



FRIENDS OF WOLFHALL

DEAR FRIENDS,

Welcome to the first Friends of Wolfhall newsletter. You are receiving this because you have kindly joined as a 'Friend' - Thank you so much for this.

At the end of June we held our inaugural fundraising weekend at Wolfhall in enormous style. A brief hiatus in the questionable summer weather allowed us to enjoy the beautiful setting and a fantastic weekend of music, talks and discoveries.

We were incredibly lucky to benefit from the amazing generosity of Philip Dukes and his ensemble, who enraptured us with music from the acclaimed TV series Wolf Hall. Philip played on the original soundtrack of the BBC production.



PHILIP DUKES ENSEMBLE

Readings from Hilary Mantel's novel Wolf Hall were delivered with spine-tingling poignancy by the superb Anton Lesser, who appeared in the TV series as Thomas More.



**ANTON LESSER READS EXTRACTS
FROM THE NOVEL
"WOLF HALL" BY HILARY MANTEL**

A visit by Hilary Mantel herself completed a truly magical day.

The energy and enthusiasm of the evening has led to a really positive uptake on Friends joining our initiative to put Wolfhall firmly back on the map. We had many wonderful comments from guests and there is a huge amount of interest in the building and our plans to protect, preserve and improve the unique historic building and its setting.



**THEO, ORLANDO AND DOMINIC
BRUCE BINNEY
WITH HILARY MANTEL AND PHILIP
DUKES**

ESSENTIAL RENOVATION WORKS

If you have recently driven past Wolfhall you will see that it is covered with scaffolding.

We are delighted to say that essential repairs to the House are underway, with a view to being able to make it watertight and weather proof and create a secure structure on which to improve. As we move towards the colder and wetter months, this is obviously a priority. There is such a long list of works that need to be done but at least we have been able to arrest the decline, so to speak.



Finding the Real Wolfhall

Since last Spring, our archaeology teams have been digging exploratory trenches in the gardens around the visible structure of the Hall which has resulted in some fascinating discoveries which prove beyond doubt that it is the **original site of the Tudor Wolfhall**. We have been able to match architectural features discovered, such as the foundations of a hexagonal tower with rooms leading off it, with structures alluded to in letters and accounts concerning Wolfhall.

There was huge excitement with the excavation of some extraordinarily rare and impressive floor tiles with an intricate embossed decoration (shown right).

Historian Graham Bathe commented

"This is a Tudor tile from the early 16th century, almost certainly from Jane Seymour's time, moved from its original setting and re-laid in a new floor."



The July event also brought many local people to Wolfhall, with their unique personal knowledge and memories and we have been able to plot the network of Tudor tunnels that run under the house and through the gardens. The discovery of a new unexplored tunnel has got us excited also!

What did Tudor Wolfhall look like?

This is not so easy to determine, because there is no overall contemporary description. We can deduce that it must have been vast, grand enough to be called a palace, and in a spectacular garden and forest setting. It was large enough to provide accommodation for Henry VIII and his entourage, when they stayed for up to a week, on three different occasions. On one day of the king's visit of 10 August 1539, when he dined with local nobility, 430 dishes were served. Even accepting that the roasting of 42 cows or sheep must have been outdoors or in barns, the kitchens and staff needed to handle and coordinate such quantities of food would have been considerable.

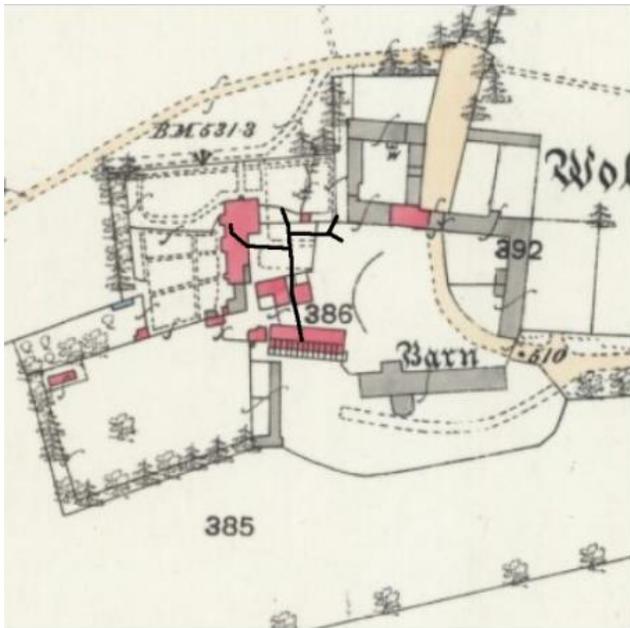
Beyond that, we must deduce how many rooms and buildings there were from occasional building accounts. On 18 April 1537, after a violent storm, the glazier of Hungerford replaced 120 panes of glass, in 21 windows, after they were broken by the wind 'in the turret'. He was called in the following month for 11 days, bringing 24 feet of new glass and six pounds of solder. Such accounts provide the only clues that there were turrets at Wolfhall, or that they had so many windows. Other incidental accounts record courtyards, a great hall, two galleries including a long gallery, a broad chamber, a great chamber with fine chimneys, the king's chamber (reserved for royal visits), a chapel, gatehouse with a room above, treasury house, evidence room (presumably for deeds relating to the substantial landholding) and an armoury. There must have also been family rooms, sleeping and servants' quarters, offices, washing facilities, laundry and service buildings. When Sir Edward Seymour moved to The Strand in London, where he later built Somerset House, he took with him 30 beds, numerous tapestries and embroidered arras-work. There were two wells, a well-house, dairy, stables, kennels, thatched barns including a great barn which was decorated during royal visits, two dovecots, malthouse, brewhouse, hop kiln and various outbuildings. There was a tower, described in a letter which is preserved, which may relate to the hexagonal tower base recently uncovered, resembling one at Hampton Court.

