



-Exploring Eliot- GEORGE ELIOT ILLUSTRATED

WARWICKSHIRE-COVENTRY

ILLUSTRATED BY
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An illustrated trail exploring people and places connected to George Eliot through the collections at Nuneaton Museum & Art Gallery, Nuneaton Library and Herbert Art Gallery & Museum.

These collection highlights illustrate Eliot's life providing a unique opportunity to get to know the bestselling author who grew up in Nuneaton and Coventry.



Exploring
Eliot

GEORGE ELIOT & NUNEATON

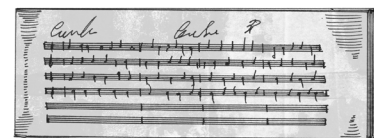
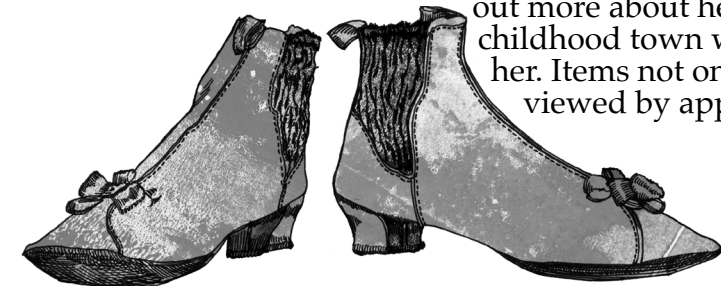


Chilvers Coton Church (1) George Eliot was baptised here as Mary Anne Evans and the family attended services every Sunday. Her parents Robert and Christiana Evans and other family are buried here. It is described as Shepperton Church in her work, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 'its substantial stone tower looks at you through its intelligent eye, the clock, with the friendly expression of former days'.

Chilvers Coton Heritage Centre (2) This was originally a free school founded by Lady Newdigate of the Arbury Estate, where Eliot's father was employed as land agent.

Nuneaton Museum & Art Gallery (3) The George Eliot collection gives a fascinating insight into the author. It includes her beautiful dress and boots

offering a glimpse of her personal taste as well as the wealth her writing provided. A music manuscript shows her life long love of music. Explore the museum's George Eliot galleries to find out more about her life and the childhood town which inspired her. Items not on display can be viewed by appointment.



Wrist ornament (right) owned by Mrs Robinson, inspiration for Mrs Pettifer, Nuneaton Museum & Art Gallery.

George Eliot Memorial Gardens and Obelisk (4) Relocated from Arbury, the Obelisk is now housed within the tranquil George Eliot Memorial Gardens.

George Eliot statue (5) Created by local artist John Letts in 1986, on commission by the George Eliot Fellowship.

The George Eliot Hotel (6) Originally called The Bull Hotel. It featured as The Red Lion in Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life* where Lawyer Dempster and his acquaintances meet.

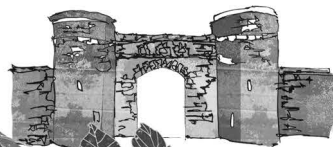
Nuneaton Library (7) contains some of Eliot's finest paper-based collection pieces. Including letters, beautiful first editions and various scrapbooks, archiving the many ways Eliot has been commemorated. Popular material is accessible to view but the wider collection can be viewed by appointment. The collection includes letters by Eliot and her friends and family which can be viewed online.

Church Street (8) The characters of Mrs Pettifer and Lawyer Dempster in *Janet's Repentance* were inspired by people who lived in Church Street. It became Orchard Street in *Scenes of Clerical Life*.

Parish Church of St Nicolas (9) Features as Milby Church in *Scenes of Clerical Life*.



South Farm is the birthplace of George Eliot (not accessible to the public).



13

George Eliot was familiar with **Arbury Hall (12)** and had access to the extensive library. Scenes of a Clerical Life features Cheveral Manor, growing from 'ugliness into beauty', believed to be inspired by Sir Roger Newdigate's transformation of Arbury. (Open to the public at certain times of the year).



14

Eliot's parents were married at **Astley Church (13)** thought to be the inspiration for Knebley Church in Mr. Gilfil's Love Story. The description of the fictional church mirrors features that can still be seen at Astley Church. **Astley Castle (14)** is the basis of Knebley Abbey which was restored by the Landmark Trust.

TO BEDWORTH

Bedworth Almshouses (15)

The old almshouses were located near the parish church and rebuilt on the present site. Eliot's father was involved in the rebuild. She would probably have visited them with her father who was involved with the Chamberlaine charity.



15

As one of Eliot's beloved places **Griff Hollows (10)** inspired Red Deeps in The Mill on the Floss, 'when she could sit on a grassy hollow under the shadow of a branching ash.' Eliot lived at **Griff House (11)** as a child. It is the home described in The Mill on the Floss 'This attic was Maggie's favourite retreat on a wet day, ...here she fretted out all her ill humours, and talked aloud to the worm-eaten floors'.

Richard Johnson was married to Eliot's aunt Elizabeth and both are buried in the churchyard of **St James' Church Bulkington (16)**. Johnson is thought to be the inspiration for Uncle Pullet in The Mill on the Floss. Nuneaton Museum & Art Gallery has items belonging to him in the collection (viewable by appointment).



16

GEORGE ELIOT BY ROAD

GEORGE ELIOT & COVENTRY

In 1832 George Eliot transferred to **Nantglyn school (17)** one of the best schools in Coventry. Eliot excelled in many subjects especially English and languages.



Bird Grove (19) (not accessible to the public). Eliot and her father lived here from 1841 until his death in 1849.

