

# SELF-LED ACTIVITY

## WHY BUILD A POWER BASE HERE?



KS1-2

KS3

### Recommended for

KS2-3 (History, Geography)

### Learning objectives

- Understand the extent of the Percy estates in Northumberland during the Middle Ages and the types of buildings and land within them.
- Reflect on what the location of Warkworth Castle reveals about how medieval lords controlled their lands and the people who lived there.

### Time to complete

Approx. 25 minutes



An aerial view of Warkworth Castle and the town of Warkworth.

### SUMMARY

Warkworth Castle was a key power base for the Percy family during the Middle Ages and they developed it as a grand residence. This activity helps students explore the extent of the Percy estates in Northumberland and the nature of medieval lordship within local communities like Warkworth.

### SUGGESTED APPROACH

Show students a map of the Percy estates (Source 1, page 44) and a map of the barony of Warkworth (1623), Source 8 on page 48. They should find Warkworth and identify any other towns or features they recognise (e.g. Hadrian's Wall or the Scottish border). Are there any recurring features (for example, castles)?

Show students a satellite view of Warkworth today. Compare this with Sources 8 and 9 on page 48. Students should consider the location of the castle in relation to the rest of the town and its medieval features (for example, the church and the bridge).

Introduce context around the Percy family's rise to power in Northumberland (notes on page 22). Students can use this information and their map-reading to suggest three reasons the Percys employed builders like John Lewyn to create extravagant architectural designs on high ground at Warkworth. Possible answers are in the Teachers' Notes on page 23.

### ACTIVITY EXTENSION

Use the town of Warkworth as a case study for understanding the feudal system. More information about key medieval features in Warkworth town is in the Teachers' Notes on page 23 and the map on page 24.

### MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Students can use their understanding of the key elements of a medieval power base to design for their own medieval town. They should pay particular attention to the positioning of their castle.

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## TEACHERS' NOTES

### UNDERSTANDING THE PERCYS AND WARKWORTH CASTLE

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- Henry de Percy (1273–1314) supported Edward I's campaign to extend the English king's control in Scotland. Robert the Bruce's successes against this campaign forced de Percy further south into England.
- After this, Henry de Percy started to buy up land in Northumberland and the Percys became the greatest landowners in the north east. He bought the castle and barony of Alnwick in 1309.
- Edward III granted Warkworth Castle to Henry Percy, 2nd Lord Percy, in 1328.
- The Percys' dominance in the north of England led them to become the main guardians of the Anglo-Scottish border. Many successive Percy family members served as wardens of the Scottish Marches.
- Alnwick Castle had larger estates and greater prestige than Warkworth, but the Percys developed Warkworth Castle into a very sophisticated architectural spectacle – it was their favourite home.
- The Percys developed Warkworth Castle as a country home in the 14th and 15th centuries rather than maintaining a traditional castle for defence purposes. The Great Tower was built in the 1380s to impress visitors and show off the Percys' power and wealth.
- Heraldry was used on the Great Tower and the Lion Tower at Warkworth to display the Percys' dominance in the local area and their links to other important families. The Percy lion was placed in prominent positions around the castle as a symbol of courage and strength. The lion on the Great Tower can be seen from the town below, while the lion and crests on the Lion Tower in the bailey could be seen by visitors entering the great hall (the main meeting space inside the castle).

### WHY DID THE PERCYS BUILD WARKWORTH CASTLE?

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Possible answers could include:

- To show off the Percys' power and dominance as local lords to those living in Warkworth.
- To develop and maintain a defensive position on high ground surrounded by steep slopes near the river Coquet.
- To take advantage of views along the river Coquet and out to sea which impressed visitors to the castle.
- To help maintain control of the extensive lands that the earls of Northumberland owned in the north of England.

# WHY BUILD A POWER BASE HERE?

## TEACHERS' NOTES

### FEUDALISM AND MEDIEVAL FEATURES IN WARKWORTH TOWN

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- Feudalism is a term used to describe how society was organised during the Middle Ages. The monarch was at the top of the social hierarchy. They gave land to the nobility (lords and barons) and the Church. Or, when the land was already in the hands of the nobility, the monarch claimed the ultimate right of ownership. The nobility distributed some land to knights who were required to raise an army to fight for the king when called upon. Nobles allowed peasants to live and farm on their lands in return for taxes, a percentage of their crops and several days of labour.
- The Percys held estates across the north east and north west of England. This included the baronies of Warkworth and Alnwick. They were granted the castle at Warkworth by Edward III in 1328.
- The Percys controlled the rights to producing salt around the village of Amble near Warkworth. Salt produced in pans (large containers or impressions in the ground) here was incredibly valuable because it could be used to preserve meat, particularly fish. The right to fish in local rivers was also worth a lot of money during the Middle Ages. The fishing industry and salt production were incredibly important to the medieval economy.
- Peasants farmed strips of land in and around Warkworth. You can still see the remains of these strips in the long garden plots at the back of houses in the centre of Warkworth.
- There was once a medieval mill to the west of Warkworth Castle. Peasants working on Percy lands were required to take their grain to their lord's mill to be processed into flour for making bread. Peasants had to give a percentage of their flour to their lord.
- In the area to the east of Warkworth Castle there is a field called Hangman's Acre. It was the job of local lords like the Percys to dispense justice, including execution, within their estates. This may have been a place of execution or possibly land granted to a hangman as part of their salary.
- The area of houses south of the castle sits on ground formerly called Maudlin. This word derives from the name of a medieval chapel which was situated here, dedicated to St Mary Magdalene.

