



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Bolsover Castle

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS



The Little Castle

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The building at Bolsover is not, despite its name, a castle, but is the remains of a palatial seventeenth century residence. There are three main parts to the site: a complete but unfurnished dwelling known as the Little Castle; a roofless but lavish great house called the Terrace Range; and a block containing an indoor riding area, forge and horse master's lodgings, together referred to as the Riding School.

There had originally been a small stone keep on the site, which was owned by George Talbot, the sixth Earl of Shrewsbury, but the remnants of this were removed in about 1612 by his stepson, Charles Cavendish, to make way for the Little Castle and the Terrace Range.

Charles inherited a passion for building from his mother, Bess of Hardwick, but he died five years later before his plans were completed. He was succeeded by his son, Sir William, whose main interest was in horses, and to indulge this taste, he began work in 1630 on the Riding School.

The site is a fine example of how a medieval castle site was adapted for residential use. The forecourt of the present Little Castle stands on the foundations of the twelfth century keep. The original inner bailey became the garden surrounded by huge walls, which incorporate some medieval masonry, and the outer bailey formed the Great Court. The same family of mason-architects worked with Sir Charles and his son. Robert Smythson, who had already worked for Bess at

Hardwick, is believed to have planned the Little Castle. After his death in 1614, his son, John, took over the work and his grandson, Huntingdon Smythson, worked on the staterooms in the Terrace Range.

The Little Castle shows the Cavendish's interest in reviving a medieval style and creating a fantasy or sham castle. It is possible that part of the inspiration for the design was to provide a background for the performance of masques. In 1634 William was host to a visit by Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria when a masque entitled 'Love's welcome to Bolsover' by the famous dramatist, Ben Jonson, was performed.

Only a few years after this lavish entertainment, the Civil War broke out and William became the commander of Royalist forces in the

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impressing the viewer with a sense of space and grandeur. At the northern end of the range it is possible to see into the kitchen area.

The Little Castle: exterior

Steps lead to a walled forecourt flanked by two lodges. The house and court are both decorated with battlements and the latter has arrow slits which serve no military purpose, but are in keeping with the medieval theme of the design. As in a medieval keep, there are turrets at each corner of the house, the largest of them containing a staircase, the others providing space for toilet arrangements.

The Little Castle: interior

On passing through the porch there is an anteroom to the left. The paintings here, like those in the rest of the Little Castle, all have meanings which would have been understood by the inhabitants and guests. In this room three of the four temperaments which were believed to be combined in people's characters are depicted. The three paintings represent the melancholic, the choleric, and the phlegmatic. It may have been planned that the fourth painting, which shows a restful garden scene, would have shown the sanguine. An alternative theory is that the host stood in front of the panel when welcoming his guests, himself representing the sanguine temperament.

