

# Leeds Castle Teachers' Guide

Welcome to Leeds Castle. We hope you enjoy looking around. This guide will tell you more about who lived here and the different rooms in the Castle. If a room is closed today, we are sorry that you cannot view it, but it is probably being used for a meeting. It is also possible that pictures or furniture may be removed temporarily. We ask that if talking to the children in a room, you group them in such a way that they do not block any doorways so that other visitors can get past.

## **A brief history of Leeds Castle**

When the Normans invaded England in 1066, William the Conqueror and his knights built many castles. Some were built for defence; others, like Leeds, were built as homes, to show off wealth and strength. Leeds Castle was built in 1119 by a Norman Knight called Robert de Crevecoeur. The moat that runs around the Castle was made in the 13th century and is fed by the River Len.

In 1278 King Edward I became the owner and it stayed a Royal Castle until 1552. Its most famous owner was Henry VIII. Soon after his death, the Castle passed into private hands where it remained until 1926 when a very rich lady called Lady Baillie bought it to create a fabulous country house. She spent over £20 million in today's money restoring it. She had French artists and craftsmen rebuild the inside to make it look like it did in Tudor times. She was well known for inviting rich and famous guests to play croquet and golf, swim in the pool and enjoy the grounds (which had zebras and llamas grazing).

## **The Heraldry Room**

Along the walls of this room, you will find a timeline of the history of Leeds Castle and the people who owned it. The portraits are all members of the Fairfax family who owned the castle from 1690 - 1806.

## **The Queen's Room**

This room is set up as it would have looked in the 1420s when Henry V's widow, Catherine de Valois owned the Castle. It is actually a day room where the Queen would sit (on the chair beside the bed) and receive guests. Beds at this time were very expensive, with only Royalty or nobility being able to afford them, and the large bed is purely for show and to impress her visitors.

## **The Queen's Bathroom**

The bath is made from wood. The cloth covers would stop the Queen from getting splinters.

## **The Queen's Gallery**

The Marble statues of Henry VIII and his three children were made when Elizabeth I was alive. The picture above the fireplace of a child in a white dress is of Thomas Smythe. Boys wore dresses up to the age of 7. The fireplace is from the Tudor period.

## **Henry VIII Banqueting Hall**

England's most famous King held parties in this room and ate banquets of exotic food like roast peacocks and swan! His face appears in a few paintings in here but can you find him in one picture with other kings & queens?

## **The Chapel**

King Edward I and his Queen, Eleanor of Castile had 16 babies! When she died, he built a chapel at Leeds Castle to remember her. This chapel was opened in 1978 and re-consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury.



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## **The Boardroom**

Many important meetings, including some between world leaders, have taken place in this room. Meetings still take place to this present day, therefore the room may be closed at certain times.

## **The Seminar Room**

This room used to be a bedroom for Lady Baillie's son Gawaine, but was turned into a meeting room in 1978.

## **Lady Baillie's Dressing Room**

As you pass through this room, look at the luxurious bathroom on your right. Every bath in the Castle has a bell next to it, to ring for a servant to help you get dressed!

## **Lady Baillie's Bedroom**

This room follows the French regency style of the 18th century. When Henry and Catherine stayed here in 1520, this side of the upper floor housed Catherine's suite of rooms. The Louis Vuitton trunk was just as fashionable then as it is today.

## **Catherine of Aragon Bedroom**

When Henry and Catherine stayed here in 1520, this side of the upper floor housed Catherine's suite of rooms. Look out for the rare picture of Catherine after her divorce, to the left of the door as you go out.

## **Main Staircase**

Upstairs are the bedrooms that are used by people who visit the Castle for meetings, weddings and parties. These rooms cannot be accessed by visitors to Leeds Castle.

## **Yellow Drawing Room**

The walls in this room are covered in silk, not wallpaper. The piano is over 150 years old and sometimes played by volunteers.

## **Thorpe Hall Drawing Room**

The wooden panelling on the walls comes from Thorpe Hall in Cambridgeshire. The panels were taken from Thorpe Hall and sold to Lady Baillie in 1927. So the walls are 200 years older than the room, and they had to alter the room to fit the panels. If you look back into the Yellow Drawing Room, you will see that the ceiling in this room has been lowered!

## **The Inner Hall**

The 16th century horseman is carved from oak and is the oldest horse statue in England. The knight holds a battle hammer. Look behind you and there is one above the door.

## **The Library**

This room was once the school-room for Lady Baillie's two daughters. When they grew up it was turned into a library – there are now 3,000 books in this room. If it took you a week to read each one it would take 57 years to read them all!

## **The Castle Dining Room**

If this room is open you may see a large dining table that can seat up to 30 people. This room is also used for weddings and dinners.

