

TO THE CASTLE....

by Tim Saunders, Travel Correspondent



What better way to spend one's eleventh wedding anniversary than at the castle for the weekend...

Sherborne Castle in Dorset is about 70 miles away from our Hampshire home and is a magnificent piece of architecture built by none other than English landed gentleman, writer, poet, soldier, politician, courtier, spy and explorer Sir Walter Raleigh (1552 to 1618) in 1594.

While we amble round the Grade I listed gardens we stumble upon Raleigh's Seat where he used to sit and puff away on his tobacco while also keeping an eye on the traffic heading to Dorchester. Rumour has it that one day while he sat here, one of his servants, thinking there was a fire, poured ale over his head. Bet he didn't do that again.

We arrive just before midday on a day for temperamental weather, with sun, wind and rain but this does not dampen our spirits and the 1,200-acre landscape is so inviting that we are entertained all day long. The children are now of an age where they are enjoying walking and running, which does make for a far more enjoyable time for Caroline and I. However, we are still exhausted having been woken early by little Heidi (7) eager to celebrate our anniversary. *C'est la vie.*

We all admire the stunning 50-acre lake created by Capability Brown. It's home to herons, ducks, swans and Canada Geese. It doesn't matter that the castle is closed due to coronavirus because there is so much to see and do in the grounds. It is so peaceful and after our picnic on one bench we

then make our way to another where we sit under a massive yew tree. While there we savour the view of the lake and beyond. To the right, Friesian cows munch the grass and there is a variety of well-established trees that really add to the landscape. It looks like a Constable painting and I so wish that my camera was working; I thought I had charged it but clearly hadn't so have no battery life. Nevermind. It makes the memory work harder.

We endure changing moods with Henry (4) and thankfully the grounds are so large that other visitors don't seem to hear. Eventually the little man succumbs to the beauty of the landscape and starts rolling down the hill and then repeatedly does this, along with sister Heidi. Then a brown tree hopper with an orange diamond shape spot on his back lands on my jacket and we all have to take a closer look. Henry puts his finger out and the little fellow walks onto his hand. Henry then proceeds to play with his new friend, that he names Dinosaur. Henry calls anything Dinosaur that matters to him. It is surprising how such a little insect can calm him down so quickly. Henry sits there on the lush green grass carefully playing with it and sharing his troubles. Very sweet. It does make us question whether we should consider now getting a little pet for the children.

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