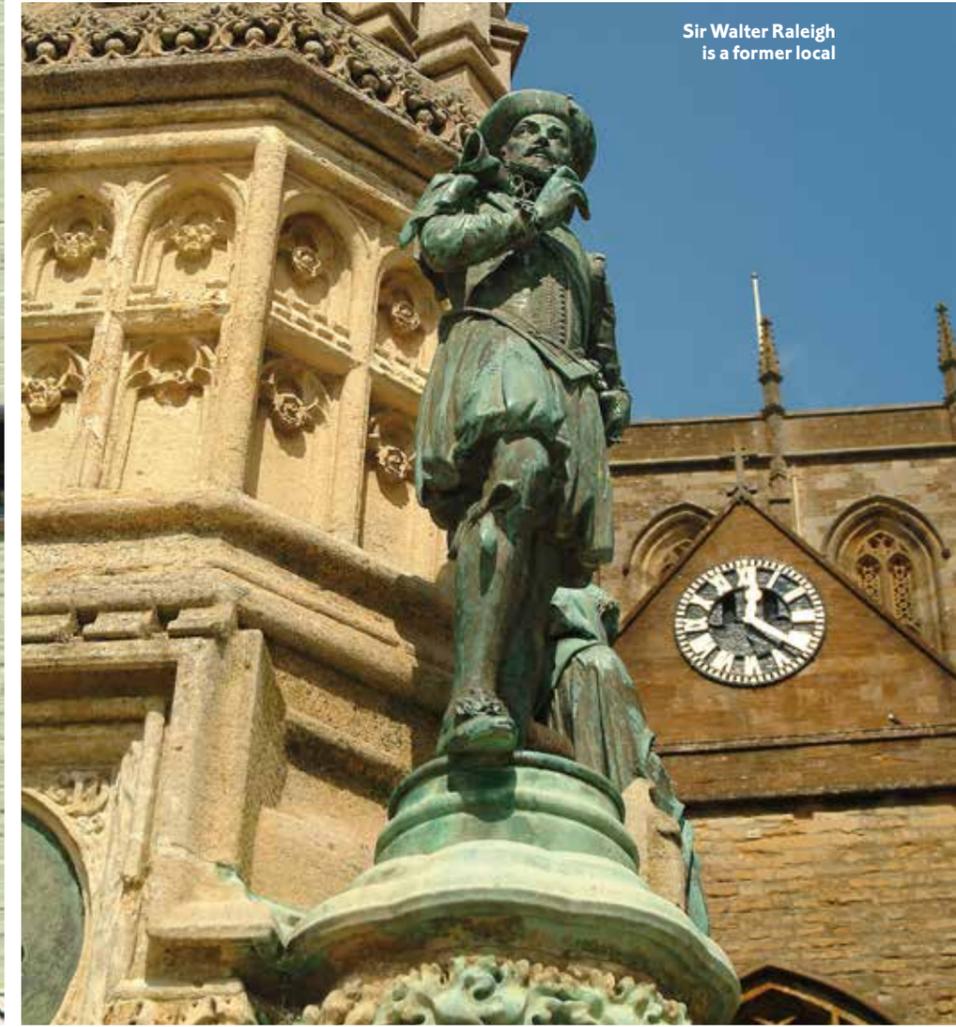


# Bringing history to life



Sir Walter Raleigh is a former local

## As Sherborne celebrates an important milestone this year, GTW's **Lorraine Jackson** explores all this Dorset town has to offer

**T**HIS YEAR MARKS the 400th anniversary of the death of Sir Walter Raleigh, and his influence is felt strongly in the small market town of Sherborne in Dorset where he lived for part of his life.

