

THE WELSH GATEHOUSE

Historic Holiday Let in Mathern, Wales
Information Booklet
About Local Historical Sites





THE WELSH
GATEHOUSE

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ABOUT THE WELSH GATEHOUSE



The Welsh Gatehouse is an extraordinary luxury retreat nestled in rural South Wales, offering a unique and intimate hideaway for two. This award-winning period property combines captivating character with thoughtfully updated comforts, including a modern wet room, fully fitted kitchen, cosy lounge and charming sleeping quarters. With twin towers and atmospheric living spaces, it feels like your own private castle, perfect for romantic breaks or special celebrations.



Set amidst tranquil countryside near the Wye Valley, guests enjoy easy access to scenic walks, historic sites and local attractions, all while savouring peace, privacy and memorable experiences in an exceptional setting.

We accept well behaved dogs at The Welsh Gatehouse, meaning that your four legged friend doesn't have to miss out on a relaxing break away. With an enclosed garden and plenty of dog friendly walks and pubs nearby, we have as much to offer canine guests as human ones!



PEOPLE CONNECTED TO THE GATEHOUSE

SIR BOGO de KNOVILL

The Welsh Gatehouse at Moynes Court, was built in approximately 1270 and is the surviving medieval gatehouse of a fortified manor originally associated with Sir Bogo de Knoville (also written Knovil or Knovell). He was an influential Marcher lord and royal official under King Edward I. He served as Sheriff of Shropshire and Staffordshire, fought in campaigns in Wales and Scotland, and signed the 1301 Barons' Letter to the Pope, helping strengthen English royal power along the Welsh borderlands. His coat of arms can be seen here on the right.

Bogo De Knovill's son, also Bogo, rose with Mortimer against Edward II in 1321 and was pardoned, though he was heavily fined. This Bogo left a son, John, who died in 1349 during the Black death. His widow, Margery de Knovill married a Thomas de Moigne. Hence the name – Moynes Court.



BISHOP FRANCIS GODWIN

Francis Godwin, Bishop of Llandaff from 1601 to 1617, is closely associated with Moynes Court. He rebuilt the medieval manor around 1609 transforming the ancient fortified site into a place of scholarship and retreat.

Godwin is remembered as the author of *The Man in the Moone* (published posthumously in 1638), often regarded as the first English science fiction novel. The story tells of a fantastical lunar voyage powered by trained wild geese and influenced later writers including Cyrano de Bergerac and Jules Verne.

Godwin moved within the intellectual world shaped by his contemporaries, Francis Bacon and Giordano Bruno, exploring ideas such as infinite worlds and the possibility of life beyond Earth. He was also something of a proto-archaeologist, investigating ancient monuments and local traditions, including discoveries around Mathern.

A friend and contemporary of the antiquarian William Camden, Godwin had a deep interest in history, manuscripts, codes and cryptography, embodying the Renaissance ideal of the scholar-cleric.

ST TEWDRIC

St Tewdric (Tewdrig) was a sixth-century king of Gwent who later became a Christian saint. According to tradition, he abdicated in favour of his son Meurig and withdrew to live as a hermit near Mathern, dedicating himself to prayer and contemplation. However, when Meurig struggled against Saxon incursions, Tewdrig was called upon once more to lead the Britons into battle. Though elderly, he led them to victory, but was mortally wounded in the fighting near the River Wye.

Legend says his body was placed upon a cart drawn by two white stags. The animals stopped at Mathern, where a spring miraculously rose at the place of his death. (see St Tewdrics Well below), where Tewdrig died. His martyrdom gave Mathern its Welsh name, Merthyr Tewdrig, meaning "the martyrdom of Tewdrig".

Medieval tradition also links him to the Arthurian legends, naming him as the father of Uther Pendragon and therefore the grandfather of King Arthur. He is remembered as both a warrior king and a holy figure in Welsh tradition.



HENRY MARTEN AND THOMAS HUGHES

In 1654 Thomas Hughes was elected Member of Parliament for Monmouthshire during Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate. He lived at Courtyard House, Moynes Court, where his initials can still be seen on a fireback dated 1648.

