

The Moat Garden, Norman Tower Windsor Castle

The wonderful Moat Garden around you started life as a defensive moat dug by Saxon labourers for William the Conqueror nearly one thousand years ago. After his conquest of England in 1066, William needed to build the central keep of his fortress on a mound for defensive purposes. The resulting dry moat, not filled with water as was more usual, soon became overgrown with wild plants to such an extent that, in 1319, it is recorded that five women were paid a penny a day to cut the nettles!

As England became more settled and the need for defence receded, gardens became more fashionable, and the Moat Garden began its recorded existence. James I of Scotland, imprisoned in the Castle during his youth, alluded in his poems to watching the Lady Joan Beaufort, daughter of the Earl of Somerset, walking in the Moat Garden. He fell in love with her and, in true romantic fashion, married her after his release from Windsor Castle and before his return to Scotland. His presence at Windsor is recorded in the "Herbere", the small summer house high up on the lip of the Round Tower.

Today the Garden has a profusion of old stone figureheads, gargoyles and ecclesiastical symbols. Some of the oldest stones, of Saxon origin, were shipped down the River Thames from Reading Abbey when it was pulled down after the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII in the 16th Century. In the southern rockery the original gargoyles which ringed King Edward III Tower can also be seen.

The Moat Garden is the private garden of the Constable and Governor of Windsor Castle, who lives in Norman Tower. Norman Tower was built in 1360, added to in 1588 and 1748, and was finally refaced and Gothicised by Wyattville during the refurbishment of the Castle by King George IV.

The Garden took its present form at the beginning of the 20th Century when it was redesigned by General Sir Dighton Probyn, Keeper of the Privy Purse to King Edward VII, who lived in Norman Tower for more than 20 years. He arranged for the mound to be re-terraced, laid out the paths and lawns and developed features such as waterfalls, St George's Grotto, Fountain Terrace, Figtree Bower and Poets Corner. He also imported the reddish-brown boulders from Sandringham. Although some of the features introduced by him, notably the avenues of pergolas and the Lavender Walk, have since disappeared, his essential layout remains. More recently, in 1993, a lily pond was created to cover the base of the crane that had been used for works on the Round Tower. In 1994, one of the shelters which leant against the Round Tower, and which formed part of Probyn's original design, was also reinstated. All subsequent Governors of Windsor Castle have contributed to the evolution of the Moat Garden to produce the beautiful scene before you today.

**THE PROCEEDS FROM OPENING THE MOAT GARDEN ARE DONATED TO CHARITIES
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