

A Walk Around Silverton - Mary Webb's Shrewsbury



By
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and
Dez Quarréll

A Walk Around Silverton is a circular walk of approximately two hours duration, but which can easily be made into a day out with the many attractions Shrewsbury can offer the visitor

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Dez Quarréll, curator of the Mythstories Museum is variously described as a writer, storyteller, artist, and composer. Like Mary Webb much of his inspiration is drawn from the mythology of the Welsh borderlands.

Mythstories, museum of myth & fable
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Wem, Shropshire. SY4 5AU
Registered Charity No. 1161594
url: <http://www.mythstories.com>

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Published by
Mythstories museum of myth and fable
The Morgan Library
Aston Street
WEM,
Shropshire
SY4 5AU

Registered Charity No. 1086122

Design and Layout: Dez Quarréll
Cover photograph: ©Gladys Mary Coles

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A Self Guided Tour Of Silverton (Mary Webb's Shrewsbury) Duration – approx. 2 hours

<http://www.mythstories.com/SilvertonMap.pdf> for route map

Start At Rowley's House between Barker Street & Hills Lane

This tour of Mary Webb's Shrewsbury – the 'Silverton' of her writings – takes us to some of the important places in her own life, as well as in the lives of her characters. We will see some of the streets and buildings on which she based her fictional locations.

Mary Webb – Shropshire's most famous daughter – has immortalised the county in her literature. She wrote six novels – the best known are *Precious Bane* and *Gone to Earth*, and her rich legacy also includes poetry, nature essays and short stories. She lived only 46 years, from 1881 to 1927, spending most of her life in her beloved Shropshire, proud of the countryside and its historic county town, Shrewsbury.

Shrewsbury is not greatly changed from the days when Mary Webb walked here. The buildings are much the same, the 'Shuts' (passages), squares, churches and old inns, the River Severn and the Quarry, the Castle and the Station. The names of the streets familiar to her are retained today: Dogpole, Wyle Cop, Butcher Row, Frankwell, Mardol.

And now a poem by Mary to send us on our way:-

The Elf

A fair town is Shrewsbury –
The world over
You'll hardly find a fairer,
In its fields of clover
And rest-harrow, ringed
By hills where curlews call,
And, drunken from the heather,
Black bees fall.
Poplars, by Severn,
Lean hand in hand,
Like golden girls dancing
In elfland.

Early there come travelling
On market day
Old men and young men
From far away,
with red fruits of the orchard
And dark fruits of the hill,
Dew-fresh garden stuff,
And mushrooms chill,
Honey from the brown skep,
Brown eggs, and posies
Of gillyflowers and lent lilies
And blush roses.

Neither bells in the steeple
Nor books, old and brown,
Can disenchant the people
In the slumbering town.

We'll now make our way down to the station, passing some of the poplars mentioned in her poem.

Walk towards the Welsh Bridge, turn right before the bridge into Mardol Quay leading into Smithfield Road.

The poplars used to line the far bank of the Severn you see on your left. Some were replaced by other species; others were rather vigorously pollarded in recent years, and then along came the flood defenses!

Go along Smithfield Road, cross Roushill and pause at Riverside Surgery.

Before the building of the Riverside shopping centre this was the site of the old Smithfield Cattle market. This would have been a very busy noisy and probably smelly, bustling area, in fact Roushill used to be the red light district of Shrewsbury spilling out into the Mardol with its many pubs and ale houses. There are some people alive today who remember their mothers telling them not to "go down the stews' (what today's tabloid papers might call the flesh pots) - ie Roushill and Mardol.

In *The Golden Arrow*, her first novel (1916), Mary Webb's central character, John Arden and his son Joe, with fiancée Lily, go to Silverton.

Extract from 'The Golden Arrow' Chapter 26

John was taking some wool to the stapler and a calf to the auction. John had some bullocks to look at for Mr. Shakeshaft and Lily had offered to sell wimberries for a neighbour in order to go to town. She pinned some honeysuckle in her dress and tied a pink ribbon round her hat. She would have other admiration than Joe's today. Joe was nice, of course, but he was not eloquent. She sat between the two men, who bulged over the sides of the cart like half-grown swallows from their nest. When Joe swayed the others did too.

