

Chapter 75

My Ancestors Who Lived in Leeds Castle (and Some of Them Even Owned It!)

[originally written 4 January 2021]

On 20 December 2020, Russ Leisenheimer posted a photo of a sunset over Leeds Castle to his Facebook page.¹ Russ was one of my high school classmates in Euclid, Ohio, and he still lives in the Cleveland area. Here is the photo:



I have been using the “World Family Tree” on Geni.com to investigate my European ancestors who lived during the Middle Ages, and seeing the photo of Leeds Castle got me to wondering if any of my ancestors lived there. OK, I realized that this was going to be a long shot, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, I have lots of free time to look into such seemingly trifling things.

I immediately went to Wikipedia.org to learn about Leeds Castle, and that prompted the following reply to Russ on Facebook:

Wikipedia states that “Leeds Castle is a castle in Kent, England, 5 miles (8 km) southeast of Maidstone. A castle has existed on the site since 1119, the first being a simple stone stronghold constructed by Robert de Crevecoeur which served as a military post in the time of Norman intrusions into England. In the 13th century, it came into the hands of King Edward I, for whom it became a favourite residence; in the 16th century, Henry VIII used it as a dwelling for his first wife, Catherine of Aragon.”

According to the World Family Tree on Geni.com, Robert de Crevecoeur was my 25th great uncle. I have 12 different ancestral lines going back to King Edward I - on the shortest line, he was my 20th-great grandfather.

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/50-MyLines-to-KingEdward.pdf>

¹ Russ regularly posts “random” photos to his Facebook page.

King Henry VIII's maternal grandfather was King Edward IV of England, and Edward IV was my 15th-great grandfather. Nice to see these connections to Leeds Castle!

Here is another photo of the castle. If you look closely at this photo, you will see a golf course wrapping around several sides of the lake:



More about Leeds Castle

I next used Google to search for more information about Leeds Castle, and I found the following:

<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryMagazine/DestinationsUK/Leeds-Castle/>

Leeds Castle
by Ben Johnson

Leeds Castle in Kent, England, has been called the “loveliest castle in the world”. Listed in the Domesday Book, this castle has been a Norman stronghold, a royal residence, and a royal palace. Its situation is stunning, set on two islands in a magnificent lake.

The Royal Manor was originally built in 857 AD and owned by a Saxon royal family. After the Norman Conquest, work began on building the first stone castle on the site.

In 1278, the Castle became a royal palace for Edward I and his Queen, Eleanor of Castile. Major improvements were made to the castle during the reign of Edward I. The Barbican, constructed during this time, is unique in that it is made up of three parts, each having its own entrance, drawbridge, gateway and portcullis. The medieval Keep, incorporating the Great Hall, is called the Gloriette, in honour of Queen Eleanor.

In 1321, King Edward II gave the castle to his Royal Steward. When Edward's Queen Isabella arrived at the Castle seeking shelter however, she was refused admission and even fired upon by archers. Edward II was not

amused and successfully lay siege to the castle. Six years later Edward was murdered, but Queen Isabella kept the castle until she died in 1358.

During its lifetime, the castle has been home to six medieval queens – Eleanor, Isabella, Philippa of Hainault (wife of Edward III), Joan of Navarre, Catherine de Valois, and Catherine of Aragon. Elizabeth I was imprisoned here for a time before her coronation. Leeds Castle is often referred to as the “Castle of Queens, Queen of Castles”.

OK, now we’re getting somewhere. After reading this, I had lots more people to look into on Geni.com. I wondered if any of them were my ancestors.

But first, let me digress and go back to the word “barbican”, which was used in describing the castle.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbican>

A barbican is a fortified outpost or gateway, such as at an outer defense perimeter of a city or castle, or any tower situated over a gate or bridge which was used for defensive purposes.

In the Middle Ages, barbicans were typically situated outside the main line of defenses, and were connected to the city walls with a walled road called the neck. In the 15th century, with the improvement in siege tactics and artillery, barbicans lost their significance. However, several barbicans were built well into the 16th century.

