

LADY GODIVA



Some 900 years ago an extraordinary occurrence took place on **Market Day** in the English **midlands town of Coventry**.

Lady Godiva was the lady, wife of Leofric, the Earl of Mercia. Earl Leofric was one of the all-powerful lords who ruled England under the Danish King Canute.

Lady Godiva was a rich landowner in her own right and one of her most valuable **properties** was Coventry.

Leofric was **a tyrant**, he tyrannised the Church and did not hold the same religious convictions as his wife, nor her fondness for the Midlands and its populace.

He **mercilessly** demanded from the people of Coventry an oppressive tax called the Heregeld. This tax paid for King Canute's bodyguard and Leofric made sure that the people of Coventry paid it!

Lady Godiva pleaded with Leofric to stop this hated tax and he is reputed to have said, "**You will have to ride naked through Coventry before I will change my ways**".

He was quite sure that his demure, modest wife would never do such a thing.

But Lady Godiva took him at his word, and on Market Day in Coventry she rode naked, **veiled** only by her long golden hair. As her hair was long enough to cover all her body, only her face and legs could be seen.

Leofric was so stunned by the whole incident that he believed it was a miracle that no one had seen his wife's naked body, and he immediately "freed" the town from paying the hated Heregeld, and at the same time ceased his persecution of the Church

Leofric appears to have **undergone a religious conversion** after this incident and he and Godiva funded a Benedictine monastery in Coventry where they were both buried. Unfortunately all traces of this monastery have long since disappeared.