

Welcome to Leeds Castle. We hope you enjoy looking around. This guide will tell you more about the different rooms in the castle and who lived here. 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 will 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, and 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. A Norman Knight called Robert de Crevecoeur built Leeds Castle in 1119. 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 - and then hosted weekend parties with rich and famous guests, playing croquet and golf, swimming in the pool, and enjoying the grounds, which had zebras and llamas grazing.

Today you will see the castle presented as it may have been in the 1920s and 30s.

ENTRANCE HALL

Enter through the large door into the Outer Front hall and turn right into the Library

THE LIBRARY

This room was once the schoolroom for Lady Baillie's two daughters. When they grew up it was converted 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 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.

THE SERVANTS QUARTERS

Here you can read about the different people employed during lady Baillie's time here. As you leave this room and go down the Servants Corridor, you are crossing the moat into the Gloriette, the oldest part of the castle.

THE LOWER GLORIETTE

The next four rooms will often have different displays, and/or set dressings, depicting pre, during and post the Lady Baillie restoration.

THE EVENING DINING ROOM

The fireplace was put into the castle by Henry VIII - Look out for his Insignia (Tudor Rose, Dragon) carved in the stone. Look too above your heads. Henry VIII put the ceilings in, but it was Lady Baillie who had the beams made and installed.

THE GAMES ROOM

Weekend guests of Lady Baillie would play cards and games in here.

THE PRIVATE WRITING ROOM

The fireplace is again a Tudor one, with the Castle of Castille and pomegranates (emblems of Catherine of Aragon) on the right corner and the Henry VIII's coat of arms on the left.

THE SALON

Lady Baillie used this room for dancing and the ebony floor was sprung! During the reign of Henry VIII the room was used for banqueting! They ate exotic food like roast peacocks and swan!

THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE

This staircase was installed by Lady Baillie to give direct access between to the two floors. How many steps are there?

LADY BAILLIE'S BOUDOIR

This room was designed for Lady Baillie in the 1960s, but when Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon stayed here in 1520, this side of the upper floor housed Catherine's suite of rooms.

LADY BAILLIE'S BEDROOM

This room, designed in 1936 follows the French regency style of the 18th century. The Louis Vuitton trunk is a very early one and was just as fashionable then as it is today.

LADY BAILLIE'S DRESSING ROOM

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

THE BAILLIE ROOM

This room today is a temporary display space. In the 16th century this floor was added by King Henry VIII- and instead of being a straight vertical tower, it is 'rounded' making it a very safe space. With the moat, height and shape it would have been impossible to invade.

THE BOARDROOM CORRIDOR

The rooms along this corridor have Tudor door cases that were taken from other parts of the castle and installed here, during the 1822 renovations.

THE YELLOW BEDROOM

Lady Baillie had this decorated as a guest bedroom; it has an adjoining marble bathroom. This room too has a Tudor fireplace with carvings of pomegranate and rose.

THE BOARDROOM

If this room is open, have a quick look in. Many important meetings, including some between world leaders, have taken in place in this room.

MAIN STAIRCASE

Upstairs, where you cannot go today, are the bedrooms that are used by people who visit the castle for meetings, weddings and parties.

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. Lady Baillie bought them in 1928. Therefore, the walls are 200 years older than the room. As you leave the room, you will see the only portrait of Lady Baillie with her two daughters.