

TALES FROM THE CASTLE

With a history going back 600 years; the present building (The Great Chamber) would be a dull place without its stories.....

There are at least four tunnels running from Crayke Castle. One of the tunnels running in the direction of Marton Priory was discovered when Crayke Court was built. Legend has it that a King of England rode out on horseback through one of the tunnels – some tunnel!

In the 15th century, nuns were present in the castle and had their dormitories on the fourth floor. It is said that a frisky friar had a strong desire for a beautiful young nun and approached her in the dormitory. Such was the frightening experience, the nun being of thin stature managed to climb through the narrow window and threw herself some 40 feet to her death.

When Sir William Allanson bought Crayke Castle in 1648, he was a wealthy draper and as Lord Mayor of York lavishly entertained Charles I who in turn knighted him. Sir William made Charles I godfather to his own son, Charles. To commemorate such an occasion, Sir William requested the head gardener to plant an oak tree at the main entrance close to where the Gatehouse stood. The gardener made a mistake and the young sapling has grown into a magnificent sycamore still to be seen today and mysteriously showing its height and girth as if it was an oak tree!

During the reign of Elizabeth I, her staunch ally Sir Francis Walsingham (Secretary of State) who was a master spy and an evil man, captured a Spanish sea captain after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Walsingham brought the sea captain to Crayke Castle, which had been leased to Elizabeth I for 80 years by Bishop Barnes. Whilst at the Castle, Walsingham experimented with the development of torture equipment until the poor sea captain could take no more and died. Walsingham disposed of the body by walling him up between what is now the dining room and the undercroft. The wall is of massive construction being the external wall for a short period of time before the undercroft was added to the northwest elevation. During Victorian times an attempt was made to knock thought the wall to make a serving hatch and the Spanish sea captain was revealed in full naval dress. The shock of this discovery caused the wall to be 'bricked up' without the sea captain being disturbed. A new serving hatch was made to the side

of the dining room door. Rather like St Cuthbert, the sea captain remains 'flesh and blood'. No nails are ever hammered into the wall!

The Spanish sea captain was last seen to walk one November night in 1987!

William Waite of Holgate, York bought Crayke Castle in 1840 and his son, Captain Waite, inherited it around 1870. Restoration work was carried out during Captain Waite's ownership with the chimneypiece bearing the Arms of the City of York being added together with the Victorian wing designed as a Billiard Room. To celebrate the completion of this room, Captain Waite threw a Ball for his friends and there was much drinking and eating. A close associate danced with the Captain's wife and informed her that her husband was bankrupt. Upon hearing the news, she was deeply shocked and distressed and took herself off to her bedroom where she cut her wrists with a knife and bled to death. On finding his wife, Captain Waite refused to believe she was dead and lit the Castle fires to keep her body warm, which he did for seven days and nights. The blood dripped to the floor below and to this day, no amount of scrubbing has managed to remove the stains.

In the 1880's the Head Footman was seen to eat his first banana complete with skin.

Before the Second World War, a Miss Matterson rented Crayke Castle. She was a wealthy woman who would think nothing of sending the chauffeur to the bank in Easingwold for £100 to play bridge in the morning and a further £100 for the afternoon. Miss Matterson wore short skirts and had unusually flared nostrils, which she highlighted with lipstick. When she had had a few drinks, it was not unknown for her to slide down the banister shouting "Geronimo". The chauffeur was a loyal member of staff – not surprising when one of his unofficial duties was getting Miss Matterson to bed after over indulging. She would never take a bath in the main Castle bathroom as it was too claustrophobic, preferring to use the bathroom with the window in the Victorian wing where she had the habit of looking out of the window to make sure the gardeners were working hard. This habit of hers did not go unnoticed by the male members of staff who enjoyed the view through the large crack in the bathroom door!

During the 1950's a Frenchman was staying at the Castle and was being lavishly entertained with much wine and many stories, which he refused to believe much to the annoyance of the other guests. When he left the dining room for a short period, the other guests hatched a plot. At this time the southeast elevation was covered in ivy where many sparrows were nesting. The

guests managed to capture some sparrows in a fishing net and put them in the drawer where the Frenchman kept his pyjamas. Eventually everyone went to bed and the Castle fell quiet. Suddenly the peace was shattered by ear splitting screams and the Frenchman was last seen dressing on the run towards Easingwold.

The moral of these stories is that you must believe the Castle tales!

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