

TITCHFIELD ABBEY

HAMPSHIRE

The ruins of the abbey show evidence of two distinctive uses. Firstly as a monastery and then as a large house for the Earl of Southampton.

Historical Description

The abbey, founded in 1232, was part of the Premonstratensian Order from north east France. It was built along the usual monastic plan of a church adjoined to a cloister which in turn was surrounded by the chapter house, dormitory, refectory and kitchen.

The medieval monasteries were major landowners and Titchfield had its own farm buildings and a large fishpond to supply the fourteen resident canons and novices with provisions.

Little remains of the original monastic buildings and site is now dominated by the gatehouse tower built into the nave of the church between 1537-42 as part of the abbey's conversion into a large house after the Dissolution.

When converted into a residence for the Tudor statesman Thomas Wriothesley (Earl of Southampton), the cloister was used as a courtyard and the frater (refectory) became the main hall. The church, as previously mentioned, was partially demolished and turned into a gatehouse. A similar adaptation of a cloister into a Tudor courtyard and house can be seen at Netley Abbey.

Inside the nave of the church the floor levels that were inserted in the sixteenth century can be identified by the position of the fireplaces. Originally as a church the building would have been open to the roof. The position of the walls at the demolished east end of the church have been marked on the ground.

Learning Opportunities

The two uses of the building as an abbey and as a house illustrate the different lifestyles of the occupants, and this could be related to the structural changes that occurred. The pupils could consider the building either as the enclosed home of a religious order or as the grand residence of major statesmen.

Key Stage 2 pupils studying the break with Rome in the history study unit 'The Tudors' could explain the reasons for the change of use and look for the resulting conversion of the building. Pupils could discuss why they think the Tudor resident needed to build such a grand gatehouse, and make deductions about the impressions he was trying to give to his visitors. Classroom work could include a problem solving and design activity to convert an abbey into a house with a courtyard. Taking on the role of a wealthy Tudor, pupils could outline instructions for their architect, drawing plans or making models. This would help them understand the layout of the site and the changes that it underwent.

Key Stage 3 pupils studying Medieval Britain could concentrate on the purpose of the original abbey. Evidence could be found of the skills of craftworkers and the different materials that they used, such as the carved Purbeck and Caen stone and the ornamental brick chimneys. Comparisons could be made with the plans and layouts of other monasteries and abbeys in other parts of the country. The routine of the monks and the origins of their religious order could be researched as preparation for such a visit.

Pupils could study and try out some of the activities that took place in the abbey, such as cooking, baking, writing and illuminating manuscripts. The medieval decorated tiles at the abbey could lead to art, design and work with ceramics.

Location

OS map 196, ref SU541067. 2 miles west of Fareham, 0.5 mile north of Titchfield village.

How to get there

Road: Leave M27 at junction 9 and follow signs to Titchfield. ½ mile North of Titchfield, off A27.

Rail: Fareham 2 miles. Enquiries tel: 08457 484950

Bus: Solent Blue line 26; Tel: 01703 226235

Facilities

Access for disabled visitors: To whole site, over grass.

Parking: Limited space on site and public car park close to site.

Toilets: In a car park close to the site, near to the junction of Mill Lane and the A27.

Free Educational Visits

Please remember you are responsible for carrying out your own risk assessment.

All visits by educational groups are free but special arrangements apply at this site. Teachers are asked to telephone the Regional Office for details: 01483 252013

For detailed information on current opening hours, please contact the regional office or visit www.English-Heritage.org.uk

We strongly recommend that teachers make a preliminary visit to explore the possibilities of the site before bringing their groups.

Staff/pupil ratio: at least 1 to 15

Safety: Teachers are advised to bring their own first aid kit, and to ensure that pupils are adequately supervised at all times.

Contacts

Education Officer: Jennie Fordham, English Heritage, Eastgate Court, 195-205 High Street, Guildford, GU1 3EH. Tel: 01483 252013

Nearby or Related Sites

The medieval abbey at Netley, four miles to the south east of Southampton, and 15 miles north of Titchfield is the medieval bishop's palace at Bishops Waltham.

Portchester Castle, 3 miles to the east of Fareham.

Fort Brockhurst, 6 miles to the south east in Gosport.

A Guide to Resources

Graham and Rigold Titchfield Abbey An English Heritage Guide

Cooksey C. A Teacher's Guide to Using Abbeys English Heritage 1992

Black M Food and Cooking in Medieval Britain

Caselli G. Everyday Life of a Medieval Monk. Published by Macdonald.

Platt C. The Abbeys and Priors of Medieval England Published by Secker and Warburg. 1984.

Lockey M, Walmsley D, Art and the Historic Environment, English Heritage, 1999, ISBN 1-85074-651-6.

Collins F, Hollinshead L, English and the Historic Environment, 2000, ISBN 1-85074-330-4

**All English Heritage resources are available from English Heritage c/o Gillards, Trident Works, Temple Cloud, Bristol, BS39 5AZ
Tel: 01761 452966 Fax: 01761 453408**

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Aug 2004