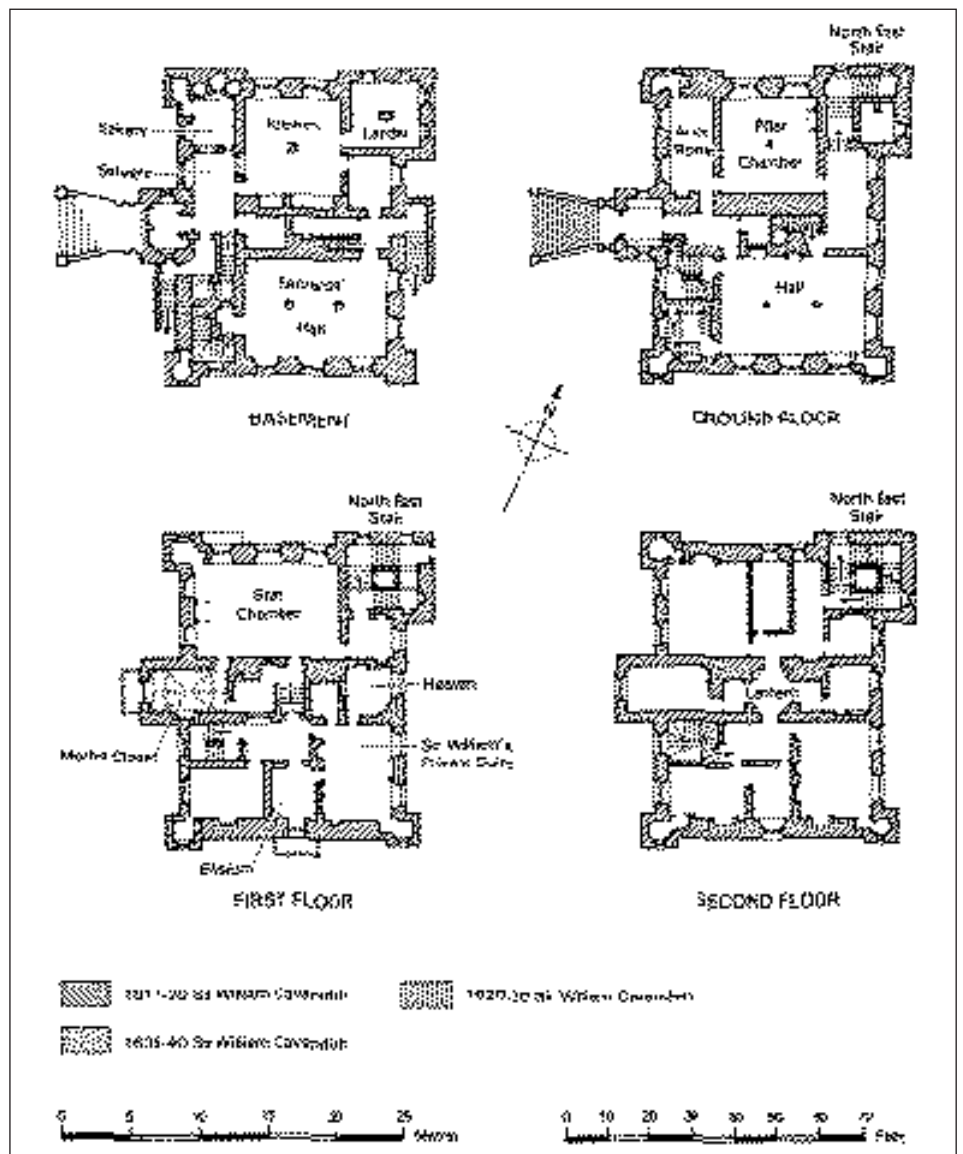
On the other side of the entrance is the Hall and beyond that, the Pillar Parlour. Both are linked to the servants' quarters by service stairs. Both rooms have a distinct medieval character with their rib-vaulting but the decoration and panelled walls show Jacobean taste. In the hall are panels painted with the Labours of Hercules, showing Hercules fighting with various animals and probably representing a struggle against animal passions. In the Pillar Parlour next door there are paintings denoting the five senses. The panelling in this room has had its decorative

details picked out in gold leaf, as it may have looked when in use. To the left of the fireplace the original panelling has been left in its unrestored state, showing its previous condition. Sir William's influence can be seen in the design of the Pillar Parlour's vault bosses in the form of horses' heads. The fireplace, in this and most of the other rooms, are made from a combination of different marbles, stone and alabaster, much influenced in style by Italian designs. The Pillar Parlour has a lower ceiling than the Hall to give more height to the Star Chamber on the floor above.

Well-lit, wide stairs lead to the next floor and the Star Chamber. As well as the star pattern on the ceiling, this room has paintings of prophets and saints around the walls. The Little Castle's most elaborate fireplace, emblazoned with the Talbot

dogs of the Shrewsburys, is in this room. To the right of it there is a small room which contained a close stool, the then favoured toilet arrangement, similar in principle to a commode. The Marble Closet, vaulted in Carara marble, leads off the Star Chamber. Its paintings reflect the theme of harmony and contentment with paintings symbolising, Justice and Prudence, Fortitude and Patience, Faith and Hope. For no reason except lack of space, instead of the traditional fourth pair, Concord and Peace, there is a painting of the heads of cherubs over the window.

Sir William's private suite is also on this floor and includes the Best Bedchamber with cupboards set into the walls and two dressing rooms: the Elysium and Heaven rooms. An assembly of gods surrounding Jupiter is painted on the



Floor plans of the Little Castle

ceiling of the former room. This represents the classical world's idea of heaven, while the Ascension of Christ, accompanied by cherubims, adorns the ceiling of the latter room.

