

Could the Tudors help us to improve the quality of our sleep?

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A historian from The University of Manchester has gone back in time to find out what we can learn from the Tudors about the quality of sleep.

Dr Sasha Handley's book, *Sleep in Early Modern England*, is the first major historical study of sleeping practices. It explores the relationship between early modern society and culture, and investigates sleeping practices and [sleep](#) quality in a period that some have dubbed a 'golden age' of sleep.

Dr Handley has now launched a 'sleep trail' at Little Moreton Hall, in conjunction with the National Trust, which takes visitors on a walk through a series of installations which replicate a journey through a night's sleep, Tudor style. A 'Dream Tent' will also be created later in the year.

"In our 24-hour society, the cultural value of sleep has fallen dramatically – and it could be said we now live in a chronically sleep-deprived [society](#)," said Dr Handley. "We're therefore going back in time to find out what we can learn from the Tudors, who had no electric lighting, no mobile phones, televisions or iPads, and whose sleep may well have been more attuned to their circadian rhythms or body clocks."

"Tudor sleeping practices aligned more closely with the natural seasonal rhythms of daylight and darkness, which is something which we fight against today with our 24/7 lifestyles."

"Early modern people also took their [sleep quality](#) seriously, since they understood [healthy sleep](#) to hold the key to long-term physical, mental and spiritual health. Consequently, they practiced an array of bedtime rituals, ranging from prayer, to reading and embroidery, which they believed induced a good night's sleep."

"The Tudors slept slightly raised up—not flat as we do—and 'segmented' their sleep, waking for around an hour during the night to chat or read," says Anna Roberts from Little Moreton Hall. "They used herbs and potions to aid them with sleep, so we've created a 'Sleep Garden' with examples of plants and herbs which the Tudors would have grown. We're seeing if any of these could be used to help us to sleep better today."

Provided by University of Manchester

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