Here is a photo looking outward through the outermost barbican at Leeds Castle:



Location of Leeds Castle

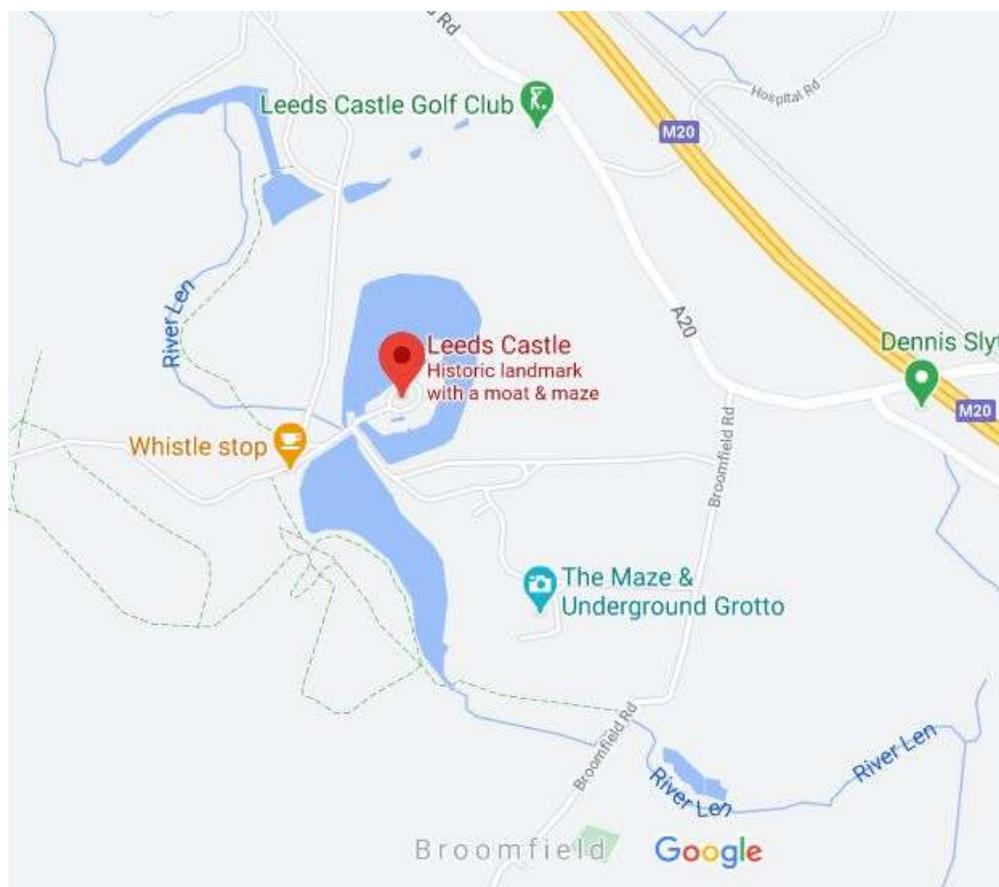
Before I go any farther, I have to write that Leeds Castle has nothing at all to do with the city named Leeds in the northern English county of Yorkshire. Leeds Castle was first built more than 11 centuries ago, long before Windsor Castle or the Tower of London. Leeds (alias Ledian) was the chief minister of Ethelbert IV,

the King of Kent², and Leeds had the original castle built of wood in 857. So the castle is named after the man who first constructed a “castle” on the site.

Leeds Castle is located in south-east England, about fifty miles from London. Here is a Google Map showing the exact location:



Zooming in on the map shows that Leeds Castle is built on two rocky islands in the middle of a lake:



This lake is fed by the River Len – this river flows towards the north-west. In medieval times, there was a mill across from the main entrance to the castle, and this mill was powered by the flow of water in the River Len. See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Len#Leeds_Castle_Mill,_Broomfield

² Recall that Ethelbert was a brother of Alfred the Great, king of the Anglo-Saxons; Alfred the Great was my 30th-great grandfather.

The river is shown at the left of the following photo:



This is the same photo I showed earlier looking outward through the barbican; the mill and the River Len are at the left.

English Kings Associated with Leeds Castle

Up to this point, I have mentioned three English kings who were associated with Leeds Castle: Edward I, Edward II, and Edward III.