'You're crushing my dress, Joe'

"Well, ain't that what its for?"

A large hand crept round her waist, she was busy making calculations about a lace collar she coveted. She must have it, but she had no money. They jogged on. The calf, looking in its sack like a baby in a headwrapper, lifted its red and white face and gave a prolonged 'moooo', then, having made its protest against things in general, it nestled into the sack of wool and went to sleep.

'You met help me along with the calf, Joe, If Lil can manage the berries'

Wimberries are a local name for cranberries.

Carry on to the Station (follow map route) - in the station forecourt

Mary went to and fro from Shrewsbury Station many times in her short life, especially when she became successful as a writer. But any separation from Shropshire was painful for her, and she was always deeply homesick when away. Coming into Shrewsbury Station was 'coming home'. When her husband, Henry B. L. Webb, took a teaching post in London (1921), they lived in the capital but kept their home, Spring Cottage on Lyth Hill, to which Mary frequently returned. Arriving at the station she would joyfully take a cab to Lyth Hill, four miles outside the town.

In the novel, *Seven for a Secret* (1922), young Gillian Lovekin, the central female character, is coming to stay with her Aunts, who live in Silverton. In the following passage Mary conveys her own excitement and anticipation on one of those many

occasions when she would have been returning to Shrewsbury.

Extract from ‘Seven for a Secret’ – Chapter 7

The country grew dimmer, grew dark, in the short journey. It only took three-quarters of an hour, but to Gillian it was like a whole day. Once she saw the far hills dark against the afterglow, once she caught a glimpse of a brook lit by reflected radiance. Then came straggling houses, a village church, houses clustering thicker, roofs all huddled together, a square church tower, two silver spires, a great bridge across the Severn – Silverton. They ran into a bay of the long station, and there stood Aunt Fanteague in her best mantle and her well-mortised bonnet, very severe.

“We missed our train,” remarked Aunt Fanteague. When she used the first person plural, things were very wrong.

“I’m only a country girl, A’ntie,” said Gillian. “Silverton’ll soon learn me to catch trains.” She thought of the London express.

“I’ve met the train twice,” said Aunt Fanteague, half inclined to be mollified.

Gillian gave her a great hug.

In the station forecourt look up at the Castle founded by Roger de Montgomery in the eleventh century. In the shadow of the castle is the platform where the train in *Seven for a Secret* would have pulled in on what Gillian thought of as her first staging post to her goal of London.

Later in her life, Mary wrote this keenly felt poem about her ‘Silverton’.

My Own Town

In this old town I know so well
I have dwelt in heaven and in hell,
And seen its folk go to and fro
With faces of unthinkable woe,
Ferocious as primaeval beasts,
Or rapt as angels at their feasts,
When close they press in silver rows
While up and down the chalice goes,
Made of a sapphire, filled to the brim
With God. I have seen them walk like kings
Pondering on majestic things.
And where the gossip gables lean
Chatting, I've met with faces mean
With meanness past all grace or cure.
As long as those blue hills endure,
That stand around the gracious plain
Which circles in the town, and rain
Marches across the corn, and tears
Weigh down the harvest of our years,
So long what I have seen and felt,
When in its churches I have knelt
And wandered by the evening stream
And seen the April roadways gleam,
Shall live. And when the traffic's hum
Is gone, the busy market dumb
As a winter bee, and all the spires
Are melted in the hungry fires
Of Time, and not a house remains –
Then here upon the empty plains,
Encircled by the changeless heights,
As changeless through the days and nights
As they, in colours that cannot fade,
Shall stand the town that I have made
With golden house and silver steeple
And a strange uplifted people,
Who in their charmed streets shall go

Hushed with a tremendous woe
And a joy as deep and vast
As shadows that the mountains cast.
And I shall dwell where once unknown
I passed, and all shall be my own,
Because I built of joy and tears
A city that defies the years.

