

CDAS Black Country Study Tour

16th – 20th August 2026

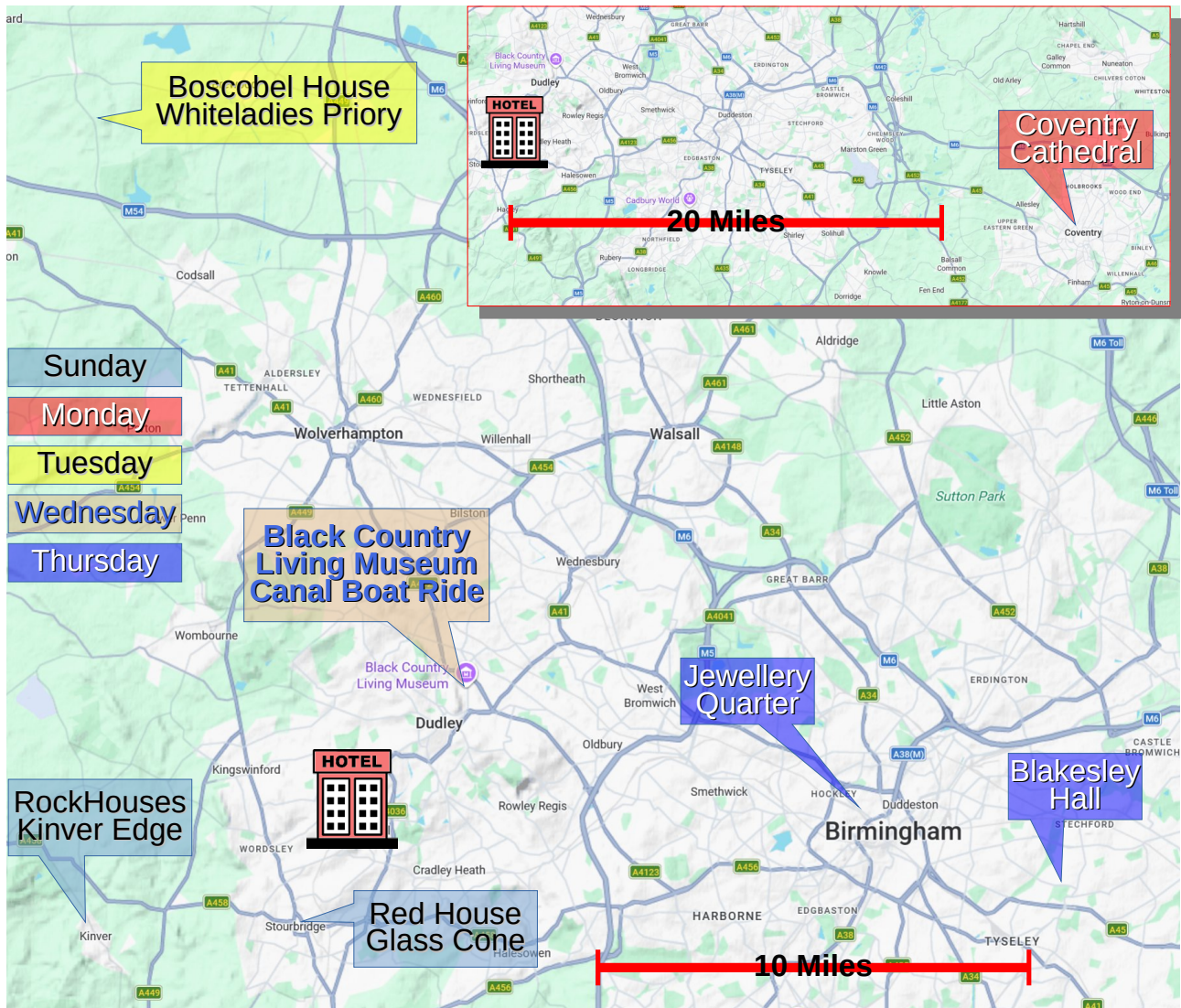
This was the 'brochure' provided for members on the tour
Information regarding accommodation and similar has been removed.

