

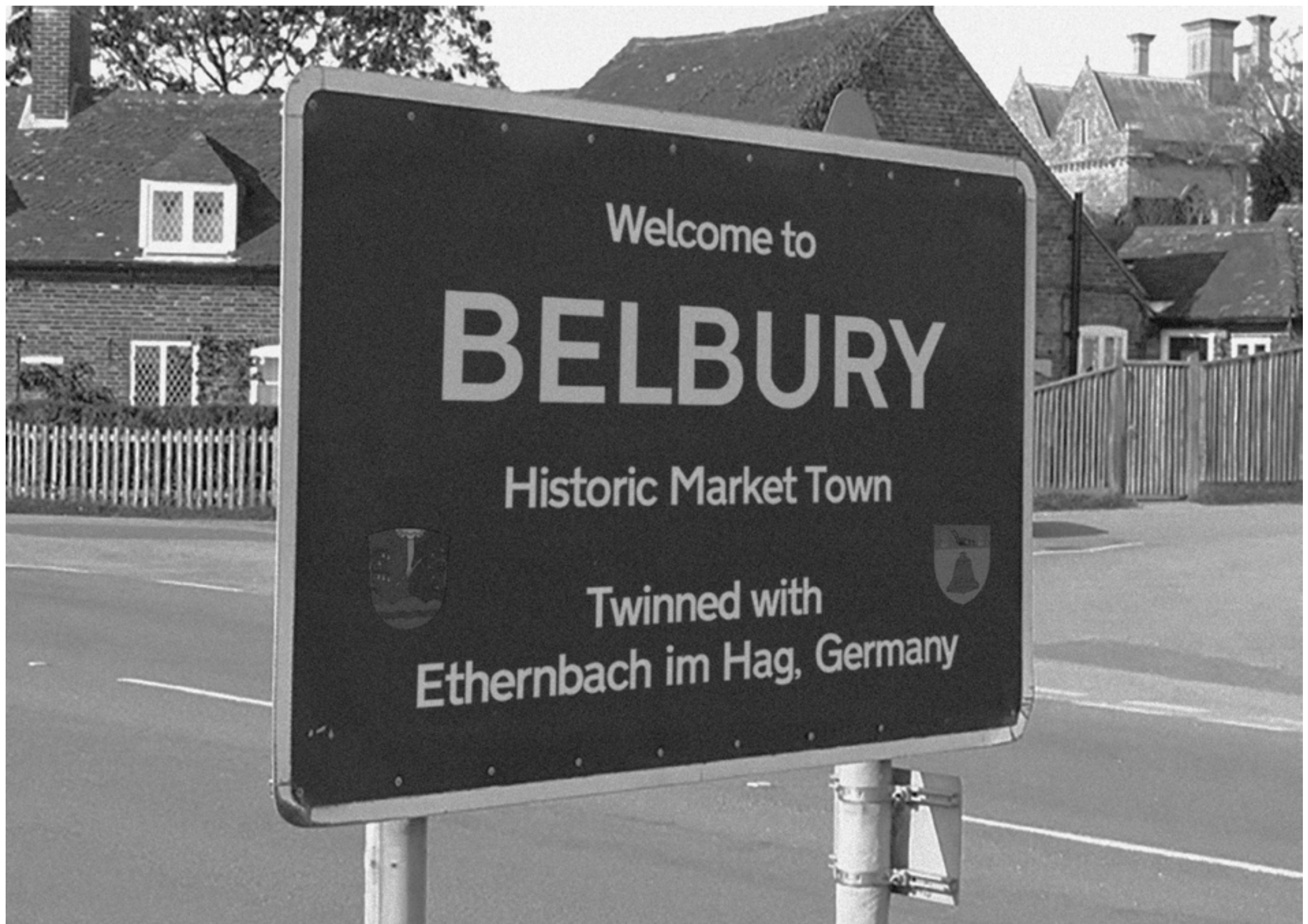
A Social Gathering Gnostic Travel Guide
Destination 3: **Welcome to Belbury**

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Ghost Box

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Welcome to Belbury!

Whether you're visiting for the day, or relocating to join the widely recognised Media and Folklore or Town Planning courses at the Polytechnic, we think you'll be pleasantly surprised by what you find here. From the warmth of our people – always keeping an eye out for one another – to the thrilling mix of architecture and archaeology, you're sure to agree with the local saying: 'Belbury people bide their time, and Belbury time bides longer.'

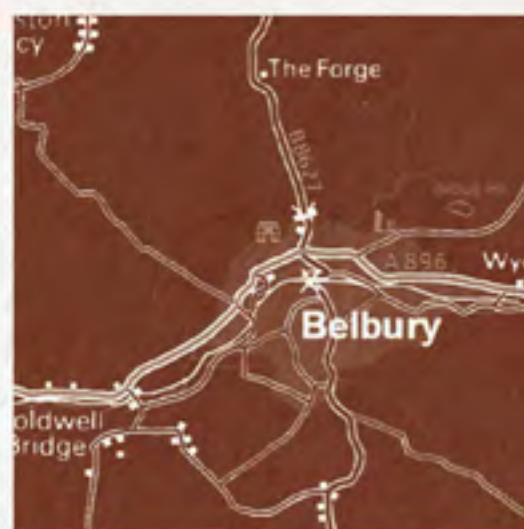


Hidden away in border country, the ancient market town of Belbury has much to recommend it. Although a highly unlikely target, the medieval town centre was badly damaged by an opportune air raid in 1940. The picturesque, 11th century church of St. Oswald's however, survives intact, as does the quaint 13th century Market Hall. Of particular interest is the manor house of Belbury Hall with its reputedly haunted Baroque folly.