In this poem you see a broader view of Shrewsbury and its people, “warts’n’all”. Note her references to the church spires that characterise the county town and to ‘the gossip gables’ so close that they seem to whisper secrets above your heads. We will pass some of these later in the tour.

Now we are going to continue with Gillian in *Seven for a Secret* and see how closely we can follow her route.

Extract from ‘Seven for a Secret’ – Chapter 7

They walked out of the station yard, up the hill, with bright shop-windows on both sides. The cake shop at the top of the hill was a blaze of light and gay-ribboned chocolate boxes.

“Not even London,” said Gillian, “could be better than this.”

“Oh London! Well, I’ve never been there myself. Silvertown’s good enough for me. Where there’s a church, and a doctor, and a butcher’s, and the other shops for the necessary, and a good wool shop, and reasonable coal, it seems to me there’s no need of London.”

“But folk tell a sight of tales –“

“Oh tales! They’ll make tales out of nothing. Now if you went to London what ud you find?”

Gillian opened her mouth to say: 'A lover,' but remembered in time.

"You'd find churches and butchers and the other shops, maybe a better wool shop, but less reasonable coal. That's all."

Turn left out of the Station Forecourt up Castle Street, crossing the road to the Library that was once Shrewsbury School. Notice the statue of Charles Darwin, once a pupil at this famous school. Turn your back on Charles Darwin and look across the main street. You will see the arched entrance to the former Meeting House of the Council of the Welsh Marches, well worthy of a diversion. **Return to Castle Street carry on up the hill and just beyond the intersection with School Gardens pause to look at the plaque on the side of the jutting shop front which marks the location of Palin's.**

This is the site of Palin's famous cake shop and home of the even more famous Shrewsbury biscuit. Imagine it in Mary's time a real mecca for those with a sweet tooth and a genuine town landmark.

'In the poorer parts of Shrewsbury, were many undernourished waifs, to whom Mary was a shy fairy godmother' (*The Flower of Light*, p.201) she bought them complete outfits of clothing as well as food, and could not bear to see "a little child begging", as her poem of that title indicates -

'Poor baby, with your wistful face!
When you are grown a man, and tall,
You'll have the kingly, simple grace,
The smile that makes a festival.
Yet form the dark your hungry eyes
Behold the cook-shop's paradise.

Proceed along Gillian's route by crossing the road and continuing up Castle Hill, turning left off Castle Street into Windsor Place. Go round St. Mary's Church, across Dogpole into Church Street past the Loggerheads and the Prince Rupert Hotel into St. Alkmund's Square

Extract from 'Seven for a Secret' – Chapter 7

They left the bright street and took their way up a narrow alley of ancient black and white houses. The moon was up, and it threw the deep shadows of old romance. Never a dark brooding shade of a gable without the possibility of a Romeo for every Juliet. Bells began to sound. They rang the chimes. A mellow bell said a word that sounded like 'June' six times. As they crossed the square the shutters were being put up.

Notice the churches St. Julian's and St. Alkmund's, which together with St. Mary's make a fine trio, from which many a mellow bell tolled.

From here continue along Gillian's route down the Bears Steps (medieval buildings) pause to look down Grope Lane for some of those gossip gables mentioned in 'My Own Town', and then turn left into Fish Street

Extract from 'Seven for a Secret' – Chapter 7

More black and white gables leaned to Gillian, more shadows lured her. Up another narrow street, down a little hill.

'Here we are', said Aunt Fanteague. The rumbling of the out-porter's barrow followed them down-hill. They had come to a little brown house. There were two windows up and two down, two gables, black oak beams let into the brown stone, two hollow white steps, a bright knocker.

At foot of Fish Street

Here at the foot of Fish Street could have been Aunt Fanteague's house in Silverton. You can just imagine the porter's trolley rumbling down the hill.

While we're here let us imagine life inside that fictional house.