Schedule

Day	Time(s)	
Sunday	~11:00	Rockhouses, Kinver (NT)
	~13:00	Red House Glass Cone
	~16:00	Arrive Copthorne Hotel
Monday	09:30	Leave Hotel
	11:00	Old Coventry Cathedral
	14:00	New Coventry Cathedral
	~17:00	Back at Hotel
Tuesday	09:30	Leave Hotel
	10:30	Boscobel House (EH)
	leave 15:00	White Ladies Priory
	~16:00	Back at Hotel
Wednesday	09:30	Leave Hotel
	10:00	Black Country Living Museum
	16:00	Dudley Canal Boat Ride
	~17:30	Back at Hotel
Thursday	09:30	Leave Hotel
	10:45,11:15	Jewellery Quarter
	14:00	Blakesley Hall
	~18:00	Start drop-off - P'head

CDAS Black Country Study Tour

16th – 20th August 2026



Disclaimer

Almost all material (including illustrations) in the following descriptions is taken from the appropriate Wikipedia entries and a little from English Heritage.

Sunday

Kinver Rockhouses

The Kinver Rock Houses are a series of cave dwellings carved into the sandstone escarpment at Kinver Edge in Staffordshire, England. They represent the last inhabited troglodyte dwellings in England, with residents living in them until the mid-20th century. The rock houses are now owned and managed by the National Trust and are open to the public as a historic attraction.



The earliest documented record of habitation in the rock houses dates from 1617, when the parish register recorded the death of "Margaret of the fox earth" on 8 June, who is believed to have lived in what is now known as Nanny's Rock. The caves may have been used for shelter for much longer, potentially dating back to the Iron Age, when hill-forts were constructed at the top of Kinver Edge

One of the formations, Holy Austin Rock, served as a hermitage until the Reformation. In 1777, travel writer Joseph Heeley took refuge from a storm at the rock houses and was given shelter by what he described as a "clean and decent family". He noted that the rock houses made excellent homes, being "warm in winter, cool in summer". This account provides valuable insight into the living conditions and social acceptance of the rock house inhabitants during this period. By the 1861 census, 11 families were recorded as living in the rock houses at Holy Austin Rock.

The soft red sandstone allowed for relatively easy excavation and expansion of the dwellings. Rooms could be enlarged as families grew, and many rock houses took in lodgers. The interiors featured furniture, stoves, windows, and doors carved into or fitted within the sandstone. Despite having no running water or electricity, the rock houses offered advantages over urban housing of the period,

including fresh air, open space, and freedom from the smoke and flooding risks associated with industrial towns.

Red House Glass Cone

The Red House Cone is a Grade II* listed glass cone located in Wordsley in the West Midlands, adjacent to the Stourbridge Canal bridge on the A491 High Street. It is a 90-foot (27 m) high conical brick structure with a diameter of 60 feet (18 m), used for the production of glass. It was used by the Stuart Crystal firm till 1936, when the company moved to a new facility at Vine Street.



It is one of four such structures remaining in the UK and is currently maintained as a museum by Dudley Council. (The other three cones are at Lemington, Catcliffe and Alloa). At the site are 10 businesses including glass artists, pottery, jewellers, textiles fine art and demonstrations of glass blowing.

A 1-acre site, on which the cone stands, was sold by John and Ann Southwell and Rebecca Stokes to Richard Bradley, a wealthy glass-manufacturer, on 21 June 1788. The cone was built by Bradley in partnership with his brother-in-law, George Ensell, for the manufacture of window glass. Ensell installed a moving lehr in the cone, which remains today and is the only surviving one in the world.

(A lehr is a long kiln with an end-to-end temperature gradient, which is used for annealing newly made glass objects that are transported through the temperature gradient either on rollers or on a conveyor belt)

Monday

Coventry Cathedral

The Cathedral Church of Saint Michael, commonly known as Coventry Cathedral, is the seat of the Bishop of Coventry and the Diocese of Coventry.

The city has had three cathedrals. The first was St Mary's, a monastic building, from 1102 to 1539, of which only a few ruins remain. The second was St Michael's, a 14th century Gothic church designated as a cathedral in 1918, which remains a ruined shell after its bombing during the Second World War, apart from its tower and spire. The third, consecrated in 1962, is the new St Michael's Cathedral, built immediately adjacent to the ruins and tower of the former cathedral – together forming both a symbol of war-time destruction and barbarity, and also of peace and reconciliation.

St Michael's Church was largely constructed between the late 14th and early 15th centuries from red sandstone. It was one of the largest parish churches in England when, in 1918, it was elevated to cathedral status on the creation of the Diocese of Coventry.



This St Michael's Cathedral now stands ruined, bombed almost to destruction during the Coventry Blitz of 14 November 1940 by the German Luftwaffe. Only the tower, spire, the outer wall, and the bronze effigy and tomb of its first bishop, Huyshe Yeatman-Biggs, survived. The ruins of this older cathedral remain hallowed ground and are listed at Grade I. Following the bombing of the cathedral in 1940, Provost Richard Howard had the words "Father Forgive" inscribed on the wall behind the altar of the ruined building.

