



ENGLISH HERITAGE

# Middleham Castle

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1069 Middleham was granted to Alan the Red, Earl of Richmond, as part of the reward for helping William of Normandy conquer England. Alan's principal castle was Richmond but he also built a castle at Middleham. Earthworks from this first "motte and bailey" castle, called "William Hill", still exist 400 metres to the southwest of the present castle. It was built to defend the northern frontier against the Scots, to keep the English in Wensleydale under Norman control and to guard the road to Skipton. In 1086 Alan granted Middleham to his brother, Ribald.

Around 1170-80 Robert FitzRanulph, grandson of Ribald, built the stone keep, abandoning the more defensive site of the first castle. Compared to many Norman keeps Middleham is very large and provided palatial accommodation. The keep was probably surrounded by a bailey, enclosed by a wooden palisade. A second bailey lay to the east, where the farm now stands.

In 1270 Middleham passed by marriage to the Nevills, one of the most important families in England. Ralph, the first Lord Nevill rebuilt the curtain wall in stone c1300.

Between 1400-25 Ralph, fourth Lord Nevill and now the first Earl of Westmorland, rebuilt the south and west ranges, increasing their height from one to two storeys. He also increased the height of the south-west and north-west towers and converted the north-east tower into a gatehouse. Ralph was then



*The formidable presence of Middleham Castle. Ask pupils what impact it would have had on the surrounding countryside in medieval times.*

the most powerful lord in the north. He had nine children by his first wife and fourteen by his second and consequently needed suitable accommodation for his extensive family. Ralph developed Middleham for Richard, his eldest son by his second marriage, who would not have been able to inherit other estates from his father.

Richard became Earl of Salisbury in 1429 and inherited Middleham in 1440. The castle became his chief residence and he added the north range, further heightened the north-west tower and rebuilt the upper part of the gatehouse. In the Wars of the Roses Richard supported the Duke of York but was captured at the Battle of Wakefield and executed.

Middleham passed to Richard's

eldest son, also called Richard. He became Earl of Warwick and was better known as "Warwick the Kingmaker" due to his military role in the Wars of the Roses.

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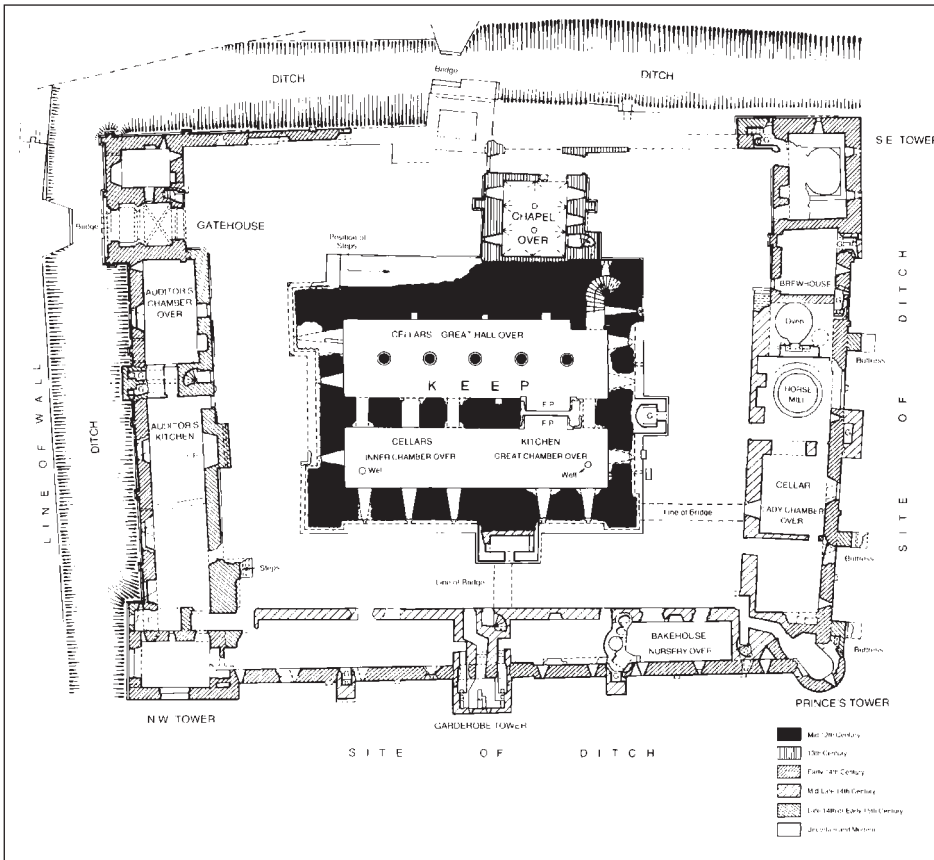
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EDUCATION



