

CONTENTS

Editor's Preface	vii	John Masefield	61
		Mary Webb	62
Reverend E Donald Carr	1	Peter Davis	65
D H Lawrence	2	Norman & Mary Baldwin	66
Katherine Swift	5	Harold Joseph Perkins	69
Henry Kingsley	6	Malcolm Saville	70
Wilfred Owen	8	Ludlow various	72
William Fletcher	11	Charles Dickens	74
Roger Evans	12	Henry James	76
Bill Tuer	15	Julian Critchley	79
Peter Davies	16	Mary Webb	80
Mary Webb	20	A E Housman	83
Edith Pargeter	23	L T C Rolt	84
Mirabel Osler	25	Charles Darwin	86
Phil Rickman	26	Thomas Phillips	89
Mary Webb	29	Wenlock Olympian Society	90
Lady C Milnes Gaskell	30	Ida Gandy	93
John Milton	34	Tim Pears	94
Laurence Catlow	37	Ellis Peters	97
Tom Sharpe	38	John Betjeman	98
C W Shepherd	41	Frances Pitt	101
Paul Evans	42	Pete Posthlethwaite	102
John F M Dovaston	45	Peter Klein	105
Simon Evans	46	Anna Maria Fay	106
Wilfred Owen	48	Andrew Bannerman	108
Mary Webb	51	Sybil Powis	111
Hesba Stretton	52		
Oswald Feilden	54	Photographer's Notes	114-116
James Boswell	57	Index	117-118
Bill Bryson	58		

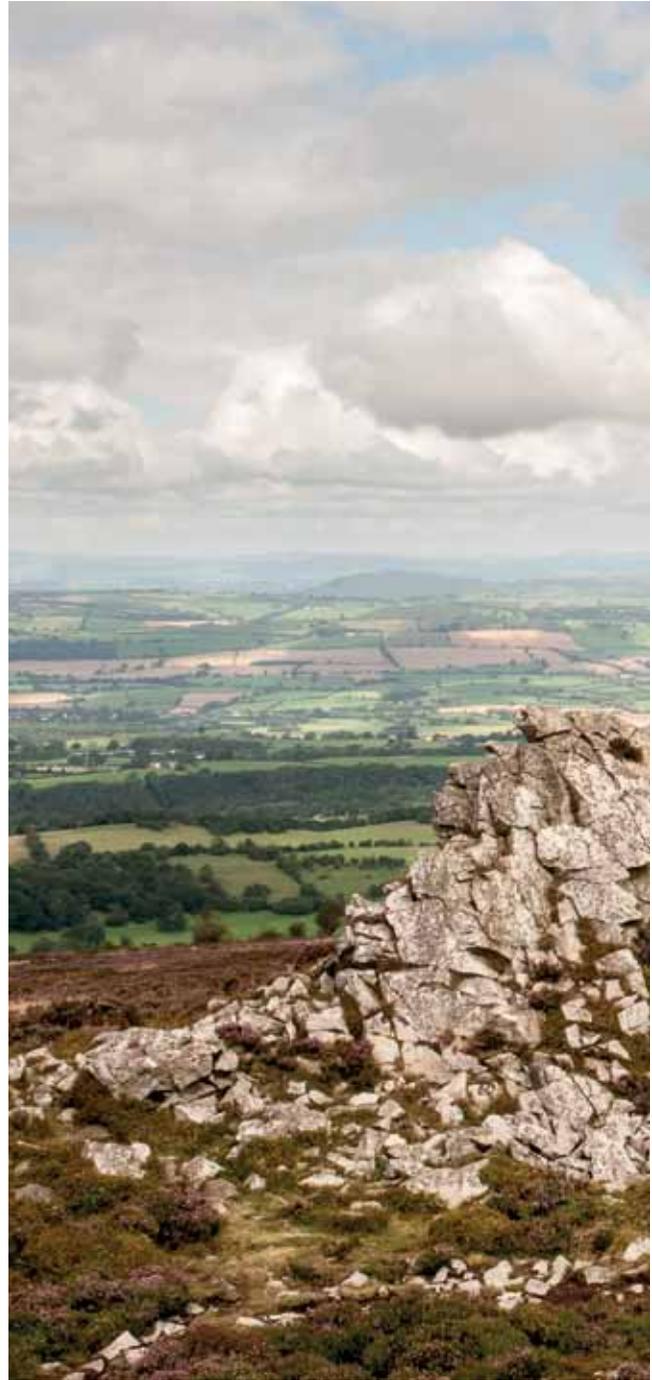
CHARLES DARWIN

The Bellstone

During my second year in Edinburgh I attended Jameson's lectures on Geology and Zoology, but they were incredibly dull. The sole effect they produced on me was the determination never as long as I lived to read a book on Geology or in any way to study the science.

Yet I feel sure that I was prepared for a philosophical treatment of the subject; for an old Mr Cotton in Shropshire who knew a good deal about rocks, had pointed out to me, two or three years previously a well-known large erratic boulder in the town of Shrewsbury, called the bell-stone; he told me that there was no rock of the same kind nearer than Cumberland or Scotland, and he solemnly assured me that the world would come to an end before anyone would be able to explain how this stone came where it now lay. This produced a deep impression on me and I meditated over this wonderful stone. So that I felt the keenest delight when I first read of the action of icebergs in transporting boulders, and I gloried in the progress of Geology.

One of the world's most influential and original scientists, Charles Darwin was born in Shrewsbury. His geology and zoology studies during a five-year voyage around the world on the survey ship HMS Beagle led him to formulate his theory of evolution and to develop his views on the process of natural selection.



The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, published by John Murray, London 1887

Photo: The Devil's Chair on Stiperstones



TOM SHARPE

Blott on the Landscape

Now as he drove northwards he had to admit that he was entering a world far removed from his ideal. Even the sky had changed with the landscape and the shadows of large clouds slid erratically across the fields and hills. By the time he reached South Worfordshire he was distinctly perturbed. If Worford was anything like the surrounding countryside it must be a horrid place filled with violent, irrational creatures swayed by strange emotions. It was. As he drove over the bridge that spanned the Cleene he seemed to have moved out of the twentieth century into an earlier age. The houses below the town gate were huddled together higgledy-piggledy and only their scrubbed doorsteps redeemed their squalid lack of uniformity. The gate, a great stuccoed tower with a dark narrow entrance, loomed up before him. He drove nervously through and emerged into a street lined with eighteenth-century houses. Here he felt temporarily more at home but his relief evaporated when he reached the town centre. Dark narrow alleyways, half-timbered medieval houses jutting over the pavement, cobbled streets, and shopfronts which retained the format of an earlier age. Pots and pans, spades and sickles hung outside an ironmonger's. Duffel coats, corduroy trousers and breeches were displayed outside an outfitter's. A mackerel gleamed on a fishmonger's marble slab while a saddler's was adorned with bits and bridles and leather belts. Worford was in short a perfectly normal market town but to Dundridge, accustomed to the soothing anonymity of supermarkets, there was a disturbing, archaic quality about it.

The 1985 TV series of Blott on the Landscape was filmed around Ludlow which was used for the fictitious town of Worford. Dundridge, the man from the ministry, has come to placate the locals over the proposed construction of a motorway through Cleene Gorge and finds his surroundings unnerving.

Blott on the Landscape, first published 1975 by Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd. 1996 edition by Pan Books, Macmillan Publishers Ltd, London.

Photo: Looking east along Market Street, Ludlow



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