



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Battle Abbey Discovery Centre

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS



Use the welcome board with your pupils when you arrive. The questions listed on it will give a focus to your time at the Centre.

INTRODUCTION

The ground floor rooms of the gatehouse at Battle Abbey contain an inter-active exhibition for young people. This Discovery Centre includes several specially designed activities to help your pupils to explore in detail the events leading up to the Battle of Hastings, the Battle itself and life at the Benedictine Abbey built on the site.

This booklet aims to provide you with the background information to make the best out of the activi-

ties in the Centre during your visit, and some further ideas for follow-up work back at school. A visit to the Centre will be only one part of your class visit to Battle Abbey and the site of the Battle of Hastings. For ideas for educational work your pupils can carry out on the site itself, please see our *Teacher's Guide to Battle Abbey and the Battle of Hastings*.

The Centre is suitable for a maximum of 35 supervised pupils. When your class arrives at the Centre you will find it best to divide into smaller groups of four or five to work at the different activities. There is a small seating area with floor cushions for you to use to talk informally to your class.

THE EXHIBITS

The Headlines

This panel gives a brief summary of events leading to the setting up of Battle Abbey.

- Harold succeeds Edward the Confessor
- Comet over England!
- Normans invade England!
- King William marks battle site with Abbey

Use this as a menu board to help introduce your pupils to what they are going to be working on in the Discovery Centre.

Claims, broken promises and battles in the North

This panel gives the background

to the Battle of Hastings, and focuses on William and Harold Godwinson, including Harold's desperate fight at Stamford Bridge against Harold Hardrada. It is a good idea for pupils to be familiar with this background before they visit the site. This panel can then be used as a focus for discussion and reminder. You may like to use the main points as a quiz for two small teams of pupils.

There were several claimants to the English throne.

William has no doubts

- He was related to King Edward the Confessor
- He said Edward had promised him the throne
- The Pope supported him
- And so he set out for England and landed at Pevensey on 28th September 1066

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Harold broke his promise

■ Harold was said to have promised to support William. But Harold said he made this promise a long time ago

■ He said that King Edward had asked him to be king as he was dying

■ The nobles who supported him didn't fancy a Norman ruler

■ He became king as soon as Edward died and got ready to defend England

Harold doesn't get it all his own way

■ His half-brother Tostig had been banished from England

■ Tostig was raiding the north of England with Harold Hardrada

■ Harold Hardrada was King of Norway and also claimed the throne of England

■ Tostig and Harold beat an English army near York and planned to march towards London

The Battle of Stamford Bridge

■ Harold had to march his army north in a hurry

■ He defeated Tostig and Hardrada at Stamford Bridge on 25 September 1066



■ William of Normandy landed three days later at Pevensey

■ Harold and his army had to hurry back south

It's my throne

Each of the main claimants to the English throne thought they had a reasonable claim.

The end panel of this exhibit summarises them - which are your pupils most convinced by?

Preparing for battle

This section asks pupils simple questions about the preparations for the Battle of Hastings, with a choice of possible answers. The correct answers are revealed by opening flaps. Younger pupils will benefit from having an adult read through the questions and possible answers with them, and all pupils should be encouraged to think about the likelihood of each possibility before checking their answer. Again, you could approach this as a simple quiz between two groups of pupils.

Where did Harold's soldiers come from?

Southern England
Some joined on the way
Norway

Harold got his soldiers both from Southern England and on his way from fighting the battle of Stamford Bridge near York. The Saxon army included a small group of professional household soldiers, who, well trained and equipped, acted as bodyguard to the king. These were called housecarls. The majority of the army, however, consisted of men who owed military service in return for land they held, ultimately of the king. These were less likely to be well-trained or equipped with weapons or armour.

When did William sail across the Channel?

August 1066
September 1066
August 1966

William first tried to sail in August 1066 but, according to chroniclers of the time, had to wait for favourable winds. It would have been a major undertaking to keep around 7,000 men, from Brittany, Picard, Aquitaine and Flanders as well as Normandy, 2,000 horses and all their supplies together for several weeks in Normandy. This shows the extent of William's organisation and commitment. He finally set sail at the end of September, probably on the 27th.

