

# BRADENHAM AND HUGHENDEN

NEAR HIGH WYCOMBE



## Homes of Queen Victoria's favourite Prime Minister.

Queen Elizabeth I was entertained in great splendour at Bradenham by Lord Windsor in 1566, on her return from visiting the University of Oxford. A contemporary report records the Queen staying overnight at Great Hampden,

progressing next day to Bradenham. The route from Great Hampden brought the party through Flowers Bottom, emerging onto the ridge top at Walter's Ash. Records suggest the present Bradenham Woods Lane did not exist and the Queen's party descended down through a glade in the woodlands to reach the



Elizabeth I

Manor. This glade is still preserved. On the following day, Her Majesty set out from Bradenham "with a large party of gentlemen, because of the thieves which infested these woods." The party passed "through some of the loveliest bits of primeval forest at Walter's Ash, down Downley Common, through Tinkers Wood" to High Wycombe.

The manor house that Elizabeth stayed in was replaced in about 1670 by the present Manor House which was the childhood home of Benjamin Disraeli, who became Prime Minister of Great Britain twice in the 19th century (1868 and 1874–1880).

Disraeli purchased nearby Hughenden Manor in 1848 because as leader of the Conservative Party "it was essential to represent a county," and county members had to be landowners. He and his wife Mary Anne Disraeli, alternated between Hughenden and several homes in London.

Disraeli had a close relationship with Queen Victoria who visited him at his home at Hughenden. He was also the only commoner permitted to sit while in private audience with the Queen. When she visited Hughenden Manor in 1877, Disraeli made special arrangements to have the legs reduced in height on one of the dining room chairs. A thoughtful touch, and one that shows a very human understanding of the potential embarrassment that may

have been caused to his Royal friend, should her legs be allowed to swing about freely.

Royal protocol did not permit Victoria to attend the private funeral, but she visited the tomb a few days later to pay her respects, and spent some time in his study. A memorial to Disraeli was erected by the Queen on the north side of the chancel following his death. It was the only memorial to be erected by a reigning monarch to one of her subjects in an English parish church. The inscription reads:



Disraeli memorial : Chris Smith

*To the dear and honoured memory of Benjamin Earl of Beaconsfield. This memorial is placed by his grateful sovereign and friend Victoria R.I. "Kings loveth him that speaketh right"*

The Queen's Christmas 1876 gift to Benjamin - an ornately bound copy of Faust by Johann Wolfgang Goethe - sits in the library, along with a statue of Disraeli himself, also gifted to him by the Queen, and a statuette of her favourite servant, John Brown which sits on the mantelpiece.



In the foreground a statue of Disraeli himself and on the mantelpiece, a statue of Victoria's favourite servant, John Brown.

Sadly in May 2011, an ornate silver milk jug given by Victoria to Disraeli as part of a tea service was stolen from the drawing room of Hughenden Manor.

## Further information

Hughenden Manor:

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hughenden](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hughenden)

References: Bradenham, Buckinghamshire - a short history by Dennis Claydon