

Sudeley Castle

Sudeley Castle stands in beautiful gardens to the south east of Winchcombe. A castle here was besieged during the Anarchy but the present structure is an amalgam of a late medieval castle and an Elizabethan mansion. Ralph Boteler, commander of the English fleet in Henry VI's reign, built it reputedly with the ransom of a captured French admiral. In 1458, Boteler received a pardon for crenellating Sudeley without a license, but he did not find favor with the ne Yorkist regime. He was compelled to sell the castle to Edward IV, who granted it to his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, later Richard III.

Katherine Parr, Henry VIII's widow, lived here as the wife of Thomas Seymour. She is buried in Boteler's chapel, which stands just outside the castle. In the 1570s, Lord Chandos rebuilt the outer courtyard as an up to date mansion, and the inner courtyard was slighted following the surrender of the castle to the Roundheads in 1644.

The castle's two quadrangles were not quite in alignment with each other. Ralph Boreler's outer quadrangle was probably a "base court" with lodgings for retainers, but the existing ranges around it date from the Elizabethan reconstruction. Only the gate passage is original.

His inner courtyard has fared better, though not much better because of slighting. The western corner towers, both square, survive along with the much restored curtain between them. The slender Portmare Tower is named after the French admiral. Dungeon Tower is considerably larger, its name suggesting that it served as a donjon or tower house.

The only other remnant is part of the east wall, which clearly belonged to a very fine building, often assumed to be the hall but more probably a suite of state apartments. Because this work is superior to the rest, it is believed to date from Richard of Gloucester's tenure.