What convinced Harold he would win?

He saw a comet
His horoscope was good
His army was ready for a fight

Halley's comet was seen in the skies for about a week at the end of April 1066. Such sights were often seen as omens, either good or bad. The sight of the comet may have encouraged Harold to hold to the English throne. However, many in England also saw the comet as a portent of disaster.

Did Harold's army fight on horseback?

No. They didn't have horses
Yes

No. They fought on foot

Most of the king's bodyguard and the wealthier thegns rode to battle, but dismounted and fought on foot. The value of using cavalry in warfare was not yet appreciated, as it required a great deal of training and co-ordination.

Where did William place his archers?

- At the back
- At the front
- In the middle

William's force, numbering around 7,500 men, were placed in three lines, with archers along the front, heavy infantry behind them and the cavalry at the back.



Jennie Fortham

Ask your pupils the following questions on the family tree, getting them to look carefully at the different relationships shown, especially the inter-marriage of families from Normandy and England.

Who's who?

Second son of King Edgar, succeeded his brother to the throne, and married Emma, daughter of Richard Duke of Normandy [Ethelred]

King of Denmark and Norway, seized English throne, married the widow of Ethelred the Unready [Cnut]

Son of Cnut and Emma [Harthacnut]

Son of King Harthacnut and grandson of King Cnut and Emma of Normandy [Harold Hardrada]

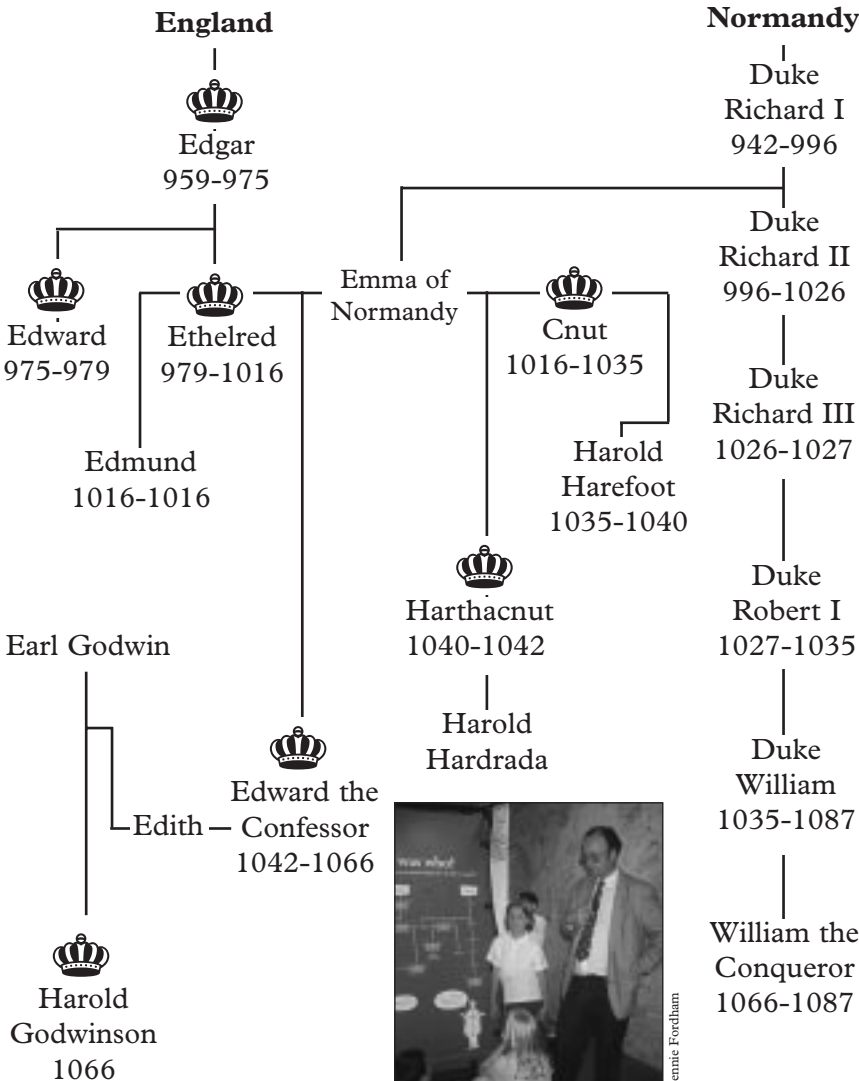
Great-grandson of Richard III Duke of Normandy, who was the father of Emma, the second wife of Ethelred [William the Conqueror]

Son of Earl Godwin and brother of Edith who married Edward the Confessor [Harold Godwinson]

Guess who was who?

