

### **The Great Malvern ‘Alternative Town Centre Walk’**

**This is an abridged version of Walk 4, taken from the ‘Pictorial Guide to the Malvern Hills’ Book Two: Great Malvern.**

Copies are available from the Tourist Information Centre, Malvern Book Co-operative, Malvern Gallery, Malvern Museum and Malvern Priory.

*Priced £8.50*

*This version attempts to avoid steps and very steep inclines, however Great Malvern is located on the slopes of the Malvern Hills and it is virtually impossible to complete a walk around Great Malvern without recourse to some steep paths and just a few steps!*

This historically rich and culturally diverse circular walk around Malvern town centre is unusual in that it visits nooks and crannies not often seen or appreciated by visitors to Malvern. Allow 1 hour without refreshment stops for which there are many!

On departing the Abbey Hotel note the blue plaque to the most famous guest to enjoy the comfort of the Hotel, Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Ethiopia, who spent time here whilst in exile. Opposite is the delightful Promenade Gardens complete with fountain first opened in 1880. To the right is the Priory Gatehouse, one of two buildings surviving from the Benedictine monastery and is home to the Malvern Museum of Local History and is open daily from 10.30 am.



**Priory Gatehouse**

After passing through the Priory Gatehouse, head left up the steep incline to the Wells Road (A449). Continue for a few hundred metres away from the town to the former Tudor Hotel, now restored to apartments, Map Reference SO 7748 4569. This was Dr. James Gully's, water cure establishment. Admire the attractive 'Bridge of Sighs' linking the two buildings.



**Bridge of Sighs**

Continue a short distance up the Wells Road and cross over near the 'Great Malvern' sign onto the grass via the steps. Return towards the town through the large iron gates of the Rose Bank Gardens past the rhododendron bushes towards the three seats overlooking Malvern's wonderful Buzzards sculpture. This is also the location for the start of the annual Beacon Race.

Ahead is the Mount Pleasant Hotel. There is a small plaque amongst the roses and shrubs in memory of Sir Edward Elgar 1857-1934. Now head downhill towards the Wells Road and turn left past the Mount Pleasant Hotel, note the blue plaque to Dame Laura Knight an English Impressionist painter commissioned by the Government as a war artist during the Second World War. She was well known for her theatre, ballet and circus scenes. On the website dedicated to Dame Laura, an oil painting, entitled Holiday Time in Malvern, depicts a 1930's scene of her sitting in the hotel gardens overlooking the entrance to the gardens and busy coach stop.

Continue along the terrace past WH Smith's towards the junction of the Worcester Road with Church Road, on the left is the Robson Ward kitchen and furniture shop. Walk through the archway and on the right hand wall of the courtyard is the 'Bottling Works Spring'.

The original source of the spring was established in 1850 and continued in production until 1950. The Burrow brothers bottled the spring water and supplied such notables as King George V and VI, the Duke of Bedford, Duke of Wellington, Sir Oswald Mosley, Charles Darwin, Stanley Baldwin (Conservative Prime Minister for three terms of office) and the Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Asquith. The flow of water today is a mere trickle of its former glory.



**Bottling Works Spring**

Turning left out of the Robson Ward archway continue to the Unicorn Pub reputed to be Malvern's oldest Public House, Map Reference SO 7749 4601. Note the blue plaque on the wall describing how C S Lewis used to meet here and enjoy a pint with his friends. It is said that after leaving the pub, one winters evening and observing a gas lamp through the mist, Lewis had the idea for the entrance to 'Narnia'.

