



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Kenilworth Castle

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS



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Aerial view of Kenilworth Castle with the former Mere in the foreground.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

For much of its history, Kenilworth Castle has been at the centre of England's affairs. Situated in the centre of the country, it has been many things including a major military stronghold, a royal palace, and an inspiration to writers and artists.

Built from local sandstone, Kenilworth stands in a naturally strong position on a rocky knoll surrounded by marshes. The site is an excellent example of how some castles evolved from relatively humble origins into powerful forts, and then into comfortable homes and palaces. It developed from a Norman motte and bailey castle of earth and timber erected between 1100 and 1135 by Geoffrey de Clinton, Chamberlain to Henry I. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, when own-

ership had passed to the Crown, King John radically extended and developed the castle by adding an outer perimeter wall and a fortified dam or causeway, all of which still can be seen today. The large shallow lake, called the Mere, created by a dam, became the castle's main defence on the west and south side, and provided a water-filled moat on the north side. It covered more than 20 hectares and, as the largest artificial lake of its period, was a formidable defensive barrier to attack.

In 1244, the castle was granted to Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester. When the barons rebelled in 1265, the castle was held by a garrison of 1,200 rebels who refused the King's terms of surrender, returning one messenger minus a hand. In June 1266, Henry arrived with a strong force to besiege the castle. Despite

extensive bombardment and the use of siege towers, the attackers were kept at bay. The garrison eventually surrendered six months later, with just two days food left.

King Henry gave the castle to his second son Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, and the Earls and Dukes of Lancaster held Kenilworth until 1361. They added to the domestic buildings and began the work of making the castle more comfortable. This included the improvements undertaken by John of Gaunt. The castle once again became a Royal residence, when Gaunt's son became King Henry IV.

In 1553, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, was granted the castle. Both he and his niece, Lady Jane Grey, were executed for treason by Queen Mary. However,

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the castle was regained ten years later by his son, Robert Dudley, a favourite of Queen Elizabeth I, whom she made Earl of Leicester. The castle now entered its most romantic period as Dudley completed the transformation of Kenilworth to a stately Elizabethan palace. Elizabeth did indeed visit several times, the most famous being in July 1575 when she stayed for nineteen days.

During the Civil War, the castle was used as a garrison by both Royalists and Parliamentarians and was slighted in 1649 by breaching the outer wall and blowing up one side of the keep. The Mere was emptied at about the same time. By 1821, when Sir Walter Scott wrote his novel *Kenilworth* the castle was a ruin shrouded in ivy. In 1937 Sir John Davenport Siddley bought the site, and gave it to the nation. In 1984, English Heritage became responsible for its care.



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The keep originally provided living accommodation for the lord, and was a stronghold in times of war or civil unrest.

lated wall on either side. The straightness and width of the causeway enabled it to be used for jousting in the late medieval and Tudor periods when it became known as the tiltyard.

arrowslits, and the vertical grooves for a portcullis at the front of the passage. The narrowness of the passage itself, flanked by stout walls allowed relatively few men to defend it.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The causeway

The medieval entrance to the castle served as a thoroughfare and as part of the system of dams for the Mere. Originally, it had a crenel-