This part of the exhibition will be better understood if pupils have some understanding of the presentation of a family tree, and are familiar with some of the main personalities of the time. Younger children will need to have the tree explained to them.

Pupils are asked to match descriptions of individuals to names, by looking particularly at the relationships between them.



Jennie Fortham

Build your own family tree

The floor cushion exhibit is to help you explain the format of a family tree to younger pupils before using the *Guess who was who?* panel. Lay the cushions out on the floor to illustrate relationships between members of a standard nuclear family. With sensitivity, you could use a real example from one of the pupils in your class. Explain that the conventions of family tree layout usually mean that members of the same generation are usually on the same horizontal line, and that the generations furthest back in time are usually shown towards the top of the family tree.



Putting together a simple family tree

Into battle!

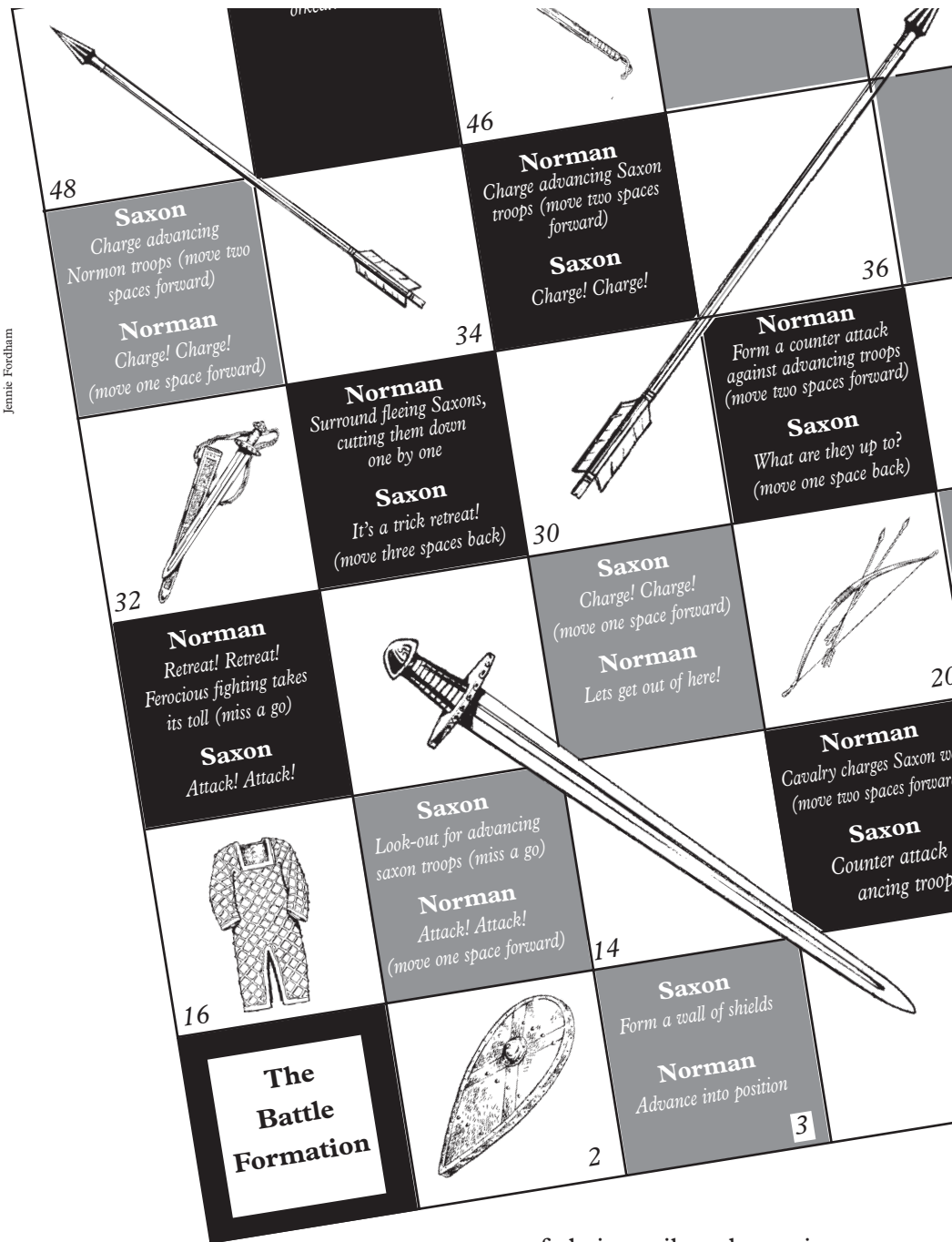
The next activity is a board game for four or five players, based around the same principles as Snakes and Ladders. Your pupils should choose to be either a Saxon (take a red shield) or a Norman (take a blue shield). The aim of the game is to reach the winning square first, but, more importantly, to have learned about the relative advantages and disadvantages faced by the two armies and the sequence of events on the battlefield on 14 October 1066.

