

Visit to Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire on 08-05-18.

The previous day had been recorded as the warmest early May Bank Holiday since records began, and the History Group who visited Sudeley Castle in Gloucestershire the following day were blessed with similar weather.

Sudeley Castle has a fascinating history, with many Royal connections and following our arrival and welcome refreshments, we were given a most informative and thorough talk on the history of the castle and its wider context within the history of England, from its earliest days, in Anglo-Saxon times, to the present day. We were then free to explore the many attractions at leisure.

The Castle has had many royal connections over the years, including ownership by Richard III, who was gifted the castle by his brother Edward IV; Henry VIII, who visited it with Queen Anne Boleyn and who owned it for thirty years; Queen Katherine Parr, who lived there after the death of Henry VIII; Lady Jane Grey, 'The Nine Days Queen'; Queen Elizabeth I, who bankrupted the owner when she came on a royal progress and King Charles I, who took refuge there during the Civil War.



Richard III Banqueting Hall, Castle and Gardens.

Sudeley has a very comprehensive exhibition area with a wide variety of exhibits, including Pre-Historic, Anglo-Saxon and Roman artefacts and stumpwork made during the reign of Charles II.

The Castle contains many interesting buildings, for instance the ruins of the C15 Banqueting Hall, built by Richard III and The C15 Dungeon Tower. Queen Katherine Parr's Rooms were originally anterooms to the state apartments.

The Private Rooms of the Castle are now occupied by the Dent-Brocklehurst family but some rooms are open to the public. They contain furniture and paintings of historic interest, but also exude a 'family feel' with photographs of the current family scattered about.

Within the grounds and very close to the Castle lies St Mary's Church, originally built as a chapel in the C15 and damaged during the Civil War. George Gilbert Scott, the renowned Victorian architect restored the chapel in the C19. The building contains some beautiful stained-glass windows but it is Queen Katherine Parr's tomb that is the main attraction. Katherine remains the only Queen of England to be buried at a private residence.



Queen Katherine Parr's Tomb.

The prize-winning gardens surrounding the Castle are magnificent. There is a wide variety of plantings including a nature trail; herb gardens; the Knot Garden; The Queen's Garden, on the site of the original Tudor parterre; Rose Gardens and The Secret Garden. There are 150 year-old yew trees and hedges and gloriously colourful flower beds, carefully planted with a selection of seasonal shrubs.

In the grounds is a rare breeds and conservation programme for pheasants. This collection is the largest private collection of rare pheasants of its kind in the country.

Some of the group walked into nearby Winchcombe, which was a short walk across fields to this picturesque village.

The consensus of opinion was that there was so much to see and do that many would consider a return visit.

Heidy Hague