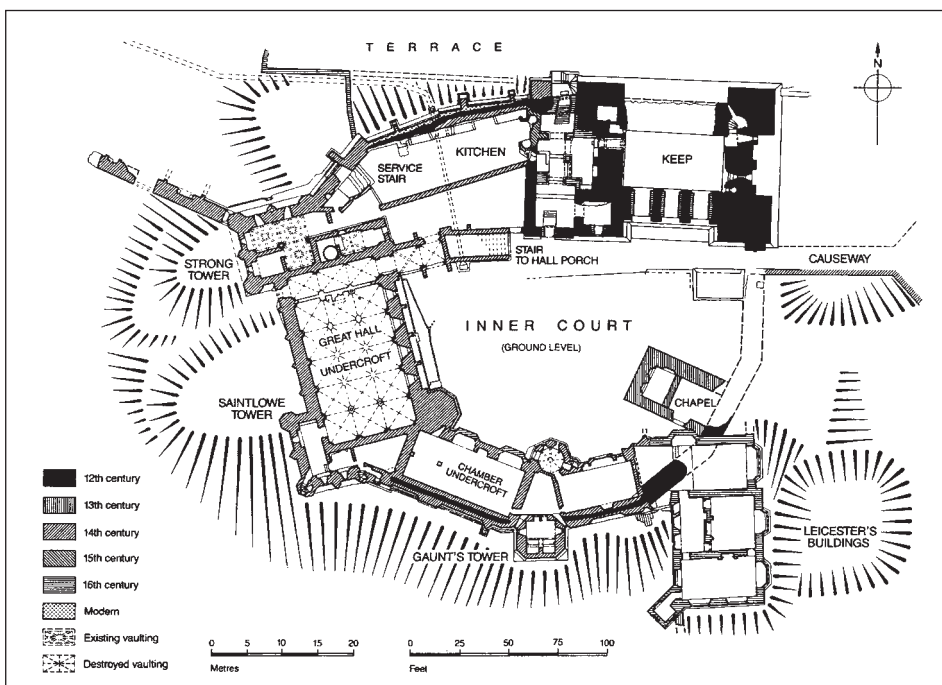
Mortimer's Tower

This was a gatehouse which controlled access to the outer court of the castle, and in medieval times was protected by the Mere, which came up to its base. Its defensive nature is shown by the remains of

Lunn's Tower and the Water Tower

Lunn's Tower is part of King John's defensive wall, and is purely military in purpose. It incorporates fish-tailed arrow slits and controls the north-east angle of the defences and the moat in front. Originally it had two upper floors each containing a fireplace, as sentry duty in a medieval winter was bleak.

The Water Tower was built for comfortable occupation, and incorporated fireplaces, latrines, large windows and window-seats.



Plan of the castle's inner court.

Leicester's Gatehouse

This is a typical Elizabethan gatehouse built by Dudley as the main entrance to the castle. He altered the entrance making it wide enough for wheeled carriages and troops of horsemen.

The keep

The stepped plinth at the base of the keep is an important architec-

tural and defensive feature of this building. The weight of the walls are spread over the entire area, so resisting tunnelling, while the narrow ledges are hard to climb or place ladders against. In addition, battering rams would have made little impression on such a massive construction. The width of the walls can be seen at the north side, where the wall was blown up after the Civil War.

Each wall contains a number of arrow slits and windows of varying sizes. The larger Tudor windows were added to give more light, they probably replaced original arrow slits. On the side facing the inner court, the surviving arrowslits have been widened at the base to give a wider angle of fire.

This three-storey building was entered through the forebuilding with wooden stairs to the first floor. The door can be seen high on the right. The entrance you use today is for the visitors' convenience. The forebuilding was converted into a gallery by the Tudors, leading to the gardens beyond: the date of the conversion (1570) is commemorated by the '70' above the garden entrance.

From the first floor you can see gaps for the second floor supports, along with the large square holes for the roof braces. The floors were linked by a spiral staircase in the north-east tower, while the pit in the north-west tower was a latrine. The slit window opposite the entrance is an original Norman feature, although modified to admit more light. To the right is the site of the well, now filled in.

The kitchen and Strong Tower

Set apart from other buildings to reduce the risk of fire, this area contains the kitchens, living quarters for domestic servants and storage areas. The remains of three great fireplaces can be identified in the walls, where tiles have been set on edge to reduce flaking under heat, and to improve insulation in

the oven.

Meals were carried up a service stair, below the modern wooden steps, to the servery in the Strong Tower, which was a three-storey service block. It contained the pantry and buttery, and from its top level had views over the Mere.

The great hall

Constructed between 1361 and 1399, John of Gaunt's great hall was one of the finest in fourteenth-century England, with a huge hammer-beamed roof. The fine carving on the main doorway, as seen from the inner court, reinforces the sense of power and wealth which is continued inside.

