

# MYTHS & LEGENDS

## of the Wye Valley & Forest Of Dean

There are a number of historical legends, ancient myths and terrifying ghost stories that surround the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean.

With 2017 marking the Year of Legends, immerse yourself into the stories of the Dean Wye.

From the historic folk tale of the Ruardean Bear to the iconic legend of the Devil's Pulpit, there are so many interesting myths and legends of the Dean Wye for you to explore.



The Devil's Pulpit



### THE WYE VALLEY

Explore the myths and legends of the Wye Valley from the many encounters of the Devil to mischievous creatures known as Pwcas.



**The Devil's Pulpit** - A rocky viewpoint which overlooks the 13th Century Tintern Abbey. Local myth states the Devil created the Pulpit to preach to the Monks of Tintern, in the hopes that he could tempt them away from their religious ways.



**The Ghostly Figures of Swan Pool** - On the road to Newland, near Redbrook lies the ghostly Swan Pool. The apparition of a ghostly woman carrying her child is said to haunt the pool. The ghostly figure can be seen rising from the depths of the water and the sound of a baby's cry rings in the air as well as a ghostly dog that circles the pool.



**Fairy Transport** - In old Welsh folklore, Corgis were the preferred method of transport for fairies!



**Mischievous Pwcas** - In Monmouth, mischievous strange creatures known in Welsh mythology as Pwcas, used to offer help to local farmers in exchange for milk. If the Pwca wasn't rewarded, they would cause mischief for the householder.



**King Arthur's Cave** - Legend says that a giant human skeleton was discovered in King Arthur's Cave on the Doward in the 1700s. The cave is shrouded in local superstition and many bones of exotic and extinct animals have also been excavated from the site.



**The Mordiford Dragon** - Said to have resided just outside of the Herefordshire village of Mordiford, at the confluence of the River Wye and the River Lugg. The legend says that the dragon was green in colour and was looked after by a small girl named Maud. The dragon was destroyed after causing havoc in the village leaving Maud distraught.



**St Tewdric Springs** - St Tewdric was mortally wounded during battle and wished to be buried at sea. Everywhere he and his people stopped during the long journey, a spring of water appeared. St Tewdric died at Mathern, a small village near Monmouthshire before reaching the sea but was laid to rest as per his request, however there is a well in Mathern which has never dried out.



**The Well that Heals** - The Virtuous Well in Trellech is also well known as St Anne's Well. In the 18th and 19th centuries the water was considered to be beneficial to the treatments of eye ailments and women's illnesses. It is also said that fairies used to dance at the site.



**Penyard Castle** - According to legend, a local farmer once discovered two iron doors beneath the ruins of Penyard Castle. The farmer collected a team of 20 oxen to tear the doors open and as a precaution, created a whip of Rowan to protect against any evil and kept a splinter from a Yew Tree in his pocket. After much force the doors opened to reveal two great big caskets of treasure with a Jackdaw perched above them. As the farmer was about to enter, the doors slammed shut and a voice bellowed out "Had it not been for your quicken-tree goad and your yew tree pin, you and your cattle had all been drawn in."



**Jack O'Kent** - A well known folkloric character based in the Welsh Marches. Legend has it that Jack was a wizard that regularly beat the Devil in bets and games.



**The Ghost of Isobel Chandos** - The daughter of the Governor of Hereford Castle fell in love with King Edward II's favourite, Hugh Despenser. After her true love's death, she left in a small boat which capsized and she unfortunately drowned. Her spirit is said to still sail along the River and the apparition is said to bring ill fortune to those who see it.



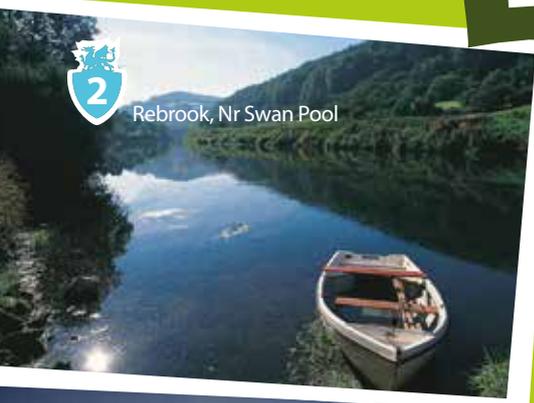
**Harold's Stones** - Legend has it that three of Harold's Chieftains died during a battle in Trellech, hence the three stones standing tall. However these standing stones actually date back 3,500 years to the Bronze Age.



**The Otter Hole** - The entrance was discovered by local man George Gardiner in 1970 whilst he was searching for Shakespeare's last manuscripts which, according to legend, were buried beside the River Wye. The Otter Hole is known as one of the best decorated caves in Britain and is located on the Wales/England border.