Middleham was a now a major military base, a centre of patronage and a thriving social centre for the Earl's numerous retainers. In 1461 Edward IV stayed at Middleham. From 1465 to 1468 Edward IV's brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester trained at Middleham in military skills and courtly manners. In 1469 Warwick turned against Edward IV and imprisoned him at Middleham for some months.

Warwick was killed at the Battle of Barnet in 1471 fighting against Edward IV who gave Middleham to his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Richard married Warwick's younger daughter, Anne, and chose Middleham as his chief residence. In ruling the north on behalf of his brother, Richard displayed great loyalty but he also used the wealth from his Middleham estates to build up a substantial retinue of loyal retainers from among the local landholders. These northern followers enabled Richard to usurp the throne, on the death of his brother, in 1483.

Middleham was Richard's favourite home but after he became king in 1483 he had little opportunity to stay there.

After Richard III's death at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 Middleham's only role was as an estate administrative centre. A survey made in 1538 shows that the main buildings around the keep were still in use but the buildings in the outer courtyard were decaying. About this time the horsemill and brewhouse were built in the south range. In 1604 the castle was granted to Sir Henry Linley and continued to be lived in. In 1662 it was sold to the Wood family who kept it until 1889. The castle was bought, in a ruinous state, by Sir Samuel Cunliffe-Lister. His successor, the second Lord Masham, carried out repairs to the castle (indicated by an inscribed 'M' on the stonework). It was put under the guardianship of the Office of Works in 1925 and since 1984 it has been in the care of English Heritage.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE CASTLE

### The Keep

Middleham is an excellent example of a Norman keep where many features were designed for defence.

These include:

- thick walls which stand on a plinth for greater strength
  - first-floor entrance. This was approached up stone stairs (where the modern wooden stairs are). It was heavily defended by an enclosing wall with three interspersed gates and an open roof which enabled the stairs to be defended from the battlements above
  - tall narrow windows which were high off the ground to deter intruders
  - a turret at each corner to give clear, all round view; two later turrets in the middle of the west and south sides provide latrines. The small entrances outside allowed for the refuse to be periodically removed
  - a crosswall dividing the inside of the keep into two. Should part of the keep ever be taken this wall allowed the remainder to be sealed off and defended.
- The ground floor had two large rooms, the kitchen and cellar, which were vaulted in stone. The cellar is larger and needed a central row of columns to support the roof. The walls and vaults would have been plastered and whitewashed which would help reflect light into these very dark rooms. The three gaps and the open fireplace in the crosswall are in direct line with the kitchen windows. This would help illuminate the cellar. Many of the kitchen servants would have slept here. Evidence indicating that the western room was used as a kitchen include:
- stone cupboards in the walls
  - a large open fireplace (now blocked) which could be used from the kitchen or cellar
  - waste disposal chutes in the base of the south wall
  - two wells
  - two circular stone pits which may have been tanks for live fish.
- A spiral staircase in the southwest turret leads to the upper floors.



*The keep is one of the largest in England measuring 32 metres by 23.8m with walls 3.6m thick, 20m high and built of ashlar with a rubble core. These artist's impressions show how the keep sustained its business and domestic role while the accommodation around the curtain walls was substantially improved.*