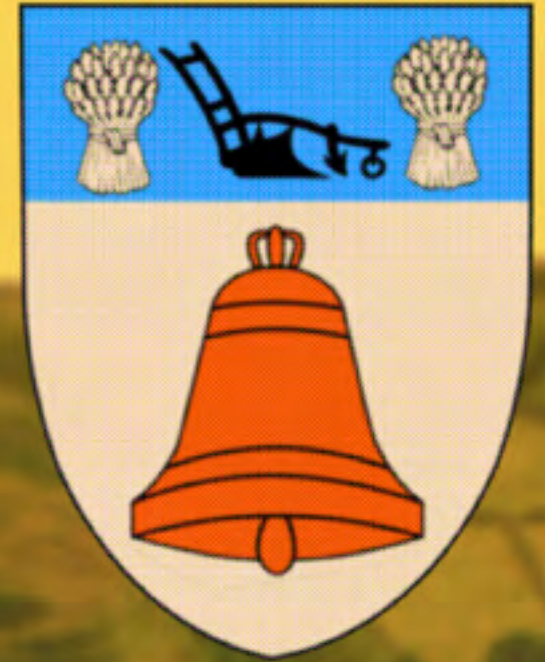
During the post war period, much of Belbury was replanned with the addition of some notable modernist architecture including the Polytechnic College, Public Library and the striking Community Fellowship Church.

Legend surrounds the foreboding Iron Age ramparts of Belbury Hill, which dominate the rolling agricultural landscape around the town. Also of interest to the antiquarian is the nearby Neolithic stone circle, Thornwood Ring, located on the manor estate, but fully accessible to the general public all year round.

Some feel that Belbury is an uneasy mix of ancient and modern, but it is, nonetheless, a fascinating town to visit for the casual tourist and amateur historian alike.



Belbury



The area surrounding Belbury includes some of the nation's most charming rural landscapes.

Hamlets nestled into the hills swerve past as you navigate hedge-thrown shadows across golden-glow lanes. Every few miles, brown signs tempt you to welcoming attractions like Forge Country Park and hospitality at The Torch and Compass or The Bonfire Boy. And on rounding the reassuring bulk of Belbury Hill, suddenly and without warning, the town: an oasis of thatched roofs and concrete towers like none other on earth.



On arriving by train, your first view of Belbury may underwhelm: axed by Beeching and reopened, with minimal improvements, in the 1980s, one would be forgiven for thinking Belbury Station remained closed, overgrown as it is by willows, willow-herb, and grass.

Though never busy, the station still offers a warm welcome, for one never truly feels alone there. Remember to alert the driver that you'll be disembarking at Belbury – and when the train stops, move quickly.



The walk from the station to the town proper will take you beneath Belbury Hill, a most desirable piece of real estate from the Iron Age right through to today.

Put a day in your diary to climb its ancient ramparts and gaze out upon the fertile miles: in earlier days, a beacon lit here might've warned of the outsider's approach – but rest assured, such suspicions have long since been laid to rest by Belbury folk.



GREETINGS FROM BELBURY





Near the Hill on the outskirts of town squats ‘the Poly’, a modernist masterpiece sitting within sight of the grand Manor house and the Neolithic marvel, Thornwood Ring. Locals are rightly proud of the Polytechnic College, and its famously innovative academic standards.

Students are readily assimilated into the local populace and what’s more, the college is at the beating heart of Belbury’s vital and happening cultural scene.



Belbury students are heavily involved in the Belbury Youth Club, and – thanks to their recruitment efforts – many of the club members eventually enrol at the Poly themselves.

Day trips to Belbury Hill or Forge Country Park, quarterly dances and parties to celebrate the turning of the seasons, and concerts by nationally known folk and pop performers at The Bell pub are just a few of the Club's many activities.





With the renowned Media and Folklore degree course based here, you might imagine that Belbury would have a strong local television and radio presence – and you'd be right.

Whether you're joining the award-winning 'Eye from the Hill' local news team, or just enjoying Oakston Associated Television's community broadcasts, Belbury's got the kind of quality media that might come as a shock even to big-city people.



However long you stay, many an evening will end in The Belbury Bell.

Built on the ashes of an old coaching inn and retaining both its name and the surviving back bar, the Bell is a joy to enter and devilishly difficult to leave. Be sure to stick to the public bar, which is usually packed with locals and visitors alike, swapping tall tales and sad songs.

It was here that the traditional singer James 'Wren' Pearson was discovered by Peter Kennedy in 1961 – to this day, the musicians that gather in the Bell leave a seat of honour for Wren's skinny frame and legendary wit.

The pub is memorialised in his best-known song, kept in the Pearson family nearly as far back as the Bell's christening:

*Now, should you see Betsy, the Belbury belle
And she whispers to you of her kin
The name of a hawk and the name of a dove
And the name of an oak and the name
of her love
You'll bid sweet Betsy to let you alone
And you'll ne'er see sweet Betsy ag'in. Agin
Pray God you'll not see her ag'in.*

The new album by Belbury Poly *The Gone Away* is out on the 28th August.

Pre-order from 3rd August from the Ghost Box Shop
<https://ghostbox.greedbag.com/>.

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