Landmarks and Legends of Sherwood Forest

See the Sherwood Forest Adventurers Map

A special thanks to Robin Hood Blogger for the informative videos.

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Rufford Abbey

Rufford Abbey Country Park offers a little slice of history as well as 150 acres of beautiful parkland and gardens. This North Nottinghamshire park and abbey attracts many visitors as a ‘must see’ historic site, with the rustic romantic ruins of the 12th Century abbey and the later country house to explore. Additionally, you can enjoy a ramble around the woodlands and lakeside, or discover the wheel of fortune maze.

Rufford Abbey is also considered to be haunted with ghosts - so keep an eye out for ‘The Clammy Baby’, the servant girl and her baby at ‘Broad Ride’, the ghostly abbot, and the “White Lady of Rufford” during your visit...


Budby Castle

Initially named after Captain William Scott, Castle William was built as a home for boat crews in Budby. From the late 19th Century the Castle was increasingly called Budby Castle and as such is now known under this name.

Budby Castle is privately owned and on private property so unfortunately cannot be explored fully – but it is a great Nottingham landmark to admire from afar.

More information: [thoresby.blogspot.co.uk/2007/04/budby-castle.html](http://thoresby.blogspot.co.uk/2007/04/budby-castle.html)
Newstead Abbey

Once home to the notorious poet Lord Byron, Newstead Abbey is a beautiful Monastic house dating back to the late 12th Century. Explore Byron’s letters, manuscripts and portraits in the Byron Collection, or peruse the gardens, ponds and monuments that offer 16 points of interest scattered across the grounds.

With history oozing out of every pore, from its medieval character to its various inhabitants, Newstead Abbey and its extensive parkland is a heart of Nottinghamshire gem awaiting your discovery.

More information: [www.newsteadabbey.org.uk](http://www.newsteadabbey.org.uk)

St Mary’s Church

Dating back to the 12th Century, St Mary’s Church in Edwinstowe has a long and rich history. The laws in Edwinstowe (in the heart of Sherwood Forest) were hard-line and easy to fall foul of, so much so that in the 1330s two Vicars were convicted of deer poaching and stealing foliage respectively! On the other hand, forest privileges allowed marriages without permission. These would take place in the doorway of the church rather than inside, and according to the legend, this is the church where Robin Hood married Maid Marion. If you wander into the centre of Edwinstowe, there is also a statue of Robin proposing to his lady.

More information: [www.stmaryt.org](http://www.stmaryt.org)
Southwell Minster

Known for centuries as Southwell Minster, the Cathedral Church of Nottinghamshire is a stunning landmark with over 1000 year’s worship. Housed in the Minster are stone carvings of ‘leafy-headed Green Men’, which are believed to be an earlier ‘guise’ of Robin Hood. An ancient horn drinking vessel which supposedly belonged to Robin Hood can also be found in this beautiful Romanesque building. The stained glass window depicting King Edwin, Ethelburga and her chaplain Paulinus is particularly beautiful and also has strong associations with the Robin Hood Legend.

More information: www.southwellminster.org

Image Credit: Richard Jarvis at southwellminster.org

The Forerester’s Tomb

Known as the ‘Foresters’ Church’, St James’ in Papplewick has a few legendary features waiting to be explored.

A medieval tomb slab can be found on the floor of the church, interestingly marked with a bow and arrow, horn and baldrich- it is often referred to as the ‘Forester’s Tomb’. Robin Hood is also said to have cut his bows from the yew trees in the churchyard – it was apparently the Celtic belief that the yew tree had power over life and death.

According to legend, St James’ church is also the site where Alan A ‘Dale (one of Robin’s men) was married to his true love. It is said that a girl named Ellen was to marry a nobleman not of her choosing but Robin Hood saved her just in time, with Friar Tuck then marrying the happy couple. However, versions of the legend indicate that groom could have been either Alan A ‘Dale or Will Scarlett...


Image Credit: Richard Vince / Creative Commons

Will Scarlett’s Grave

Said to be home to Will Scarlett’s grave, St Mary’s church in Bildworth offers an interesting Robin Hood landmark. The grave is marked by yew trees and a fragment of the original apex of the church tower. Many graves on the hillside pre-date the church building and sit within the boundary of Sherwood forest, offering speculation that many of the men buried here had disputes with the Sheriff of Nottingham and were possibly outlaws like Will Scarlett.