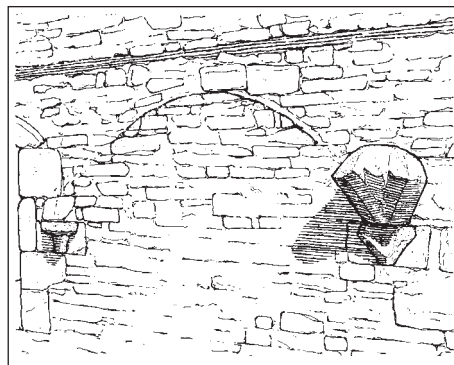
### The Great Hall

A large round-headed door at the top of the staircase provided a ceremonial entrance to the Great Hall. This room was the centre of castle life, serving as a court, a place for public audiences and meetings, a venue for ceremonies, feasting and entertainment and provided a communal sleeping area for servants. At the southern end two small holes (one with a round-headed head) in the wall are drains and indicate where the servery and pantry were. They would be screened off from the rest of the Hall. From here food was prepared and then served (often in procession) to the Earl who would sit opposite the noises and smells of the food preparation and the latrines which were next to them. Note the absence of any fireplace. The Hall was usually heated by a central hearth with outlets in the roof to clear some of the smoke. Behind the Earl's table was a small chapel and to his right is a doorway leading into his private accommodation, the Great Chamber and the Inner Chamber, separated by a wooden partition. Both rooms have a fireplace with cupboards at their sides, a latrine and a small side-room in the corner turrets. Next to the doorway from the Great Chamber to the latrine is a stone wash basin and a wall drain.

Most of the windows in the keep are Norman and are either round or square headed. All are deeply splayed on the inside to allow maximum amount of light to enter.

In the fifteenth century larger windows were inserted in both upper rooms.

Originally the keep had two steeply pitched timber roofs over the east and west section. The two lines of corbels (projecting supporting stones) running along the walls of the Great Hall mark where the original roof was. In the fifteenth century the roof over the Great Hall was removed and a new storey added. This created more private accommodation with extensive views over the curtain wall to the surrounding countryside.



*The chapel block was added around 1300. Evidence clearly shows that all three floors were vaulted.*

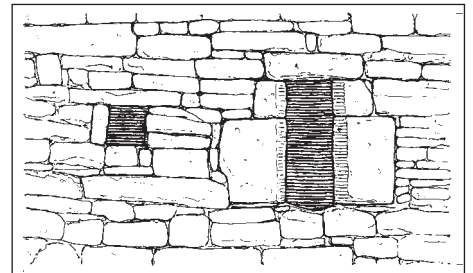
### Chapel

About 1300 a three-storey block was built between the keep and the curtain wall. The top storey was a chapel and the two lower storeys were probably living quarters for priests, lay clerks or choristers since a latrine block (extensively ruined) is attached to it. The lower floors have small round-headed windows

while the chapel has large traceried windows. Entrance to the chapel was from the top of the main entrance into the keep. A passageway was at ground floor level to allow access through the building.

### Curtain wall

The lower part of the curtain wall was built around 1300 with shallow buttresses and a two-storey tower at each corner. A stringcourse (horizontal band of stone) halfway up the exterior of the wall indicates its original height. On the walls are putlog holes.



*Holes in the wall can be very confusing for pupils. Adjacent to this very small window on the exterior of the south curtain wall is a putlog hole. It was used to support scaffolding and would have been filled in with rubble or plaster, which has now fallen out.*

The curtain walls were heightened in the fifteenth century when more domestic accommodation was built. The south and west walls were strengthened with large buttresses. Evidence of alterations can be seen in blocked up windows next to the horse mill and the roof creasing of the southeast tower from an earlier single storey building.

On the north and east sides of the

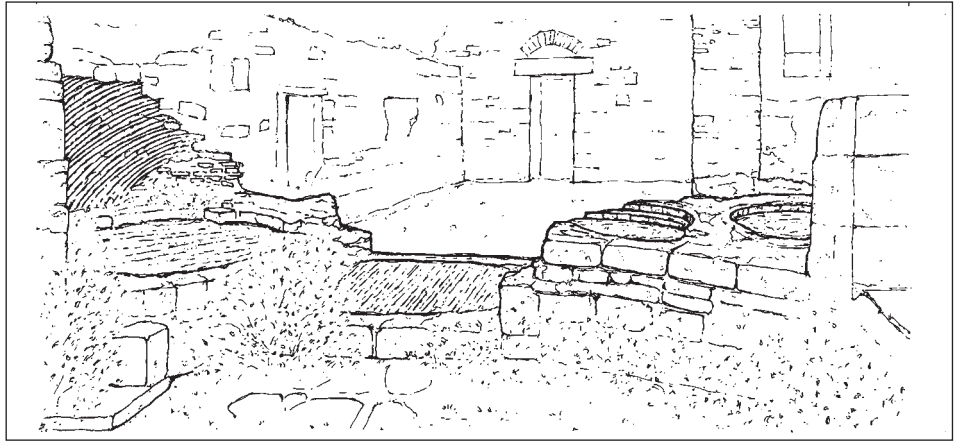
curtain wall is a dry ditch 8m wide and 3m deep, but 45 metres to the south of the present wall is the outline of a larger ditch.

