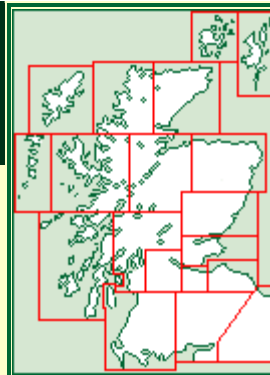




# Gretna & Gretna Green

## Undiscovered Scotland: The Ultimate Online Guide

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Classic Postcard View of the "World Famous Old Blacksmith's Shop"



Location Map

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Every year over 4,000 weddings take place in Gretna and Gretna Green, which amounts to around one in eight of all weddings that take place in Scotland. And there seems every chance that the twin settlements are between them home to rather more than one in eight of all the anvils remaining in Scotland.

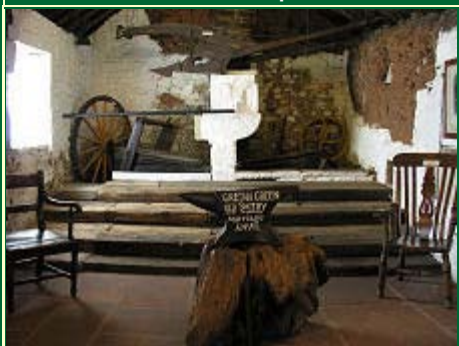
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Blacksmith's Shop Centre



Gretna Green Old Smithy Anvil

Gretna Green lies either side of the A74(M) motorway, a mile across the border into Scotland from England. It forms one end of a village whose other end is called Springfield. Gretna Green became famous though a combined accident of history and geography.

England in the early 1700s was facing serious social problems caused by large numbers of irregular marriages taking place around the country. The solution was an Act of Parliament introduced in 1754 by Lord Hardwicke.

This restricted the number of places in which marriages could take place; it tightened up the regulations on recording of marriages; and, most significantly, it outlawed marriages in which either bride or groom were under 21 unless both sets of parents or guardians consented. The new law was rigorously enforced, and clergymen faced 14 years of transportation for breaking it.

But the 1754 Act did not apply to Scotland.

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Gretna Registration Office



Old Smithy Museum



Old Smithy Coach House



The Conservatory at the Old Smithy



Old Smithy Sculpture Park

Here it remained possible for anyone of 16 or over to get married with or without their parents' consent. And marriages could be carried out without prior notice and in a wide range of venues, without need for a clergyman to officiate. Gretna Green happened to be the first place you reached in Scotland when following the main route north from Carlisle, and so it became a centre for runaway marriages. These were often carried out by the village blacksmith as the tradesman of most respect in the community. And they were often carried out with a sense of urgency driven by the knowledge that one or other set of parents was in hot pursuit.

The act of marriage came to be marked by the striking of his anvil by the blacksmith. This could be seen as symbolising the joining together of two pieces of metal in the heat of the blacksmith's fire. Like them, the couples involved were joined together in the heat of the moment and bound together for eternity.

An English Act of Parliament in 1857 meant that a marriage in Scotland would no longer be recognised in England unless one of the parties to it had been resident in Scotland for at least three weeks prior to the wedding. This slightly reduced the flow of such weddings, and killed off a similar "wedding industry" in [Coldstream](#) on the other side of the country. But Gretna Green remained a considerable draw until 1940, when irregular marriages performed by someone other than a clergyman or official registrar were outlawed in Scotland. During the 13 years until 1940 the last "anvil priest" who officiated at the Old Smithy, Richard Rennison, is said to have performed 5147 weddings.

And for 37 years that was pretty much that. But in 1977 the three week residential requirement was removed; couples instead needing to give 14 days written notice of their wedding. And from 1994 anvil weddings outside church premises once more began to take place in Gretna and Gretna Green, albeit conducted by clergymen. Since 2002 Registrars have also been able to perform civil weddings in approved venues outside Registration Offices.