On the second floor, less important although still comfortable rooms lead off an octagonal lobby over which is a central lantern of windows giving a pleasant airy feel to the landing. From this floor it is possible to go down the servants' staircase to the kitchens. These narrow winding stairs offer a contrast to the wider, better-lit ones used by the family. A separate stair leading from the Hall leads directly to the wine cellar. At the foot of the servants' stairs is the servery, with serving hatches from the kitchen and the bakery. To the left is the game larder, under the main porch. The kitchen has two large fireplaces for cooking meat on spits and vegetables in cauldrons. A model shows the fireplaces in use, but some of the fittings reflect eighteenth century design, so it is not reliable for showing the kitchen as it might have looked originally. The bakery next door had three large ovens. Grooves were cut into the stone floors of the kitchen rooms to drain away waste water, emptying out through holes in the base of the walls. These would have been particularly useful in the larder next to the kitchen, which had water piped to it from the well in the garden. Here there are stone sinks, a salting table and a brine tank. Next to the larder a passage leads into a cellar, also sometimes referred to as a servants' hall.

Fountain garden

The Venus Fountain in the centre of the garden or inner court has the arms of William when he became an Earl. In the thick walls surrounding the garden are three garden rooms, possibly on the site of medieval towers. Two of the garden rooms have fireplaces for additional comfort on chilly days.

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Building at Bolsover

Workmen's bill for Boulsover work from 24th of July unto the 7th of August 1613.

Free masons' work done at Shutellwd quarry

Pd Goodwin and his fellows for working 163 foot of ashlar at 11/2d. the foot 20s. 4d...

Pd them for 14 foot of door jamb at 41/2d the foot 5s. 3d...

Pd them for 41/3 foot of pillar at 2s. 6d. the foot 10s 8d...

Labourers at harling and sifting of lime and carrying of water Pd Wildesmithe for 4 days 2s 8d.

Pd Norwode for 8 days 4s. 8d.

Pd Wilson for 9 days 5s. 3d.

Pd Yeavlee for 11 days 6s. 5d.

Pd Otter for 12 days 6s.

Pd Robe for 6 days 3s...

Women at carrying of filling stone and sand

Pd Aise Robenson for 11 days 3s 8d.

Pd Mary Marye Robenson for 11 days 3s. 8d. a

Pd Rodes wiffe for 11 days 3s. 8d. Pd

Miller wiffe for 11 days 3s.8d.

Pd Warde wiffe for 11 days 3s 8d.

Pd Hogkinson for 11 days 3s. 8d...

Smithson's charges

Pd Smithson's charges for 10 meals 3s 4d.

Total £347 13s. 5d.

This extract from the account for two weeks' work at Bolsover has many points of interest. The masons were paid according to the amount of work completed whereas most of the other workers were paid a daily rate. At least one person worked two six-day weeks - the labourer Otter; several others worked at least one six-day week. Some women were employed as labourers, a few had husbands working at the site: Rodes' wife was paid the same rate as her husband who was a labourer there. Smithson's fee is not listed in the accounts but his daily payment for meals was the equivalent of some labourers' daily wages. Apart from hewing stone, shaping it and carrying it, other work needed to build Bolsover included preparing lime and sand to make mortar.

Love's Welcome to Bolsover, a masque by Ben Jonson. Performed at Bolsover Castle on 30 July, 1634.

After the Banquet, the King and Queene retir'd, were entertain'd with Coronell Vitruvius his Oration to his Dance of Mechanickes...

"O Captaine Smith! our Hammer-armed Vulcan! with your three Sledges (hammers), you are our Musique, you come a little too tardie; but wee remit that, to your polt-foot (club-foot), we know you are lame. Plant your selves there, and beat your time out at the Anvile. Time and Measure, are the Father and Mother of Musique, you know... O Chesil! our curious Carver! and Master Maul, our Freemason; Squire Summer, our Carpenter, and Twybil his Man; stand you foure, there, I' the second ranke, worke upon that ground. And you, Dresser, the Plomber; Quarrel the Glasier; Fret, the Plaisterer; and Beater, the Morter-man; put all you on i' the reere, as finishers in true footing with Tune, and Measure....Spring, Leape, Caper, and Gingle; Pumpes, and Ribbands, shall be your reward, till the Soles of your feet swell, with the surfet of your light and nimble Motion.'