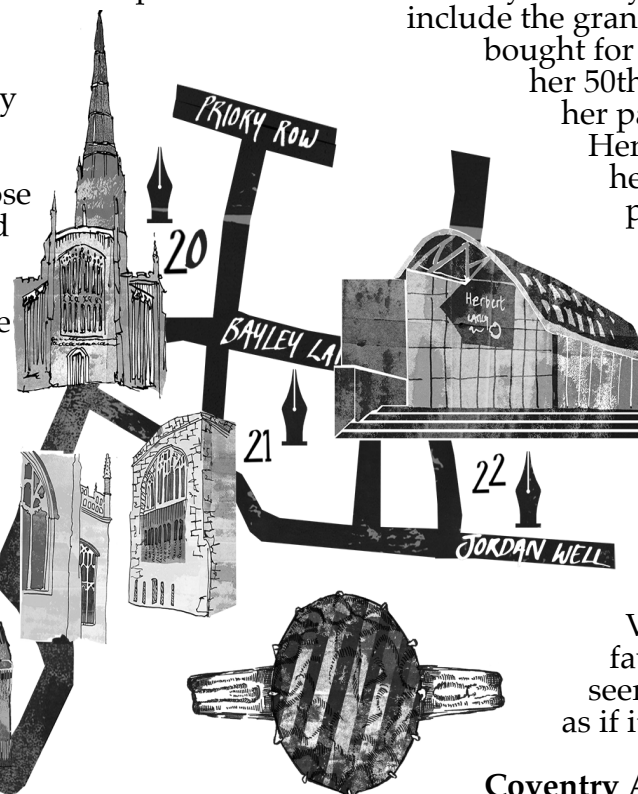
Eliot and her father attended **Holy Trinity Church (20)** while living in Coventry. It was at this time she began to question formal religion and in 1842 Eliot refused to attend church. This caused a rift with her father which Eliot called their 'holy war'.

St Mary's Guildhall (21) was the inspiration for the Grand Old Hall in Eliot's book, Adam Bede. 'Grim dusty armour hung in high relief in front of the dark oaken gallery at the farther end, and... opposite was spread a curtain of old tapestry.'

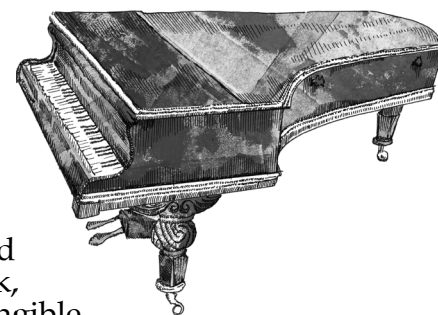
Near to Nantglyn is the **Cara Bray Horse Trough (18)** dedicated in honour of her work founding the Coventry Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. When Eliot and her father moved to Coventry in 1841, local inhabitants Charles and Cara Bray became her close friends. The radicals and freethinkers Eliot encountered at their home had an important impact on her. Their friendship is evident from the diary and commonplace book of Cara Bray, now in Coventry Archives (viewable by appointment).



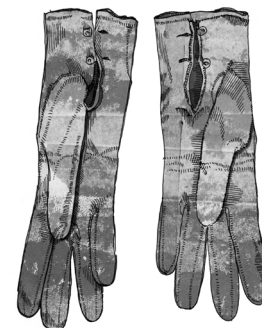
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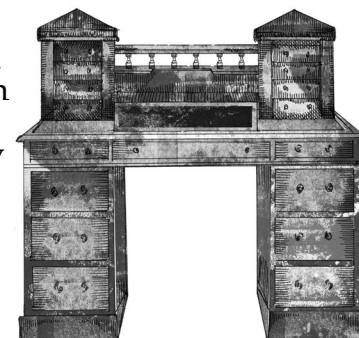
Herbert Art Gallery & Museum (22) The George Eliot collection has significant pieces which represent her life in Coventry and beyond. They include the grand piano bought for Eliot on her 50th birthday by her partner George Henry Lewes, and her writing desk, providing a tangible link to the woman who became one of the most famous writers in England (on display).



Also in the Herbert's collection is Eliot's opal ring and fine gloves (viewable by appointment). Her love of opals is evident in her short story, The Lifted Veil. '...the opal was my favourite stone, because it seems to blush and turn pale as if it had a soul...'



Coventry Archives (22) based within the Herbert holds a selection of beautifully bound first edition books as well as letters written by the famous author. Coventry Archives also holds more recent items such as scrapbooks inspired by Eliot and historic views of Coventry (viewable by appointment). The reading room has a range of books about her life and works with more available by request.



Mary Ann Evans spent her formative years in Nuneaton and Coventry before moving to London and publishing under the pen name of George Eliot. Her works were extremely popular in her own lifetime and she became one of Britain's greatest writers.

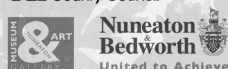
Eliot's unusual and interesting life touches on issues important to all of us, from family and love to religion and politics.

This illustrated trail explores George Eliot's life and works through the places which inspired the famous author.

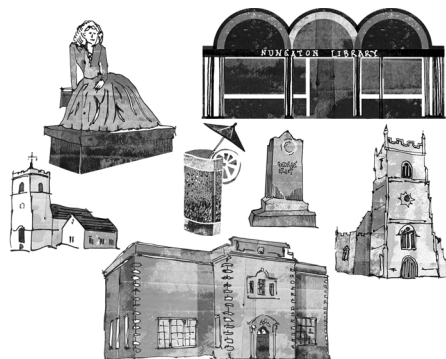
Check websites for up to date access information and opening times.

This trail is a guide only. Please check map locations and walking and driving routes before visiting.

Visit www.exploringeliot.org to find out more.



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WARWICKSHIRE



COVENTRY