The floor is missing, so the room is viewed from the undercroft or storage basement, although the slots for both the floor and the roof are clearly visible in the walls, along with the remains of support pillars in the floor. The east and west walls each contain two tall windows for light and a grand fireplace. There is a private polygonal area, an oriel, set into the east wall which was for the owner and his guests. The oriel contains its own fireplace and fine traceried windows, and may have been screened off at times. The seats set into the windows on both sides were used for work such as writing or sewing, making the most of the natural light.

The door leading from the undercroft to the outer court was the way in for deliveries and servants. The risk of attack was always present and grooves for a portcullis are clear on either side of the door.

Saintlowe Tower

The Saintlowe Tower, great chamber and lesser chamber were built

by John of Gaunt to provide comfortable accommodation for important guests and state apartments for himself. At the east end of the great chamber is Gaunt's Tower, which was a two-storey latrine block with a further two storeys of rooms above.

Leicester's Building

The height of Elizabethan luxury, this three-storey building had a suite of rooms on every floor. Each had a main public room with large rectangular windows facing east towards the morning sun, ornamental fireplaces, and an adjoining bedroom. There was also a service room for each with a chute to take waste to the basement. The larger holes were for floor supports.

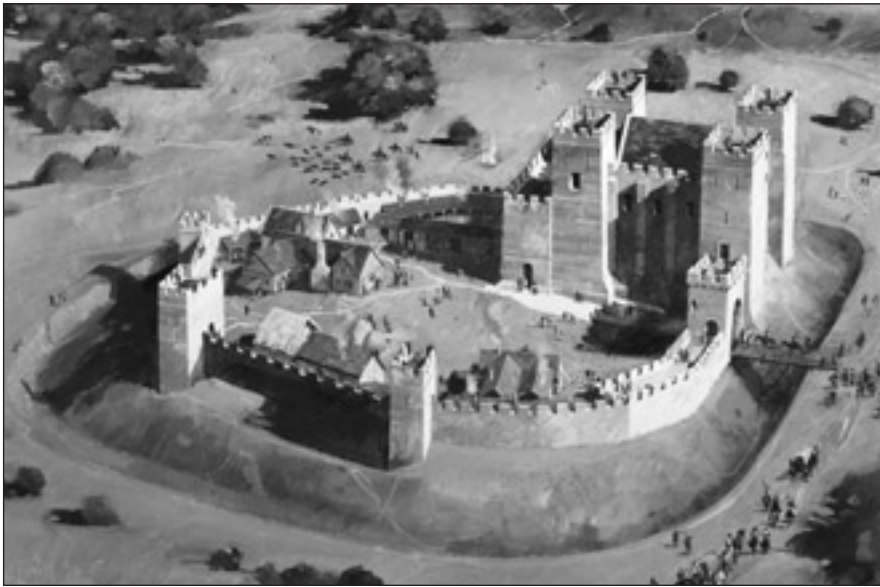
Leicester's Stables

Nearly 49 metres long, the Tudor stables are built against the eastern outer curtain wall and are exceptionally well preserved. The upper floor was probably used for servant accommodation and hay storage and are built of timber frames with brick and plaster infilling.



Leicester's Building was constructed to provide luxurious accommodation for guests including Queen Elizabeth I.

TIMELINE



English Heritage Photo Library

The Norman castle at Kenilworth.

1086 Kenilworth is mentioned in the Domesday Book.

1174-1184 On becoming Crown property, a stone keep was built to replace the timber one.

1244 Henry III granted Kenilworth to Simon de Montfort.

1326 Edward II was deposed as king at Kenilworth.

1414 Henry V built a summerhouse on an island in the Mersey.

1553 John Dacre of Northumbria was granted the castle.

10th Century

11th Century

12th Century

13th Century

14th Century

15th Century

1100-1135 Geoffrey de Clinton built an earth and timber castle.

1199-1216 Major works were undertaken by King John to strengthen the castle's defences.

1361-1399 John of Gaunt's building programme changed the castle's role from defensive to palatial.



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The castle was a stronghold in the twelfth century.

