

# ERL SPRING EVENT 16 – 20 APRIL 2024 IN WORCESTERSHIRE



## The Accommodation for 4 nights

The 3 star Fishmore Hall Hotel, is a privately-owned boutique Shropshire country house hotel overlooking the charming town of Ludlow, with unrivalled views over stunning Shropshire countryside. As you can see its cuisine is Michelin Fork and three AA Rosettes rated. With 15 bedrooms each with a designer bathroom, plus the new Spa facility.



The Tour is Half board here for the four nights – At the heart of this hotel is the restaurant, Forelles. Here you will discover the best of Shropshire dining with the innovative cooking of the bright young head chef, Phil Kerry, and his team, using ingredients sourced from local producers in the Shropshire Marches. With bar meals also available.

## The Event Programme – 3 full days of very different and historic venue visits

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April** – arrival from 15.00 at the hotel, afternoon tea can be booked if you wish

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April** – A day in the Midlands Industrial Heritage

To Dudley, and The Black Country Living Museum to see an amazing living collection



The Black Country Living Museum (formerly the Black Country Museum) is an open-air museum of rebuilt historic buildings in Dudley, West Midlands, England. It is located in the centre of the Black Country, 10 miles west of Birmingham. The museum occupies 10.5 hectares (26 acres) of former industrial land partly reclaimed from a former railway goods yard, disused lime kilns, canal arm and former coal pits. The museum opened to the public in 1978, and has since added over 50 shops, houses and other industrial buildings from around the metropolitan boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall and the City of Wolverhampton (collectively known as the Black Country); mainly in a specially built village. Most buildings were relocated from their original sites to form a base from where demonstrators portray life spanning 300 years of history, with a focus on 1850–1950. Today's mileage is about 80.

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April – Visit Elizabethan History in Stunning Grade One Buildings**  
**Depart at 9.30 for a short drive to Ludlow for coffee in the 16thC Feathers Hotel**



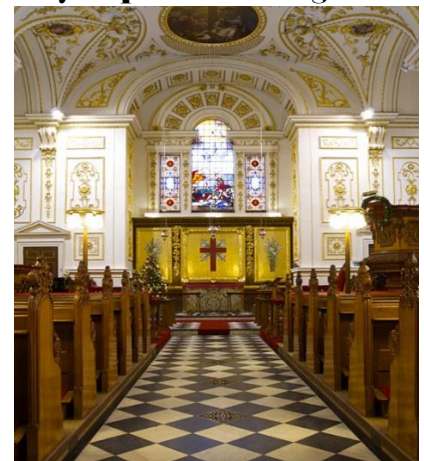
Built in 1619 by an ambitious attorney of the Marches, our handsome building was converted into a hotel by his grandson 50 years later and has been welcoming guests since called Rees Jones, who moved to Ludlow to pursue his career at the 'Council 1670. The Feathers' famous half-timbered Tudor façade is adorned with carved wooden motifs of the Prince of Wales' three feathers emblem, which gives the hotel its name. Described by architectural historian Pevsner in his seminal 1942 book 'The Buildings of England' as 'that prodigy of timber-framed houses' it was listed as a Grade 1 building in 1954. More recently, in 1983, The New York Times named it the 'most handsome inn in the world'. In the article by historian Jan Morris, she added: 'It is one of the prime images of olde England, portrayed in posters and brochures wherever tourism is known.' Guests have stepped through The Feathers' original studded plank front door, which survives to this day, and enjoyed food, drink, rest and relaxation within its Jacobean interior for over 400 years.

**11.00 Drive the 23 miles to Upton Cressett Hall where the owners, William and Lady Laura Cash invite us to a Private Viewing followed by Lunch with them in this Grade 1 building**



The Hall as it stands today was built in the late sixteenth century – with the remains of a 15th century Great Hall – and is reputed to be the oldest dated house built entirely of brick in Shropshire. A 'date-stone' of 1580 can clearly be seen on the front of the house from the Moat Lawn. From the 14th century until 1926, the historic estate belonged to the Cressett family – Shropshire landowners and royalist courtiers – and their descendants. The Cressett direct line died out with the death of Elizabeth Cressett in 1792 after which the estate passed through various branches of the Pelham Cressett and Thursby Pelham family (which included two prime ministers). The site of the Hall is ancient. It is recorded in the Domesday Book and in nearby fields there are the remains of a second century Roman settlement. The surrounding land is also the site of a deserted medieval village, traces of which remain as earthworks. A tiny Norman church, dedicated to St Michael, stands nearby and is maintained by the The Churches Conservation Trust. Parts of the Hall date to 1380 and are the remains of an earlier manor which belonged to the de Upton family. In the thirteenth century, the de Uptons were Verderers of the Royal Forest of Morfe and Knights and suitors to Holgate Castle, and the last of their line married into the Cressett family in the 14th century. Listed in England's Thousand Best Houses (2009). Today's mileage is about 50.