### Curtain wall buildings

The earl's household (which might number 200) lived in buildings around three sides of the courtyard and would be allocated rooms according to their rank. In the fifteenth century increased accommodation was provided by replacing the single-storey buildings with two-storeyed ranges (their height is indicated by roofline on the east wall of the Prince's Tower and the north face of the Garderobe Tower) and heightening the towers. This resulted in a number of self-contained apartments. Rooms on the ground floor have low vaults and are therefore smaller; unable to have windows at ground floor level through the curtain wall for defensive reasons, their windows would face the keep and would only receive a limited amount of light. The rooms above, apart from being larger and overlooking the countryside, would receive more light from being higher up and therefore able to pierce the curtain wall. Evidence indicating the domestic nature of these buildings can be found in their numerous fireplaces, latrines, separate external staircases and style of windows. When the courtyard buildings were replaced additional small towers were built in the middle of the north, south and west ranges to provide latrines for the new chambers. The tower on the west contained eight private latrines accessed from different levels. Elsewhere latrines were contained inside buttresses and deposited through holes in their base into the ditch.

A first-floor doorway in the south-east corner of the keep shows where a connecting wooden bridge was later built to link the keep with the Privy Chamber.

In the sixteenth century larger and more ornate windows were inserted in the first floor rooms along the north wall. Only their large open-



*The remains of the bakery ovens.*

ings remain. At the same time a horsemill and two ovens were built in the south range and the basement of the Southeast Tower was altered in the sixteenth century, possibly to hold a vat for brewing. The bakery has cupboards along its walls but the date of the ovens is uncertain. These circular, domed ovens were constructed of brick, since having already been fired at high temperatures, brick would not crack when heated.

### Gatehouse

The earliest entrance into the castle was through the outer bailey (no longer visible), across a drawbridge and through a gatehouse (only the foundations remain) in the east wall. The north-east tower was converted into a gatehouse c1400-25 when a passageway through was inserted. This passage is in two sections, separated by a stone arch. There is stone seating at the side of the inner section. It has a plain vaulted roof whereas the roof of the inner section has a rib vault. In the corners of the vaulting are carved heads. The upper floors had fireplaces and latrines, and would have provided self-contained accommodation for members of the household or garrison. The upper section of the gatehouse was rebuilt in the fifteenth century. Defensive features are:

- the ditch in front
- absence of windows on the ground floor
- battlements on the roof
- the corbels (stone supports)

around three sides of the top. They supported the machicolations (battlements which project from the wall with spaces through which missiles could be dropped onto attackers)

- projecting turrets
- buttresses at the corners to provide additional strength. The upper diagonal sections are fifteenth-century additions



David Walsley

*Asking pupils to 'attack' or defend the gatehouse will help them understand the many defensive elements incorporated into the design.*

- rebates by the archway which show where the gates were and the nearby holes for the drawbar slots
- the slot for the portcullis
- a narrow slit in the entrance passage to provide defensive cover from the guard chamber
- a door in the passageway leads to the guard chamber. Even if this room was taken there is no access

to any other part of the tower. The upper floors can only be reached from a staircase at the rear.

There was possibly a drawbridge where the modern bridge is now. The small 'keyhole' gun loop high up next to the north-east turret is not medieval but shows that attempts were made to adapt the castle to changes in weapon technology.

### The outer bailey

Although nothing now remains there would have been an additional bailey to sustain such a large and important household. This bailey would contain numerous workshops, stables, storehouses and additional living accommodation. These were initially built of timber with some being rebuilt in stone.

## EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

Preparation for a visit should include an understanding of:

- castle terminology and defensive measures
- how and why the design of castles changed. It will be useful to study aerial photographs and ground plans of other similar castles and keeps
- the many different people needed to sustain the household of an important earl.

### History

Middleham is an ideal site for pupils to study change and development in castle design. Three distinct periods are evident:

- the motte and bailey castle represented by William's Hill
- the twelfth-century Norman keep
- the fourteenth-century 'court-yard' style with rectangular towers.