1266 Siege of Kenilworth - the rebels in the castle held out for six months.

1266 Henry III gave the castle to his younger son, Edmund, Earl of Lancaster.



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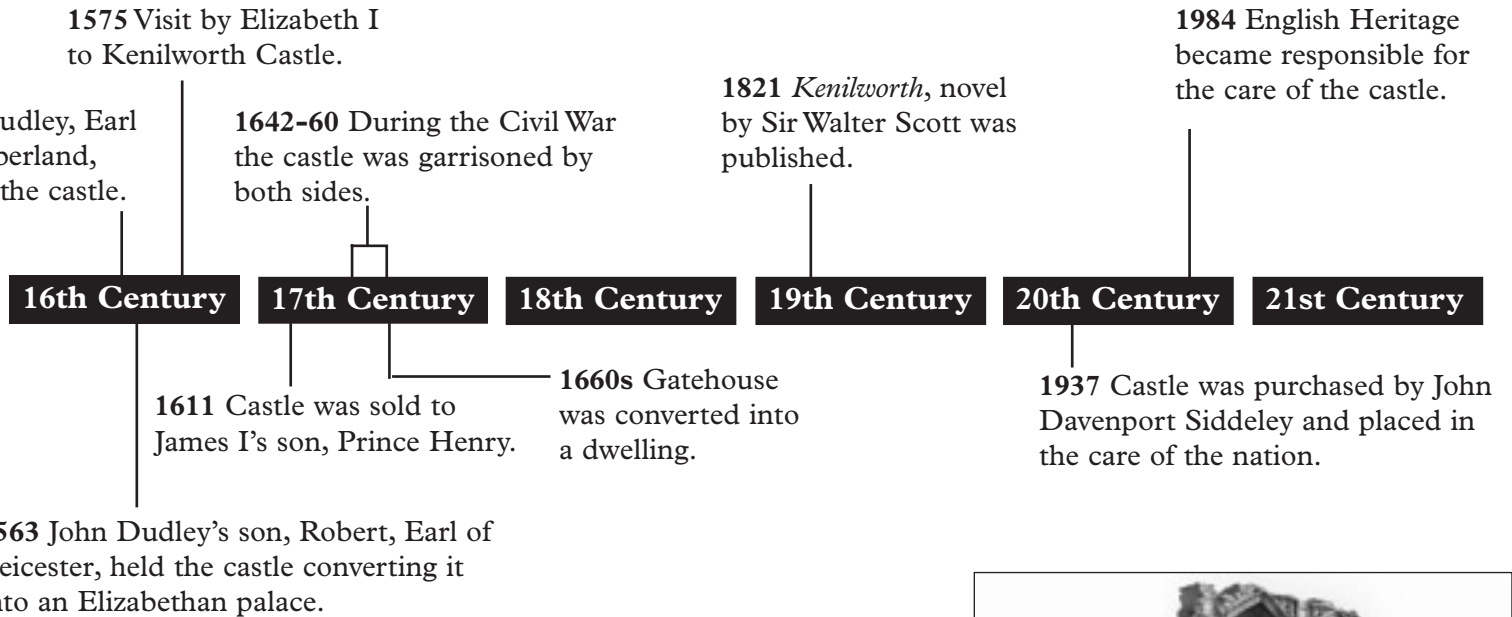
The Tudor castle at Kenilworth was visited by Elizabeth I.



English Heritage Photo Library

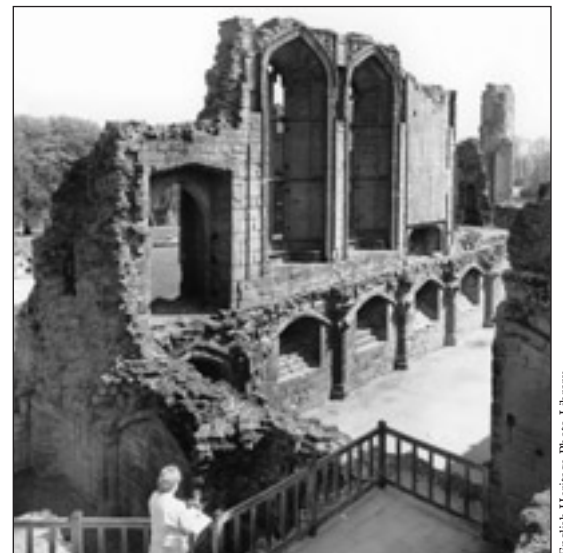
This porch was moved from Leicester's Buildings to the Gatehouse in c1650. Robert Dudley's initials can be seen either side of the doorway.