Here is an excerpt of the profile on Geni.com for King Edward I:



Edward of Westminster

Spanish: Eduardo I, Rey de Inglaterra

Gender: Male

Birth: June 17, 1239
Westminster Palace, London, Middlesex, England (United Kingdom)

Death: July 07, 1307 (68)
Burgh by Sands, Cumberland, England (United Kingdom) (Dysentery)

Place of Burial: Westminster Abbey, London, England (United Kingdom)

Immediate Family: Son of Henry III, king of England and Eleanor of Provence, Queen Consort of England
Husband of Eleanor of Castile, Queen consort of England and Marguerite of France, Queen of England

According to Geni.com, King Edward I was my 20th-great grandfather:



Of course, this is just the “shortest blood relationship”. I previously found that I have twelve separate ancestral lines going back to King Edward I:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/50-MyLines-to-KingEdward.pdf>

One of these twelve lines is particularly relevant, and that is the line going back through my great-grandfather James Alfred Burks:



On this line, King Edward I was my 21st-great grandfather. Note that I had to produce this chart in two steps – the first was from me back to James Alfred Burks, and the second was from James Alfred Burks back to King Edward I. This line goes through the other two English kings mentioned in this chapter: King Edward II and King Edward III. The line for the “shortest blood relationship”, on the other hand, goes through a different son of King Edward I.

Moving on, here is an excerpt from the profile on Geni.com for King Edward II:



Edward of Caernarfon, II

Gender: Male

Birth: April 25, 1284
Caernarfon Castle, Caernarfon, Caernarvonshire,, Gwynedd, Wales, United Kingdom

Death: September 21, 1327 (43)
Berkeley Castle, Berkeley,, Gloucestershire, England, United Kingdom (Assassinated)

Place of Burial: Gloucester Cathedral, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, England

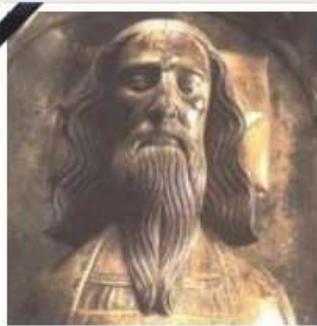
Immediate Family: Son of [Edward I "Longshanks", King of England and Eleanor of Castile, Queen consort of England](#)
Husband of [Isabella of France, Queen consort of England](#)

According to Geni.com, Edward II was my 20th-great grandfather:



Note that this line goes back through my **Miller** ancestors, whereas the previous line to Edward I through Edward II went through my **Burks** line. Again, this emphasizes how many different ancestral lines I have going back to King Edward I.

The last of the three kings was King Edward III:



Edward of Windsor

Gender: Male

Birth: November 13, 1312
Windsor, Berkshire, England (United Kingdom)

Death: June 21, 1377 (64)
Sheen Palace, Surrey, England (United Kingdom) (stroke)

Place of Burial: Westminster Abbey, Westminster, London, Middlesex, England (United Kingdom)

Immediate Family: Son of [Edward II, king of England and Isabella of France, Queen consort of England](#)
Husband of [Philippa of Hainault, Queen consort of England](#)
Partner of [Alice Perrers, Royal Mistress; N.N., Unknown Mistress of Edward, III and Elizabeth of Suffolk](#)

Note that he was a son of King Edward II. According to Geni.com, King Edward III was my 19th-great grandfather.



From all of this, I conclude that I am indeed a direct descendant of three English kings who were associated with Leeds Castle.

Castle of Queens

I now will move on and look at the English queens who have been mentioned in this chapter. The first is Eleanor of Castile, Queen Consort of England. Recall that she was the first wife of King Edward I.