Spin the pointer and move on the number of squares indicated. Each pupil should read out the full instruction of the square they have landed on, to give the opportunity for you to discuss with them the sequence of events of the battle. To help you there is a simplified sequence of the battle on the side panel of the exhibit.

Pupils should progress through the game, considering the advantages and disadvantages held by each army at each stage. With luck, your 'Norman' pupils should reach the victory square first.

However, if your 'Saxon' pupils manage to win through, don't forget to explain to them the difference between the game and the real outcome of the Battle of Hastings. Now visit the battlefield itself to see where the events actually took place. (See the *Teacher's Handbook* for suggestions for activities on the battlefield.)

The pennants around the Battle game show different types of



weapons used by the Saxons and the Normans. Some of these are also illustrated on the board. Back at school ask your pupils to do some further research into the kind of weapons used in the battle.

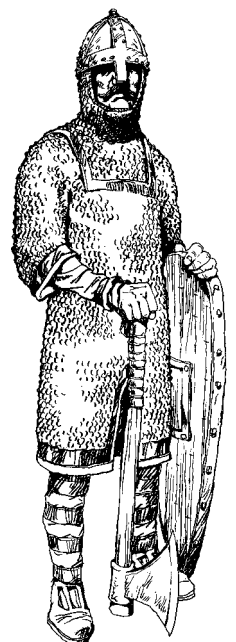
Armour

There are several life-sized cutout figures placed around the walls of the Centre, including a Saxon housecarl and a Norman foot soldier.

Housecarls were trained soldiers, used as a bodyguard for the king. They used the two handed battle-axe, and were said to be among the best soldiers in Europe. The housecarl is shown wearing a long

coat of chain mail, and carrying a kite shaped shield and a two-handed battle-axe.

The Saxons also used the more traditional round shield. The helmet was fitted with a nasal to protect the nose. This was the commonest form of helmet used by both Saxons and Normans, and is much in evidence in the Bayeux tapestry.



Life at Battle Abbey

Battle Abbey was founded by William in 1070. Benedictine monks were invited from the Loire area of France to establish the new abbey, on the very spot where Harold had been defeated.

William was very generous to the abbey, which owned so much land it was one of the wealthiest in England.

Why was the abbey built here?

This exhibit asks pupils to revolve mounted cylinders with possible answers to three basic questions about the founding of the abbey.

William commanded an abbey to built because...

- ...his wife told him to
- ...he was very sorry for all the bloodshed of the Norman Conquest
- ...he thought it would have a good view

He chose the precise spot because...

- ...the drains would work best on this site
- ...he had a dream which told him where the abbey should be
- ...it was where King Harold died during the Battle of Hastings

Battle was a Benedictine abbey. Who were the Benedictines...