The character Vitruvius who made this oration was a Roman architect, no doubt reflecting William's passion for architecture. The dance of the workers, which probably took place out of doors, was a source of amusement to onlookers as the dancers exaggerated clumsy movements. After it, there was a second banquet then two cupids were lowered on wires through hangings of blue silk. A conversation between the two in which they flatter the King, Queen and their Court, was followed by a fulsome speech of welcome and further dancing. Both the King and Queen were devotees of this form of entertainment in which they participated as Chief Masquers. Not only did the masque provide a colourful and musical spectacle, through its speeches and poetry it reinforced the belief that the King embodied all the virtues and was the source of the population's happiness. The

entertainment cost the Earl £15000, a colossal sum and the equivalent of about a million pounds today.

EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

A visit to Bolsover Castle is particularly relevant to pupils at Key Stage 3 studying the Making of the United Kingdom, for the insights it gives into the life of courtiers and aristocratic families before the Civil War. For pupils at Key Stage 2 the Castle can relate to an aspect of local history such as life in a country house. In all Key Stages, Bolsover Castle provides opportunities for work in a wide range of subjects.

Preparation should include a planning visit to the site by staff. As part of their preliminary work in school, pupils can look at the ground plan of the Castle, and find out about court life in the reign of Charles I.

To help pupils understand the site, start in the Great Court (the outer bailey of the medieval castle) and point out the Riding School, the Terrace Range and the Little Castle, whose garden wall follows the line of the original inner bailey wall. Pupils could comment on the differences they can detect between the style of the Terrace Range and the Little Castle. Standing in the forecourt of the latter, they could also look at the different window sizes on each floor and suggest on which floors they are likely to find the grandest rooms (look for the largest windows) and which rooms were likely to receive the least natural daylight. What effect do pupils think the lantern at the top of the building will have on the amount of daylight reaching the top floor?

History

The very wealthy Cavendish family were able to realise their fantasies and ambitions in the buildings at Bolsover Castle. Although little is left of the Terrace Range pupils can identify clues which tell us that William Cavendish wanted to create

a grandly impressive home, fit to receive a royal visit. Ask pupils to look for clues like:

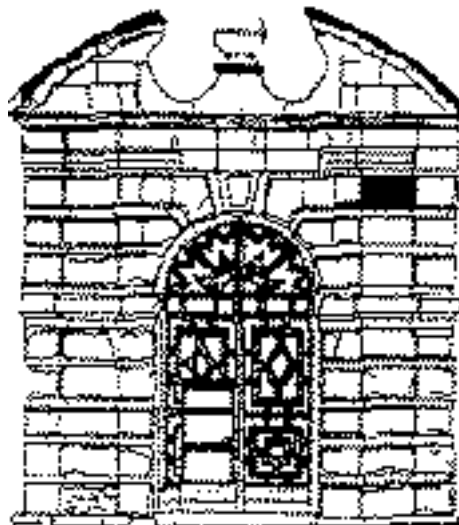
- style of the main entrance at the western side of the Terrace Range
- the size of the rooms and their windows
- the sequence of the rooms, one opening into another
- the decoration on the facade

Pupils can then contrast these features with those in the Little Castle. How does this building look like a pretend castle? How does it differ from a real castle keep? (For security reasons there would have been no windows on the ground floor and no undefended stone steps to the door.)

The design of the rooms in the Little Castle give many clues about the tastes and interests of William Cavendish. Which rooms do pupils think look very old and castle-like? Look for vaulted ceilings and pillars. What evidence is there that William enjoyed music? What type of materials did he prefer for the decoration of the castle? Why do pupils think there were so many paintings on the walls and ceilings?

Apart from making deductions about William from the evidence of the building, the basement area

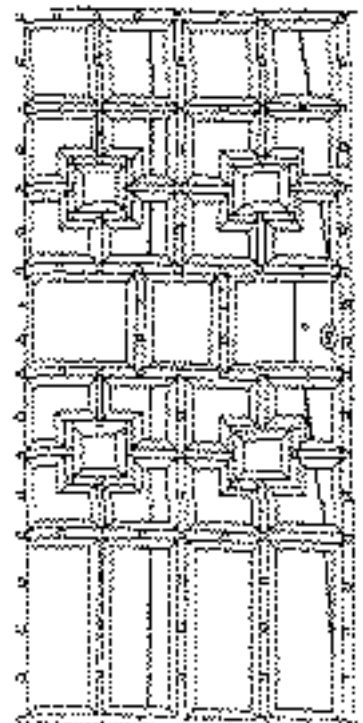
Designs of exterior and interior doors



gives some clues about the life of his servants. How well-lit and ventilated was their work space? How far did they have to carry food and drink to the main Hall of the Castle and to William's private suite? What facilities were there for the servants in the basement? What were likely to be the warmest and coolest places there? Was anything done to make their work area decorative? Pupils can compare the servants' stairs with the main staircase and note the differences. Ask them if they were to visit the Little Castle without access to information, would they be able to distinguish between the servants' and the family's areas, and if so, how?