Each phase has its own distinctive design in response to changes in medieval warfare and the need for more and improved living quarters.

### Attack and defence

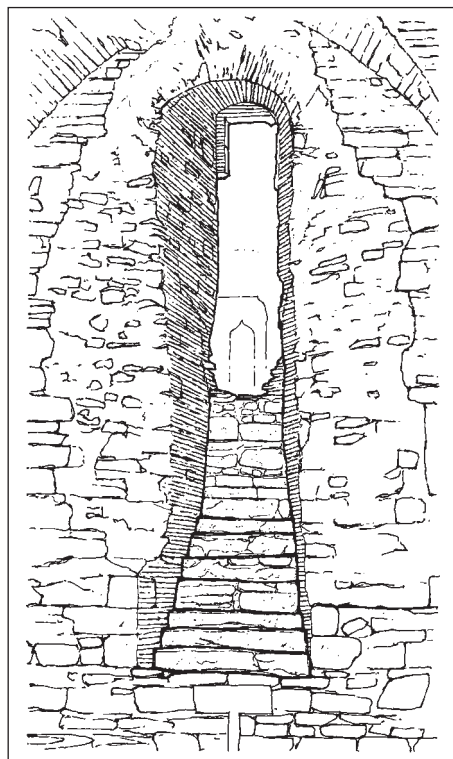
To help pupils understand the defensive role of the castle and the elements which contributed to it they could make pictorial glossaries

on site. Alternatively pupils could make their own list or drawings of different defensive elements which they would expect to see in a castle as preparation work. On their visit they can use these to identify the remains and mark them on a specially amended site plan.

Ask pupils to imagine they were planning an attack on the gatehouse. They need to identify the obstacles and work out how they will be able to overcome them and in what order. Alternatively you could ask pupils to imagine they were a captain in charge of six men manning the gatehouse. What instructions would he give to them and in what order if an attack was imminent?

To appreciate the defensive features of the keep pupils need to assess the function of the:

- walls - thickness, height and construction
- entrance - position and means of being defended
- windows - size, position and structure
- crosswall - its defensive role
- corner turrets - their strategic value
- plinth - functional rather than decorative use.



*The splayed and stepped windows in the ground floor of the keep are situated high up for defensive purposes.*

The keep was built in the twelfth century but continued to be used until the Tudor period. To investigate the changing role of the keep pupils should look at the additions and alterations carried out over this period. Initially the keep was a self-contained defensive unit surrounded by wooden buildings and a wooden curtain wall. Look for ways in which the keep was adapted to improve the quality of living accommodation. Evidence includes the later latrine turrets, the fourteenth century windows, extra floor above the Great Hall and the bridges linking the keep to other chambers around the courtyard.

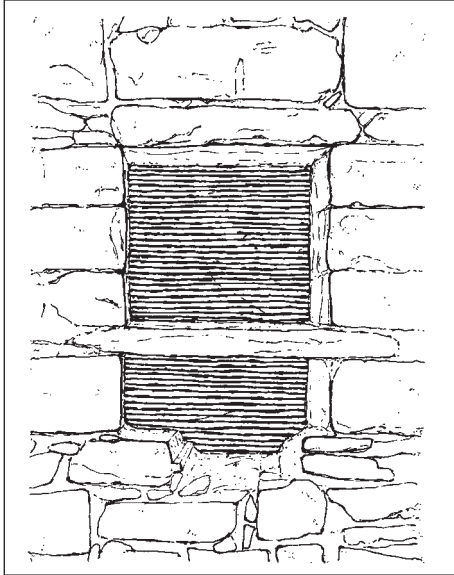
Middleham castle is ideal for studying the layout and domestic arrangements of a large medieval household. Ask pupils to compare the living accommodation in the keep, the south range and the north range which was improved in the sixteenth-century. (Note the shift from communal quarters to private apartments in the courtyard with their large number of fireplaces and generous provision of latrines). This information can be recorded using drawings, notes or photographs and presented as a display about change and continuity of castle occupancy.

To encourage pupils to observe the remains for clues about how people lived in the past you could ask pupils to examine, compare and list any differences and similarities in the four corner towers. This will ensure that pupils look closely at the physical evidence. Pupils should take notes and illustrations to clarify their findings but it is also very good practice if pupils were to record unexplained or ambiguous features requiring further research or investigation back at school.

