The Tudors beyond Winchester

Journey out of Winchester a few miles and you will find these interesting places with Tudor connections. Before her wedding, Mary travelled to Winchester from London, staying with Bishop Gardiner at his castle in Farnham and then on to his palace at Bishop's Waltham. This medieval palace stood in a 10,000 acre park and had been a favourite hunting spot for Henry VIII. Bishops occupied the palace until the early 17th-century when it was destroyed during the Civil War. The extensive ruins are worth a visit today, and events are sometimes staged there. Tel: 01962 840 500.

Old Basing House

Home of the Lord Treasurer, William Paulet, was a huge castle, converted in Tudor times into a large private house. Mary and Philip were entertained there after their wedding. The house, like many others, was damaged in the Civil War and fell into ruins covering about 10 acres. Today you can see the remains of Tudor kitchens, towers, and a recently recreated early 17th-century formal garden. Tel: 01263 467 294.

To the south is the famous seaport of Portsmouth where in 1494 Henry VII built a square masonry tower.

A year later he added a dockyard where royal warships could be built and repaired. Fifty years later, Henry VIII built Southsea Castle

The south coast and the Solent in particular had to be protected against the marauding foreign ships and Calshot Castle and Hurst Castle were both positioned to do just this, Calshot being the best material for its hardwearing quality.

At Southwick, you can see the church of St James. Rebuilt in 1566 by John Whyte (a servant of the Earl of Southampton), it is a rare example of a post-Reformation Tudor church and well worth a visit. The interesting thing about the church is its date. At a time when churches were being torn down, or their decoration removed, here is a church that was newly built. It is especially noteworthy for its three-decker pulpit, its gallery, reeds (screen behind the altar) and box pews. There are monuments to John Whyte (d.1567) and his wife (d.1548).

Quiz answers

1. 10x X, 5x L, 100x C, 500x L, is 1,180x £1. Try writing 1554.

2. There are 25 knights. Some of the names are Sir Galahad, Sir Lancelot du Lac, Sir Gawain, Sir Mordred. Can you add to these?

3. Richard II’s battle of Bosworth? The Merry Wives of Windsor; Henry VI.

4. All the arches are empty. The statues were removed along with all other images of God and the Catholic Church. Here is a great example of a post-Reformation Tudor church and well worth a visit. The interesting thing about the church is its date. At a time when churches were either being torn down, or their decoration removed, here is a church that was newly built. It is especially noteworthy for its three-decker pulpit, its gallery, reeds (screen behind the altar) and box pews. There are monuments to John Whyte (d.1567) and his wife (d.1548).

5. Winchester has no local stone other than flint. Most of the square stones came from the Isle of Wight, which is about 45 kilometres away. The stones were part of the two abbeys, Hyde and St Mary’s. The walls were torn down during the time of Henry VIII.

6. The stone built collar was financed by this church. The monks undertook their expensive goods. Because these were expensive, the living areas were made of wood and plaster.

7. Mills were, and still are, used for grinding corn. The wheels were made of wood, and later ones of stone, quartz being the best material for its hardworking quality.

8. Formal gardens are laid out in a precise way. Plants would be seen on the east face of the church and well worth a visit. The interesting thing about the church is its date. At a time when churches were either being torn down, or their decoration removed, here is a church that was newly built. It is especially noteworthy for its three-decker pulpit, its gallery, reeds (screen behind the altar) and box pews. There are monuments to John Whyte (d.1567) and his wife (d.1548).

9. Sir Francis Drake

The map shows the area around Winchester and places of interest relating to the Tudor period. Towns mentioned in this leaflet all appear on this map.

Did you know?

Henry VII is said to have had over 70,000 people executed while he was king.

Winchester had its own gallows sited to the south of the town. The Jolly Farmer pub there is a list of people executed while he was king.

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Tudor monarchs
One of Henry VIII’s favourite houses was Winchester Castle where his first son, Arthur, was born and then christened at the cathedral, the first Tudor royal ceremony to be held in the city.

When Arthur died, Henry’s second son Henry VIII became king. Probably best known for having six wives, Henry VIII caused a great political and religious upheaval when he split from the Catholic Church of Rome and established the Church of England, thus giving him the freedom to remarry.

In 1522, Henry entertained the King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, at Winchester Castle’s Great Hall, when Charles was able to look at the newly painted Round Table with its central Tudor rose and portrait of King Arthur. The painting is a real bit of Tudor one-upmanship. Arthur in the picture looks like the bearded Henry, and Arthur’s fame had spread throughout Europe and formed an integral part of the Chivalric Code. The point being made by the picture is that Henry could trace his family back to King Arthur and then to the emperors of Ancient Rome. This was further back than Charles V who at that time was Holy Roman Emperor. The position of the Tudor rose motif at the centre of the painting emphasises Henry’s legitimate right to the throne.