# MYTHS & LEGENDS



2

Rebrook, Nr Swan Pool



River Severn

13



The Beast of Dean

E



Bleeding Stone

C

## THE FOREST OF DEAN

Discover the myths and legends of the Forest of Dean from the age old question of 'who killed the bears?' to the mysterious bleeding stone.

- A Who killed the bears?** - In the 1800s, two Russian bears were brought to the Forest of Dean by some Frenchmen. While en route to Ruardean, an angry mob launched a deadly attack on the bears. Some Ruardean residents witnessed the brutal attack and sheltered the injured. The assailants were later fined for the attack but during legal processes the attackers were thought to be described as residents of Ruardean. The mocking refrain "Who killed the bears?" still taunts the residents to this day...
- B Littledean Hall** - A country house in the village of Littledean. It is reputedly one of the most haunted houses in England. It is known for its phantom blood stains in the dining room hall and a ghost of the manservant to Charles Pyrke of Littledean Hall from the 18th Century. The manservant haunts the 1st floor landing as residents of Ruardean. The mocking refrain "Who killed the bears?" still taunts the residents to this day...
- C Bleeding Stone** - The Staunton Longstone is a Bronze Age standing stone that stands at seven feet tall. Local folklore says that the stone will bleed if it's pricked with a pin at precisely midnight.
- D The Last Witch of Gloucestershire?** - A Cinderford wise woman, Ellen Hayward was the last person charged with Witchcraft in Gloucestershire. She was tried at Littledean Jail in 1906.
- E The Beast of Dean** - There have been many, historical and contemporary, reports of mysterious creatures living in the woods especially around Parkend. One notable example is the 'The Beast of Dean' which was also given the name 'Moose-Pig'. Long before reintroduction of wild boar in the area, an animal said to resemble a boar but large enough to crush hedges and make trees fall lurked in the depths of the woods.
- F The Dymock Curse** - An inscribed lead tablet was found in a house in Wilton Place, Dymock. The name Sarah Ellis was written backwards at the top and there were also inscriptions on the tablet representing the good and evil spirits, there is also a curse written on the tablet. Sarah Ellis was never found and the local legend is that the curse affected her so much that she committed suicide. The tablet is now displayed in Gloucester Folk Museum.
- G Lydney Park Roman Temple Curse** - One of the artifacts found at the Lydney Park Roman Temple Site was a cursed tablet. The tablet read "O the God Nodens. Silvanus has lost a ring. He has [vowed] half its value to Nodens. Amongst all who bear the name of Senicianus, refuse thou to grant health to exist, until he bring back the ring to the Temple of Nodens." Extraordinarily, the exact ring was found in a farmer's field in Hampshire. The ring itself is now housed in The Vyne Museum, it also lives with Tolkien memorabilia and the question remains as to whether or not the ancient ring might have been the very one that inspired J.R.R Tolkien.

**A MYTH...**  
is a story without  
any natural explanation

**A LEGEND...**  
is a historic story  
that cannot be  
proved to be true



**WANT TO FIND OUT MORE...?**  
Take a look at [deanwyelegends.co.uk](http://deanwyelegends.co.uk)

# FOREST OF DEAN & WYE VALLEY



JOIN THE CONVERSATION  
#DeanWyeLegends

-  **The Devil's Pulpit**  
Tintern
-  **Ghostly Figures of Swan Pool**  
Redbrook
-  **Fairy Transport**  
Wales
-  **Mischiefous Pwcas**  
Monmouth
-  **King Arthurs Cave**  
The Doward
-  **Mordiford Dragon**  
Mordiford, Herefordshire
-  **St Tewdric Springs**  
Mathern
-  **The Well that Heals**  
Trellech

-  **Penyard Castle**  
Penyard
-  **Jack O'Kent**  
Wales
-  **Ghost of Isobel Chandos**  
Hoarwithy
-  **Harold's Stones**  
Trellech
-  **Otter Hole**  
Chepstow



## WHAT IS A MYTH?

A myth is known as a traditional story concerning the early history of a person or area without any basis of fact or natural explanation.

## WHAT IS A LEGEND?

A legend is a story from history that is often believed by many people but cannot be proved to be true.



-  **Who killed the bears?**  
Ruardean
-  **Littledean Hall**  
Littledean
-  **Bleeding Stone**  
Staunton
-  **The Last Witch of Glos**  
Cinderford
-  **The Beast of Dean**  
Parkend
-  **The Dymock Curse**  
Dymock
-  **Roman Temple Curse**  
Lydney Park, Lydney