Anne's Well Café.

**Cross the road, turn left, and then keep right to find Malvern Museum in the old priory gatehouse**





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## Malvern Museum



### The gateway to the monastery

#### The Priory Gatehouse

Malvern Museum is tucked into the 15th century Priory Gatehouse – the original gateway to the medieval monastery.

The side facing the town centre has been restored with a heavy Victorian hand, but the other side retains Tudor brickwork. The little window, or 'squint', next to the museum entrance would have allowed a porter to check who was at the gate before opening up.

The museum is an excellent introduction to the geology and history of the town with activities and dressing up costumes for children.



# Route to the Hills

This booklet is part of Great Malvern: Route to the Hills, a partnership project that celebrates the town's rich heritage and culture. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, it tells some of Malvern's unique stories through a new walking route which connects the town with the hills.

The project has included theatre, film-making, talks and guided walks. Around Great Malvern we have installed new artworks, building plaques, information panels, pavement studs and benches. Look out for them as you explore!



Information panel



Each bench has a special feature connected with the history of Great Malvern



Pavement stud

## With thanks

We gratefully acknowledge the material and advice contributed by Peter Smith.

### Images

**1940s mobile radar rig (cover and 11), civilian radar class (06):** © Crown, OGL v3.0, from the MRATHS collection

**Great Malvern Station (01):** courtesy of H.C. Casserley Collection

**The Worm (01):** © Tim Crump

**Southlea (02):** courtesy of Paul Ferris

**George Bernard Shaw (03):** © Mary Evans/IMAGNO/Austrian Archives

**Gas lamp (04):** © Rachel Lilly Photography

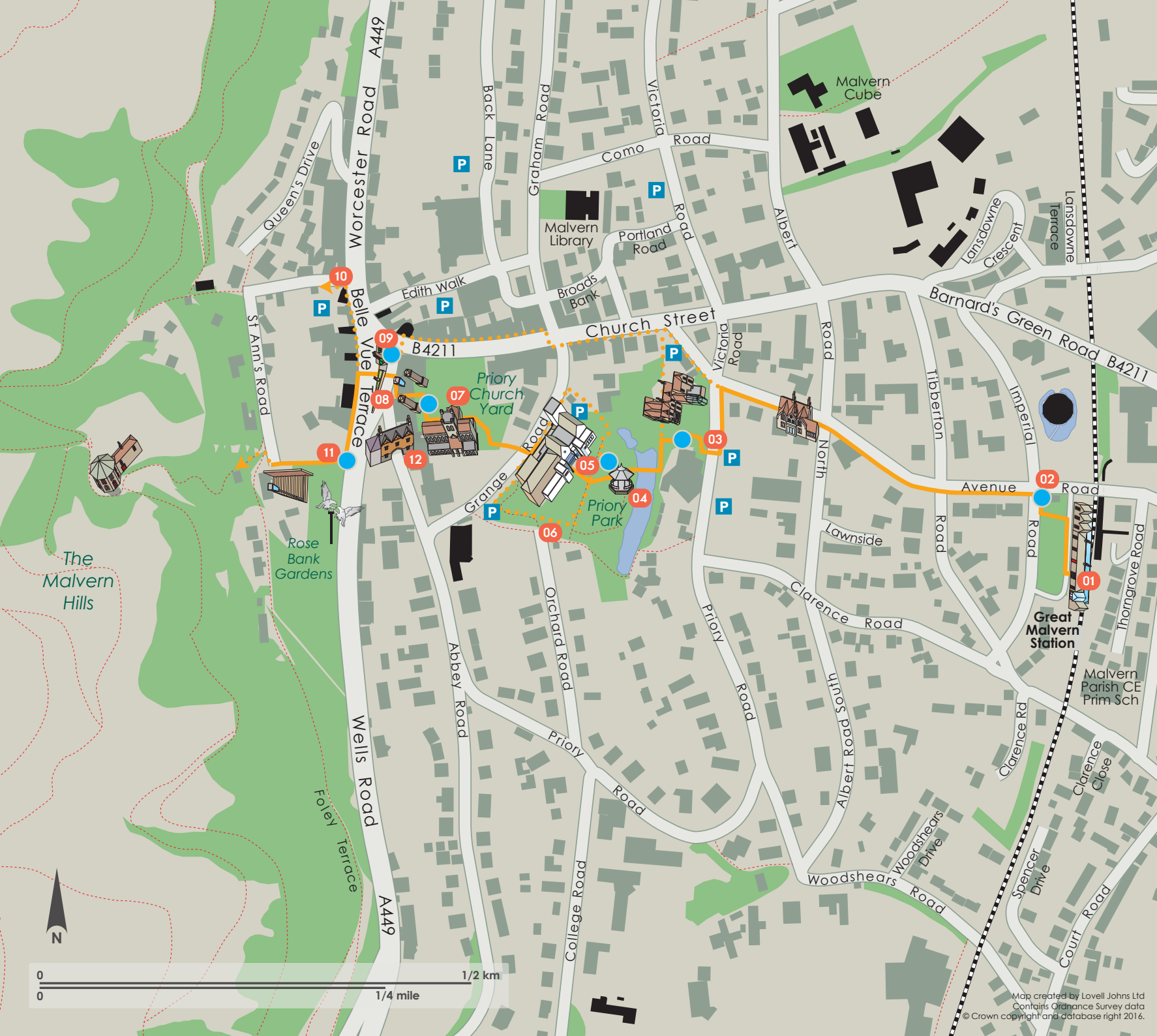
**Malvern Drama Festival (05):** courtesy of Susannah Self

**Jacob fountain (05), Park View (06), Malvern Museum (12):** courtesy of Wellcome Library, London

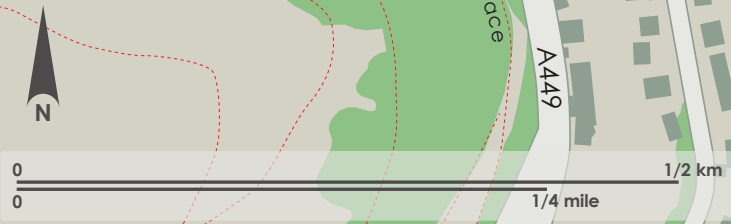
**Prior Walcher (07):** courtesy of Adams.3.52.4, Cambridge University Library

**Elgar with Mr Phoebus and in his library (09):** courtesy of the Elgar Foundation

All other historic photographs and prints kindly supplied by Brian Iles and Malvern Museum.



- 00 Guidebook points of interest
- Information panel
- Route to the Hills
- ⋯ Public footpath
- P Public parking
- Buildings of interest



# Explore Great Malvern: Route to the Hills



## How to get here

### ***By car***

Great Malvern is about 25 minutes' drive from the M5. There is usually plenty of space in the town's car parks. These are marked on the map inside the back cover. The most convenient car park for exploring the town centre is the pay and display car park on Priory Road.

### ***By train***

You can catch the train to Great Malvern from London, Birmingham, Hereford, Bristol and Oxford. The station is beautiful and historic (see page 2) and it's where the trail described in this book begins.

### ***Online***

To plan your day and find out more visit:

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