More information: www.nottsopenchurches.org.uk

http://youtu.be/2vF1UkaaEwM
Welbeck Abbey

Welbeck Abbey is an incredible grade I listed building that served as a country house residence for the various Dukes of Portland. The estate grounds are beautiful and extensive, but unfortunately much of the estate is not widely open to the public. There is however, the ‘Welbeck Abbey State Room Tours’ for those interested in a glimpse into this stunning estate and its unique history. Tickets for the tour can be booked at the Harley gallery.

More information: [www.rotherhamweb.co.uk/h/welbeck.htm](http://www.rotherhamweb.co.uk/h/welbeck.htm)

The Lion Gates

The Lion Gates are the very grand entry point of Welbeck Abbey that would have been used as the main gate by the Dukes of Portland over the years.

More information: [www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/dblock/GB-456000-375000](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/dblock/GB-456000-375000)

Welbeck Tunnels

Welbeck Abbey is famous for its mysterious underground apartments and tunnels built by the Fifth Duke of Portland (born 1800). The Duke was considered a little eccentric and commissioned the building of underground passages that stretch for miles towards Worksop and other neighbouring locations. Unfortunately, the tunnels are not open to the public, but you can learn more of their extensive history here: [www.nottshistory.org.uk/portland1907/portland7.htm](http://www.nottshistory.org.uk/portland1907/portland7.htm)
Worksop Manor & Lodge

Worksop Manor is a Grade I listed country house that has a unique and long history. The Magnificent building is unfortunately not open to the public, but has a few points of interest in its history and can be seen from the footpath to Welbeck.

The lords associated with the manor over the years were traditionally involved with the coronations of the monarch- this was the home to many prestigious and important figures in history. Mary Queen of Scots was held prisoner in the Elizabethan Worksop Manor House, which burnt down in 1761.

The Manor Lodge was also an impressive building that had largely survived from its original state until 2007 following a fire. It has recently undergone restoration.

More information: [www.nottshistory.org.uk/Jacks1881/worksop.htm](http://www.nottshistory.org.uk/Jacks1881/worksop.htm)

Steetley Chapel

A unique little chapel, Steetley Chapel has an incredible story dating back to the time of the Black Prince and even before Welbeck Abbey. This eccentric building survived the plague and the civil war, was fully restored in the 18th Century, and today continues to represent its long and interesting history from secret church services to folklore.

Steetley chapel is also referenced in Sir Walter Scott’s classic novel, Ivanhoe, as ‘The Chapel in the Forest’ where Robin of Loxley (Robin Hood) meets Richard the Lionheart.


Clumber Park - Gothic Chapel

Once the country estate of the Dukes of Newcastle, Clumber Park offers over 3,800 acres of beautiful parkland and woods, with a fantastic Gothic-style chapel to explore within the grounds. The original house was unfortunately demolished in 1938, but there is still so much to explore from the Walled Kitchen Garden to the idyllic lake, all of which is teeming with wildlife.

King John’s Palace Ruins

Located in King’s Clipstone, King John’s Palace is the ruins of a medieval royal house that has a rich and long history. The original palace was allegedly infiltrated by Robin Hood when King John was using it as a base to hunt him.

Formerly known as the ‘King’s Houses’, it later became associated with King John, despite his short reign during his brother’s (Richard I/the Lionheart) imprisonment in Germany.

However, today only parts of the great hall remain.


Cross of St Edwin’s

A part of what could be considered ‘the royal heart of medieval Sherwood Forest’, St Edwin’s Chapel had a long and unusual history, possibly pre-dating the earliest recorded reference from King John’s reign. The site is dedicated to St Edwin, King of Northumbria who was said to have been a fair king and the most powerful king amongst the Anglo-Saxons. St Edwin was killed at the battle of Heathfield in 633AD and as a much loved figure, was called a saint by the people... the spot where he was buried was considered a holy place.

Today, all that remains after Henry VIII abolished the chapel, is an iron cross placed by the Duke of Portland in 1912 to mark the location with an engraved accompanying dedication.