Extract from 'Seven for a Secret' – Chapter 7

They knocked, and there was Aunt Emily. She stood pensively under the pale light in the narrow hall, while the cuckoo-clock, a little behind the times, struck six.

Aunt Emily kissed her.

"It's years since I saw you, dear," she said "Why, you've quite grown up!" ...

... In the parlour the table was set for tea, and the fire of reasonable coal burned brightly. There was a piano which was a musical box. There was an oval case of stuffed willow-wrens; there were two glass-fronted cupboards of china, a whist table, and several framed lustre paintings on velvet; a cabinet portrait in a plush frame signed 'Hubert Gentle'; a piece of coal which was supposed to contain a diamond, and which caused much future trouble to Gillian.

... There were innumerable photographs on the walls, all a little mottled, a little yellow. They seemed to be of people who could never really have lived. The ladies wore chignons, the gentlemen wore whiskers. All wore still and curious clothes. She was told they were the Aunts' grandparents, her great-grandparents. She was glad she had never known them. On the mantelpiece were vases of everlastings. In a corner was a painted drainpipe (sunflowers on a brown ground), containing bulrushes. On one wall was Landseer's *Fidelity*, on another *Highland Cattle*, on another a still life-study by

Aunt Emily in youth (apples, Michaelmas daisies and vase), and on the fourth, *Wedded*. On the piano were some sacred songs.

Turn left into Wyle Cop and walk to the next junction where, over the road, you can see the Lion Hotel, where Mary attended concerts.

Backtrack along Wyle Cop to St. Julians, and cross to go along Milk Street and then right into Princess Street to the Square

Along the streets you have just walked were many small shops like the Margarine shop and the Drapery shop in *Gone To Earth*, Mary's second novel. (1917) in which Hazel Woodus, aged 18, comes to Silverton from The Callow, her home in the Shropshire hills, to buy a new dress. Her cousin Albert works in the Margarine shop and is surprised to see her.

Extract from 'Gone To Earth' - Chapter 2

When Hazel had chosen her dress – a peacock blue serge – and had put it on there and then in the back of the shop, curtained off for this purpose, she went to her aunt's.

Her cousin Albert regarded her with a startled look. He worked in a margarine shop, and spent his days explaining that margarine was as good as butter. But, looking at Hazel, he felt that here **was** butter—something that needed no apology, and created its own demand. The bright blue made her so radiant that her Aunt shook her head.

"You take after your ma, 'Azal," she said. Her tone was irritated. ...

.... When Albert went back to the shop, Hazel helped her Aunt to wash up. All the time she was doing this, with unusual care, and cleaning the knives – a thing she hated – she was waiting anxiously

for the expected invitation to stay the night. She longed for it as the righteous long for the damnation of their enemies. She never paid a visit except here, and to her it was a wild excitement. The gas-stove, the pretty china, the rose-patterned wallpaper, were all strange and marvellous as a fairy-tale. At home there was no paper, no lath and plaster, only the bare bricks, and the ceiling was of bulging sailcloth hung under the rafters.

Now to all these was added the new delight of Albert's admiring gaze – an alert, live gaze, a thing hitherto unknown to Albert. Perhaps, if she stayed, Albert would take her out for the evening. She would see the streets of the town in the magic of lights. She would walk out in her new dress with a real young man – a young man who possessed a gilt watch-chain. The suspense, as the wintry afternoon drew in, became almost intolerable.

Hazel's new dress might have been bought in The Square, which was also known as The Drapery at the turn of the century because of the proliferation of Draper's Shops.

Stand under the Old Market Hall in The Square

In Mary Webb's time, Shrewsbury market was in the Victorian market hall, which was on the site of the present market in Shoplatch. It was there that Mary Webb had a market stall during the First World War.

She was then living at Pontesbury, a village nine miles to the Southwest of Shrewsbury, at the foot of the Shropshire hills. Mary conceived the idea for her war effort of selling the produce of her garden, vegetables and flowers at easily affordable low prices. She would leave extremely early because of the long walk to Shrewsbury. Nine miles or not, she certainly seems to have enjoyed her journeys to

Shrewsbury market as we see in the following poem.