The spire rises to 284 feet to the base of the weathervane, and is the tallest structure in the city. It is also the third tallest cathedral spire in England, with only Salisbury and Norwich rising higher. When

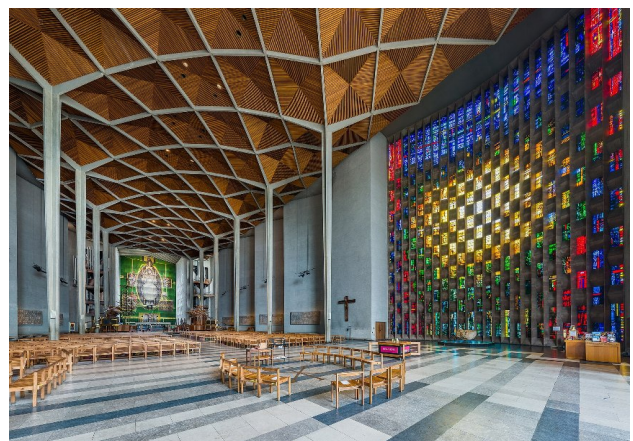
the height of the weathervane is included, it is 290 feet (88 metres) high.

The current cathedral, built next to the remains of the old one, was designed by Basil Spence and Arup, built by John Laing and is Grade I listed.



The selection of Spence for the work was a result of a competition held in 1950 to find an architect for the new Coventry Cathedral; his design was chosen from over two hundred submitted. Spence (later knighted for this work) insisted that instead of rebuilding the old cathedral, it should be kept in ruins as a garden of remembrance and that the new cathedral should be built alongside, the two buildings together effectively forming one church. The use of Hollington sandstone for the new cathedral provides unity between the buildings.

The foundation stone of the new cathedral was laid by Queen Elizabeth II on 23 March 1956. The unconventional spire or flèche is 80 feet tall and was placed by helicopter in April 1962.



The cathedral was consecrated on 25 May 1962 by Cuthbert Bardsley, Bishop of Coventry with Benjamin Britten's War Requiem, composed for the occasion, premiered in the new cathedral on 30 May.

Tuesday

Boscobel House

Boscobel House is a Grade II* listed building in the parish of Boscobel in Shropshire. It has been, at various times, a farmhouse, a hunting lodge, and a holiday home; but it is most famous for its role in the escape of Charles II after the Battle of Worcester in 1651. Today it is managed by English Heritage.

Boscobel House was created around 1632, when landowner John Giffard of White Ladies Priory converted a timber-framed farmhouse, built some time in the 16th century on the lands of White Ladies Priory, into a hunting lodge.

The priory and its estate, including the farmhouse site, had been leased from the Crown by William Skeffington of Wolverhampton at the Dissolution of the Monasteries about a century earlier. It passed into the Giffard family because Skeffington left it to his widow, Joan, and she subsequently married Edward Giffard, son of Sir Thomas Giffard of Chillington (died 1560) and grandson of Sir John Giffard (died 1556) of Chillington Hall. The reversion was sold to William Whorwood in 1540, which made him the effective owner, but one of the early lessees must have paid off Whorwood, because it was later passed on to Edward Giffard's heir, John.

John Giffard decided to make the farmhouse more useful by building a substantial extension to the south, including a living room and bedrooms more fitted to use by a gentry family. Giffard called the new hunting lodge Boscobel House. Thomas Blount (writing 1660), the main source for the events, portrays the naming as an after-dinner activity, and attributes it to Sir Basil Brook(e), a prominent recusant from Madeley, Shropshire, who was one of Giffard's guests at the housewarming party.

Boscobel is believed to come from the Italian phrase *bosco bello* meaning "in the midst of fair woods": in 1632, Boscobel House was surrounded by dense woodlands. Also, the many branches of the Giffard family all claim ancestry from the lords of Bolebec and Longueville in Upper Normandy: Osbern de Bolebec became lord of Longueville in the early 11th century and his sons, Osbern and Gautier or Walter, were companions of William the Conqueror.

