

Walking with Legend

Walk anywhere in the British Isles and you're never far away from a place of legend. Stop to look and you may notice that hunched outcrop on the hilltop, those ancient stones in the valley below or that ruined building on the promontory ahead. You may not know it, but you'll sense it. There's more to this place than meets the eye. The land has memories to share – if only you knew what they were.

Now, across different parts of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, you can discover some of these memories through stories. Myths and local legends are many and varied but they all help to bring the landscape to life – by connecting us with the deep or recent past, by seeking to explain natural and man-made features or conveying to us the customs and concerns of our forebears. Whether entertaining, enlightening, frivolous or frightening, such stories are imaginative pathways from past to present, into the future.

Many myths and legends are centuries old, passed on from one generation to the next by word of mouth before taking on a later, literary guise. Stories are living things, changing with each new transmission between teller and listener, fitting new contexts and making a renewed sense of place, people and events. After you hear a memorable story about a place, you'll view it differently, and in turn you can help to keep that story alive by telling it to your family and friends.

And, of course, whether myth or legend, history or memory, at some deep level and in some poetic way, all these stories are true.

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