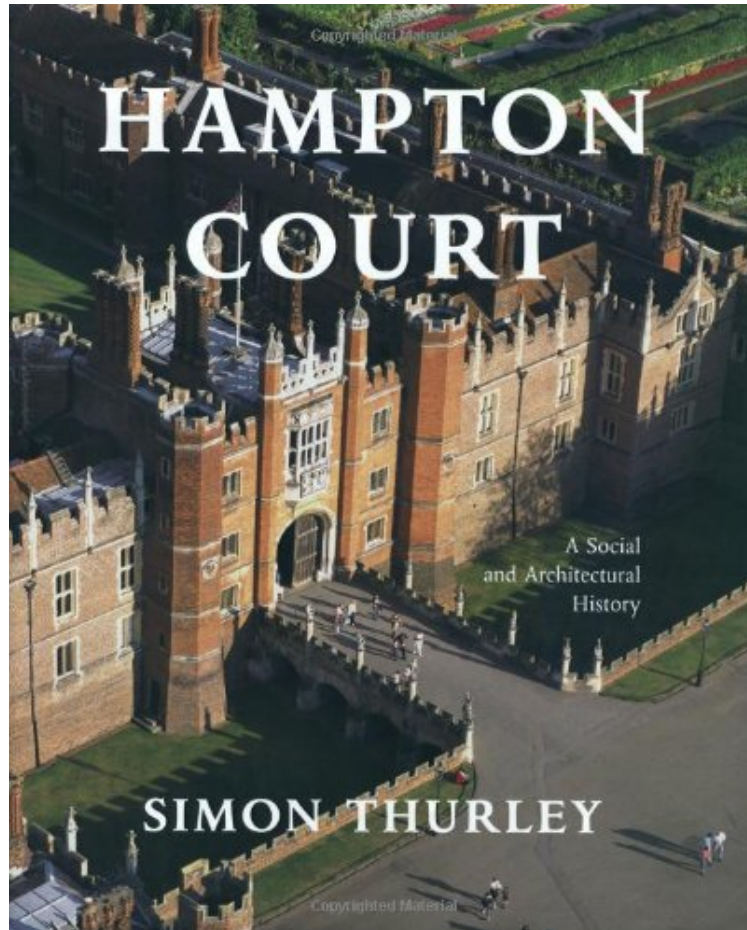


Hampton Court: A Social and Architectural History

Simon Thurley

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Simon Thurley : Hampton Court: A Social and Architectural History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hampton Court: A Social and Architectural History:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Beautiful book and very informativeBy TrinaI received my "Hampton Court" today and am very pleased. I've been studying the Palace off and on for about a year, in relation to some genealogy work, and the book was recommended to me by a palace staffer as the best available. For someone looking for a beautiful book on the palace that has wonderful (and sometimes rare) illustrations as well as a great deal of historical information, it's a perfect purchase. Well-written, well-produced, and substantial, this has the excellence that booklovers dream of.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An extremely Beautiful BookBy JeffI can't get over the quality of this book. It is a rather large oversized book, and the quality is very nice. It has so much information in it and the pictures are beautiful. If you are interested in the Tudor dynasty, you are going to love this book.12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. a visual treatBy ShemogueI have to admit a weakness for coffee-table books about palaces, stately homes etc, but this sumptuous, oversize volume is among the better ones of

the genre. It is a detailed history of Hampton Court Palace - its origins, construction, additions, renovations, decoration and gardens, but also it touches on the lives and motivations of its people - builders and architects, kings and princes, bureaucrats and functionaries, tenants and visitors. Richly illustrated with floor plans, drawings, paintings, prints, portraits, and photographs, this account of Hampton Court brings the story of the famous palace up to the 21st century. When I last visited Hampton Court a quarter century ago, both house and gardens were looking decidedly shabby and, apparently, it got much worse before it got better. Tourists were passing it up in droves. Scandalous mismanagement, including a 3 million pound contractor fraud, dismantled fire detectors and gateways too narrow for fire engines, led up to a disastrous fire in 1986 and resulted in 2 deaths. Although this is a serious work, one (unintentionally?) hilarious episode described in the book is the comic-opera visit to view the fire damage by the then Secretary of State for the Environment (the man ultimately responsible for Hampton Court), Nicolas Ridley. Ridley, a chain smoker, his wife who was claustrophobic and ten other dignitaries were descending in the lift when it jammed between floors; the emergency manual door-opening device failed to function; the elevator maintenance man could not be located. Two hours later the Fire Brigade forced the doors open with a hydraulic jack. Heads rolled afterward - if only metaphorically. New schemes have since been put in place for restoration and refurbishment, for improved property management and to enhance the attractions of the historic old palace for new generations of visitors.

This fully illustrated study of what is 'probably Britain's most important secular historic building complex' is based on the premise that the architecture of Hampton Court cannot be understood without a consideration of the agendas of the remarkable people who built it. Soundly based on a multitude of sources, including many original plans and surveys as well as recent archaeological evidence, the book begins with the earliest Court built by Lord Daubeney in the 15th century; a structure that has almost entirely disappeared. Thurlly goes on to examine the plans and structures of Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII and the Tudors, demonstrating how the 'rapid and sometimes astonishing turns in Henry's private life' impacted on his building programme at Hampton Court. The book compares and contrasts the use of the Court by the Stuarts, who largely regarded it as a place for entertainment and hunting, before examining its transformation under William and Mary who saved it from a long decline. The evolution of the gardens, the embellishments of the Georgians, the destruction of the Victorians, the influx of tourists and the conservation efforts of today are all illustrated and authoritatively discussed by the Chief Executive of English Heritage.

With the help of lavish illustrations and reconstructions, Thurlley lays bare the history of the palace. . . . Simon Thurlleys account is unlikely to be superseded. Giles Worsley, Daily Telegraph (London)