Eleanor of Castile and León, Queen consort of England

Gender: Female
 Birth: 1240
 Burgos, Burgos, CL, Spain

Death: November 29, 1290 (49-50)
 Herdeby, Lincolnshire, England (United Kingdom)

Place of Burial: Westminster Abbey, Westminster, Middlesex, England (United Kingdom)

Immediate Family: Daughter of [Saint Ferdinand III, king of Castile and León](#) and [Juana de Danmartín, reina consorte de Castilla](#)
 Wife of [Edward I "Longshanks", King of England](#)

Here is my line back to Eleanor of Castile:



This line goes back through my great-grandmother, Hannah Mariah Miller, and on this line, Eleanor was my 21st-great grandmother. Just for fun, I looked to see if I had a line going back through Hannah Mariah Miller’s husband, Aaron Burr Oakey. And I did! See the following chart:



On this line, Eleanor was my 22nd-great grandmother. Since both Aaron and Hannah were descended from Eleanor, this means that they were (very) distant cousins.

Recall that earlier I quoted from the article about Leeds Castle by Ben Johnson:

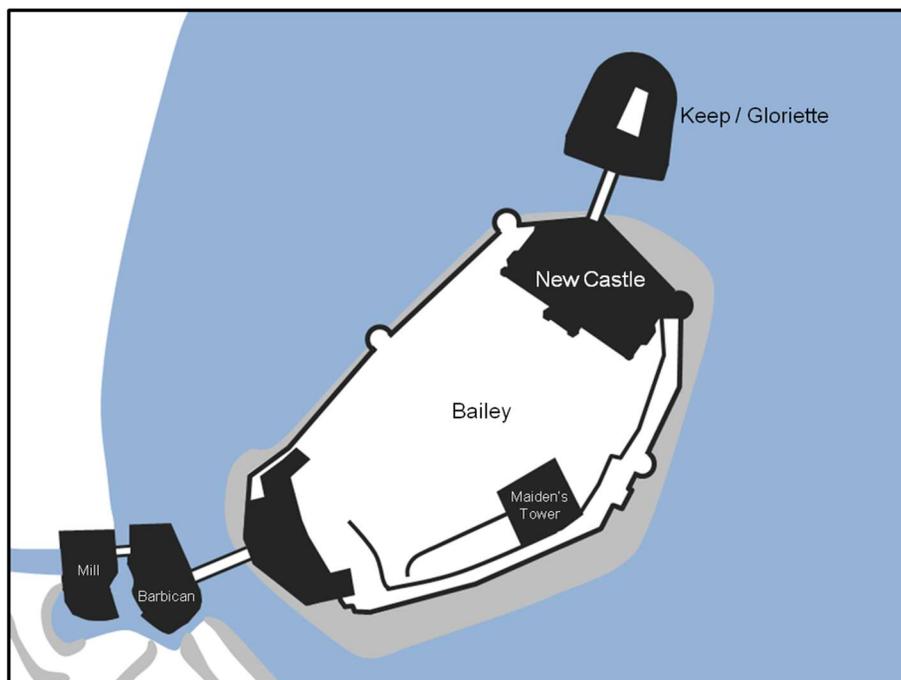
In 1278, the Castle became a royal palace for Edward I and his Queen, Eleanor of Castile. ... The medieval Keep, incorporating the Great Hall, is called the Gloriette, in honour of Queen Eleanor.

What is a “Keep”?

<https://www.britannica.com/technology/donjon>

Keep – English term corresponding to the French donjon for the strongest portion of the fortification of a castle, the place of last resort in case of siege or attack.

Leeds Castle



Here is one of the earlier photos of Leeds Castle that shows the Keep in the lower-right:



More about the Keep and Eleanor's role in its design can be found in Appendix A.

But I digress....

After Eleanor died in 1290, King Edward I re-married. The Leeds Castle website has the following:

<https://www.leeds-castle.com/Visit/History/A+Royal+Castle>

In 1299, in order to improve his fraught relationship with France, Edward I married the French princess Margaret (or Marguerite), sister of Philip IV. He granted Leeds Castle to his new wife, beginning the tradition of the Castle forming part of the 'dower' or personal property of the Queen, to be retained even after the King's death.

