

## Honorary Degree Recipients

### CONFERMENT OF THE HONORARY DEGREE OF MASTER OF THE UNIVERSITY

*on*

Lesley Smith

in recognition of her energetic and commercially enterprising curatorship of Tutbury Castle

*presented by*

Professor Michael Gunn LLB, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Scholarship)

Lesley Smith is a remarkable social historian of the 16th century who is passionate about and committed to raising public understanding of the subject. Lesley uses many approaches to promote her cause. She is perfectly happy to don full Elizabethan costume, weighing up to 25kg, as a historical character – her favourite being Queen Elizabeth I – if this will further the understanding of our nation's history. Lesley Smith was appointed as the lessee of Tutbury Castle, Staffordshire, one of the most important extant Norman Castles in England, by the Duchy of Lancaster in 2000. She has been astonishingly successful. Since the year 2000 the annual number of visitors has soared from 8,000 to over 100,000. This remarkable achievement has become a case study for Heritage Management students at the University.

Lesley's career started as a political public relations officer and she acted as consultant to a number of influential individuals. She also worked with some of the great houses such as Melbourne Hall and Kedleston Hall. She started writing her own syndicated newspaper column at 25 and later went on to be an editor of a specialist chemical industry publication. However, her abiding interest throughout her life has been social history.

Lesley's personal passion and enormous commitment to make history both understandable and stimulating to large audiences is reflected by her 32 television appearances both in character and as a specialist history presenter. She has featured in Tony Robinson's Channel 4 Series *The Worst Jobs in History* and also in the television series *Most Haunted*. In both programmes Lesley helped to explain the darker side of working in an 11th century fortress. Lesley Smith is therefore highly suited for her other major role as the Public Relations Officer for the Duchy of Lancaster with responsibility for Duchy property across in England. The Duchy is part of the Royal Estate owned by the Monarch. The other Duchy is that of the Duchy of Cornwall.

Through her research into health care in the Elizabethan Period, Lesley Smith is a nationally acknowledged medical historian. She specialises in researching the private lives of middle class women of the 1580s, in particular their sexual practices. At present Lesley is studying and working in collaboration with the Medical School at the University of Birmingham focusing on 16th century gynaecology. One of her fascinating findings has been the use of lemons as a supposed means of contraception.

Lesley Smith delivers over 300 presentations each year, and she is a regular contributor of research papers to the *Journal of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists*. Seven academic papers have been published. She has delivered lectures to groups such as the Medico-Chirurgical Society, Royal Institute of Chemists (at the University of Derby), The Royal Society of Medicine and recently she has given talks to the Scottish Parliament at the Royal Society in Edinburgh.

In 2001, Lesley Smith made contact with the University of Derby seeking to form a working relationship and offered the free use of Tutbury Castle's facilities to students and staff of any discipline. In 2003, the British Museum commenced a major research project at Tutbury Castle with important input from the University of Derby. The results of this project are expected to spark international interest and will be known in 2008. Lesley Smith has now created the Tutbury Castle Trust to protect the research into the Castle and support educational events. Lesley and her staff present re-enactments of times including candlelit talks by Ann Boleyn on the morning of her execution and the chance to talk with Mary Queen of Scots while she was imprisoned in the castle. The purpose of these events is not simply to entertain but to expand the educational role that is integral to Lesley's philosophy.

Lesley Smith lived and married in Dovedale and now lives by the Cathedral in Lichfield and has one son, Henry. Her passion for history is only matched by her passion for Derbyshire.