Henry Marten, one of the signatories of King Charles I's death warrant, also served in Parliament during the Commonwealth period. He would have known Thomas Hughes. After the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the surviving regicides were arrested and tried. Marten escaped execution but spent the remainder of his life imprisoned, twelve years of which he spent in Chepstow Castle (in Marten's tower). He died in prison there in 1680. Marten is buried at St Mary's Priory Church., Chepstow

Prisoners of status were sometimes allowed limited freedom on parole. Given the close proximity of Moynes Court and the Parliamentary connections of the Hughes family, it is probable that Marten may also have visited Moynes Court, where Thomas Hughes' daughter Sarah was living, .

INTERESTING FACTS



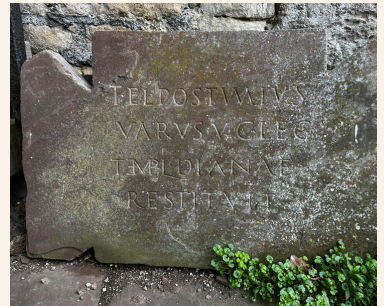
THE GREAT FLOOD: A RIVER SEVERN TSUNAMI

According to contemporary sources, on 30th January 1607 a freak tidal wave swept up the Bristol Channel causing untold mayhem, including to Chepstow and Mathern. Thousands were killed and 200 square miles of farmland and villages were destroyed.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1607_Bristol_Channel_floods

ROMAN ECHOES AT THE WELSH GATEHOUSE

In the early seventeenth century Bishop Francis Godwin brought four Roman inscribed plaques dated to the 3rd Century AD, to the site, installing them within the walls of Moynes Court. Three of these are now in the Roman Legionary Museum in Caerleon. A replica of one of these roman plaques can be seen in the archway entrance to the Welsh Gatehouse.



CHANGES TO THE GATEHOUSE ROOF

The Welsh Gatehouse was substantially remodelled in the 17th Century. A print (above) in William Coxe's Historical Tour of Monmouthshire (1801) shows the two towers with pyramidal tile roofs. The Gatehouse has glazed-in arrow-slits, a small trefoil lancet window (14th C) and a small ogee door let into the massive main gate.

THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE IN THE WELSH GATEHOUSE

The Welsh Gatehouse has a counterclockwise spiral staircase (when ascending from below). This is unusual, most spiral staircases in fortified buildings are clockwise. One possibility is that Sir Bogo de Knovil was left-handed, so having a counterclockwise staircase would have favoured a left-handed defender descending from above. Many historians argue that it was simply the mason's preference.



PLACES TO VISIT

All locations can be found using the [what.three.words](#) app. The words to use will be indicated below
- (///example.like.this)

St Tewdric's Well - a 3 minute walk

Surrounded by history, you do not have to look very far for the first point of interest near to The Welsh Gatehouse. Just walking down to the end of the drive and turning right will bring you to the St Tewdric's Well. It is a site where legend and early Welsh Christianity intertwine. See note about St Tewdric above. The well became a place of pilgrimage, its waters long believed to possess healing powers. Sheltered within a charming stone well house, this tranquil spot offers visitors a tangible connection to Wales's early medieval past, just a short walk from the ancient church where St Tewdric is reputedly buried.



Website:
<https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/3486603>

(///masts.predict.shock)

St Tewdric's Church - a 10 minute walk

Standing at the heart of the old part of Mathern village, St Tewdric's Church is one of Monmouthshire's most historically significant parish churches. Dedicated to the early Welsh king, who was esteemed as a saint and a martyr, Tewdrig, whose remains are said to be interred here. The present building dates largely from the 12th and 15th centuries, reflecting both Norman influence and later medieval craftsmanship. Once closely linked to nearby Chepstow Castle and the Bishops of Llandaff, the church offers history-minded visitors a peaceful yet powerful glimpse into the religious and political landscape of medieval Wales.



Website:
<https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/3000020-40-church-of-st-tewdric-mathern>

(///tangent.supposes.exam)

PLACES TO VISIT

Mathern Mill, Mathern - a 5 minute drive

Tucked beside a gentle stream near Chepstow, Mathern Mill reflects centuries of rural industry. Once grinding local grain for surrounding villages, this historic watermill offers a glimpse into traditional milling and agricultural life. Its stone walls and tranquil setting evoke the rhythms of a working countryside shaped by water and craft. They open this once a year to the public.

