

Three Abbeys and a Castle: Visiting Royalty in Hampshire

Intro: Welcome to Hampshire HistBites. Join us as we delve into the past and go on a journey to discover some of the county's best and occasionally unknown history. We'll be speaking to experts and enthusiasts, asking them to reveal some of our hidden heritage, as well as share with you a few fascinating untold stories.

Gabby: Hello. I am Dr. Gabby Storey, and I'm delighted to host this week's Hampshire's HistBites podcast. This week, we'll be moving away from Winchester, arguably Hampshire's most famous royal hotspot and exploring four sites with connections to past monarchs and their families.

We'll be exploring Romsey Abbey, Netley Abbey, Titchfield Abbey, and Odiham Castle, and discussing their links with the Royals. There've been some fantastic podcasts already by Joe Strong and Catherine Capell, which look at Winchester's royal connections, so I'm keen to unveil what will hopefully be some hidden gems to go to and explore. I'll be mentioning various religious orders as I move through my discussion and I'll provide a brief note on each of these to go out with the podcast.

So, first of all, we have Romsey Abbey. Now Romsey was founded as a Benedictine Abbey by Edward the Elder in 907. Romsey had an enduring connection with the Kings of England and their families throughout the medieval and indeed, into the early modern period. The association of Romsey and the princesses of the house of Wessex, be it through the princesses becoming abbesses, or through donations, highlight its importance to the ruling dynasties. The site also served as a place of education for Royal children, with the daughters of Margaret and Malcolm, King of Scotland, i.e. Matilda and Mary, being educated there in the late 11th century. Now Margaret's sister, Christina, was also educated at Romsey and these sisters were the daughters of Edmund Ironside and sisters to Edward Ætheling. Margaret's daughter, Matilda was to marry Henry I, and during his reign, he made several grants to the Abbey. We know Henry I visited Romsey at least twice during his reign and his support of Romsey was to continue through both his nominated successor, the Empress Matilda, and the succeeding monarch Stephen. Control of the abbeys and other religious institutions during the civil war of the 12th century was important to Empress Matilda and Stephen because it afforded them networks and allies as well as opportunities to display their patronage.

Charters from the period evidence the back and forth of religious institutions between the two sides, as both sought to demonstrate that power and authority as well as wealth through patronising the establishment. Stephen's daughter, Maria of Boulogne was an abbess of Romsey from 1155 to 1160 after becoming an Oblate as a child, that means that she was dedicating her life to God and she resided in Benedictine institutions in her childhood. Now, Marie has previously been prioress of Lillechurch priory in Kent, founded circa 1148. Marie was promoted to abbess of Romsey in circa 1155, after the death of the previous abbess. Her time at Romsey was short-lived due to her abduction and marriage to Matthew of Flanders. She later took up her position as Countess of Boulogne and did not return to Romsey, instead retiring to St. Austreberthe, Montreuil. There is consistent evidence of Royal grants and occasional visits to Romsey by the early Plantagenet Kings Henry II, Henry III and Edward I

and perhaps most famously King John's house in Romsey is understandably believed to have been John's hunting lodge. However, it has been proven that the lodge was constructed in 1256, some 40 years after John's death, in the reign of his son, Henry III. The Abbey and its Royal connections continued throughout the late medieval period, although as with many institutions, it was deeply affected by the Black Death. In 1539, the lady chapel at Romsey Abbey was destroyed as part of the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII and the Abbey itself was suppressed. The Abbey underwent various periods of neglect and attempts at restoration through the 17th and 18th centuries. Romsey place as a central Royal connection in Hampshire waned in the later medieval period, in part due to religious reformations, but also due to the growing importance of London and the centralization of power from the old Wessex capital.

The second place I would like to discuss is Netley Abbey. Situated on the South coast Netley was founded as a Cistercian Monastery by the Bishop of Winchester, Peter des Roches, in 1238. Although Peter died before work begun, it was continued without him with a group of monks moving into the Abbey from Beaulieu Abbey, the following year. With regards to its royal connections, King Henry III was a strong supporter of the Abbey, acting as its patron on several occasions from 1251. Now, like Romsey, Netley was also suppressed during the dissolution of the monasteries, although it was later repurposed for secular usage. Netley is an interesting counterpoint to many of its more famous companions. It does not appear to have produced any great works or ecclesiastics and does not have a great history of educating the Royals and future scholars, becoming relatively obscure on a national scale. However, owing to its foundation, it is still a worthy site of interest and exploration. Henry III donations to the Abbey included land, privileges and a tun of wine, tun here meaning 256 wine gallons, to be given to the Abbey from Southampton every year. This grant changed in 1281 after Edward I granted the presage where the wine came from to his mother as part of her dower allowance, the incomes used to support a queen consort in her dowagerhood. Instead Netley was to receive 20 shillings per annum from the King. We know that Netley struggled with its income, actively petitioning the crown for intervention and further revenue in 1338, for example. Edward III responded by Letters Patent, allowing the Abbey to assign lands for rental purposes. It's plausible that King Richard II faced similar requests for support, owing to the inspections of 1461, where an Edward VI confirmed Letters Patent of Henry III and Richard II. Ultimately, although the Royals may have had a vested interest in keeping Netley afloat, perhaps due to its Royal foundations, there does not appear to have been substantial endowments or interest in the Abbey. The interactions we have are limited, and it was not a major place to consider visiting whilst on progress. However, it was undoubtedly of some interest to the crown, as it was not allowed to fall into complete disrepair until Henry VIII's Dissolution saw its suppression.