The Giffard family were recusants – Catholics who refused to participate in the worship of the established Church of England. For them, this brought fines, imprisonment and discrimination; for priests it could mean barbarous execution. The Giffards took care to surround themselves with

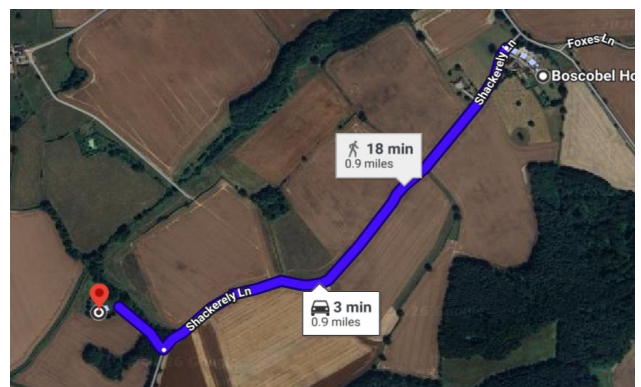
reliable retainers; until the mid-19th century, after Catholic Emancipation, their servants and tenants were mainly Catholic. The house served as a secret place for the shelter of Catholic priests, with at least one priest-hole.



This secret purpose of the house was to play a key part in the history of the country. By 1651, when Boscobel played host to Charles II, it was owned by John Giffard's heir, his daughter, Frances Cotton who was a widow at this time. She was not resident at the time of the events that made Boscobel House one of the most evocative sites in the English royalist imagination. It was here that Charles II hid to escape discovery by Parliamentary soldiers during his escape after the Battle of Worcester.

Initially, Charles was led to White Ladies Priory by Charles Giffard, a cousin of the owner, and his servant Francis Yates, the only man subsequently executed for his part in the escape. There, the Penderel family, tenants and servants of the Giffard family, began to play important roles in guiding and caring for him.

White Ladies Priory



Tuesday

The Priory of St Leonard in Brewood was founded in the late 12th century in Brewood Forest, then a remote wooded area. It was a house of Augustinian canonesses, who followed the relatively mild Rule of St Augustine.

It was known as White Ladies from the colour of their robes, to distinguish it from the Benedictine convent of St Mary, Brewood, about a mile away, known as the Black Ladies. The Black Ladies were in the manor of Brewood in Staffordshire, held by the Bishop of Lichfield, while the site of the White Ladies – now in the county of Shropshire – found itself in the unusual position of not being in either a parish or a manor at the time.



White Ladies' one moment of historic fame arrived when the young king Charles II took refuge there after his defeat at the Battle of Worcester on 3 September 1651, in the Third Civil War. Charles was greeted early in the morning of 4 September by John Giffard's widow, Dorothy, together with George Penderel, 'a servant of the house', one of five brothers who worked on the White Ladies and Boscobel estate. They gathered in the hall, and George summoned his elder brother Richard. 'Mistress Giffard' gave Charles some sack (dry white wine) and biscuit.

From White Ladies, Richard Penderel led Charles in an unsuccessful attempt to cross the Severn near

Madeley, Shropshire. They were forced to retrace their steps and Charles took refuge at Boscobel, where he was met by Colonel William Careless, whose brother rented land from the Giffards at Broom Hall, Brewood. Careless and the King spent all day hiding in a nearby oak tree (which became known as The Royal Oak), from where he could see the patrols searching for him.



Later Charles spent the night hiding in one of Boscobel's priest holes. He was moved from Boscobel to Moseley Old Hall, another Catholic redoubt near Wolverhampton, and ultimately escaped the region posing as the servant of Jane Lane of Bentley, whose family were also landowners at Broom Hall and at the Hyde in Brewood. The Lanes, although friends and business partners of the Giffards, were not recusants but of Puritan sympathies and Jane's brother, Colonel John Lane, had taken Parliament's side in fighting around Wolverhampton during the Civil War.

Why is it called the Black Country?

The Black Country is a loosely defined area of the West Midlands, which is mainly urban, covering most of Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall. In 1785 the 14-mile road between Wolverhampton and Birmingham was described as "one continuous town".

The area was one of the Industrial Revolution's birthplaces. Its name was first recorded in the 1840s, and derives either from the 30 foot thick coal seam close to the surface or the production of coal, coke, iron, glass, bricks and steel which produced high levels of soot and air pollution.

Wednesday

Black Country Living Museum

This is an open-air museum of rebuilt historic buildings in Dudley, located in the centre of the Black Country. 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 more than 50 shops, houses and other industrial buildings from around the Black Country, mainly in a specially built village. Most 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.



The museum is close to the site where Dud Dudley first experimented with the technique of smelting iron with coal instead of wood charcoal and making iron in modest quantities for industrial use. Abraham Darby later refined the process using coke to produce a better quality product in greater quantities. Dudley has a claim to be "the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution" – the Black Country is famous for its wide range of steel-based products from nails to the anchor and chain for RMS Titanic.