Here is an excerpt from Marguerite’s profile on Geni.com:



Marguerite de France, reine consort d'Angleterre

Gender: Female

Birth: 1275
Paris, Paris, Ile-de-France, France

Death: February 14, 1317 (41-42)
Marlborough Castle, Marlborough, Wiltshire, England

Place of Burial: Grey Friars, London, Middlesex, England

Immediate Family: Daughter of Philip III, "the Bold" king of France and Marie of Brabant, queen consort of France
Wife of Edward I "Longshanks", King of England
Mother of Thomas of Brotherton, 1st Earl of Norfolk; Edmund of Woodstock, 1st Earl of Kent and Eleanor Plantagenet

Here is our “shortest blood relationship”:



Marguerite of France, Queen of England, was my 20th-great grandmother. So this is pretty interesting – I am descended from children of both wives of King Edward I. This certainly helps to account for my twelve ancestral lines back to Edward I.

When I looked into this in greater detail³, I learned that Edward’s first marriage to Eleanor was arranged when he was fifteen years old and she was thirteen years old. By Eleanor, Edward had at least fourteen children, perhaps as many as sixteen. Of these, five daughters survived into adulthood, but only one son outlived his father, and that was King Edward II. After Eleanor’s death, Edward married Margaret (Marguerite) of France, and they had two sons, both of whom lived to become adults, and a daughter who died as a child. I note that Edward I was born in 1239 and Margaret of France was born in 1275 – so he was thirty-six years older than she was!

As an aside, the ancestral line shown above, which goes back to Marguerite of France through her son Edmund of Woodstock, 1st Earl of Kent, was not one of the twelve lines I described in Chapter 50 – so I guess I really have thirteen lines back to King Edward I.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_I_of_England#Family_and_children

Now let me move on to another queen, and that is Isabella of France, Queen Consort of England. Recall that she was the wife of King Edward II. Here is an excerpt of her profile on Geni.com:



Isabelle de France, reine consort d'Angleterre

Gender: Female

Birth: circa March 17, 1292
Paris, Paris, Île-de-France, France

Death: August 22, 1358 (62-70)
Castle Rising, Norfolk, England, United Kingdom

Place of Burial: Grey Friars, Church, London, England

Immediate Family: Daughter of Philippe IV le Bel, roi de France and Jeanne I, Queen of Navarre
Wife of Edward II, king of England
Partner of Roger Mortimer, 1st Earl of March
Mother of Edward III, king of England; John of Eltham, Earl of Cornwall; Joan of the tower, Queen of Scots and Eleanor of Woodstock, countess of Guelders

Here is my “shortest blood relationship” going back to Isabella of France:



On this line, she was my 20th-great grandmother. Of course, this relationship isn't surprising, since she was the mother of King Edward III, and I already showed that he was my 19th-great grandfather.

The next queen is Philippa of Hainault, Queen Consort of England; she was the wife of King Edward III. Here is an excerpt from her profile on Geni.com:



Philippa de Hainault, Queen consort of England

Gender: Female

Birth: June 24, 1314
Valenciennes, Hainault, Flanders

Death: August 15, 1369 (55)
Windsor Castle, Windsor, Berkshire, England (Dropsy)

Place of Burial: Plot: south side of the Confessor's chapel, Westminster Abbey, Westminster, London, England

Immediate Family: Daughter of William III, count of Holland and Jeanne de Valois, Countess of Hainault
Wife of Edward III, king of England
Mother of Edward, the Black Prince; Isabella, Countess of Bedford; Joan of England; William of Hatfield; Lionel of Antwerp, 1st Duke of Clarence and 8 others

Since she was the wife of King Edward III, I figured that I had to be descended from her – and I am:



This line goes through my great-grandmother Hannah Mariah Miller, and on this line, Philippa of Hainault was my 19th-great grandmother.

To jump ahead, it turns out that the next three queens I'll discuss are not my direct ancestors (as hard as that is to believe).