By combining historical investigation and archaeological work, we now have the greatest chance of revealing Wolfhall in its heyday.

Discovering the gardens

Along the way, and with the help of our historians Graham Bathe and Robin Holley, we have discovered:

- ≈ Edward (brother of Jane and later 'Lord Protector of England') was a close friend of Henry VIII and it was he who invited the King to Wolfhall in 1545
- ≈ Edward is noted to have paid the gardeners at Hampton Court for seeds which he sent to Wolfhall
- ≈ One of the most respected book of plants of this time, by William Turner, was dedicated to Edward Seymour
- ≈ A famous poet (Shelton) wrote a poem about Jane Seymour's mother comparing her to herbs and flowers
- ≈ There were eight gardens, including a primrose garden, box garden, great paled garden of one acre, my young lady's garden, old lady's garden, and an arbour – presumably a shady retreat.
- ≈ There were eight orchards.
- ≈ The spectacular Seymour family scroll (currently in Chippenham museum) depicts wild flowers that the author clearly associates with his family.



As these facts unfold we are beginning to build up a picture of what the gardens would have looked like in Jane's time... and it is these that we are hoping to recreate at Wolfhall.

The events in the summer successfully raised the money needed to start work on the gardens and we look forward to being able to bring you progress reports on this over the next 12 months. Suffice it to say there is a vast amount of clearing and preparatory work to be done before structure and new planting can take place.

We are always in need of 'man' power (this is an inclusive term, ladies), and if you fancy committing your skills or honing them by helping out in the gardens, please do get in touch. This could be a regular or a one-off contribution, we are happy to put you to work!

Lastly - A Historical Titbit....Christmas at Wolfhall in 1537



As the festive season approaches, Graham Bathe, our in-house historian, has put some thoughts together on what Christmas would have been like at Wolfhall in 1537.

In December 1537 supplies were brought to Wolfhall for the festive season. Christmas itself was a strictly religious occasion, although this was coupled with feasting. New candles and tapers were purchased to decorate the chapel of Wolfhall, which had its own resident priest, and had close links to Romsey Abbey in Hampshire, where some of the family were nuns. The arrival of the New Year involved greater celebrations, and exchanges of gifts, often with entertainments by minstrels, acrobats and jesters. One gets the impression that food was generally available in profusion at Wolfhall. Current archaeological work is certainly unearthing copious quantities of bones and shellfish. Documents show that even the falcons were provided with a quarter of a cow each week.

In Tudor times, many courtiers owned a series of houses, occupying each for a period before moving to the next. They would be likely to move their whole household, including employees, and all plate, cutlery and bedding, from site to site, leaving just a handful of servants to ensure that the house left behind was kept secure, aired and clean. The whole household family and servants would eat together, although it is difficult to compute how many sat down at the tables at Christmas in 1537. This must have been a reflective occasion with mixed thoughts. Henry VIII had stayed for a whole week at Wolfhall in 1535, and had married Jane Seymour the following year. In 1537, she had given birth to Henry VIII's long-awaited male heir, the future King Edward VI, just two months before Christmas. However, she had died soon after childbirth, and had been buried at Windsor Castle in November. Alongside the birth of the prince, Jane's brother, Sir Edward Seymour, who would later become Lord Protector of the boy king, been granted extensive lands and titles.

Traditionally members of the church abstained from eating red meat on Fridays as a penance in deference to the death of Christ. Some 400 oysters, 100 lampreys, conger eels, ling, and white and red herring were brought in for the Friday menu. For the festive season itself, the household consumed the meat from one ox, one cow, two veal calves, four sheep, 16 pigs, 62 rabbits (regarded as a delicacy then), 21 chickens and three geese. Alcohol available included ale (brewed on site), Gascon wine, and 'a little roundlet of six gallons of red wine for my lady'.