(///chips.hammocks.think)



Heston Brake, Portskewett - a 10 minute drive

Heston Brake is an Iron Age hillfort above Portskewett, overlooking the Severn Estuary. The site sits on a ridge with steep natural slopes and earthworks enclosing an oval area, with a barrow within the wider landscape. Evidence suggests late Iron Age occupation, possibly continuing into the early Roman period. Its proximity to Caerwent indicates ongoing strategic importance. Today it is a scheduled ancient monument, valued for its historical significance and insight into prehistoric settlement patterns in Wales.

(///plodding.remind.curiosity.)



Caerwent Roman Town (Venta Silurum) – a 10 minute drive



Caerwent offers one of Britain's best glimpses of a Roman town buried beneath a modern village. Founded around AD 75–80 as Venta Silurum, market centre of the Silures tribe, it preserves remarkably high stretches of town wall, street plans and foundations of houses, shops, a temple and public buildings, spread across fields and lanes. Simple interpretation panels help you decode mosaics, floor plans and the outline of everyday Roman life on this once-busy frontier. Unlike many urban Roman sites, Caerwent feels peaceful and uncrowded, making it easy to imagine carts rumbling along the streets nearly two millennia ago.

Website: <https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/caer-went-roman-town>

(///pins.economies.clarifies)

PLACES TO VISIT

Chepstow Castle – a 10 minute drive



The oldest surviving post-Roman stone fortification in Britain, this remarkable castle has stood guard above the dramatic cliffs of the River Wye for nearly a thousand years. Rising proudly over the surrounding landscape, its thick stone walls and imposing towers offer a powerful glimpse into the military ingenuity of the medieval world. Within its gates are Europe's oldest surviving castle doors—ancient oak timbers that have protected the entrance for centuries and remain one of the site's most fascinating historic treasures.

As you wander through the castle's atmospheric halls, battlements, and towers, it's easy to imagine the lives of the soldiers, nobles, and craftsmen who once walked these very stones.

Throughout the year it hosts more than 30 vibrant events that bring the past vividly to life. Visitors can enjoy thrilling falconry displays, hands-on chainmail workshops, traditional archery demonstrations, ghost hunts after dark, and dramatic historical re-enactments that recreate scenes from centuries past.

Each August, Castell Roc transforms the castle courtyard into a lively festival stage, where music, laughter, and celebration echo against the ancient stone walls.

Located just two miles from The Welsh Gatehouse, this magnificent castle is the closest and most accessible piece of local history—though it is only the beginning of the many historic treasures waiting to be discovered nearby.



Website: <https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/chepstow-castle>

(///flitting.meaty.melts)

PLACES TO VISIT

Caldicot Castle – a 12-minute drive

Step through the gates of Caldicot Castle and into a remarkably preserved medieval stronghold steeped in Welsh history. Rising proudly within tranquil country parkland, its imposing gatehouse towers, battlements, and wooded grounds invite you to step back into a world of knights and noble households. Explore richly furnished rooms, climb the winding towers for sweeping views, and wander peaceful gardens that soften its once-defensive walls. Throughout the year, the castle springs to life with living history encampments, falconry displays, open-air theatre, and family festivals—offering an immersive experience where centuries of heritage unfold before your eyes. Website: <https://www.visitwales.com/attraction/castle/caldicot-castle-and-country-park-532221>



(///ferried.disclose.solve)

Tintern Abbey – a 20 minute drive



Framed by wooded Wye Valley hillsides, Tintern Abbey is one of Britain's most evocative monastic ruins. Founded in 1131 as Wales's first Cistercian house, it grew into a vast Gothic complex whose soaring stone walls still stand almost to full height, despite losing their roof after the Dissolution. Romantic poets, painters and early tourists made Tintern famous, and today visitors can wander the cloister garths, chapter house and great church, tracing the daily routines of medieval monks. Cadw panels and guidebooks bring the religious, political and artistic stories to life in unforgettable surroundings.

