

Press Release

March 2010

Discover the Secrets of the Stuarts at Chiddingstone Castle

On **Monday 26 July**, Chiddingstone Castle, near Edenbridge, Kent, is hosting a special activity day between **11am and 5pm**, when families can discover the secrets of the Stuarts!

The day is inspired by the castle's fascinating collection of Stuart and Jacobean antiques and artefacts and families are invited to uncover the fall of the Stuart Royal family and the secret Jacobite plots!

There will also be the opportunity to meet the "real" Stuarts from Arriere-ban Historical Experiences you can try and break codes hidden in the castle's collections, and write your own secret letter

As well as admiring the Stuart and Jacobite exhibitions, families can discover the amazing Japanese, Egyptian and Buddhist collections, which are on display in the castle rooms.

After exploring the collections of the late Denys Eyre Bower, the castle's Victorian tearoom is the perfect place to relax and enjoy a homemade light lunch or a cream tea.

The castle's 35 acres of ground offer the ideal place for children to burn off some energy and explore the surrounding woodland, award winning orangery and courtyard rose garden. During the summer month's vibrant displays of Azaleas enhance the grounds and visitors can enjoy a picnic on the lawns.

The castle is renowned for its innovative events programme, which offers a choice of entertaining activity days throughout the year. Families can enjoy all the event days, as well as entry to the castle for the whole season for just £48.50 for a family of four (2 adults and 2 children or 1 adult and 3 children)

For more information please call 01892 870347 or visit

www.chiddingstonecastle.org.uk

Chiddingstone Castle is open until 27 September, Sunday – Wednesday 11am –5pm, last entry is 4:15pm.

Admission – Adult: £7, Child: £4 (under fives free) families: £19.50 (2 adults and 2 children) Please note that on Activity Days, a charge of £2 will apply for 2-4 year olds to cover the cost of materials and entertainment.

From 2010 there will be a parking charge of £2.50, for visitors arriving by car, access to the grounds, tea room and shop only is included in the parking fee. For visitors arriving on foot, access to the grounds, tea room and shop only is £1 for adults.

For more information about Chiddingstone Castle, images or to arrange a press trip please contact Caroline Edmunds on 01892616647 or email caroline@penningtonpr.com

Editors Notes

Born in 1905, in Crich in Derbyshire, Denys Bower was a passionate if eccentric collector who led an extraordinary life. He disabled his hand in a motorcycle accident when he was a youth, which meant he did not serve in the Second World War. In 1955 he bought Chiddingstone Castle for £6,000 and opened it to the public to display his collections.

In September 1957, his life took a curious turn as he fell in love with a woman 30 years his junior and who claimed to be the Comtesse de Estainville, though she was really the daughter of a Peckham Bus Driver. After more than a year she broke off the engagement, and Denys, who was distraught, took a revolver from his collections and visited her in an attempt to change her mind. The young woman let Denys in and, as she turned to adjust a budgie cage he drew the revolver, accidentally pulling the trigger, and shot her. Thinking he had killed her, he turned the gun on himself and fired.

With a policeman standing over him, Denys awoke in the Miller Hospital in Greenwich, muttering that Anna's father, the Count Grimaldi must be told. Naturally the police, knowing who the young woman really was, assumed that Bower was not quite right in the head. Luckily the "Countess" had only minor injuries and was released after a few days. Bower was not so fortunate and on his release from hospital after a fortnight, was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment for attempted murder and attempted suicide.

The case received sensationalist press coverage and many believe it was this that led to his conviction, but thanks to the efforts of two sisters, Denys was released from Wormwood Scrubs in 1961. The Eldridge sisters took pity on the ex-convict and helped him restore Chiddingstone Castle.

Much more of Denys' remarkable story is told in the book, "Beyond Belief", which is on sale in the shop at Chiddingstone Castle.