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retreat on an
e.



English Heritage Photo Library

Kenilworth was becoming more palatial by the end of the fourteenth century.



English Heritage Photo Library

Constructed between 1361 and 1399, John of Gaunt's great hall was the social and political centre of the castle.

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

When Elizabeth I visited the castle in July 1575 a spectacular pageant was arranged.

'Saturday 9th July, 1575:

... it was eight o'clock in the evening ere her Highness came to Killingworth ... passed forth unto the next gate of the Brays, which ... they call now the tiltyard, where a porter, tall of person, big of limb and stern of countenance, wrapped all in silk, with a chub and keys of quantity according, had a rough speech full of passions ... he caused his trumpeters that stood upon the wall of the gate there, to sound up a tune of welcome ... her Highness all along the tiltyard rode unto the inner gate, ... where the Lady of the Lake with two nymphs waiting upon her, arrayed all in silks ... from the midst of the pool, where upon a moveable island, bright blazing with torches ... Over the Castle-gate was there fastened a table beautifully garnished above with her Highness' arms ...'

Extracts from the account by an eyewitness - Robert Laneham, appointed by Dudley as Clerk of the Council Chamber Door.

'Her Majesty proceeded towards the inward court, passed on a bridge, the which was rayed on both sides. And in the toppes of the postes whereof were set sundrie presents: as wine, corne, frutes, fishes, fowles, instruments of musike and weapons for martial defence. She was received into the Inner Court with sweet musike. And so alighting from her horse, the drummes, fyfes and trumpets sounded: wherewith she mounted the stayres and went into her lodging'.

Part of an account entitled 'The Princely Pleasures of the Castle of Kenilworth' by George Gascoigne who was responsible for organising the festivities.

Use these sources to ask pupils to:

- write a newspaper report describing the arrival of the Queen
- write a diary entry for Elizabeth

describing the welcome she receives at the castle

■ imagine that they are the owners of Kenilworth Castle and plan their own welcome celebrations for the Queen and her retinue

■ follow Elizabeth's entry route noting what activities happened where.

EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

Preparation

To ensure pupils get the most out of a visit they need to understand:

■ factors influencing the siting of a castle such as access to water, communications, food sources, and strategic position

■ how and why the design of castles changed

■ the purposes of a castle as compared with those of a palace. A castle was a home, a refuge, a stronghold, a symbol of power, an administrative centre and a gaol. A palace was a home, a symbol of power and an administrative centre

■ the primary defensive features of castles - ditches, towers, arrow slits, portcullises

■ the idea of staged defence using, in Kenilworth's case, the Mere and a range of ditches, the outer curtain wall, an inner ditch and bank, the inner curtain wall, and the keep. Pupils could imagine that their school is under attack by a medieval army - remember no guns or missiles! Where are the weak areas, and where would be worth fortifying? How could the site be made stronger? It is thought that a stonethrower could hurl a 4.5kg missile between 360-410m. Where would you site siege machines such as a mangonel or trebuchet?