More information: www.thynghowe.org.uk/MapPages/Feature14.html

Friar Tuck’s Well

This site is tangled with legends of Friar Tuck’s hermitage. It would have been a great little well in its heyday, but unfortunately there are only remains of the original structure today. Friar Tuck’s Well is still well worth a visit because of its interesting history and unusual intertwined tales. One of the stories details how Friar Tuck cursed the spring after he was ‘ousted’ by ‘Roger de Tallibois’, making them dry for seven year intervals.

More information: ournottinghamshire.org.uk/page_id__920_path__0p32p57p.aspx
Mompesson’s Cross
In a time where the plague killed around 1.5 million people, this unique spot marks the area where a preacher, William Mompesson, arrived in the village of Eakring and brought the town together for ‘open-air’ services.

Having come from another plague-stricken village in the 1670s, Mompesson held his services outside the church to prevent the spread of the infection. He was considered the ‘hero of the plague’ because of his efforts and was credited with success of keeping the ‘black death’ from affecting the entire town.

More information: www.ollertonandarea.org.uk/towns-and-villages/eakring

Robin Hood’s Whetstone
Used as a tool to sharpen blades and arrow tips, Whetstones were useful for outlaws such as Robin Hood.

Robin Hood’s Whetstone was recorded on the 1630 estate map as a parish boundary marker and can be found near the ‘Long Stoop’ in Sherwood Pines.

More information: sherwoodforestvisitor.com/2012/09/18/robin-hood-in-sherwood-forest

The ‘Murder’ Stone
An infamous story of a murdered girl named Bessie Shepherd in 1817 still resonates in Nottinghamshire today. Walking home from Mansfield after successfully finding work, Bessie was attacked by Charles Rotherham who beat her with a hedge stake. Rotherham was found guilty and hanged on Gallows Hill.

The stone can be found at the spot where she was murdered on the Mansfield Road, opposite Thieves Woods.

More information: nottinghamhiddenhistoryteam.wordpress.com/2013/06/17/tales-from-the-mansfield-road-the-elizabeth-bessie-sheppherd-murder/
Warsop Windmill
Built in 1825, Warsop Windmill (first known as Forest Mill) is a three-storey stone-built tower that has an interesting history both as working windmill, and the site of unsolved murder. Almost demolished in 1930, the building is now a Grade II listed building, and well worth a visit.

Wellow Dam
Believed to have dated back as far as 1145AD, Wellow Dam is a Nottinghamshire landmark found in the quaint little town of Wellow. There are many theories and legends conjecturing as to its use over the years, one of which claims that the monks of Rufford originally made the dam for a fish pond!

More information: www.wellow.me/origins.htm

Ollerton Watermill
Found on the edge of the Sherwood Forest, The Ollerton Mill is a historical gem dating back to 1713. It is the only working watermill remaining in Nottinghamshire. Having recently been restored, the mill now provides a visitor centre and a charming little teashop, ideal for a rest stop.


The Maypole Village
Quaint Wellow Village is a great little stop on any adventure around Nottinghamshire. Describing itself as ‘The Maypole Village’, the existence of a maypole in the village can be traced back as far as 1856. Maypole celebrations and dancing is a key, but often forgotten, aspect of English history and culture.

More information: www.wellow.me/mayhistory.htm
"Stumpy"

Coined by the Sherwood Forest Country Park Rangers, ‘Stumpy’ is a truly unique veteran oak that has been twisted by age and the weather. The rangers and staff suggest that is resembles either a petrified forest spirit, or something out of a fantasy/Tolkien Novel.

As a tree that stands out with so much character, it’s clear that ‘Stumpy’ has a story, even if it’s unknown to us all. Visit ‘Stumpy’ for yourself, located near the Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre, and make your own interpretation of this unique tree.

Creswell Crags

The Creswell Crags are a Nottinghamshire site that should not be missed by adventurers of Sherwood Forest. Not only does the Creswell Crags Museum and Heritage Centre offer an insight into the history of the crags and the surrounding area, the Creswell Crags are ‘a limestone gorge honeycombed with caves and smaller fissures’ ready for your discovery.

With archaeologists finding evidence of life during the last ice age, roughly between 10,000 and 50,000 years ago, this fantastic site allows visitors an exciting exploration of the earth’s long and interesting past.

There are various different caves to discover, most notably is Robin Hood Cave (once called Robin Hood’s Hall), which is the largest of the caves and comprised of four main chambers linked together by short passages. The caves are protected by metal grills to preserve the rare archaeological deposits that remain inside, however cave tours are available at the museum and heritage centre.