When Henry VIII died in 1547 his son Edward VI, aged nine, became king. During this short reign – he was fifteen when he died – his religious policies led to the arrest and imprisonment in the Tower of London of many leading Catholics. Amongst these were the Bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, and the Warden of Winchester College boys’ school, Dr John White.

Mary & Philip’s wedding
25 July 1554 – St James’s Day (patron saint of Spain)

In July 1554 Philip sailed up the Southampton Water to Southampton, whereupon Mary called all noblemen, gentlemen, ladies and others to Winchester for the wedding. She moved to Wolvesey Castle in Winchester as Philip travelled to the city, stopping off at the Hospital of St Cross on the way. He entered the city through Southgate to the sounds of trumpets, bells and cannon shot. Later that day, he met Mary for the first time where a courier pronounced her ‘old, badly dressed and almost toothless’. However, the wedding took place, with the cathedral hung with tapestries and banners that covered the damage caused by Henry VIII’s men during the religious conflict known as the Reformation. The King and Queen then set off along the Roman road to Basing House, 20 miles north of Winchester. A month later, Philip left for Spain, returning three years later for a few months before leaving again, forever. Mary died shortly after.
The streets of Winchester

The royal wedding of Mary and Philip in 1554 brought about an intensive clean up of the city. Streets were cleaned and ‘le rubbishes’ carted away. Heralds were paid for ‘proclaiming’ the King and Queen on their entry into the city, the town was decorated with flags and the Queen’s trumpeters, footmen and men-at-arms all received gifts of money.

Hotels and inns
Tudor Winchester had over 100 inns and alehouses and so was well able to cater for the guests at Mary and Philip’s wedding (a number that probably doubled the city’s population). Most of the inns were on the north side of the High Street, near the Buttercross, while most of the alehouses and taverns were opposite them, including one behind the Buttercross called ‘Hevene’ and next to it one called ‘Helle’.

The Buttercross
At the heart of the city centre, now pedestrianised, this medieval monument is a traditional meeting place for Tudor Wintonians (people of Winchester). Originally known as the City Cross, it was first mentioned in 1427. It was from here that the mayor would read out public announcements and give news of royal births, marriages and deaths.

The Soke
This word means an administrative area, in this case under the Bishop rather than the Queen. In Tudor times the Soke on the east of town was one of the richer areas of Winchester.
In St John’s Street you’ll find a good example of a Tudor merchant’s house (now privately owned). Opposite is the church of St John’s in the Soke whose accounts in 1591 show that the sum of 3 shillings was spent on ‘drinking and the ringing’ of its bells to celebrate the visit of Elizabeth I.

St Mary’s Abbey
This was one of the main nunneries in England. Under a city charter issued in 1247 it was the abbey’s responsibility to care for the elderly and unwell, it was this case under the Bishop rather than the Queen. In Tudor times the Soke on the east of town was one of the richer areas of Winchester.

The Westgate
One of five medieval gates, this was the main entrance into the city. The two stone shields on the west front were a sort of noticeboard where the coat-of-arms of important visitors were painted on. In the Westgate Museum you can see Dr John White’s painted ceiling, as well as Tudor objects.

Winchester Castle and the Great Hall
One of the strongest fortresses in Britain, started in 1070 by William the Conqueror, the Great Hall was built in 1222 and is one of the finest surviving medieval halls. In 1663, the year Elizabeth I died, the courts moved here from Westminster to avoid the plague. It was here that the one-time favourite of Elizabeth I, Sir Walter Raleigh, was tried and found guilty of plotting with Spain against England.

Wolvesey Castle
Since Saxon times, the bishops of Winchester lived here. More a fortified residence than a castle, it was here, in 1556, that Mary I stayed before her wedding to Philip of Spain, and this is where she held her wedding banquet. After that, the building gradually fell into disuse.

City Mill
Mentioned in the Domesday Book, the mill was one of 13 in the city. Reflecting the decline of Winchester in Henry VIII’s time, the mill was neglected and ceased working. The site was given to the city to help pay for the cost of Mary and Philip’s wedding in 1554. The mill was eventually restored in 1743.

St Mary’s Abbey
This was one of the main runneries in England. Abbess Elizabeth Shelley (see Tudor Wintonians in this leaflet) gave up the house to Henry VIII and soon after it was abandoned. Mary gave the land to the city to help cover her wedding costs. The site is now occupied by the Guildhall, and Abbey House is the residence of the Mayor of Winchester.

St John’s Hospital
Founded by the city’s merchants in 1294 to care for the elderly and unwell, it was this hospital that Ralf Lamb gave money to (see Tudor Wintonians). Under a city charter issued by Elizabeth I in 1587, St John’s Hospital was run by the city until 1829, when it became an independent charity.

Mark Rylance as Thomas Cromwell on set in Winchester during the filming of Wolf Hall. © Company Pictures/Playground Entertainment for BBC. Photograph by Giles Keyte.