■ the range of domestic buildings found in a castle

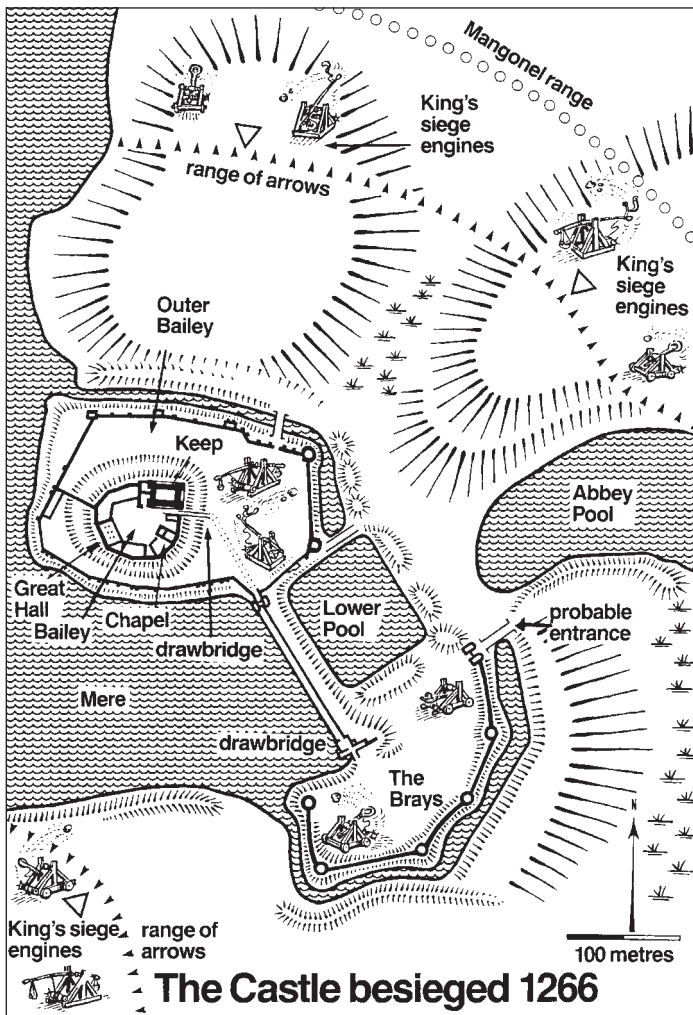
■ how the castle functioned as a community.

History

The exhibition in Leicester's Stables can be used to orientate pupils and help them understand the layout and chronological development of the site. The large model shows the Tudor castle at the height of its power with smaller models explaining how the site has evolved from a medieval defensive castle to a royal palace. Ask pupils to identify where they are standing and to find key features such as the keep, curtain wall, towers, gatehouse and the Mere. You could use the timeline to help identify who were responsible for the four main periods of development as shown by the smaller models.

To allow pupils to understand the range of activities carried out in the castle, when on site divide them into groups and give each a plan of the site and a photograph of a specific feature. Ask them to find the feature and mark it on the plan. In pairs, they could then list the evidence they can find in that room for heating, lighting, water supply and drainage. Now ask them to decide on the function of the room - was it used for living, storage, defence or accommodation?

Alternatively, pupils could investigate the clues in the castle to identify whether it had a military function or was used as a palace. Allocate each group an area such as the great hall, Strong Tower or the keep. Ask each group to look at the thickness of the walls, the size and shape of the windows, how many doors are present and the amount of decoration. They can record their findings on a table, by sketching or photographing the clues and by measuring the thickness of the walls. Once they have investigated their area ask them to decide if their room had a defensive or palatial function.



In 1266 Kenilworth Castle survived a siege for six months.

Back at school, gather together the findings of each group and look at the position of each function within the castle as a whole.

The major factor in the 1266 siege of Kenilworth was the presence of the water defences. If pupils have done the school siege exercise they could repeat it in the castle. Alternatively, tell your pupils that they have been tasked by Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, to undertake a survey of the castle's defences. In groups, ask them to assess each defensive feature

against various forms of possible attack. Use a table like the one below to record their findings.

Queen Elizabeth I visited Kenilworth in 1575. Use the documentary sources and brainstorm ideas on the preparations that may have taken place prior to her arrival at the castle:

- where would she stay?
- what welcome would she receive?

	scaling (climbing)	stone throwing	arrow fire	mining (digging)
curtain wall	very high walls moat to cross no ledges	very high protected by the moat	no windows moat	moat
Keep				
Gatehouse				

English

Kenilworth has inspired many creative people including Shakespeare and Scott. Enough remains of many buildings for pupils to imagine what they may have looked like when complete. Standing inside the great hall, ask pupils to make a list of words under the headings *I see, I feel, I hear* and *I smell*. They can develop these words into a description of the hall, imagining what they can see through the floor when a banquet is in progress. They should remember to describe what is happening around them in the basement as the servants go by.