More information: www.creswell-crags.org.uk

The Centre Tree

Marking what was considered to be the centre of the ‘Ancient Sherwood Forest’, the centre tree is a beautiful 140 year old oak.

A short walk from the Sherwood visitor centre, this tree is a notable landmark, but is considered ‘a mere stripling’ compared to its neighbours.

More information: www.ournottinghamshire.org.uk/page/the_centre_tree?path=0p31p390
The "Parliament Oak"

Possibly one of the oldest surviving trees in Sherwood Forest, the Parliament Oak is a notable natural landmark of the Forest. Having lived through a life cycle of a thousand years, this tree is an impressive piece of history. How it gained the name Parliament Oak is disputed, one theory suggests that King John may have called a parliamentary meeting at this spot after hearing of the revolt of the Welsh, while hunting in the forest.

Parliament Oak is considered to sit in the ‘Royal Heart of Medieval Sherwood Forest’.

More information: sherwoodforesthistory.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/parliament-oak-clipstone-icon-of.html

Major Oak

Thought to be around 800 years old, The Major Oak is a popular Sherwood Landmark and ‘Britain’s Favourite Tree’. It is a Quercus Robur (the English or pendunculate oak) and folklore suggests its hollow trunk was once used as a hiding spot for Robin Hood.

More information: www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/enjoying/countryside/countryparks/sherwood/

http://youtu.be/MpSsIMZU67U

Druid Stone

The Druid Stone is an interesting ‘natural geological rock formation’ near Blidworth that is ‘a conglomerate of pebbles and sand, cemented together by stalagmatic limestone’. It has a hole through its base that was long believed to align with the midsummer sunrise.

More information: nottinghamhiddenhistoryteam.wordpress.com/2013/01/28/the-three-stones-of-nottinghamshire/

Image Credit: Guy Stephenson at megalithic.co.uk
Greendale Oak Pub

The Greendale Oak pub is named after a famous ancient oak with a truly unique story. The story details that the Greendale Oak was so wide that a Duke bet that he could drive a horse and carriage through it! An archway was cut through the trunk, the carriage and four horses drove through, and the bet was won. However the oak, unsurprisingly, died.

The pub is a great little stop for adventurers exploring near Cuckney.

More information: www.thegreendaleoak.co.uk

Thynghowe

Thynghowe is a Viking age assembly site on the western edge of Sherwood Forest. Now known as Hanger Hill, Thynghowe lies amongst old oaks in the area of Birklands and had functioned as a place for people to resolve disputes and settle issues.

More information: www.thynghowe.org.uk/Thyng.html

Fountain Dale

Two miles north-west of Blidworth, Fountain Dale is the spot where Robin Hood is said to have met Friar Tuck. The tale describes the Friar carrying Robin on his back across the water but with a fight ensuing between them!

More information: www.robinhoodlegend.com/fountain-dale/
The Foul Evil Brook

Running from Lindhurst into Rainworth Water, the Foul Evil Brook is a legendary body of water that Romans were said to have bathed in, believing the water would cure a skin disease called ‘The Foul Evil’.


Thieves Wood

Thieves Woods, as its name suggests, was a hotspot for a number of outlaws and thieves that would hide here ready to attack unsuspecting travellers and rob them of their possessions.

These legendary woods also feature in a tale of Robin Hood and his men, who were said to have driven away a nasty band of robbers that were harassing the people of the Ravenshead area. The story details that the Friar Tuck sent for Robin Hood after a girl was kidnapped and her father robbed. The local hero returned both daughter and money safely.


Robin Hood Hill

Found north of Oxton, Robin Hood Hill is said to be a spot where Robin Hood and his men hid their loot. It is a small steep hill between Oxton and Farnsfield, and is home to Robin Hood’s Pot, a bronze-age burial mound, roughly 150 metres north-west. There have also been Roman coins excavated at this site.

More information: www.bbc.co.uk/nottingham/content/articles/2008/09/18/robin_hood_and_his_hill_feature.shtml

If you’re planning to explore Sherwood Forest, you could use our Nottingham hotel as your base camp – it’s close to the forest and right in the city centre, which has plenty of rich history to offer as well.