



TIM SAUNDERS & FAMILY VISIT

Old Wardour Castle, Wiltshire

"It's like a Mr Bean sketch," says Caroline as she learns about how the rightful owner of Old Wardour Castle in Tisbury, Wiltshire tried to win it back, ultimately destroying it forever.

There is much history to learn about this medieval castle which was built in the late 1300s and saw much life over the following 340 or so years. The architect of this castle William Wynford, designed the nave at Winchester Cathedral. Surprisingly there remain some ornate ceiling decorations in the entrance.

As you might expect various battles brought about this historic castle's demise. Nevertheless it is an absolute gem of a find, reached by travelling down many a narrow country lane.

The best way for children to learn is by showing them something they can immerse themselves in. And this is just what they can do at Old Wardour Castle. They thoroughly enjoy tearing about the old ruins, up the narrow circular stone staircases and into the various chambers. "They'll remember this in their history lessons," says Caroline. On arrival they are each given an English Heritage badge and lanyard. They pretend that these are their walkie talkies as they go on their mission to discover the place. It is such a privilege to be able to step back in time and imagine the cooks in the kitchen. How different life was then. The lowly kitchen staff would have slept on the floor but kept warm by the enormous fires. Meanwhile the head chef had their own chamber just off the kitchen allowing them to be on hand to make

sure the food was cooking just so and not anymore than needed. Imagine how freezing cold this massive stone castle would have been, especially in winter and so there must have been many fireplaces throughout. Climb to the top and a view of the lake is your reward.

The large grounds include a grotto, which was all the rage from the 1600s. These stone structures allow you to sit and admire the grounds. There is a bit of a musty smell from all the damp but again this is a big hit with the children, who walk through and explore each crevice; both Heidi (8) and Henry (5) coming out with cobwebs in their hair.

Interestingly, the castle in the 1991 film Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves starring Kevin Costner and Morgan Freeman was based on Old Wardour Castle.

We while away a whole day here, enjoying a picnic on one of the many benches.

We really should be grateful to English Heritage for saving this important castle for the nation. Imagine if some Neanderthal had bought it and set about renovating it. So many details would have been lost forever.

For more information visit:

www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/old-wardour-castle/

Family Staycations by Tim Saunders is out now in ebook, paperback and hardback.