

What traces of the Tudors can be found in Suffolk?

As part of an ongoing heritage series, we look back at the legacy certain groups left behind throughout history. This week, **Danielle Lett** takes a look at the Tudors

When the medieval period ended, the next major era in English history to follow was Tudor England.

The Tudor period – which also included the Elizabethan era – saw the reign of five monarchs, and took place between 1485 and 1603.

The Tudor era was a time of great change, with historian and biographer John Guy arguing that England was 'economically healthier, more expansive, and more optimistic under the Tudors than at any time since the Roman occupation.'

And much of that change and influence took place in Suffolk – and can still be seen to this day.

One of Tudor England's greatest legacies here in the county is the village of Lavenham. Picturesque and quaint, Lavenham was incredibly prosperous during the 15th and 16th centuries thanks to the thriving wool trade (a trade which dates back to the 13th century after Lavenham was granted its market charter in 1257).

So prosperous in fact that when King Henry VII visited the settlement in 1487, he fined many

families for flaunting too much wealth.

By the late 15th century, Lavenham became one of Britain's most affluent places, and in 1524 it was ranked as the 14th richest in the country.

And many of the buildings you can see today were constructed during Lavenham's golden age. The stunning Grade I-listed St Peter and St Paul's Church is a prominent wool church that dates back to 1525. An example of Late Perpendicular Gothic architecture, it was designed by John Wastell and was paid for by some of Lavenham's local wealthy merchant families.

More famous perhaps are Lavenham's colourful, timber-framed Tudor buildings which are dotted around the village and are incredibly well-preserved considering how far back they date.

You've got The Guildhall which stands in the centre of Lavenham and overlooks the market square. Tracing its roots back to 1529, The Guildhall was originally built as a meeting place for the local Catholic guild. But as the centuries went on, and as

Wolsey's Gate in Ipswich
Picture: NEWSQUEST ARCHIVES



Lavenham lost its prosperity, its use changed over time and was used as a bridewell in the 17th century and as a workhouse in the 18th century.

Other iconic Tudor-era buildings in the town include Little Hall, and the Wool Hall, and The Crooked House.

Elsewhere in Suffolk, Ipswich also boasts a rich Tudor heritage. For starters, Ipswich is closely linked to Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Born in the town in 1473, Wolsey became a bishop, statesman, and one of King Henry VIII's closest aides. By 1515, the Suffolk native was appointed as cardinal by Pope Leo X, giving him precedence over all other members of the English clergy.

Dubbed by the Ipswich Society as 'a diligent statesman who worked hard to translate Henry VIII's own dreams and mercurial ambitions into effective domestic and foreign policy', he also proposed to build a school in the town centre.

However, the college sadly never came to light – and what remains of the cardinal's dream is Wolsey's Gate. This structure, now a Scheduled Ancient Monument, was intended to be the river entrance to the college. In 1532, all the remaining building materials

from the failed project were taken to London and instead used for the king's buildings at Westminster. It's interesting to think how different Ipswich might be had construction of the college gone ahead.

To commemorate the former cardinal, who passed away in 1530, a bronze statue of him was unveiled in 2011 at the junction of Silent Street and St Peter's Street.

To see more Tudor remains in Ipswich, simply take a stroll down one of the town's many lanes, as a handful of structures remain for all to see – as Ancient House, 4 College Street, and Christchurch Manor all date back to the Tudor era.

And did you know that Mary Tudor's final resting place is right here in Suffolk?

Mary Tudor, Queen of France, was Henry VIII's favourite sister (and it is believed he named his daughter, Mary I, after her), and the youngest daughter of King Henry VII.

When she was 18, she was arranged to marry King Louis XII of France who was 34 years her senior. This marriage was negotiated by none of other than Cardinal Wolsey, as part of a peace treaty with France.

However, Mary was secretly in

love with Charles Brandon, the Duke of Suffolk. But lucky for Mary (who became Queen Consort following her marriage to the French king) King Louis XII died shortly into their marriage, and she was free to marry the Suffolk man she'd been pining over.

Mary and Charles married in France in a secret ceremony on March 3, 1515 – behind King Henry VIII's back. What the two did was technically treason as he married a princess without the King's consent, but thanks to Cardinal Wolsey stepping in, as well as King Henry VIII's love for the two of them, they merely had to pay a hefty fine rather than face execution.

Mary passed away on June 25, 1533, at the age of 37 at Suffolk's Westhorpe Hall, where her body lay in state before a requiem mass took place at Westminster Abbey. According to records, Mary was loved by the people of Suffolk, and alms of meat, drink and money were given to the poor after her funeral.

She was first buried in the Abbey of St Edmund in 1533, but when the abbey was dissolved, she was moved to St Mary's Church five years later where she has been ever since.



Some of Lavenham's Tudor buildings

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St Peter and St Paul's Church

Picture: NEIL WINTON, FLICKR



Mary Tudor with her husband, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk

Picture: PHIL MORLEY, NEWSQUEST



The Guildhall in Lavenham

Picture: NEWSQUEST ARCHIVES