Market Day

Who'll walk the fields with us to town,
In an old coat and a faded gown?
We take our roots and country sweets
Where high walls shade the steep old streets,
And golden bells and silver chimes
Ring up and down the sleepy times.
The morning mountains smoke like fires;
The sun spreads out his shining wires;
The mower in the half-mown leasur
Sips his tea and takes his pleasure.
Along the lanes slow wagons amble;
The sad-eyed calves awake and gamble;
The foal that lay so sorrowful
Is playing in the grasses cool.
By slanting ways, in slanting sun,
Through startled lapwings now we run
Along the pale green hazel-path,
Through April's lingering aftermath
Of lady's smock and lady's slipper;
We stay to watch a nesting dipper.
The rabbits eye us while we pass,
Out of the sorrel-crimson grass;
The blackbird sings, without a fear,
Where honeysuckle horns blow clear –
Cool ivory stained with true vermilion;
And here, within a silk pavilion,
Small caterpillars lie at ease
The endless shadows of the trees
Are painted purple and cobalt;
Grandiloquent, the rook-files halt,
Each one aware of you and me,
And full of conscious dignity.

Our shoes are golden as we pass
With pollen from the pansied grass.
Beneath an elder – set anew
With large clean plates to catch the dew –
On fine white cheese and bread we dine:
The clear brook-water tastes like wine.
If all folk lived with labour sweet
Of their own busy hands and feet,
Such marketing, it seems to me,
Would make an end of poverty.

Turn down Market Street (a continuation of Princess Street after The Square) to view The Market Hall

Trade continues inside in much the same way as it would have done in Mary's day or in the next fictional passage from *The Golden Arrow*.

Extract from 'The Golden Arrow' – Chapter 26

The markets at Silverton round about Lammastide are great days. Then you may see faces that you never see for the rest of the year – faces with quietness on them like a veil. To go into the market is to step back into multi-coloured antiquity with its system of the exchange of necessaries, and the beauty of its common transactions.

Fruit from deep orchards by lost lanes, from the remote hills; flowers from gardens far from any high-road; treasures of the wild in generous baskets – all these are piled in artless confusion in the dim and dusty place.

The Saturday after Deborah's departure to Lostwithyn was the great wimberry market. The berries were brought in hampers that needed two men to lift them, and the purple juice dripped from them as in a wine-vat. Other fruit lay in huge masses of purple, gold and crimson. The air was full of its aroma. There were cheeses from dairies

beside the great meres, that joined their waters across the fertile fields when the snows melted. There were white frilled mushrooms from pastures where the owl and the weasel lived undisturbed. These were gathered in the morning dusk, when dew made the fields like ponds, by barefooted young women with petticoats pinned above their knees – a practice that caused many a detour of young farm hands on the way to work. There were generous, roughly cut slabs of honeycomb from a strain of bees that were in these parts when Glendower came by. There were ducks with sage under their wings as a lady carries an umbrella. One stall was full of sprigged sun-bonnets, made after a pattern learnt in childhood by the old ladies that sold them.

These simple things, all recklessly cheap, gave to their sellers something of the large dignity of Nature herself – who gives in full measure out of unfailing storehouses. Beauty was everywhere, except in the meat market. There slow bluebottles, swollen and unwholesome, crawled and buzzed; men of a like complexion shouted stertorously, brandishing stained carving-knives; an unbearable stench arose from the offal, and women with pretty clothes and refined manners bought the guts of animals under such names as ‘sweetbreads’ or ‘prime fat kidneys’, and thrust their hands into the disembowelled bodies of rabbits to test their freshness.

When the Market Hall is open walk through the market

Before you go through the market you must promise not to repeat any of the last lines of the previous passage from *The Golden Arrow* to the butchers trading today. It is interesting that Mary was herself a vegetarian.

