

Entertaining Queen Elizabeth

Every summer, medieval kings and queens would leave London because the city smelt so bad in the hot weather. They would travel round the country staying with rich lords and ladies who spent fortunes entertaining them and their servants. These trips were called *Royal Progresses*.

One of Elizabeth's most famous visits was to Kenilworth Castle, in 1575. Kenilworth, near Stratford, was owned by the Earl of Leicester. Her visit began with fireworks and gun fire which could be seen and heard twenty miles away. It continued for ten days with hunting trips, plays and dancing.

The high point of Leicester's entertainment for her was a water pageant on a huge artificial lake. This had movable islands, Neptune, mermaids and an actor riding on a dolphin that was eight metres long. The actor was supposed to be playing Arion, a character in Greek myth. Not wishing to deceive the crowd, he cried out that 'he was not Arion, but honest Harry Goldringham'!



Elizabeth 1

Talking points

How old would Shakespeare have been in 1575? Do you think it possible he would have seen or heard about the entertainments provided for Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth? What would you have thought about the cost of the Royal Progresses if you'd been a poor person in 1575?



What parts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seem to be similar to what happened at Kenilworth?

What sorts of entertainment are put on for the modern Queen Elizabeth?

On paper or computer

Write a newspaper story about Elizabeth I's visit to Kenilworth as if you were there at the time. You could either find out more about her visit by researching on-line or in a library – or you could just make some details up!



Don't forget to include eye-witness accounts (an interview with the young Shakespeare, perhaps). Remember to think about headlines, lay-outs and choice of language as well.