

STAUNTON HAROLD ESTATE

In NW Leicestershire, lies a beautiful area of wooded hills with several outstanding historical and scenic features. Staunton Harold Estate, located in a green valley with two lakes, includes: the house, church, estate cottages and stables. The stables have been converted and are now known as the Ferrers Centre of Arts and Crafts, which comprise of craft shops, workshops, galleries and tearooms.



Amongst the 210 grants from William the Conqueror, Henry de Ferrers was given land at Staunton. Henry could not properly manage all of his estates and so, by about 1141, he leased Staunton to Alan de Lecha, from near Nottingham, who was a wealthy Saxon (before the Norman Conquest). Alan's son Harold changed his own name to de Staunton and became Lord of the Manor. Staunton then became known as Staunton Harold. Since at least 1144, Staunton Harold had a chapel, paid for its chaplain and supported its poor. It was part of the Breedon Parish.

The present house is of about 1770, but includes parts of two earlier houses. The church appears to be 15th century, but was actually built in 1653 during the Commonwealth and is unique. Over the door can be read:

"In the year 1653 when all things sacred were throughout the nation either demolished or profaned, Sir Robert Shirley, Baronet founded this church; whose singular praise it is to have done the best things in the worst times and hoped them in the most calamitous. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

Inside are the Shirley monuments, the magnificent wrought iron chancel screen and the painted ceiling.

The Shirley family parcelled up and sold the estate in 1954.

The house was saved from demolition by Group Captain Lord Cheshire V.C to become one of his homes for the incurably sick, then, later become a Sue Ryder home. Now the house is the private residence of the Blunt family. More information on the history of the estate can be found in the Staunton Harold Visitor Guide available from the Ferrers Gallery in the Ferrers Centre. All three walks begin from the Ferrers car park and head to the front of the house and the Golden Gate. Stout shoes or boots are advised.