The site's coal mining heritage is shown by an underground drift and colliery surface buildings. The museum has a working replica of a Newcomen atmospheric engine. Thomas Newcomen's invention was first successfully put to use in Tipton in 1712. The museum's reconstruction was based on a print engraved by Thomas Barney, filmmaker of Wolverhampton, in 1719.

On the low ground at the northern end of the site, houses, shops, workshops and public buildings have been dismantled and rebuilt brick by brick to create an early 20th-century village. Activities in the buildings are demonstrated by staff in period costume. The village preserves a cross section of social and industrial history.

Electric trams and trolleybuses transport visitors from the entrance to the village where thirty domestic and industrial buildings have been relocated close to the canal basin. The museum is one of three in the UK with working trolleybuses. The route to the village passes the Cast Iron Houses and a 1930s fairground.

Dudley Canal Boat Ride

The museum contains a section of canal called Lord Ward's Canal Arm. Work began on the boat dock in 1976 and the museum recreated a typical dock that would have been found on the Birmingham Canal Navigations. Docks like the museum one would have been formed from recycled wooden boats. They were used to build wooden boats or maintain iron and composite boats.



Adjacent to the museum is the Dudley Tunnel, authorised by the Dudley Canal Act 1785 (25 Geo. 3. c. 87), obtained in 1785 and completed in 1792. At about 3,172 yards long, it is now the second longest canal tunnel on the UK canal network today.



We will take a 45-minute skipper-guided trip into the tunnel through the historic limestone mines and caverns on a boat of the Dudley Canal Trust.

Thursday

Jewellery Quarter Museum

The Jewellery Quarter is Europe's largest concentration of businesses involved in the trade and produces 40% of all jewellery made in the UK.

It is also home to the world's largest Assay Office, which hallmarks around 12 million items a year. Historically the Jewellery Quarter has been the birthplace of many pioneering advancements in industrial technology.



A survey of 1553 named one of the first goldsmiths of Birmingham, Roger Pemberton. During the 18th & 19th centuries Birmingham prospered from the Industrial Revolution and developed into a large industrial town manufacturing a wide range of products, often from various metals. Many large foundries and glassworks attracted workers from all areas of Britain. A considerable trade developed in the manufacture of gilt buttons, cap badges, pins and small metal “toys”, a term from the era used to describe a whole range of intricate metal objects.

According to the Birmingham Directory of 1780 there were 26 jewellers at the time. Because the definition of a jeweller was not explained in the directory, it is thought that it may contain many irregularities and the number of actual jewellers may be lower. It is thought that by the start of the 19th century there were around 12 jewellery manufacturing companies, employing approximately 400 people.

We will visit the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter.

Blakesley Hall Museum

Blakesley Hall, a grade II* listed building, is a Tudor hall in Yardley. It is one of the oldest buildings in Birmingham and is a typical example of Tudor architecture with the use of darkened timber and wattle-and-daub infill, with an external lime render which is painted white. The extensive use of close studding and herringbone patterns on all sides of

the house make this a home that was designed to show the wealth and status of the owner. The house is also jettied on all sides. At the rear of the hall, built on the back of the chimney, is a brick kitchen block dating from circa 1650.



The hall is a timber-framed farmhouse built in 1590 (when Yardley was in Worcestershire) by Richard Smalbroke, a man of local importance. His family farmed at the hall and had other buildings in the surrounding area which were lost over time. After 1685, the building passed into the hands of the Greswolde family and for the next 200 years became a tenant farm. In 1899, the hall was acquired by Henry Donne who renovated the dilapidated house before selling it to the Merry family, a local paint and varnish manufacturer, who were the last family to occupy the hall.

The hall became a museum in 1935 after centuries of use as a private home and its parlour was renovated. Its purpose was to display the history of the local medieval manors. The Hall was damaged by a bomb in November 1941 causing extensive damage and did not open again until 1957.

Many of the original architectural features of the hall remain such as the herringbone floor. Among the artefacts discovered at the hall are candlesticks and pewter goblets. In the Bedchamber, paintings on the wall from 1590 were discovered after being hidden for centuries, their rediscovery partly in thanks of the bomb damage that loosened a significant amount of plaster in the hall. When renovations took place postwar, inspection of the bedchamber revealed fragments of leather and painted plaster. When the chamber was cleaned up, the walls and timbers were shown to be decorated in a Moorish design. A mock up of how the 'painted chamber' would have looked can be seen in the back bedroom at Blakesley hall.