The third place I'd like to briefly mention for Hampshire's Royal Connections is Titchfield Abbey. Now like Netley, Titchfield was founded by Peter des Roche in 1231 to 1232. Titchfield's foundation was to support Premonstratensian canons from the era of Prémontré France. Titchfield does not appear to have received the patronage of Henry III as extensively as Netley. However, it certainly benefited from royal connections during its history. Its location made it an ideal stopping point for travelers, royal and lay, as seen with the visit of Henry V before his campaign to France. Now Titchfield Abbey was also the location for the marriage of Henry VI to Margaret of Anjou on the 23 April 1445. Although Margaret's coronation still took place at Westminster Abbey in London. After the Dissolution of the monasteries, the estate of Titchfield was granted to Thomas Wriothesley. He transformed it

into Place House, which became a major stopping point for visitors. Thomas and his successors were visited by the successive Royals, owing to their status at court. We know that Edward VI, Elizabeth I and James I and his wife Anne of Denmark all visited Titchfield at least once during their reigns. However it's uncertain if Mary I visited the Wriothesley's at Titchfield, as the indication from her progresses was that she visited other local residences. Charles I and Henrietta Maria were also known to have stayed at Titchfield during their reigns. Royal progresses through Hampshire, particularly during the summer when the New Forest was an ideal site for hunting mean it's perhaps unsurprising that Titchfield, owned by a significant noble, became host to the Royals. It's only after the death of the 4th Earl of Southampton in 1667, that Titchfield moved away from the Wriothesley's. Earl of Southampton's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, inherited Titchfield, however it was granted and reallocated to other nobles dependent on conflicting factions at court after it became subsumed into other grants of land.

Now, the last place we're going to explore is Odiham castle as a move away from several of the religious institutions which had royal connections. Odiham was one of the free castles commissioned by King John and was constructed between 1207 and 1214 at the expense of nearly £1000. In 1216, it was the site of a siege during the first Baron's war and was overtaken by French forces. Although these were later expelled, it took several years for the Royals to restore the damage which took place during the siege. Odiham was also the setting for the wedding of Simon de Montfort and Eleanor of England, John's youngest daughter, in 1238, with the castle having been granted to her two years previously in 1236. After de Montfort's rebellion during the second Baron's war and his death in 1265, Odiham returned to the Crown. Edward II granted the castle to Robert the Ewer; however, it was reclaimed by Edward when Robert fell out of favour. After Edward III's grant of Odiham to his queen, Philippa of Hainault, Odiham became part of the Dower assigned to medieval queen consorts of England for their subsistence, although as with all dower grants, the lands included was subject to change from queen to queen, owing to the needs of the crown amongst other factors. It is also during this period that King David II of Scotland was held prisoner at Odiham at various points after his defeat at the Battle of Neville's Cross on 17th of October 1346. From the 15th century, Odiham had lost its place as a royal residence and began to fall into ruin. By the beginning of James I reign, Odiham was formerly acknowledged as a ruin and had been replaced by other buildings as a royal residence and as a defense. Its ruins remain a remarkable piece of the landscape and an important part of Hampshire's history and its royal connections.

Now, there are many other places that I've have not had time to cover today, which merit importance as part of Hampshire's Royal connections, such as Wolvesey, Portchester, and Carisbrooke castles. There are other religious buildings, which are also worthy of exploration, for example, Andover Priory, Beaulieu Abbey, which I briefly mentioned earlier, and Wherwell Abbey, the latter of which was founded by Ælfthryth, wife of King Edgar and of course, Winchester cathedral, it's a wonderful site, but I'm really glad to have touched on here the importance of other local bits of Hampshire's history. There are many more fantastic, hidden gems in Hampshire with wonderful histories to explore and although these may not all have royal connections, they have formed an important part of Hampshire's history and landscape. So many may now be in ruins, it's worth exploring these remains and their histories in order to develop a fuller understanding of Hampshire's past and its wider connections.

Thank you for listening, and I hope you enjoyed this week's episode on Hampshire's royal connections. For more information on the sites, you can see English Heritage or indeed the site's websites to arrange a visit and go and explore for yourself. If you'd like to find out anything else about my work, I'm on Twitter and Instagram @Gabby Storey. I've unfortunately not had time today to cover all of Hampshire's royal sites but do feel free to comment on social media with some of your favourite Hampshire sites with royal connections. Thank you.

Outro: We hope you enjoyed listening to today's episode. If you would like to find out a little bit more about what we've been talking about, then please visit the website, www.winchesterheritageopendays.org, click on Hampshire HistBites, and there you'll find today's show notes as well as some links to more information.

Thank you.