

Loose Valley Care Home residents enjoy historical discussions and Burns Night



Last week here at Loose Valley Care Home, we enjoyed a fascinating look back in time at some interesting historical places and people

Maidstone Zoo and Cobtree Manor

On Monday 22 January, we talked together about the history of Maidstone Zoo, opened in 1934 by the owner **Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake** who had inherited the land from his father. He created it in the grounds of his house, Cobtree Manor, just outside of Maidstone.

*The zoo had lions, tigers, bears, horses, puma, leopards, ostriches, kangaroos and many smaller creatures, with around **250 animals on display**. Sir Garrard even bred cream ponies for a circus and put on pantomime productions with them pulling a Cinderella coach! The zoo finally closed in 1959.*

Our residents love to chat and discuss topics that are relevant to them, and so many remembered going for a day out to Maidstone Zoo when they were young and how **exciting it was to see all the animals up close**.

The bears were a favourite along with the lions, as most had only seen pictures from books, so to witness these magnificent creatures right in front of their eyes was amazing to them!

Leeds Castle

On Tuesday we turned our attention to Leeds Castle which has been called the '**loveliest castle in the world**', magnificently standing on an island surrounded by a moat and past home to many kings, queens, lords and ladies. Henry VIII updated it for Queen Catherine of Aragon to live in.

It's a beautiful place with **swans, gardens and playgrounds** for children to play in, along with many cafes and lawns to have picnics on.

Two of our residents use to live at the back of the castle's estate and would cut through the grounds to visit the castle, and our lovely Doreen used to work there and had fond memories of the castle and gardens.

Robert Burns

On Thursday 25 January (**Burns Night**) we chatted about the writer and poet Robert Burns; his life growing up and the history of his stories and songs he wrote, which included 'Auld Lang Syne'. We discussed why Scotland celebrates this man and his achievements during his life.

As part of our Burns Night celebrations we piped in our **Haggis** with bagpipes on the iPad, and Paula and Charlotte played the '*Flower of Scotland*' (the rugby anthem) along with many more bagpipe tunes throughout lunchtime.

A number of our residents were trying haggis for the first time, whilst others had a love of it being from Scotland or surrounding areas. Ada said it was "*Not too bad, a little spicy though!*" and quite a few of our ladies and gents decided to pass on it!

What a lovely week of going back in time and enjoying some historical facts, photographs and reminiscence together.



MAIDSTONE and its surrounding area is rich in history and if there's a place proving the fact – it has to be Cobtree Manor Park, which is the site of the former Maidstone Zoo, the largest private zoo of its time.

The land near Aylesford was used for farming in the 17th and 18th centuries and it was eventually



by the River Len to the east of the village of Leeds. It is a historic Grade I listed estate.

A castle has existed on the site since 857.^[1] In the 13th century, it came into the hands of King Edward I, for whom it became a favourite residence; in the 16th century, Henry VIII used it as a dwelling for his first wife, Catherine of Aragon.

The present castle dates mostly from the early 19th century. Its last private owner, Olive, Lady Balfour, left the castle in trust to open it to the public. It has been open since 1978.

History [edit]

Medieval and Tudor [edit]

From 857, the site was owned by a Saxon chief called Led or Leod who built a wooden structure on two islands in the middle of the River Len.^[2] In 1119, Robert de Crevecoeur rebuilt it in stone as a Norman stronghold and Leeds Castle descended through the de Crevecoeur family until the 1260s.^[3] What form this Norman stronghold took is uncertain because it was rebuilt and transformed in the following centuries. Adrian Pettifer speculates that it may have been a *motte and bailey*.^[4]

In 1278, the castle was bought by King Edward I's Queen, Eleanor of Castile, through the purchase of the debt bond from Jewish moneylenders forced to sell at a considerable discount as a result of Edward's own excessive tax demands.^[5] As a favoured residence of Edward's, it saw considerable investment. The king enhanced its defences, and it was probably Edward who created the lake that surrounds the castle. A barbican spanning three islands was also built and a *chapel* with apartments for the king and



Leeds Castle



Kent, UK

General information

Architectural style	Castle
Town or city	Leeds, Kent
Country	UK
Coordinates	51°14′55″N 0°17′48″E﻿ / ﻿51.24861°N 0.29667°E﻿ / 51.24861; 0.29667
Construction started	857 ^[1]
Renovated	1278 ^[5]
Owner	Leeds Castle Foundation