When it is closed walk around market to the front entrance on Bellstone

Some people in Shrewsbury today can remember Mary Webb selling roses at a h’penny a bunch off a wooden trestle table in the market.

They recall her 'sitting in wet and muddy skirts at her stall, her dark bun dishevelled, quiet and quite different from the farmers' wives shouting their wares'.
(*The Flower of Light*, p147)

After *The Golden Arrow* was published, she was occasionally pointed out and would delight in talking about her work. She never earned very much from her market trading but was never dissatisfied and cherished her time there.

Market life was full of rare joys and surprises, as this excerpt from *The Golden Arrow* shows:-

Extract from 'The Golden Arrow' – Chapter 26

"Five shilling for that lot and a kiss, miss – and a cup of tea thrown in."

Lily wavered. To get rid of the wimberries and have a cup of tea was a pleasant prospect. "What's a kiss?" she thought.

"A'right," she replied.

They went to the People's Dining Saloon close at hand. It had a long trestle table, where the market-folk sat with noses nearly touching, like parrots in a cage.

"I must do some reckoning first," said Lily, who had begun to repent; she also wished to doctor the accounts before Joe appeared. She put the butter down at one shilling a pound, and took sixpence off the wimberries. This gave her enough to buy the collar. "Easy as easy!" she thought.

They had tea and ham. The dealer was very pleasant. Lily felt that the kiss would really not be disagreeable. Only two diners were left, and they were counting out eggs.

“Look here, missis!” said the buyer, an old man with hair as stiff and long as a pony’s mane. “Look here – eleven a shilling’s my price. Now that’s over a penny each. Now I counts out twelve – see? Eleven for me and one for you. Now agen.”

The curious manner of his arithmetic confused the seller.

“It’s all Welsh to me,” she said. “I’ve got five young chillun and you’d ought to treat me fair.”

“I am a-treating of you fair,” said the ancient, and he began to count the eggs again. At each dozen he placed one in front of her.

“But I don’t want any back, I want to sell ‘em!” she wailed.

“So you can sell ‘em, when you’m got a dozen there – leastways, eleven!” shouted the buyer, exasperated.

The dealer looked at them scornfully, and turned to Lily.

“Now for the reckoning, miss!” he said, and took his kiss.

Lily’s horrified eyes beheld Joe’s face flattened rosily against the plate-glass door, with its superannuated legend – somewhat disconcerting on this broiling day –

‘Christmas Puddings piping hot.’

Lily was piping hot.

Joe came in.

“Seems to me,” he said, “as there’s a little fellow here that’d be better not here.”

“How should I know this little lot was yours?” said the dealer.

“Come on out of this, Lily!” commanded Joe.

How did this episode finish? We’ll have to wait until later in the tour. **Now we’ll go straight up Claremont Hill.** As we climb the hill you’ll see some other candidates for that little brown house where Aunt Fanteague lived in *Seven for a Secret*.

Go across Bellstone and head to your right and then turn left straight up Claremont Hill and stop at the top by the new St. Chads Church.

Just over Claremont Hill from the church, on the right, is the site of the old St. Chad’s school. This is where Charles Darwin, a Shrewsbury lad, started school. But it’s also very important for Mary Webb. It was here that Mary attended Cambridge University Extension lectures from 1903 - 1909, which amongst other things, led to her meeting her future husband, Henry. (*The Flower of Light, P.74*).

Another chapter of their life is told at our next stop, Priory School.

Turn right down Claremont Bank and turn left to Priory School

Mary’s husband, Henry Webb, in Autumn 1916, took up a teaching post here at Priory School and they decided to build their own house, Spring Cottage, on Lyth Hill, which many people feel is Mary Webb’s real spiritual home.

Now let's go down past Priory School into The Quarry Park and to the side of the Severn to hear the end of that lover's tiff in *The Golden Arrow*.

Extract from 'The Golden Arrow' – Chapter 26

Joe and Lily sat by the river in a deserted corner.

"Now, then!" said Joe

"Wunna you kiss me, Joe?"