At a simpler level you could give pupils a plan of the site and ask them to go round indicating which rooms would have been the lightest, darkest, warmest, coldest, noisiest, smelliest, grandest, smallest, most private, most decorative or most comfortable. Record those aspects of the room which have enabled

pupils to make their decisions. This will help pupils to imagine how the room would have been used.

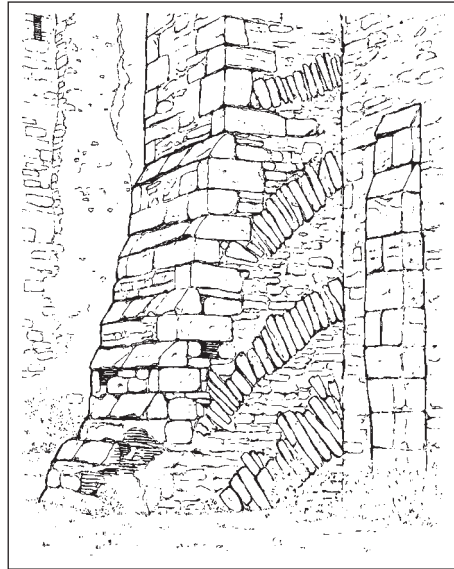
Use the artist's impression of the castle to locate existing or missing features. On an enlarged copy pupils can highlight in colour those remains which have enabled the artist to make his interpretation how the castle may have looked.



*By studying medieval diet pupils could suggest what might have been stored in the wall cupboards on the ground floor of the keep.*

### Preparations for a feast

There are several features which provide evidence about medieval life and cooking. Ask pupils to find them and mark on a blank plan of the castle or sketch the evidence. Before the visit ask pupils to research what provisions would be needed to supply the bakery, brewhouse and ovens to help them understand how these buildings operated and how food was produced. Based on preparatory research into medieval diet pupils could devise a menu for a feast. They need to find out where the food came from, where it would be kept, how and where it will be prepared, how many different types of servants will be required to prepare a feast, and how they will get the food to the servery and then into the Great Hall without it going cold.



*The buttress on the left was added in the fifteenth century to support the upper floors which were built at the same time. Its shape and design show how forces were counteracted. Compare it with the buttress on the right built around 1300 when the curtain wall was much smaller.*

### Technology

Middleham castle has examples of many different types of structures which can be used to explore the technology of a past society.

Sketches, photographs or annotated diagrams are useful means of investigation and recording.

As part of an investigation into building technology ask pupils to find, record and explain how:

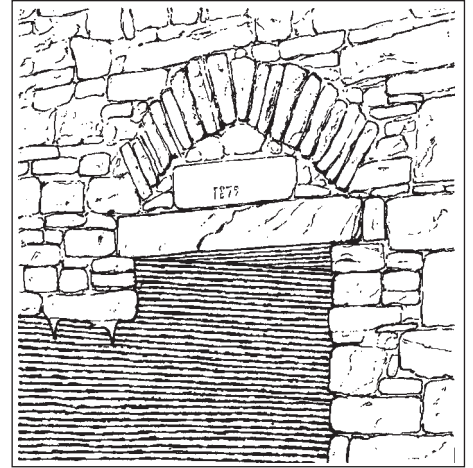
- a buttress was used (shallow late thirteenth-century buttresses can be compared to the large fifteenth-century stepped examples)
- putlog holes were essential to the construction of walls
- different shapes of stone were used to support the weight above windows and doors
- fireplaces and chimney flues were built into the fabric of the walls
- different types of vaulting supported a roof
- a spiral staircase was constructed.

Detailed sketches could then be translated into models back at school. Pupils could look for other means of roof construction - joist holes, rebates and corbels.

Back in school pupils could test the forces involved and the solutions employed by the builders. This could also take the form of models which could then be subjected to

stress experiments.

Structures with specific design features can be investigated prior to, or after a visit. Look at the construction of a drawbridge over the moat, the materials needed and the mechanisms used for its operation. A similar study could be made of the construction and the mechanisms of a portcullis.



*There are many means of supporting masonry at Middleham Castle. Here a relieving arch takes the weight off the lintel.*

### Health and hygiene

Investigating the technology behind the provision of lighting, heating, cooking, sanitation and water gives a clear insight into the living conditions in the medieval period.