Next is Joan of Navarre, Queen of England. She was the second wife of King Henry IV. Here is part of her profile on the Geni.com website:



Juana Richmond de Navarra, reina de Inglaterra

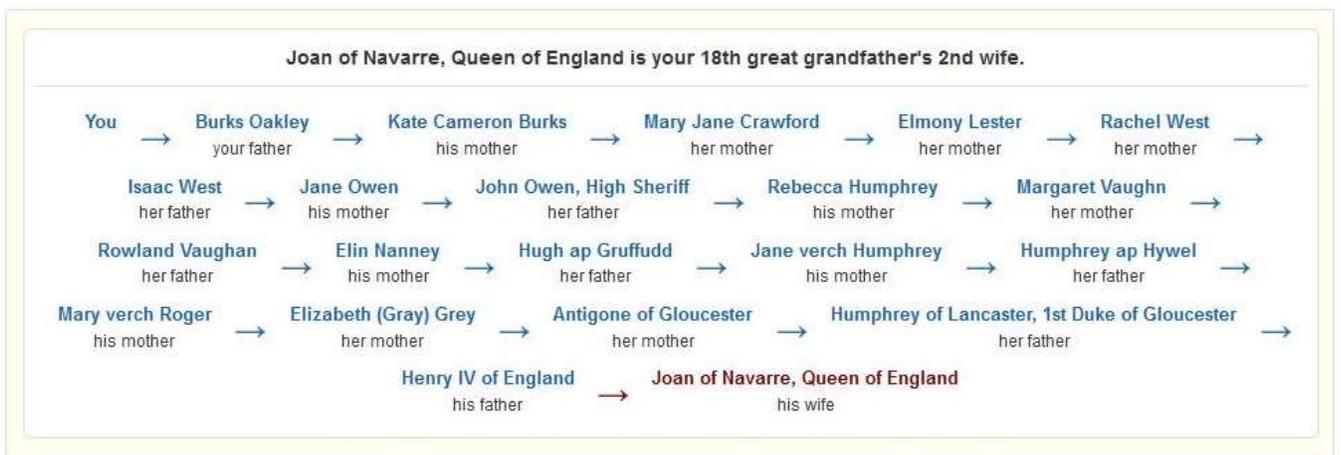
Birth: July 10, 1370
Pamplona, Navarre, Spain

Death: July 09, 1437 (67)
Havering-atte-Bower, Greater London, England, United Kingdom

Place of Burial: Canterbury, Cathedral, England

Immediate Family: Daughter of Carlos II el Malo, rey de Navarra and Juana de Francia, reina consorte de Navarra
Wife of Jean V de Montfort, duc de Bretagne and Henry IV of England
Mother of Jeanne de Bretagne; Jean VI, duc de Bretagne; Marie de Bretagne; Marguerite de Montfort, dame de Guillac; Arthur III, duc de Bretagne and 4 others

Here is our “shortest in-law relationship”:



Joan of Navarre, Queen of England, was my 18th-great grandfather’s second wife. Oh my! This means that King Henry IV was my direct ancestor – my 18th-great grandfather on a line going back through Kate Cameron Burks!

My “shortest blood relationship” to Joan of Navarre is shown in this chart:



She was my sixth-cousin sixteen-times removed. This relationship goes back through my ancestor King Henry III (and my shortest line to Henry III shows that he was my 21st-great grandfather).

Next is Catherine of Valois, Queen consort of England, wife of King Henry V:



Catherine de Valois, Queen consort of England

Gender: Female

Birth: October 27, 1401
Paris, Ile-de-France, France

Death: January 03, 1437 (35)
Abbey, Bermondsey, Surrey, England (childbirth)

Place of Burial: Westminster Abbey, London, England

Immediate Family: Daughter of Charles VI de Valois, roi de France and Elisabeth von Bayern, reine de France
Wife of Henry V of England and Sir Owen Tudor
Mother of Henry VI of England; Tacina Tudor; Margaret Catherine Tudor; Jasper Tudor; Owen Tudor and 1 other

Here is our “shortest blood relationship”:



Catherine of Valois, Queen consort of England, was my fourth-cousin seventeen-times removed. Interestingly, this line goes back through several of my Polish ancestors, including my 19th-great grandfather Bolesław bytomski von Kosel, książę (prince), and his mother Beatrice of Brandenburg. I had no idea that I had Polish and German royal ancestors! I'll have to look into them at some future time.

As an aside, here is a short excerpt from the Wikipedia article about Beatrice:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatrice_of_Brandenburg

Beatrice of Brandenburg (Polish: Beatrycze Brandenburska, German: Beatrix von Brandenburg; c. 1270 – before 26 April 1316), was a German princess and a member of the House of Ascania in the Brandenburg branch. By her two marriages she was Duchess of Świdnica and Koźle-Bytom-Siewierz.

