

Over *nine-hundred*
years of history





The land where Amberley Castle stands was gifted to Bishop Wilfrid in 683 AD by Caedwalla, King of Wessex. In the Domesday Book it was recorded Amberley had 17 villagers and 25 smallholders.

The land became the property of the Bishop of Chichester.

The current buildings have their origins in a timber-framed hunting lodge built by Bishop Luffa of Chichester in 1103. Bishop Luffa also had the parish church built next door.

In 1140 the timber framed building was knocked down by Bishop Seffrid I to make way for a more elaborate stone hall. The first building here was the small hall and its Norman entrance can still be seen in reception.

In approximately 1200 Bishop Seffrid II had the East Wing built.

A larger Great Hall and other domestic improvements were added by Bishop John of Langton during his time at Chichester between 1305 and 1337. It was at this time it became known as "Bishop of Chichester's Summer Palace".

When Bishop Reede took the throne at Chichester, he had the Great Hall knocked down and built a grander one!

In 1377 Bishop Reede applied to King Richard II for permission to crenellate the grounds and add the gatehouse and Oubliette – to ward off pirates! Many believe it was more to show off.

Permission was granted on 10th December 1377 and during 1377 to 1382 the work took place - crenulations, battlements and a portcullis transformed it into a fortified manor house.

In 1526 Henry VIII visited Amberley to seek advice from Bishop Sherborne, regarding a divorce with his Spanish wife Catherine of Aragon. With the English reformation and the now newly formed Church of England many Church estates and religious houses were dissolved and fell into crown ownership. The estate of Amberley still belonged to the church but was no longer used as a summer palace. Bishop Sherborne was the last Bishop to use Amberley as a home.

During the reigns of Edward I and Mary I the Castle was leased to a series of tenants and the leasehold changed many times and Elizabeth I leased the Castle between 1588 and 1603.

During the Civil War the tenant at Amberley was a Royalist and would not pay his taxes to parliament and the castle became a royalist strong hold.

Oliver Cromwell sent General Waller to destroy the defences in 1643. 20-30 foot was lost from the Curtain Walls and the Great Hall was destroyed in 1643, creating a ruin. Stone from the ruins was stolen by locals and the castle fell into disrepair.

After the Civil war, Amberley Castle was seized off the Church by Parliament and sold by the office of sequesters estates to Mr John Butler, a cloth merchant from London, for the grand sum of £3,341 14s 4d. Which is about £230,000 in today's money. It was Mr Butler who built the Manor house out of the ruins which had been the great hall and started the transformation of Amberley Castle as we know it today.

With the restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, Charles II visited Amberley twice and in 1660 gave the castle back to the Bishopric. No mention of reimbursement to Mr Butler is made, however they did negotiate a long lease and continued to live here for a further two generations.

The Mural in the Queen's Room was commissioned by Sir John Briscoe, who acquired the tenancy of the Butlers. It has the coat of arms of Charles II on the left and Catherine of Braganza's on the right; it portrays Charles and his wife Catherine hunting in either Arundel or Parham Park. This was a tribute to Charles visit to the Castle and shows where the Briscoe's loyalties lay; to the house of Stuart, the Briscoe's were very keen to distance themselves from the parliamentarian Butlers.

With the Small Hall being joined to the remains of the East Turret, the first-floor room added was dedicated to Charles I due to the castle's royalist links.

In 1872, the Castle was sold by the church commissioners to Lord Zouche, owner of Parham House, as a hunting lodge; he then sold it onto the 15th Duke of Norfolk in 1893. The 15th Duke of Norfolk – known as 'The Builder Duke' – had Arundel Castle modernised and built Arundel Cathedral. This saw a new era to Amberley. He had the stonework over the Portcullis repaired and used Amberley Castle as a hunting lodge and to entertain in while Arundel castle was cloaked in scaffolding for 15 years.

In 1926 the castle was bought by the Emmett family. They added the Adams Room to give a better flow to the ground floor of the manor house.

In 1945 Princess Elizabeth (now Queen Elizabeth II) visited and stayed with her friends, the Emmett's daughters.

In the 1982 Baroness Emmett sold the castle and with the sale, the Castle Farm and the Castle grounds were divided.

Hollis Baker owned the castle from 1982 -1987 and reinstated the 2.5ton portcullis. An American family owned the castle from 1987 to 1988.

In 1988, the castle was bought by Joy and Martin Cummings. They bought it not knowing if they would get permission to convert it into a hotel, but luckily won support of the villagers.

The castle was converted into a hotel with the restaurant opening for trial runs in February 1989. They won many awards and built up an international reputation.

In 2004, Amberley Castle became a member of Relais & Chateaux; an exclusive collection of the finest hotels and gourmet restaurants in the world with the philosophy of the 5C's: courtesy, charm, character, calm and cuisine.

Amberley Castle was purchased by Andrew and Christina Brownsword in October 2011 and is now a member of Brownsword Hotels.

