



# Sheiling School Thornbury

Sheiling School has been located on the beautiful site of Thornbury Park for over 60 years. Thanks to the investigations of a number of local historians and archaeologists, we now have access to some brilliantly researched documents detailing the last 500 years of the site's history prior to our occupancy.

Back in the early sixteenth century the land which is now the site of our school and grounds was farmed by local people who grew crops and raised their livestock here. In 1510, to the outrage of the tenants whose livelihoods depended on the land, Edward Stafford (3rd Duke of Buckingham) was granted royal licence to enclose an area of 1000 acres and to change its use from agricultural land to create a deer park and castle. In Tudor times a deer park was essentially a kind of aristocratic playground, an exhibition of wealth and power, since the consumption of venison was effectively a status symbol confined to an elite few. The castle, now Thornbury Castle Hotel & Restaurant, was constructed on the site of an existing manor house dating back to 930. It was never intended to be a defensive castle, the design was for decorative purposes only. It may not have displeased those same local farmers when, a decade later, Edward Stafford was executed on the orders of an increasingly paranoid King Henry VIII who suspected him of plotting to usurp the throne. Ownership of Thornbury Park and Castle then reverted to the crown. In 1535 Henry VIII visited here for 10 days with Anne Boleyn, just one year before he had her executed as well.

Within twenty years the castle had fallen into disrepair, and the deer park was separated off and sold. Following a succession of owners the parkland was purchased in 1679 for the sum of £4,500 by Richard Newman, whose family continued to inhabit or lease it for the next 200 years. It was the Newmans who, in 1832, began the construction of Thornbury Park House, the building now used as our administrative centre. It took four years to complete the building of the house. The taller part of the building (visible in the print above), which now incorporates our school office and meeting rooms, was originally the family home. The rest of the building, which now includes our kitchen and a number of offices, housed the service quarters. Eventually, Thornbury Park House and park were auctioned off and purchased by the Sheiling School in 1952 for the sum of £10,000.

To discover more about Thornbury Park's tenuous and not-so-tenuous links to royalty, Shakespeare, the gunpowder plot and high profile poaching scandals over the centuries, click on the links below. Our sincere thanks to Dave Rowley, Meg Wise, Thornbury New Parke Archaeology Group, the Thornbury & District Museum and others for their meticulous research and for bringing all this remarkable history to light.

[1. Museum Research Newsletter Feb 2016 New Parke History Part 1](#)

[2. Museum Research Newsletter Mar 2016 New Parke History Part 2](#)

[3. Museum Research Newsletter Apr 2016 New Parke History Part 3](#)

[4. Museum Research Newsletter June 2016 New Parke History part 4](#)

[5. Museum Research Newsletter November 2016 New Parke History part 5](#)