"No. Not till I've got to the bottom of this business," Joe replied, with a new-found wisdom. "Besides, I've got no tea to give you for it."

Lily began to cry.

"Best begin," said Joe. "Here we stop till you do, if it's all night."

She knew that he would. She was in despair. It seemed so bad, and was so slight.

"It was them wimberries."

"Eh?"

"He bought 'em off me.'

"Oh."

"Only if I'd kiss him. And he threw in a cup o'tea. It inna my fault if I'm pretty," she added, petulantly.

Joe looked at her thoughtfully.

"It be". He said with perspicacity. "I dunno how it is, Lil, but you make your clothes look, when you've got them on, like them women

in the papers, ondecent. Now, our Deb never does. And,” he added with decision, “if you want to look ondecent, you can look it at whome – to me.”

The prospect caused a relenting expression which Lily saw.

“I sold the things pretty well,” she remarked.

She was rather dismayed when he asked the prices.

“The butter was too cheap,” said Joe.

“It’s gone down.”

The interview was over. She bought the collar while Joe went to see if his father was ready. They drove home in great content, and all clouds seemed to have blown away. Lily registered a black mark against Deborah for the propriety of her dress.

Mary came to The Quarry throughout her life, enjoying boating on the river, flower displays, especially the Shrewsbury Flower Show, the tree-lined promenades, the green open spaces and birdsong.

Freedom

When on the moss-green hill the wandering wind
Drowzes, and lays his brazen trumpet down,
When snow-fed waters gurgle, cold and brown,
And wintered birds creep from the stacks to find
Solace, while each bright eye begins to see
A visionary nest in every tree –
Let us away, out of the murky day
Of sullen towns, into the silver noise
Of woods where every bud has found her way
Sunward, and every leaf has found a voice.

Now watch your stomachs as we go over the suspension bridge to Frankwell.

Go over the Porthill suspension bridge and turn right down the hill, to Frankwell.

Now roughly here would have been the last lamp-post out of Shrewsbury for Hazel Woodus as she left on her long walk home after being refused an overnight stay by her jealous Aunt Prowde and denied the pleasure of ‘a lantern show’ with her cousin Albert.

Extract from ‘Gone to Earth’ - Chapter 2

The wind ran up and down the narrow streets like a lost dog, whimpering. Hazel hurried on, for it was already twilight, and though she was not afraid of the Callow and the fields at night, she was afraid of the highroads. For the Callow was home, but the roads were the wide world. On the fringe of the town she saw lights in the bedroom windows of prosperous houses.

“My! They go to their beds early,” she thought, not having heard of dressing for dinner. It made her feel more lonely that people should be going to bed. From other houses music floated, or the savoury smell of dinner. As she passed the last lamp-post she began to cry, feeling like a lost and helpless little animal. Her new dress was forgotten; the wreath-frames would not fit under her arm, and caused a continual minor discomfort, and the Callow seemed to be half across the county.

Continue past Frankwell roundabout and keep right to the Welsh Bridge (built in 1795 and the route out from Shrewsbury to the west and Wales).

Now as we walk down to the Welsh Bridge you might be able to recognise some of those houses with their inviting lights and feel some of Hazel's desolation.

This too would have been Mary Webb's route home after a day at the market, and unlike Hazel, Mary Webb would always be in high spirits.

This is the end of our tour. We cross the Welsh Bridge and make our way back to Rowley's House in Barker Street, where we started our tour.

Suggested further reading:-

**The Flower Of Light: A biography of Mary Webb
by Gladys Mary Coles (Headland)**

**Mary Webb: A shorter biography
by Gladys Mary Coles (Seren Books)**

**Selected Poems of Mary Webb,
edited by Gladys Mary Coles (Headland)**

**Mary Webb & Her Shropshire World
by Gladys Mary Coles (Headland)**

**Walks with Writers
by Gordon Dickins & Gladys Mary Coles
(Shropshire Books)**

The Mary Webb Society Journal