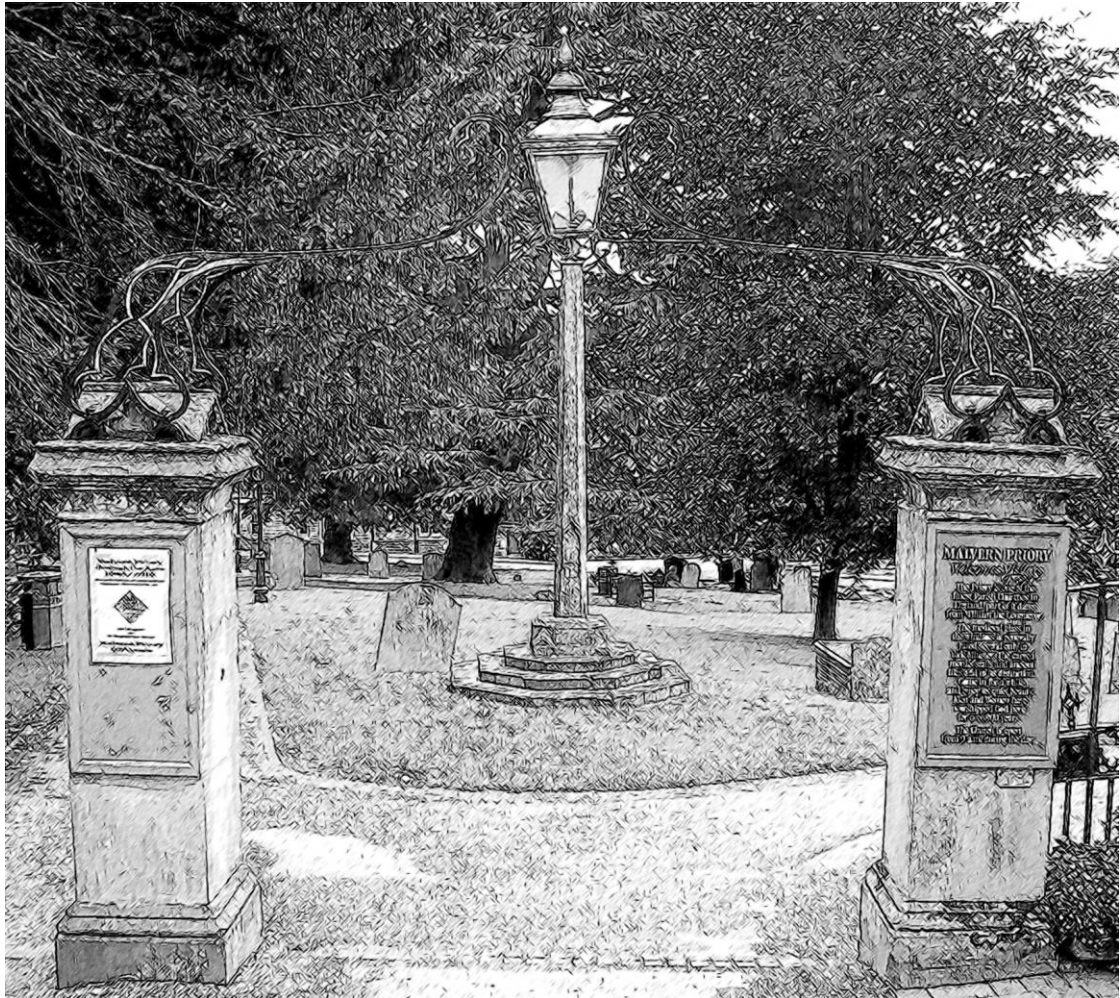


**Unicorn Pub**

On the opposite side of the road approaching the top of Church Street is Barclays Bank which was formerly the rather more interesting Royal Library. A little further up the road, past the steeply sloping Edith Walk, the Nationwide Building Society was once the location of another hydrotherapy treatment centre, during the Victorian era when Malvern was an established spa town.

Continue along the Worcester Road heading out of Great Malvern and on the left after approximately two hundred metres is the Holly Mount United Reformed Church. Walk towards the main entrance of the church and to the left open the wrought iron gate decorated with green apples into the 'Labyrinth', which claims to be an ancient form of pilgrimage for those unable to make the journey to the Holy Land. It is attractively laid out and is quite secluded, making this an ideal spot for contemplation.

On leaving this 'alternative' Holy Land, the walk passes by the icon of twentieth century retail extravagance, the Brays departmental store in the Worcester Road. Map Reference SO 7749 4617. Continue down the Worcester Road and on the opposite side to the Kosihaus store and coffee shop is Montreal House. This is where Charles Darwin made his second visit to Malvern for the water cure for his daughter and himself with Dr James Gully and sadly where his daughter Anne died, it is now believed from tuberculosis, at the tender age of 10. The blue plaque was unveiled by his great, great grandson, Randal Keynes in 2009 to commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of Darwin. Anne is buried in Malvern Priory



### The Malvern Priory

Return towards the town Centre and by the former Royal Library head down Edith Walk past Rebecca's Range and the Amnesty International Book shop to the wonderfully unusual 'Theatre of Small Convenience'. This is well worth a visit to experience an eclectic performance in reputedly the smallest theatre in the world. After enjoying the show, walk down and turn right into Church Walk past the supermarket and Benedictos Italian Restaurant onto the steeply sloped Church Street.

Turn left, opposite is Cecilia Hall hidden between two attractive bow fronted glass windows of the Oxfam Shop. Elgar rented the hall for his pupils taking violin lessons. Cross over the traffic lights to the entrance of the estate agents. Here you will see a small brass plaque describing the former Malvern Town Gentlemen's Club where Elgar and other gentleman took refuge.

Continue a short distance to the Malvern Theatre which is well worth visiting to view the various art displays and the fascinating water clock high up on the balcony bar along with Elgar's bust. Do take time to admire the ornate Winter Gardens Fountain with four cherubs sitting on a marble basin near the restaurant entrance. Continue out of the theatre down the steps to the well groomed Winter Gardens. Head towards the

children's play area where amongst the mature Cedar trees is carved a sculpture of a woman diving into the sea accompanied by a fish and otter, in keeping with Malvern's water theme. Stroll towards the Victorian bandstand and cross over the pretty wooden bridge above the Swan Pool, originally the Benedictine monks source of freshwater fish for their meals. Ahead is the 'Splash' sports complex.



**Winter Gardens - Woman and Otter Sculpture**

Turn right alongside the pool past the attractive brick/stucco arches to an alleyway on the left where a little way down is Spa Cottage built in the 1840's. The Chalybeate Well under this cottage was visited by people seeking a cure for their ailments during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Return to the Swan Pool and walk up the tarmac path with the theatre to the right and onto Grange Road. To the left is the magnificent Park View House. Look out for the green plaque on the wall of this impressive duck-egg-blue painted building built in 1845. This was formerly the first large scale, purpose built hydropathic establishment in England.

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