Registration Office Interior



Anvil Hall Interior



St Andrews Church of Scotland



The Gables Hotel



Gretna Flower Basket



Gretna Hall Hotel



Gretna Hall Blacksmith's Shop

The result has been the steady increase in the numbers of weddings taking place in Gretna and Gretna Green, a trend that shows no sign of diminishing. And the choice of venue on offer is bewildering.

In Gretna Green the "World Famous Old Blacksmith's Shop", also called the Old Smithy, is perhaps the best known venue. This now has three wedding rooms, each with an anvil; and has developed a fascinating (and surprisingly extensive) museum. It has also transformed itself into a major tourist attraction with a range of shops and other facilities. Close by is the Gretna Hall Hotel, another popular wedding venue, complete with its own blacksmith's shop (and anvils), while a number of other wedding venues are also available in Gretna Green. See also our [Marrying in Scotland](#) page.



Monarch Wedding Cars



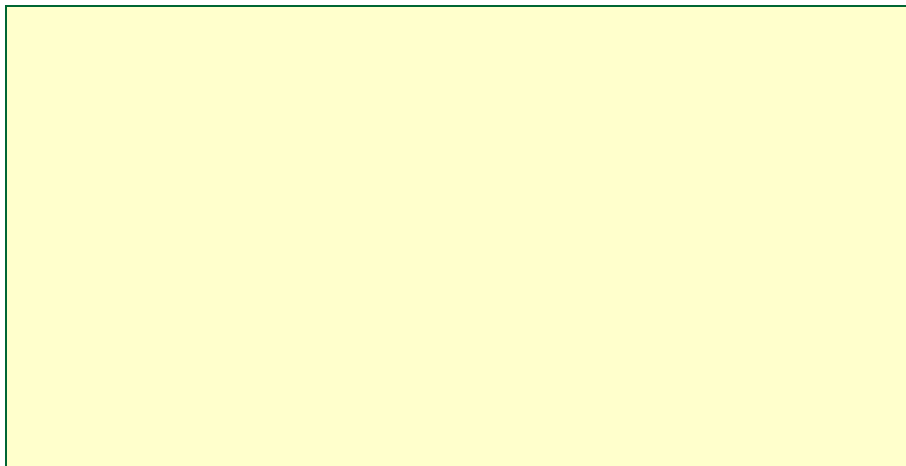
Not Just Weddings:  
Gretna Gateway Outlet Village

Gretna Green is separated from Gretna by the dual carriageway A75 and by a few hundred yards of open fields. Gretna was built from scratch as a planned township during the First World War, to house workers from the huge munitions factories developed in the area. This has not stopped Gretna taking part in the wedding boom of the last decade. Key points of focus include the Registration Office, Scotland's busiest, and the magnificent Anvil Hall, a church converted for use specifically for weddings. Other churches and hotels in Gretna also offer wedding packages, each competing to provide an experience to remember.

Meanwhile both Gretna and Gretna Green are home to a number of local businesses supplying flowers, cakes, dresses, cars, photographers, accommodation and everything else you could possibly need to make that special day perfect.

In talking about Gretna and Gretna Green, it is easy to overlook the fact that there is rather more to them than just their focus on marriage. Gretna's football club has become increasingly famous in recent years, both through its exploits on the field, and as a model of community involvement. Meanwhile, on the shopping front the Gretna Gateway Outlet Village provides a major attraction in its own right.

And anywhere else, the WWI development of Gretna to serve what was the world's largest munitions factory would deserve a more in depth look. On the north shore of the Solway a workforce of 30,000 people produced vast quantities of cordite, or *devil's porridge*. And on an equally sombre note, on 22 May 1915 Gretna became the location of Britain's worst ever rail disaster, when a troop train taking troops of the Royal Scots to fight in Gallipoli ran into a stationary local train. The wreckage of the two trains was then hit by a northbound express. At least 227 people were killed and a further 246 injured in the Quintinshill disaster.





The Anvil Hall in Gretna

## MARINA OPEN HOUSE

Saturday March 31<sup>st</sup> from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

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