Website - <https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/tintern-abbey>

(///belonging.rant.shrub)

PLACES TO VISIT

Magor Marsh – a 20 minute drive

For a very different kind of historic site, Magor Marsh preserves one of the last fragments of ancient fenland on the Gwent Levels. First reclaimed from the sea in Roman times, this man-made landscape of reens (drainage ditches), meadows and wet woodland has been shaped by centuries of careful water management. Today it's a nature reserve, but information boards and trails highlight how local people have farmed and fished here for generations. It's ideal for history-minded walkers who like their stories mixed with birdlife, big skies and a sense of stepping into an older, slower countryside.



Website: <https://www.gwentwildlife.org/nature-reserves/magor-marsh>

([///console.spark.included](#)).

Newport Medieval Ship - a 20 minute drive

Remains of a fifteenth-century merchant vessel unearthed in the heart of Newport in 2002. The ship was originally around 116 feet (35 metres) long. Vessels of this size were considered 'great ships' by contemporary standards and were typically used for the long-distance trade between Britain, Biscay and Southern Iberia. The most likely construction date of the ship is 1457

<https://www.newportship.org/>

([///rush.reduce.focus](#))



PLACES TO VISIT

National Roman Legion Museum & Caerleon Roman Fortress and Baths – a 25 minute drive



In Caerleon, visitors can step directly into the world of the Roman Empire by exploring one of the best-preserved legionary fortresses in Britain. This historic riverside town was once a major military base, home to the powerful Second Augustan Legion, which arrived here around AD 75 and remained for more than two centuries. At the heart of the story is the National Roman Legion Museum, where fascinating artefacts bring the Roman past vividly to life. Displays of armour, weapons, inscriptions, and everyday objects are complemented by interactive exhibits that reveal what life was like for the thousands of soldiers stationed on this distant frontier of the empire.

A short walk from the museum connects several remarkable archaeological sites that together form an extraordinary snapshot of Roman military life. The vast fortress baths complex once echoed with conversation and relaxation after long days of training and duty; today, atmospheric projections recreate the glow of water and drifting steam that once filled the halls. Nearby stands the impressive amphitheatre, which could seat around 6,000 spectators for military displays and dramatic contests. Visitors can also see Britain's only visible remains of Roman legionary barracks. Together, these sites offer a rare and immersive glimpse into daily life in a Roman frontier fortress.



Website - <https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/caerleon-roman-baths>

(///fire.ruins.nurses)

PLACES TO VISIT

Harold's Stones, Trellech - a 20 minute drive

At Trellech stand Harold's Stones, three towering prehistoric monoliths dating back over 4,000 years. Shrouded in legend and mystery, they may mark a ceremonial site or ancient alignment. Set within peaceful countryside, the stones invite history enthusiasts to step into Wales's deep past and imagine the rituals of Neolithic Britain.



(///impaired.willing.reconnect)

Roman Temple Site at Lydney Park - a 20 minute drive



Overlooking the Severn Estuary, the Roman temple at Lydney Park is steeped in myth and archaeology. Once dedicated to the mysterious god Nodens, the site revealed mosaics, inscriptions and even a curse tablet. Wander these evocative ruins and experience a rare glimpse into Roman religion in ancient Britain. There are also beautiful gardens which open April May June.

<https://www.lydneyparkestate.co.uk/>

(///inform.grove.digests)

Tredegar House- a 35 minute drive



Tredegar House is one of the finest Restoration-era mansions in Britain, located in Newport, South Wales. Set in 90 acres of beautiful parkland and formal gardens, this 17th-century red-brick estate was the ancestral home of the influential Morgan family for over 500 years. Run by the National Trust it is worth a visit

(///park.finger.shirts)

PLACES TO VISIT

Raglan Castle – a 35 minute drive

One of the grandest and most impressive late-medieval fortresses in Wales, Raglan Castle stands as a striking symbol of noble ambition, wealth, and architectural innovation. Its most distinctive feature is the remarkable hexagonal Great Tower, known as the Yellow Tower of Gwent, which rises dramatically above the surrounding landscape and reflects the castle's unique blend of military strength and refined Renaissance-influenced design. Built during the 15th century, Raglan was intended not only as a defensive stronghold but also as a luxurious residence that would demonstrate the prestige and influence of its powerful owners.

