

1. Sarehole Mill

Ronald and his brother spent many an hour investigating Sarehole Mill and being chased off by the miller's son, whom they nicknamed the 'White Ogre'. In the 1960s, Tolkien contributed to a public appeal to restore the Mill which had become dilapidated. Sarehole Mill is now a museum managed by Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery. Open April – October, Tues – Fri 1.00-4.00pm, Sat/Sun 12 – 4.00pm. Closed Mon, except Bank Holidays. Admission charge. Groups by appointment. Tel 0121 777 6612.



2. 264 Wake Green Road

Tolkien said that the times he spent at Sarehole were the happiest years of his youth. His mother moved there shortly after this house was built in 1896. Sarehole is said to have been the model for "The Shire", the home of the Hobbits. Memories of this rural childhood were to colour much of his later writing. (Please note that 264, Wake Green Rd is a private residence).



John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born on 3 January 1892 in Bloemfontein, South Africa. His parents, both Birmingham people, had emigrated in search of a better life. Three years later, Mabel Tolkien took Ronald and his younger brother, Hilary, to Birmingham to see their grandparents for the first time. Whilst they were visiting her parents in Kings Heath, Mabel received the shocking news that her husband had rheumatic fever. Sadly, he died before she was able to return to South Africa.

With no reason to return to South Africa, the family settled in the hamlet of Sarehole where they lived for four years. They then moved to 214, Alcester Road, Moseley from where Ronald could take a tram to King Edward's School, Birmingham. The school's Victorian Gothic buildings stood in New Street (a blue plaque now marks the site).

The family soon moved to Westfield Road, Kings Heath, and then to Ladywood and a house (now demolished) in Oliver Road, in order to be near the Catholic Oratory. Mabel, a recent convert to Catholicism, drew strength from the Church. Diagnosed as diabetic, she died in 1904 while convalescing, with the boys, at the Oratory's retreat near Rednal.

Following their mother's death, the boys remained in the Ladywood area, being sent to stay with their aunt in Stirling Road, but they were not happy and moved to lodgings in Duchess Road. Four years later, they moved to their last Birmingham address in Highfield Road where Ronald learnt that he had gained a place at Exeter College, Oxford. With the exception of army service and a spell as lecturer at Leeds University, Tolkien was to remain at Oxford for the rest of his life.

Although he was the author of important works on Anglo-Saxon and Middle English, it is for his fantasy novels that



J.R.R. Tolkien is best known. 'The Hobbit' was published in 1937, and the trilogy, 'The Lord of the Rings', in 1954-5. Tolkien died on 2 September 1973, aged eighty-one.

3. Moseley Bog

Tolkien later lamented the encroachment of the suburbs upon his former home but there is one place that 'civilization' missed: Moseley Bog. The bog was an ideal place for Tolkien's childhood adventures. It was once a mill pool, probably a storage pool for Sarehole Mill, and is also the site of two Bronze Age 'burnt mounds'. These heat-shattered stones, used to heat water for cooking, are evidence that the site was once inhabited. The bog is recalled in Tolkien's description of the 'Old Forest', last of the primeval wild woods, where 'Tom Bombadil' lived. It is now preserved as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and is shortly to be leased from Birmingham City Council by the 'Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust'. The site can be accessed, by car, from an entrance on Yardley Wood Rd and on foot, via Wake Green Playing Fields.



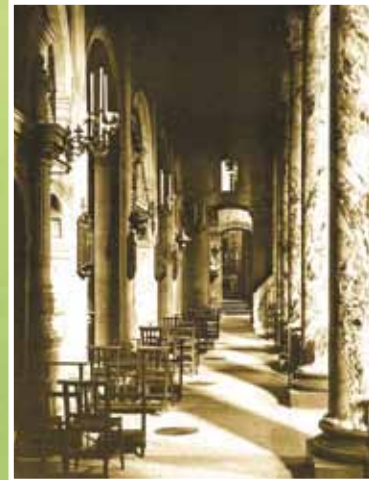
4. St Anne's Church

When Tolkien's mother became a Catholic, the family worshipped at St Anne's, Alcester Street. The church was new having been built in 1884 to replace Cardinal Newman's original chapel. Tolkien was to follow the faith adopted by his mother for the rest of his life. Open during service hours and by appointment (0121 772 2780).



5. The Oratory

In 1902, Mabel Tolkien's search for a sympathetic church led her to Cardinal Newman's community on the Hagley Road. The family lived nearby in Oliver Road and, for a time, Ronald was enrolled at St. Phillip's School in the same street. The friendship of Father Francis Xavier Morgan, who became the boys' guardian, was a source of strength during Mabel's illness and subsequent death. Open during service hours and by appointment (0121 454 0496).



6. Perrott's Folly

This extraordinary 96ft. (30m.) tower is named after the man who had it built in 1758, John Perrott. It stands near a later Victorian tower, part of Edgbaston Waterworks, and the pair are said to have suggested 'Minas Morgul' and 'Minas Tirith', the 'Two Towers of Gondor', after which the second volume of 'Lord of the Rings' is named.



7. Sam Gamgee

Tolkien used the name 'Sam Gamgee' in the 'Lord of the Rings' for 'Frodo's' faithful companion and the last of the ring-bearers. He probably came across 'Gamgee tissue' as the local name for cotton wool which was invented by a Birmingham surgeon, Dr Joseph Sampson Gamgee, whose widow lived opposite Tolkien's aunt in Stirling Road.

8. 4 Highfield Road

At his previous lodgings in Duchess Road, Tolkien had met and fallen in love with Edith Bratt, who was to become his wife. He was only 16 at the time and Father Morgan attempted to put an end to the relationship by moving the two boys to Highfield Road. It was Tolkien's last Birmingham address.

For further information contact;

The Tolkien Society,
c/o 210 Prestbury Road,
Cheltenham, GL52 3ER.
www.tolkiensociety.org

River Cole and Chinn Brook Conservation Group,
c/o 68 Smirrells Road, Hall Green,
Birmingham, B28 0LB.

Sarehole Mill Museum: 0121 777 6612
The Shire Country Park, Rangers Office: 0121 702 2739

Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery: www.bmag.org.uk

Birmingham City Council: www.birmingham.gov.uk

For travel information:
Traveline: 0870 608 2 608
or Centro Hotline: 0121 200 2700

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The Tolkien Trail





Two Towers

"Still round the corner there may wait,
 A new road or a secret gate,
 And though we pass them by today,
 And take the hidden paths that run
 Towards the Moon or to the Sun,
 Apple thorn and nut and sloe,
 Let them go! Let them go!
 Sand and stone and pool and dell,
 Fare you well! Fare you well!"

(from 'The Lord of the Rings')



The Mill

"To the end of his days Bilbo could never remember how he found himself outside, without a hat, a walking-stick or any money, or anything that he usually took when he went out; leaving his second breakfast half-finished and quite unwashed-up, pushing his keys into Gandalf's hands, and running as fast as his furry feet could carry him down the lane, past the great Mill, across The Water and then on for a mile or more."
 (from 'The Hobbit')



The Bog

"But the Forest is queer. Everything in it is very much more alive, more aware of what is going on, so to speak, than things are in the Shire. And the trees do not like strangers. They watch you. They are usually content merely to watch you, as long as daylight lasts, and don't do much. Occasionally the most unfriendly ones may drop a branch, or stick a root out, or grasp at you with a long trailer."
 (from 'The Lord of the Rings')

