

Anne Hathaway's Cottage

House Background

Anne Hathaway's Cottage was originally a farmhouse. The family were successful sheep farmers and were tenants of the 90-acre farm. The house was built around 1463 (dated by wood used in the frame) in the village of Shottery, only one mile from Stratford. The house was made using wattle and daub between the wooden beams that make up the frame. The original house was only two rooms with a cross passageway and only had one floor, although there is evidence of a sleeping shelf in the room currently set up as a parlour. The house is raised up to prevent flooding. Shottery Brook, on the other side of the road, has been known to flood, but there is no record of the floodwaters ever having entered the house. Sometime after Anne's brother, Bartholomew, inherited the house following his father's death (and after Anne had married), he became able to afford not only to purchase the farm's freehold, but also to add considerable extensions as well as putting in a second floor. Later generations went on to improve the house further. Members of the Hathaway family lived in the house for 13 generations. After it was purchased by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in 1892, two generations of Hathaways continued to live in the house as custodians. Much of the furniture in the house belonged to the Hathaways and covers a range of periods from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The gardens outside would have been a farmyard in Anne's day.

Kitchen

Background

Part of the original house, this would originally have been a general kitchen/parlour space and so it is likely that William and Anne would have spent a certain amount of time here whilst courting and visiting her family after marriage. The kitchen would have been a busy room and a pot of pottage (a type of savoury soup containing vegetables, cereals, pulses and meat, if you could afford it) would have been kept cooking all of the time. New ingredients would have been added to it at regular intervals. Bread was a staple part of Tudor diet and the bread oven is large enough to cook up to 15 loaves in one go.

Room Highlights

- 1 Original floor put in when the family first moved in during the 1540s. Therefore, this is the same floor that William and Anne would have walked on.
- 2 Bread oven (large opening in the left side of the rear fireplace wall).
- 3 Break ark with rounded top. Flour and other ingredients could be kept inside the box and top could be turned upside down on the base and used as a place to mix dough and allow it to rise.
- 4 Elm wood bread peel with a flat spatula-like head that would be used to move the loaves in and out of the bread oven.
- 5 Elm wood bread oven door.

Bedchamber

Background

This room is above the kitchen and is probably where servants would have slept after Anne's brother added the first floor. It is thought that the staircase was added later and this room would probably have been accessed using a ladder when it was originally built.

Room Highlights

- 1 Low chair with curved rail, dating from the early 19th century, thought to be a birthing chair.

Storeroom with Wattle and Daub panel

Background

The wattle and daub panel is part of the early construction of the building. The areas between the timber beams were filled with wattle and daub. Vertical oak stakes were used for strength and then willow or hazel branches were woven between them to create a basket screen. The daub was a mixture of mud, clay, lime, chopped straw, horse hair and cow manure which was added to hold the rest together.

Bedchamber

Background

This bedchamber is over what is now the Parlour and is located where the sleeping shelf for the unmarried females and young children may have been in the original house (although the shelf would not have covered the whole of the current floor space). This room contains another bed owned by the Hathaway family. This bed is a rare example of a bed from the 1500s and is another contender for the 'second best bed' left to Anne by William when he died.

Room Highlights

- 1 Bed.
- 2 The rope key on the bed is ready to adjust the ropes of the Tudor bed frame.

Bedchamber

Background

This room houses what is thought to be the 'Hathaway Bed', which has belonged to the Hathaway family for many generations. When Shakespeare died in 1616, he made the following bequest in his will: 'I give unto my wife my second best bed'. Beds were very expensive in Tudor times and were reserved only for adults. If a family could afford more than one bed, they would have a 'Best Bed' that would be kept in the parlour and used for visiting guests. (It was also a visual display of the family's wealth.) It is thought, therefore, that in giving Anne his 'second best bed' that he may well have bequeathed her their marital bed.

Room Highlights

- 1 Oak tester bedstead of which different parts are dated from the late 1500s to the early 1600s.
- 2 Oak cradle dating about 1680.
- 3 The candle has a handle for easier carrying and a depression to collect the wax.

Bedchamber

Background

Part of the extension, this room has had a number of uses over the years. In Anne's brother's time, it was used as a storeroom and was also used as a guest bedroom when the family had visitors.

Room Highlights

- 1 Dating from the nineteenth century a lace making pillow on a stand called a 'horse'.
- 2 A warming pan. Hot coals or wood embers were put inside and then placed under the bed covers to warm the bed.
- 3 The oak arm chair is known as the 'courting chair' where Shakespeare sat and courted Anne. The chair is said to have been given to Shakespeare's granddaughter and she then passed it to the Hathaway family. They sold it to a visitor in the 1700s. It was found at auction in 2002 when it was purchased by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. The Carving of the Shakespeare arms and initials WAS being added sometime in the late 18th century after it had been purchased from the family.

The Cold Store / Store Room (now a Washing Room)

Background

Part of the extension built by Anne's brother, this cold store or store room is where the family would have kept perishable food. The rear wall of this room faces north and it is thought that, originally, the house had no windows on the north side so this window would have been added later. The lack of a window would have helped to keep the room cold.

Room Highlights

- 1 Various jugs and containers.
- 2 Large tub used for washing linens.
- 3 Dolly standing next to the tub (around 1900). These were used to agitate the clothes in the water and help remove any dirt.
- 4 The screw top linen press was used for keeping linen smooth and neatly folded.

The Dairy / Buttery

Background

Part of the extension built by Anne's brother, this room would have been used to produce butter, cream and cheese for the family, as well as for storing milk.

Room Highlights

- 1 18th century wooden pattens on the floor. These were 'overshoes' to be used over normal shoes to protect them from mud and dirt.
- 2 Plunger butter churn. Butter-making was a long process and part of it would have been in the plunger churn. The handle would be moved up and down to separate the yellow fat from the buttermilk.
- 3 Butter 'hands' (on the table) – used to shape the butter into pats after churning.
- 4 Butter print stamp for butter pats.

The Parlour

Background

Part of the original building, this would have been the bedroom in Anne's time. Its use would have changed after her brother, Bartholomew, installed the first floor, allowing bedrooms to move upstairs. As well as a bed or pallets for the parents and servants, there was a sleeping shelf on the wall that would have been wide enough to allow all the children and single females of the house to sleep safely at night. This would have been accessed by a ladder that would have been removed at night. It is thought that this is where the phrase 'left on the shelf' may have derived from as unmarried daughters would remain living with their parents and would continue to sleep on the shelf. The stone fireplace and chimney are later additions to the house. The room contains several pieces of furniture owned by later generations of the Hathaway family.

Room Highlights

- 1 Wooden settle (high-backed bench) by the fireplace (about 1750-1800). Later generations of Hathaways would tell visitors that Shakespeare wooed Anne on this settle but dating shows this can't have been the case.
- 2 'Hot cupboard' to the left hand side of the fireplace. Bacon and other meats may have been placed here for drying.
- 3 Examples of plates through the ages including a replica of a wooden trencher (as used in Tudor times) and willow-pattern plates of various sizes.
- 4 Slatted panel attached to the ceiling just in front of the fireplace and used to store cold meat.

Find out more about the Primary education courses offered at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
www.shakespeare.org.uk/education/schools



Be part of Shakespeare Week and register at www.shakespeareweek.org