She was the second daughter of Otto V the Long, Margrave of Brandenburg-Salzwedel, by his wife Judith of Henneberg, daughter of Count Herman I of Henneberg and heiress of Coburg and Schmalkalden.

Moving on, I'll next look at Catherine of Aragon, Queen Consort of England.



Catherine of Castile and Aragon, Queen consort of England

Gender: Female

Birth: December 16, 1485
Alcala de Henares, Madrid, Spain

Death: January 07, 1536 (50)
Kimbolton Castle, Leominster, Herefordshire, UK

Place of Burial: Peterborough Cathedral, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, England (United Kingdom)

Immediate Family: Daughter of Ferdinand II the Catholic, King of Aragon and Isabella I the Catholic, Queen of Castile
Wife of Arthur, Prince of Wales
Ex-wife of Henry VIII, King of England
Mother of NN Tudor, stillborn; Henry Tudor, 1st Duke of Cornwall, died in infancy; NN Tudor, stillborn; NN Tudor, stillborn; Mary I of England and 1 other

Here is our “shortest blood relationship”:



Catherine of Aragon, Queen consort of England, was my fifth-cousin fourteen-times removed. This line goes back through Capt. Richard More, who was a passenger on the *Mayflower*.

Let me conclude by going back to some text from the Leeds Castle website:

<https://www.leeds-castle.com/Visit/History/A+Royal+Castle>

In 1299, in order to improve his fraught relationship with France, Edward I married the French princess Margaret, sister of Philip IV. He granted Leeds Castle to his new wife, beginning the tradition of the Castle forming part of

the 'dower' or personal property of the Queen, to be retained even after the King's death.

Several of my ancestors described in this chapter were Queens of England. And that means that they owned Leeds Castle for some periods of time. Priceless!

Summary

In this chapter, I started with a Facebook posting from one of my high-school classmates, which included a photo of Leeds Castle. Little did I know where this "random" photo would take me.

I learned that a number of English Queens lived in this castle, and in fact, they owned it independently of their husbands (the Kings). Using the World Family Tree on Geni.com, I learned that I am descended from:

- King Edward I and his first wife Eleanor of Castile, Queen Consort of England
- King Edward I and his second wife Marguerite of France, Queen of England
- King Edward II and his wife Isabella of France, Queen Consort of England
- King Edward III and his wife Philippa of Hainault, Queen Consort of England

I also found that I am descended from King Henry III and King Henry IV. One of the ancestral lines that I presented in this chapter went through my 19th-great grandfather Bolesław bytomski von Kosel, książę (prince), and his mother Beatrice of Brandenburg; I'll have to look at this line in detail sometime soon.

Appendix A

Paraphrased from http://www.englishmonarchs.co.uk/leeds_castle.html

In 1278, King Edward I's queen, Eleanor of Castille purchased Leeds Castle from its then-current owner. King Edward I improved the castle's defenses, and it was probably he who created the lake which surrounds it. A barbican was constructed spanning three islands and a drawbridge connected the main island to a smaller island holding the keep, which was referred to as the Gloriette. Influenced by his Spanish-born Queen, Eleanor of Castille, the term derives from the Spanish word for a pavilion at the intersection of pathways in a garden.

Eleanor's health began to deteriorate in 1287 and she died in 1290, leaving Edward distraught. In 1299, Edward married Princess Margaret, the daughter of King Philip III of France. The couple spent their honeymoon at Leeds Castle and he granted the castle to his new wife. From then on, Leeds Castle formed part of the 'dower' of multiple queens of England, which was retained after the king's death. It became known as the "ladies castle", which it is still called today.

Here is a photo of the courtyard in the Keep:



Appendix B

On July 2, 1976, the New York Times published an article about Leeds Castle on page 4. This article can be found at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/1976/07/02/archives/leeds-castle-one-of-britains-oldest-reopened-to-public.html>

Leeds Castle, One Of Britain's Oldest, Reopened to Public

MAIDSTONE, England, July 1 (Reuters)—One of Britain's finest and oldest castles, saved from decay by an American heiress, was reopened to the public today by Queen Elizabeth's cousin, Princess Alexandra.

