

Redlynch & District Local History Society

A Short History of Tudor House and Gardens by Andy Skinner

Zoom Presentation on Tuesday 5th January 2021
(around 30 participants)

Andy Skinner, from Southampton City Council Cultural Services department, gave us our first talk of the New Year - a whistlestop tour of the Tudor House Museum in Southampton. The talk began with a John Speed map of 1611 showing the old city contained within the medieval walls, and indicating the prominence of Tudor House which is one of the most important historic buildings remaining in Southampton. Henry VIII's antiquarian, John Leyland, called it a "fine building". There are 3 floors; the cellars, the ground floor leading to the gardens and grounds and the upper floor including a Banqueting Hall and attic. The oldest part of the Grade 1 listed complex is the ruin of King John's Palace which is accessed from the grounds of the museum. A misnomer, this, as there is no evidence that King John ever lived, or even stayed here. When the Palace was built, in the 1180s, it was on the shore line.



From the courtyard can also be seen the mathematical tiles on the rear of Tudor House, a kind of faux brickwork that covers the basic wattle and daub structure of the building, to give it a more luxurious look but also to avoid the brick tax that was introduced in 1784. Examples of similar tiles can be found on Salisbury buildings.

The principal source of Southampton's wealth for centuries was the import and export of wine and wool. The halls and cellars of well-off merchants once lined the West and South quays. King John's Palace was used as a warehouse and the cellars of Tudor House were also used for storing wine. During the Hundred Years War though, in 1338, Southampton was subject to French 'piratical' raids. The city was sacked and plundered of its wine and wool and the city elders decided to reinforce the walls to protect the warehouses.

The building was first opened as a museum in 1912. By some miracle it avoided the blitzing of Southampton during WW2 but, by the late 20th century the structure had become unsound. It was saved, renovated and re-opened in 2011. In 'normal' times the museum is open 6 days a week. Let's hope it won't be long before we can take a trip to Southampton and explore for ourselves.

Bob Inns, Secretary

January 7th 2021