- where would her servants and horses stay?
- what food would be required?
- what entertainment would be organised?

Now ask pupils to identify where in the castle these would take place, for example the stables, Leicester's Buildings, the kitchens or the tiltyard. On site, divide pupils into smaller groups and allocate them to one of the identified places. Ask them to develop a tableaux scene or freeze-frame depicting the activities going on there.

Using artists' impressions

During its history, Kenilworth has seen many changes. There are four drawings that show these changes (see timeline pages 4-5). They are based on the physical evidence and how the artist interprets expert advice and documentary sources. You can use them with pupils to investigate interpretations of history. Pupils can be asked the following:

- what is still left?
- how did the artist achieve this image?
- where did the artist obtain the rest of his information?
- does the impression influence the way you feel towards the castle? How?

Copies of the drawings are featured in 'Interpreting the past' poster pack.

Design and Technology

The keep and Leicester's Gatehouse are essentially of the same design, but intended for very different purposes, one military and one mainly decorative. Pupils could compare the designs of the two buildings looking for differences and similarities. How are windows used? Why are they that

shape? Have some windows been changed? How thick are the walls? Which is the more comfortable? Which is the more impressive to look at and why?

Geography

The castle gives an excellent view over the surrounding countryside. Pupils could investigate the physical location of the Pleasance and the boundaries of the Mere by using maps, the model in Leicester's Stables and by looking at the evidence in the landscape. There are a number of footpaths across the Mere allowing pupils to discover changes in ground levels, to look at the King's Gate used by Henry V and to investigate the defensive water system.

Using local maps, pupils could research the spatial relationship between the castle, the abbey and the town. This could involve map reading and the investigation of how the town has grown in relation to the castle by plotting the ages of buildings and using documentary sources such as Kelly's Directories.

MAKING A VISIT

Opening hours

1 April - 31 October: daily, 10am - 6pm (5pm in Oct). 1 November - 31 March: daily, 10am - 4pm.

How to get there

Ordnance Survey map ref SP278723.

Road: at M6 junction 4 (M42 junction 7) take the A452 south into Kenilworth. From Coventry take the A429 south for 6 miles. From Warwick take the A429 north for 5 miles.

Rail: Warwick 5 miles.

Bus: Midland Red Number 18. Stratford Blue X16-9.18BR Coventry - Leamington Spa. Tel 01788 535555.

Free educational visits

Educational visits are free for structured curriculum work but

must be booked at least 14 days in advance via the Regional Office. The required staff-pupil ratio is at least 1 to 15. It is essential that you make a preliminary visit. You will be sent a free entry permit to do so when your booking is confirmed.

Contacts

Education Bookings: 112 Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 3AG
Tel: 0121 625 6864.
Education Officer: Tel: 0121 625 6863.

Facilities

Access for the disabled: wheelchair access to site.

Parking: parking for all vehicles. Picnic space is available.

Toilets: on site.

Shop: schools are welcome as all proceeds contribute towards the continuing work of English Heritage.

Education room: will re-open soon with wet weather facilities.

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Posters

Looking at castles, English Heritage, 1994 ISBN 1-85074-490-4

Interpreting the past, English Heritage, 1999
ISBN 1-85074-559-5

Videos

History Trail: *Mighty Monuments*, English Heritage, 1996. 20 minutes. Key Stage 3 pupils investigate a medieval castle using physical evidence and on-line library research
Looking at a castle, English Heritage, 1980. 14 minutes. Key Stages 2 and 3.

CD-ROM

Real Castles, TAG and English Heritage, 2000
ISBN 1-902-804-0115

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

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Written by James Goodman
Edited and produced by Suzanne Spicer
Designed by Michael J Richardson
Printed by Palladian Press, Colchester
© English Heritage 1999 Revised 2002

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