**Friday 19th April – A look at two completely different venues, each very affected by changes in the 20thC. – Widley Court and Church and The Severn Valley Railway, a post Beeching success**



**Witley Court**, in Great Witley, Worcestershire, is a ruined Italianate mansion. Built for the Foleys in the seventeenth century on the site of a former manor house, it was enormously expanded in the early nineteenth century by the architect John Nash for Thomas Foley, 3rd Baron Foley. The estate was later sold to the Earls of Dudley, who undertook a second massive reconstruction in the mid-19th century, employing the architect Samuel Daukes to create one of the great palaces of Victorian and Edwardian England. The declining fortune of the Dudleys saw the sale of the court after the First World War to a Kidderminster carpet manufacturer. In 1937 a major fire caused great damage to the court, the estate was broken up and sold and the house was subsequently stripped of its fittings and furnishings. Forty years of decay followed before the house and grounds were taken into the care of The Department of the Environment in 1972. Since that point, significant restoration and stabilisation have secured the house as a spectacular ruin.

**St. Michael and All Angels Church, Great Witley.** As the parish church for the villages of Great Witley and Little Witley it is used regularly for services, concerts and other events. After the fire at the Court in 1937 it was abandoned. The church suffered a period of neglect until 1965 when an extensive restoration programme was started by concerned parishioners in order to save it from further decay. The church now displays a splendour which is unique amongst country churches in Britain. It has exquisite gilded decorations throughout, ceiling paintings by Antonio Bellucci, ten painted glass windows by Joshua Price depicting biblical scenes, splendid carved woodwork and a large monument by Michael Rysbrack. There is an impressive organ and many musicians consider the church acoustics to be as fine as for any building of its size outside London. The vaults in the crypt were opened up a few years ago and are now on view to the public. They contain lead coffins in various states of decay and Lord Dudley's original granite tomb. There is also the Samuel Thorpe tower clock from 1804 now restored and in working condition as well as a display of material and artefacts relating to the church and Witley Court, and the families involved over the last 300 years.

**Witley Court, and the attached Church of St Michael and All Angels, are both Grade I listed buildings**

**After the first 24 miles to Great Witley, we drive another 13 miles to Bewdley Station to join the Severn valley Railway to Bridgenorth and back on one of their Steam Festival Days**



Opened in 1862 after a nine-year building project, the **Severn Valley Railway** was originally part of the much longer Shrewsbury to Hartlebury line. The original line contained 15 stations. The Bewdley to Kidderminster section, or loop line, was constructed by the GWR, who ran many of the railways in the area, and opened in June 1878. The line was never the busiest, largely because it had been laid as a single-track line for the economy. Although several passing loops were added later, the limited capacity meant that it could never aspire to regular through traffic from stations and industries outside of the Severn Valley, and so only saw local passenger and goods traffic. Fortunately, there were several coalfields in the area that used the Railway to transport their coal to nearby power stations and further afield.

In 1948, the government nationalised the railways and the Severn Valley line passed to the newly formed British Railways (BR). The following decade saw many of steam-hauled passenger trains replaced by diesel units. Traffic had been in decline since the 1920s, and in the early 1960s BR announced the line was 'suspected of being unremunerative.' Although plans to close the line began as early as 1961 and all passenger services stopped in 1963, a mere two years later a plan to save the Severn Valley line began in a pub – as most good things do! Total day's mileage is about 60.

**Saturday 20th April Home after breakfast**

**Price £840.00 pp sharing accommodation, with deluxe rooms and suite supplements – see Booking Form**

**What's Included**

Four star hotel half board accommodation for 4 nights, entry to – Black Country Museum, and Great Whitley Hall and Church; travel on The Severn Valley Steam Railway, Coffee at The Feathers, Ludlow; Private Visit to Upton Cressett Hall and lunch with the owners; Tour Guide Route Book and services of a Tour Director.

**What's Not Included**

Drinks, except coffee in Ludlow and at Upton Cressett Hall, fuel and parking at Bewdley Station, private extras and tips.