# MEDIEVAL FEATURES IN AND AROUND WARKWORTH



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- 1** WARKWORTH CASTLE
- 2** AMBLE SALT PANS
- 3** STRIPS OF FARMING LAND
- 4** HANGMAN'S ACRE
- 5** MEDIEVAL MILL
- 6** MAUDLIN

# SOURCES

PEER INTO THE PAST

A historical source is something that tells us about life in the past, such as a document, a picture or an object. It may be a primary source, from the time, or a secondary source, created later. Our experts have chosen these sources to help you learn about Warkworth Castle history.

## SOURCE 1

**KEY**

- Castle (supported by a number of manors)
- Tower
- Manor (large farms with manor houses)
- Urban dwelling (houses with land in a town or city)
- Economic activity (income from market rents, salt production and other industries)

This is a modern map with overlaid symbols to show the types and extent of property owned by the Percy family in Northumberland, Cumbria and Yorkshire during the 15th century.

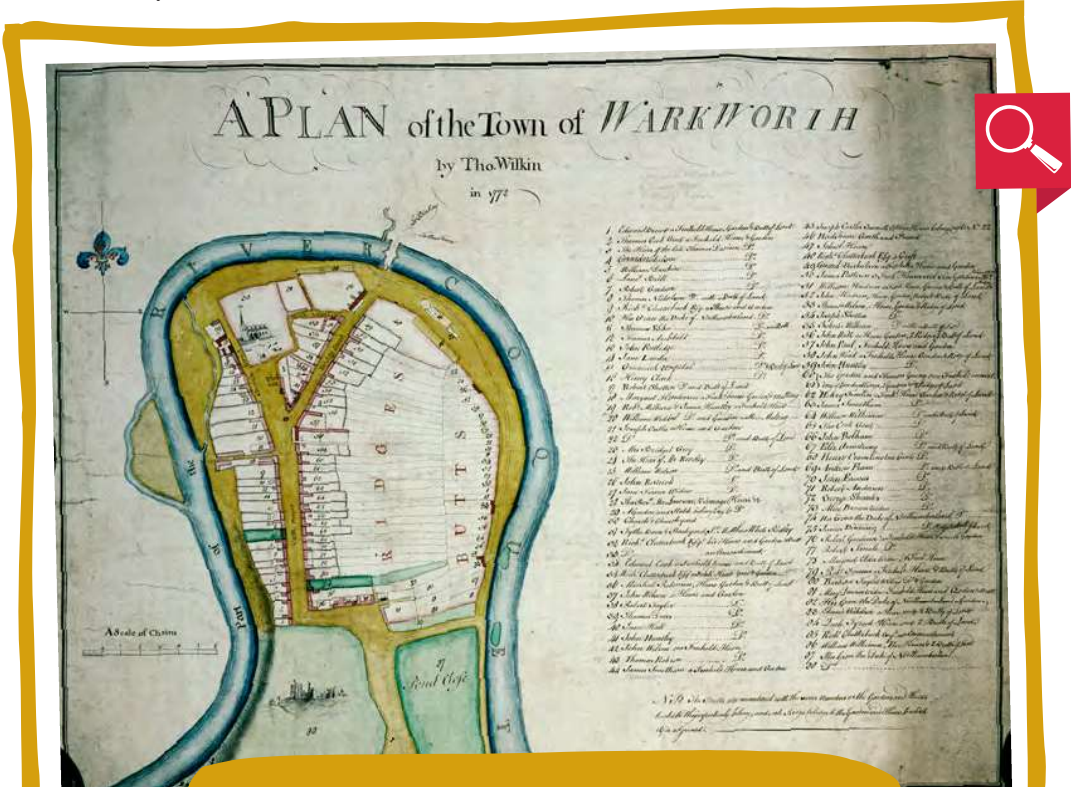


SOURCE 8



A map of the barony of Warkworth created by Robert Norton in 1623. Archives of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle, AC: O.XVI.1.a. © Collections of the Duke of Northumberland

SOURCE 9



A Plan of the Town of Warkworth by Thomas Wilkin (1772). Archives of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle, Sy: B.III.2.a © Collections of the Duke of Northumberland