In fact Raleigh is responsible for the fact there are two castles in the town. He leased the original 12th century castle in 1592 and planned to turn it into a fine residence. The idea proved too costly however, and instead he chose to build a mansion close by. Sherborne New Castle was completed and became his home in 1594 – and the former castle ruins, known as ‘Old Castle’, are now preserved by English Heritage, see [english-heritage.org.uk](http://english-heritage.org.uk)

My visit to Sherborne New Castle took place during a sunny bank holiday weekend. Set in beautiful grounds with deer in the surrounding

parkland, the castle is now home to the Digby Wingfield family, having been bought by Sir John Digby in 1617. Visitors touring the house can view grand collections of art, furniture and porcelain. Tour guides help to bring history to life, and ‘Great Stories’ information sheets highlight the castle’s key moments. An exhibition is also running this year to recognise Raleigh’s ties with Sherborne.

The wonderful English landscape garden was designed by Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown, and sweeping lawns, herbaceous borders and majestic specimen trees fill the grounds. Paths lead beyond the castle courtyard and The Orangery to the boathouse and pier, from which are views of the Old Castle ruins. A longer walk takes you round the lake past Raleigh’s seat, rockery and cascade.



Sherborne New Castle has views over the ruins of the Old Castle

Visitors are welcome to bring a picnic or take refreshments in the tea room or outside on the patio. There’s a gift shop in the courtyard, and free coach and car parking right in front of the castle entrance. It’s worth noting that wheelchair users are restricted to the ground floor of the castle as there’s no lift and the stairs to the first floor are narrow. However, a slide show is made available to view the upstairs rooms.

Group visits are welcomed and private guided tours can be arranged, see [sherbornecastle.com](http://sherbornecastle.com) or call 01935 812072.

### EXPLORING THE TOWN

Sherborne itself is an attractive medieval town, six miles east of Yeovil and close to major trunk routes connecting with the south west. It’s served by a railway line, with trains from London Waterloo in just over two hours and Exeter in a little over an hour.

With numerous historic buildings, the town’s home to the beautiful Sherborne Abbey, St Johns Almshouse, independent schools and

a small museum. It boasts a characterful high street, a choice of restaurants and cafés and several public parks.

I was fortunate to take a walking tour with resident Blue Badge Guide Cindy Chant, and learned much about the history of Sherborne, including more about Raleigh and others who influenced the town.

I visited the location of the famous public school Sherborne School for Boys, where

code breaker Alan Turing was a former pupil. We finished our tour at the centuries old Sherborne Abbey, which has prime position in the centre. Cindy was a mine of information and a lively host... thank you! Find out more at [sherbornewalks.co.uk](http://sherbornewalks.co.uk) or email [cindyatsherbornewalks@gmail.com](mailto:cindyatsherbornewalks@gmail.com)

### A VARIED LINE-UP

Sherborne plays host to a number of events – and one of which, the award-winning Abbey Music Festival, was taking place over the weekend of my visit. The popular five-day festival had a full programme of musical ensembles taking place in venues throughout the town. Despite this Sherborne was pleasantly quiet, making it a delightful alternative to other busy tourist destinations in the area.

Upcoming events to check out later this year are the Sherborne Literary Festival and International Film Festivals, both held in October. Find out more about both festivals at [sherborneabbeyfestival.org](http://sherborneabbeyfestival.org) and [sherbornedorset.co.uk/whats-on-2](http://sherbornedorset.co.uk/whats-on-2) **GTW**

### A RELAXING VIBE

Lorraine stayed in The Eastbury, a three-star boutique hotel a short distance from the centre in a peaceful setting.

The Eastbury has 23 rooms, spread over three floors, each of which is tastefully decorated in its own individual style. It has an on-site restaurant overlooking a pretty, secluded walled garden and is also open to non-residents, together with its outside

terrace with seating area and a guest lounge. Free car parking is provided to the rear of the hotel and coach parking is accessible a few streets away in Culverhayes car park. A word of warning: there isn’t a lift for guests, however it is possible to arrange help with transferring luggage to your room.

Visit [theeastburyhotel.co.uk](http://theeastburyhotel.co.uk) or call 01935 813131.