- ...they were the children of Mr and Mrs Benedict of Hastings
- ...they were men who drank too much alcohol
- ...they were an order of monks who followed the rule of St Benedict

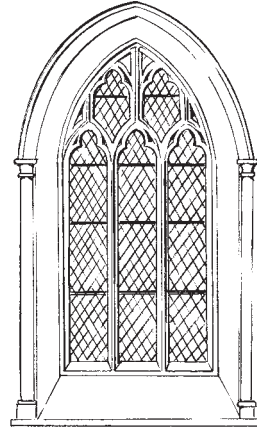
Pupils should turn the cylinders until they decide upon their chosen answers. The three cylinders will then reveal a drawing of an architectural detail.

Only one of these drawings, however, reveals the three correct answers.

Pupils should check back through their answers to see if they have chosen an obviously

inappropriate answer (this is best discussed in pairs) before coming to their final decision.

If the answers are all correct, the drawing shown will be that of a Gothic window.



How did the monks use the buildings?

This panel looks at questions pupils often ask about the daily life of monks in an abbey. The answers are revealed by opening doors. Encourage your pupils to make suggestions of their own before opening the doors to check whether they are right.

How did the monks build the abbey?

This exhibit has drawers containing examples of building materials used in the abbey's construction, with simple questions and answers to focus pupils' observations. Encourage your pupils to touch the materials through the openings provided. Ask them to describe what they can feel to another member of their group by using a range of descriptive words.

<i>shiny</i>	<i>ridged</i>
<i>granular</i>	<i>soft</i>
<i>silky</i>	<i>scratchy</i>
<i>lumpy</i>	<i>dusty</i>
<i>crumbly</i>	<i>worn</i>
<i>sharp</i>	<i>smooth</i>
<i>angular</i>	<i>rounded</i>

Did the monks have toilets?

Yes, the reredorter or latrine block was at right-angles to the dormitory building, and was flushed by running water. You can still see the remains today.

What happened in the cloister?

The cloister was used as a quiet place for work and study. Its four sides surrounded an open area, and lay between the church, abbot's house, dining hall or refectory and the chapter house. Today the cloister is part of the school which occupies the abbot's buildings, but you can still view it from outside the chapter house.

What happened in the chapter house?

The chapter house was used for daily meetings between the monks and the abbot. The daily running of the abbey was usually discussed. Visit the chapter house and look for evidence of the monks' seating.

What was the dorter or dormitory used for?

The dorter was where the monks slept. At Battle you can still see the dorter, above the parlour and novice's chamber. This was a very large room, designed to hold more than 140 monks. Look for the fireplaces in the walls: these were added later.

Where are we now?

The Discovery Centre is in the Great Gatehouse to the abbey. (More information about the history and architecture of the rooms you are in can be found later in this booklet.)

Remember that you and your pupils will be able to visit most of the site of the abbey, where the monks lived, worked and prayed. See the *Teacher's handbook* for ideas of what to do with your pupils in the abbey ruins.

Then get them to describe what they can see in the drawers - focusing on trying to describe colours as clearly as possible. Look around the room you are in for examples of different building materials. You should be able to see several, both old and new. Look for old and new wood, tiles, sandstone of different qualities, (look for chisel marks on some pieces, especially near the window in the first room) concrete, and glass used in different ways.

Follow this up by looking at the building materials in the museum rooms upstairs in the gatehouse. You will see more examples of different stone, some of which may be touched, and some of the original tiles and stained glass from the abbey.



Trying to work out who did what in the abbey

Who lived at the abbey?

There was a variety of jobs to be done to keep an abbey such as Battle running smoothly.

The side panel to the building exhibit allows children to explore

Brother Andrew	excellent at sums	in charge of selling wool
Brother Matthew	fine sense of smell	kitchen supervisor
Brother John	very lazy, can't sing	banished from the abbey
Brother Luke	kind hearted	responsible for the infirmary
Brother Mark	perfect eyesight	manuscript illuminator
sheep	versatile	provided wool and meat

How did they make shingles (wooden roof tiles)?

A block of wood, often oak, was split by hammering wedges down the line of the grain.

These wooden tiles, or shingles, at Battle we think were usually around 300mm by 150mm.

The example shown is a modern replica made from cedar.

Wooden shingles are still used today in traditional roofing or as an exterior wall covering.

How were roof tiles made?