Website: <https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/raglan-castle>

(///should.agrees.incursion)



St Fagans National Museum of History – a 45 minute drive

On the western edge of Cardiff, St Fagans is a vast open-air museum devoted to everyday Welsh life across centuries. More than forty original buildings — from farmhouses and a medieval church to a miners' institute, school and city pub — have been carefully dismantled and re-erected in the grounds of a historic manor house. Costumed interpreters, traditional crafts and changing exhibitions help you step into stories of work, worship and home life from all over Wales. It's essentially a walk-through timeline of Welsh social history, and easily a full-day outing for history-hungry visitors. You pay for parking but admission is free of charge.

Website: <https://museum.wales/stfagans/>

(///attend.buddy.boring)



PLACES TO VISIT

14

Castell Coch – a 45 minute drive



Castell Coch, or the 'Red Castle', rises up from the ancient beech woods of Fforest Fawr like a vision from a fairy tale. Yet these great towers with their unmistakable conical roofs only hint at the splendour within.

Given free rein by the third Marquess of Bute, architect William Burges didn't hold back. The highly decorated interiors and rich furnishings of Castell Coch make it a dazzling masterpiece of the High Victorian era.

But it's no exotic folly. Underneath the mock-medieval trappings you can still trace the impressive remains of a 13th-century castle, once used as a hunting lodge by the ruthless Marcher lord Gilbert de Clare.

([///relate.baking.hoot](http://relate.baking.hoot))



PLACES TO VISIT

Cardiff Castle - a 45 minute drive

Cardiff Castle blends nearly 2,000 years of history, from its Roman fort beginnings to its medieval stronghold and the lavish Victorian fantasy created by architect William Burges for the Marquess of Bute. Visitors can wander the Norman keep, admire opulent themed interiors, and step onto the medieval-style battlements overlooking the modern city. The castle's layered past offers a vivid journey through Welsh heritage in the heart of the capital.



Website: <https://www.cardiffcastle.com/>
(///glad.spider.record)

Skenfrith Castle, White Castle, and Grosmont Castle which are a 50-60 minute drive, form a spectacular trio of Medieval fortresses nestled in the rolling countryside of southeast Wales. Built after the Norman Conquest to guard the English-Welsh border, each castle offers a unique glimpse into medieval military life.



Rich in history and surrounded by scenic walking routes, the Three Castles invite visitors to discover dramatic landscapes, fascinating heritage, and unforgettable views in the heart of Monmouthshire.

Website: <https://www.marksmearings.com/three-castles-monmouthshire-wales/>

Blaenavon Ironworks - a 50 minute drive

Blaenavon Ironworks stands as one of the best-preserved early ironworks in Britain and a cornerstone of Wales's Industrial Revolution story. Founded in 1789, its towering blast furnaces, cast houses and workers' cottages reveal how raw coal and iron ore were transformed into the materials that built railways, cities and empires. Walking through the site, you can explore the water-balance tower, dramatic furnace stacks and exhibitions detailing the lives of labourers and skilled ironmasters alike. Part of the wider Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, it offers an atmospheric and deeply human insight into industrial innovation and community life.



Website: <https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/blaenafon-ironworks>
(///modem.reinstate.handover)

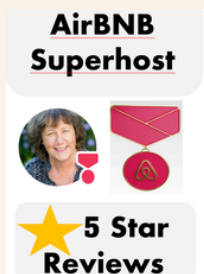
Big Pit National Coal Museum - a 50 minute drive



Big Pit National Coal Museum offers one of Britain's most powerful industrial heritage experiences. Set within the Blaenavon World Heritage landscape, this former working coal mine allows visitors to descend 300 feet underground with a real ex-miner guide, exploring original roadways where generations once laboured in heat, darkness and noise. Above ground, the winding tower, pithead baths and exhibitions vividly recount the social history of Welsh mining communities, strikes and solidarity. Big Pit is not just a museum; it is an immersive journey into the industry that fuelled the Industrial Revolution and shaped modern Wales.

Website: <https://museum.wales/bigpit/>
(///failed.bind.month)

AWARDS FOR THE WELSH GATEHOUSE



REVIEWS <https://uk.trustpilot.com/review/welshgatehouse.com>

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(///shredder.typist.subject)