Leeds Castle, home to eight queens in medieval times, was bought in 1926 by Olive Lady Baillie, heiress of the American Whitney family.

She devoted her life and spent about \$2 million to restore the 1,100-year-old buildings, set in 350 acres of parkland near this city southeast of London, after 400 years of decay and neglect.

When she died two years ago at the age of 75, Lady Baillie left the castle and \$2.5 million to a charitable trust for the public. And she willed that the castle be opened and also used as a center for medical research seminars.

At the ceremony marking the reopening today, Princess Alexandra said it had been Lady Baillie's wish to carry on the traditions of her American family "who have been among the greatest medical philanthropists in the United States."

Leeds Castle was first built more than 11 centuries ago, long before Windsor Castle or the Tower of London. Leeds alias Ledian, the chief minister of Ethelbert IV, the King of Kent, had the original castle built of wood in 857.

The New York Times

Published: July 2, 1976

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Appendix C

As one can imagine, Leeds Castle has changed considerably over the centuries. A group at East Anglia University created a project called **Virtual Past**. See:

<http://www.virtualpast.co.uk/index.php>

Virtual Past's computer-generated historical media can help you engage new audiences and increase heritage engagement. We combine state-of-the-art computer modelling techniques with historical research to create dynamic new ways to enhance visitor experiences.

They have a short example to showcase what they can do, and it features Leeds Castle. Here is a short excerpt:

<http://www.virtualpast.co.uk/leeds.php>

Leeds Castle in Kent – ‘the loveliest castle in the world’ – is one of the UK's most attractive and well-known heritage sites.

Understanding the castle as it is seen today is by no means straightforward, as centuries of adaptation and re-use have resulted in a challenging set of architectural remains. Visitors can easily be forgiven for thinking that nineteenth-century buildings are medieval and that parts of the medieval fabric are the results of modern restoration.

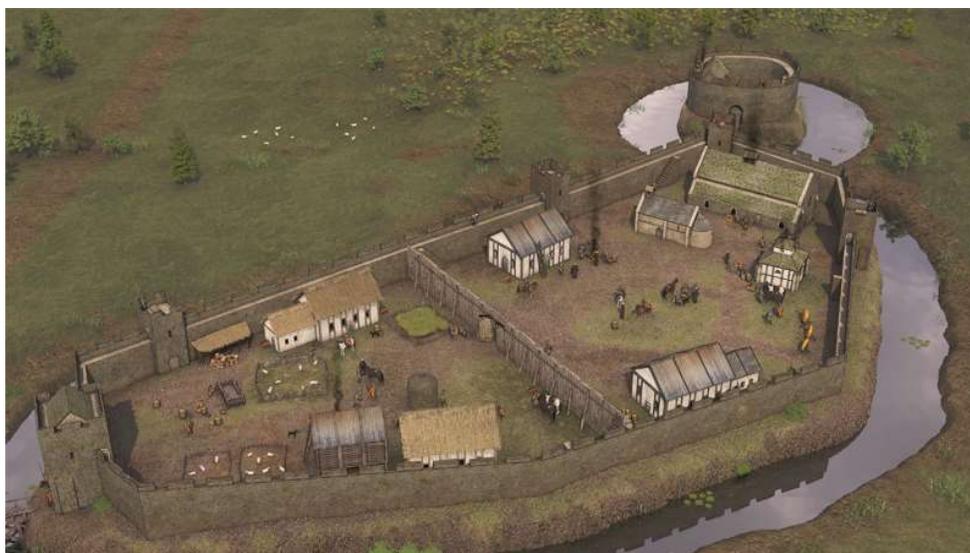
Virtual Past was asked to create a digital model showing the development of the castle from the twelfth to the twentieth century in order to help visitors interpret the complex site.

This group has taken still photos from the digital model of Leeds Castle and created a YouTube video – see:

<https://youtu.be/nhifPxCfsWI>

This video is really worth watching!

Here is just a few still photos from the model:



1278



1517



1927