Art

Bolsover Castle is a rich resource for work in art, offering a stimulus for pupils' own work and providing examples of styles of art and design from the early seventeenth century. Both Robert and John Smythson copied designs of other buildings in order to inform their own designs at Bolsover. In the manner of these early architects, pupils could draw the designs of doorways and doors leading from the Great Court to the Riding School or the Terrace Range. These drawings could then be used on the front cover of folders open-



ing onto other work based on the Castle.

The Little Castle presents many possibilities for practical work on site and as follow-up, including:

- copying the pattern of painted decorations on wooden panelling with a view to making stencil patterns based on the designs
- drawing a fireplace and then making a clay model of one
- drawing the animals which feature in the paintings of the labours of Hercules and then making papier mache animal masks based on them
- older pupils could attempt to draw one of the figures in a ceiling painting to see how the artist coped with the problems of perspective. In school ordinary objects could be drawn using similar techniques, and mounted on the ceiling.

The subject matter of the paintings provide clues about the type of art commissioned and enjoyed by wealthy patrons in the early seventeenth century. Pupils could make a list of the subject matter in each room and analyse it according to the source of inspiration: the classical world, Christian religion, the five senses and the four temperaments, for example.

Music

After seeing the Castle and reading the documentary extracts on the builders of Bolsover, pupils could discuss what sounds and rhythms might have been made by the different groups of workers, for example, by the masons as they built the walls and carved the stone, or by the carpenters as they cut through wood, or by the smiths in the forge and the sounds made as the mortar was mixed. Pupils could work in groups to reproduce these sounds, using their voices or experimenting with improvised materials. One group member will need to decide



One of the labours of Hercules depicted in the Hall

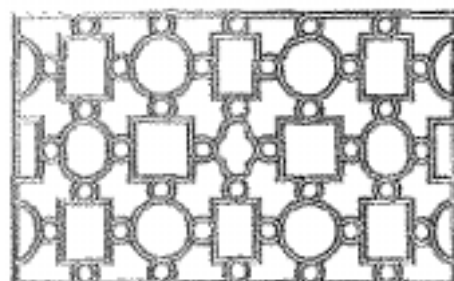
on a dominant rhythm and then the others each add their own sounds and rhythm to it. These sounds and rhythms can be incorporated into a sequence of movement reflecting the occupations, or into a dance as in the performance of Ben Jonson's Masque.

Pupils can look for the musical instruments depicted in carvings around a fireplace in one of the top-floor rooms, and in the ceiling painting in the Heaven Room. They could try to identify them and later in school, listen to a tape of music based on a period piece. Snatches of music are painted on the ceiling of the Heaven Room. These are from country dance tunes composed in 1609 by Thomas Ravenscroft (who also wrote 'Three Blind Mice'). Pupils could speculate on why this was included in the painting.

English

The site offers plenty of scope for work in English. Pupils can:

- write a story based on the characters in the paintings of the five senses who come to life and live in the Castle. They should firstly write down words to describe dress, face and expressions, and restrict themselves to one room, collecting words



to describe what they can see and hear there, and how the room makes them feel

- write their own interpretation panels. Having a specific audience in mind, like younger children, helps to sharpen the focus, as does limiting the number of words allowed
- compose a script for a radio programme. This can be done in pairs, each responsible for a different room or part of the site. They need to bear in mind that they are painting a picture in words, and should include precise descriptions of location, size, colours, materials and textures.

Geography

The location of the Castle provides a superb vantage point from which to look at the surrounding land use. Ask pupils to note the contrasts between rural and industrial land use, and where residential housing has developed, noting the difference between ribbon development, and planned (note the model village, built for local miners). They can use a map to find where the main transport routes are, and then locate these on the landscape. What are the consequences for local people in the way in which the land is used? Are there any consequences for the Castle in being so near to industrial sites?