Clay was dug from the ground, baked in a mould until hard.

The roof tile you see is the remains of an original.

Decorated tiles were often used on the floor in more important places such as the church (see examples in the museum).

How did they colour glass?

These petals were painted on clear glass. Lead strips between the pieces of glass made the design look bolder. This piece is a replica - but some fragments of originals are on view in the museum.

in a simple way the different kind of jobs done, and the skills needed to carry them out. (Further information on this topic may be found in *A Teacher's Guide to Using Abbeys*). Pupils will need patience to be sure they have got the correct match.

What did they use bricks for?

Bricks were used as a lining for roofs, or fireplaces or sometimes to strengthen walls. While you are out on site, see if your pupils can find any examples of where bricks have been used in the abbey.

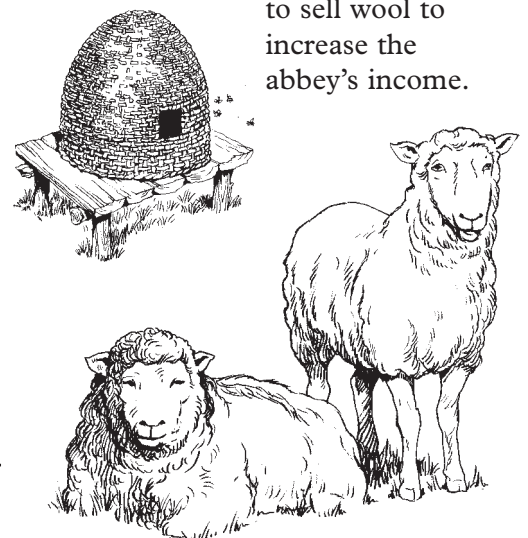
Why does some sandstone have yellow-orange flecks?

This happens when iron deposits in the stone rust and discolour it. If you ask your pupils to look again at the walls of the room they are in they will see some more examples of iron stained sandstone.

Where did the stone used to build the abbey come from?

Masons used local sandstone, and limestone was also brought from Caen in France. Caen stone was of very fine quality, and so was used for more detailed carving and where appearance was most important. It also weathers better than the local sandstone. Your pupils should be able to tell the difference between the two examples; the smaller piece on display is the harder, finer, Caen stone.

Younger pupils will find, at their height, replica sheep and beehives. Use this as an opportunity to discuss with them the need for an abbey to be self-sufficient and also



to sell wool to increase the abbey's income.

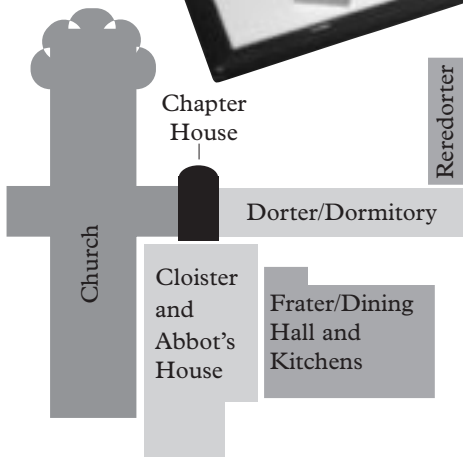


Children piece together the model of Battle Abbey



The latrine in the first room of the gatehouse

Jennie Fordham



Putting the abbey together

This exhibit consists of large, brightly-coloured blocks to represent the shapes of the main buildings of the abbey:

- the church
- the frater (dining hall) and kitchen
- the cloister and Abbot's House
- the chapter house
- the dorter (dormitory)
- the reredorter (latrine).

Using the colours and shapes as their clues, get your pupils to reassemble the abbey model. Use the model as a basis for your discussion about the range of buildings at the abbey, before exploring the site itself.

The chapter house was used for daily business, and for daily readings of a chapter of the bible. The cloister was for quiet reading, manuscript copying and gentle exercise.

THE GREAT GATEHOUSE

The Discovery Centre is housed in two of the most interesting rooms at Battle Abbey. Take the opportunity to look at this end of the building with your pupils as well as using the exhibits.