Turning to the Castle and its immediate locality, pupils could assess how it serves the needs of tourists coming to Bolsover. What facilities are provided in the Castle's grounds and how adequate do pupils consider them? What other facilities could help to develop this heritage site?

Maths

A series of activities in the Little Castle can relate to shapes:

- finding how many different shapes were used in the stonework

The outline design of the Star Chamber ceiling

to decorate the walls around the Forecourt

■ looking at the ceiling in the Star Chamber, ask pupils to identify the different shapes on which it is based. Which type of shape, apart from the stars, is the most numerous?

■ identifying rooms which have flooring materials with shapes that tessellate

■ pupils could make a chart to show how many different shapes were incorporated into the design of the fireplaces. Which shapes are most commonly used?

For younger pupils you may wish to design a checklist of shapes for them to find.

Science

English Heritage has done a lot of work to conserve the buildings. Pupils could look for evidence of damage to the fabric of the Castle and suggest what has caused the deterioration.

The list could include:

- the fact that the family removed the roof to the Terrace Range
- weathering over many years
- pollution in the atmosphere
- wear and tear caused by visitors

How has the surface of the stones changed, for example, in the Forecourt of the Little Castle? It is the policy of English Heritage to make repairs obvious by leaving the material in its new-looking state. Ask pupils to find examples of this and to discuss if it is a good idea, or if repairs should blend into the original.

The Pillar Chamber by H. W. Todd, 1846.



Inside the Terrace Range as it might have looked when in use, by Allan Sorrell

Technology

Before visiting the Castle pupils could note the different types of catches and handles used to fasten doors in their homes and at school. During their visit, pupils can look at the bolts used to fasten doors. How do the bolts operate? What attention has been given to their design? How similar and different are they from present-day ones?

A design problem faced by the architects was how to dispose of waste water from the kitchen and nearby rooms. After considering how waste water is removed from homes today, pupils could look for

the methods used at Bolsover. What do the pupils think of them? What problems might they have caused to those who worked in the basement?

The Masque of 1634 was one of the most important events at the Castle. Pupils could take on the role of film makers who have been asked to make a film about this event. They need to select parts of the castle where the royal party might have been received, where the dancing took place out of doors, and where the dramatic descent on wires of two 'cupids' could be staged. Would pupils prefer to make a film about



the Masque in the actual location, and what difficulties would this involve? Or would they rather build a set in a studio? What information would they need to record from the site to do this?

MAKING A VISIT

Opening hours

See www.english-heritage.org.uk for opening hours or contact Customer Services on 0870 333 1181.

Booking procedure and information

Education Bookings
East Midlands Region
44 Derngate
Northampton NN1 1UH
Tel: 01604 735440
Fax: 01604 735401

Educational visits are free but must be booked at least two weeks in advance. It is essential, if the most is to be made of the time spent on site, for teachers to make a preparatory planning visit. When your booking is confirmed, you will be sent a permit for a free preparatory visit. The maximum party number for this site is 150 with a staff to pupil ratio of at least 1 to 15.

The Riding School



How to get there

Bolsover Castle is in Bolsover, 6 miles east of Chesterfield on the A 632 and off the M1 at junction 29. (OS Map 120; ref SK 471707.)

Bus: Stagecoach E Midland 81/AQ, Chesterfield Transport 81-3, 282/3 Chesterfield-Bolsover (passes close to Chesterfield Rail Station, No 81 being the most direct).

Train: Chesterfield Station

Facilities

Parking: free parking opposite the main gate, in the grounds for people with impaired mobility.

Wheelchair access: the grounds only; a wheelchair is available.

Toilets: near the car park; not suitable for people who use wheelchairs.

Shop: books, postcards, souvenirs, light refreshments.

Picnics: on site.

Tape Tours: these are not available for school groups, but may be useful to teachers on preparatory visits. There is a tape available for visually impaired people.

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Videos

Teaching on site, English Heritage, 1992, 73 minutes. Suitable for in-service and initial teacher training. Introduces approaches to using the historic environment with a range of National Curriculum subjects.

Using Museums, Fulcrum Productions Ltd, 1995, 60 minutes. Suitable for in-service and initial teacher training. Shows learning strategies for using sites and objects for all the Key Stages.

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