The present gatehouse was built in the middle of the fourteenth century, replacing an eleventh-century gateway. The roadway of this earlier gateway lies beneath the first of the two rooms, while the walls of the second room also largely date from this earlier gatehouse. Look outside, particularly at the north wall, where the difference in stonework is very apparent.

The rebuilding was partly as a result of the increased wealth of the abbey - there was a great deal of rebuilding of William's original foundation as the abbey grew richer - but also results from the increased need for security during the Hundred Years' War with France.

The two ground floor rooms of the gatehouse originally provided accommodation for the abbey's porter, who was responsible for controlling access, through the great gates and pedestrian entrance, to the outer court of the abbey. The small window in the wall of the first room, looking out onto the gate-passage, shows the porter's view of the comings and goings through the gates. A

blocked opening beside it, only visible from the outside, suggests an earlier window which may have been blocked because it was inconveniently close to the fireplace. In the opposite corner of the first room, you can see a latrine set into an earlier blocked doorway.

The blocked doorway



Jennie Fordham

This doorway originally led to an eleventh-century spiral stair belonging to the first gatehouse. The small rooms within the turret would have provided storage space.

Over the centuries these rooms have been much altered. This is particularly apparent in the second chamber, where sockets in the walls and an upper set of windows are evidence of a first floor that no longer exists. The blocked doorway in the west wall at this level once led to a latrine. The remains of the eleventh-century spiral staircase can clearly be seen. This was probably removed when a first floor doorway, visible as a blocking at the top, was cut through the dividing wall. In the base of this wall there are tiles which probably belong to a malting kiln which occupied this space when the rooms were put to agricultural use in the eighteenth century.

PRACTICALITIES

How to make a booking

The Discovery Centre may be booked at the same time that you book your visit to the site. (To book a visit to Battle Abbey, please telephone 01483 252012.)

Each slot in the centre is one hour long, starting at 1000. The Centre is suitable for a maximum of 35 pupils, with an adult:pupil ratio of 1:15. If you bring a larger group to the abbey you should book more than one session.

The Centre is accessible for those with disabilities. There are two shallow steps between the two rooms, and additional access through a modern door in the second room if necessary. Discuss your requirements at the time of booking, so the site staff can be alerted to provide any help you need.

Your group will be shown to the Discovery Centre at the time you have booked. Please leave everything ready for the next group at the end of your session. You should aim to be ready to vacate the room a few minutes before the end of your session, so not to delay the next group.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to use the Centre as a base to deposit bags and coats while you go round the site.

Planning

Use your preliminary visit to plan how you will use the facility with your pupils. For example, you may wish to use the rooms at the start of your visit to put the site into context, and to highlight points that will be relevant to your site-based work. Or you may prefer to end your visit in the Discovery Centre, using the exhibits to help you draw everything together.

It is best to divide your class into smaller groups to work on the separate activities. If you have several adult helpers, decide in advance

how best to use them. The exhibits have been designed for a broad range of Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils. Younger children will need some adult help with reading and drawing their own conclusions. Photocopy this booklet for your other helpers so they can prepare in advance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES

Books for teachers

Cooksey, C, *Using Abbeys*, English Heritage, 1992, ISBN 1-85074-297-9. An informative and practical guide with teaching ideas which could support any visit to an abbey.

McAlevy, T, *Life in a Medieval Abbey*, English Heritage, 1996, ISBN 1-85074-592-7. A detailed and well-illustrated description of abbey life, drawing on the vast resource of artists' impressions of English Heritage abbey sites.

Warne, J, *Battle Abbey and the Battle of Hastings*, A Teacher's Guide, English Heritage 1999, ISBN 1-85074-509-9.

Videos

The Battle of Hastings, English Heritage, 1994, 10 minutes. This video is based on contemporary accounts, and encourages pupils to consider different interpretations of the events of the battle.

The Norman Conquest of England, English Heritage, 1982, 15 minutes. Provides an overview on how the Norman Conquest altered the landscape, buildings, language and culture of England.

The Silent Years - A Day in the Life of a Medieval Novice Monk, Webster Sargant Productions, 1995. This entertaining animation follows a day in the life of a Cistercian monk.

All of the above videos are available from English Heritage. For our full Resources catalogue please contact the number below.



Face to face with a Saxon farmer

Jennie Fordham

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