Ask pupils to locate and record:

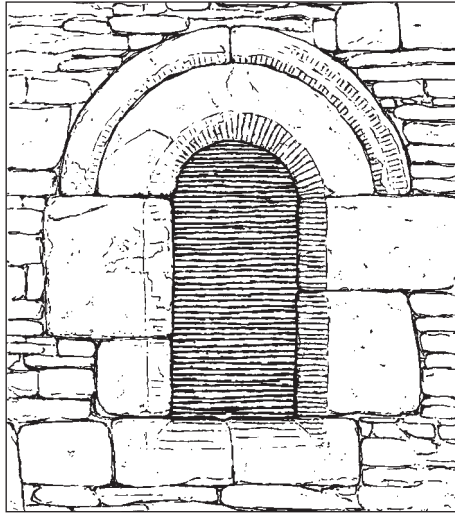
- the ovens. Work out from the remaining evidence how they were constructed, how they operated and why some were made of brick. The a small sixteenth-century oven in the south range is still complete
- the large fireplace in the keep kitchen. Compare it to fireplaces elsewhere. Pupils should note that there were no fireplaces in the Great Hall. How, therefore, was it heated? (Castle builders clearly were able to construct great fireplaces, but culture and tradition retained the open fire in the Great Hall)
- the source of water. How was it obtained, where was it needed, how was it distributed and disposed of
- how waste products from food preparation were disposed of
- the latrines. How they operated and served the various buildings and floor levels. how was the refuse

disposed of, if indeed it was removed from some outlets.

Plotting these features on a blank site plan will show their proximity to one another and to the living accommodation. Pupils can then analyse any problems which these arrangements may have had on the welfare (health) and lifestyle of the inhabitants. Does this help explain why the main living accommodation was on the upper floors? Pupils need also to understand why it was usual for castles to have a brew-house. A large and important household would also have a number of domestic animals (in addition to numerous vermin). What provision has been made to accommodate or exclude these animals?

### Light

Give pupils a site plan and ask them to score each room according to how much light would enter. They should justify their decision with notes or diagrams detailing the size, position, design and amount of windows. Discuss what effect the deeply splayed windows or the 'stepped' windows in the basement of the keep would have to the amount of light entering. They should also consider that rooms overlooking the ditch would receive more light than those overlooking the keep, and those on the first floor would receive more than those on the ground floor. Is there any other evidence to show how limited light could be augmented - fire-places, wall-openings, reflections from whitewashed plaster or brackets for light fittings? Pupils could also research which windows may have had glass and when this would most likely have been introduced. For windows without glass how would the wind and rain have been kept out and what effect would this have had on the room. To what extent do the very large sixteenth-century windows compromise the defence of the castle or is this now an irrelevant factor? These large Tudor windows are clear indications about the changing role of the castle in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, reflecting the political situation in England.



*The design of windows varies considerably according to position and period of building. They also provide clues to indicate what particular spaces were used for.*

### English

The castle is a good site to develop language work. The use and application of language work is necessarily linked to work in history. Paired or group work is an interactive means of developing observation, describing and recording skills and new environments inevitably stimulate many responses. After detailed investigation of the site pupils could be asked to present their findings in a number of ways to a variety of audiences. Ask pupils to produce:

- an illustrated guide for younger children about how to build a castle
  - a storybook contrasting the life of the young Prince Edward and the child of one of the servants
  - a self-assembly model of the keep with instructions how to build it
  - a storyboard for a documentary
  - an article in a medieval House and Homes magazine
  - a health and safety report about living conditions in the castle
  - an audio commentary. Rather than present information as a narrative try creating it around an event, or through more suggestive means such as listening into conversations that may have been held between different groups of people at each area of the tour.
- Accompany this with background sounds which you would expect to hear from nearby buildings
- a newspaper report about the arrival of Edward IV at Middleham

- a leaflet produced by an estate agent who is trying to sell one of the apartments in the courtyard
- a timetable and duty roster for the servants preparing for a banquet.

### Castle and court

As so much evidence remains to show what life was like at the castle pupils could imagine that they have been asked by English Heritage to devise an unusual special event which will involve audience participation, or develop a living history day to inform and entertain the public. In groups they must plan on site where and what they will be doing and to prepare scripts. This can be followed up at school by research into the props and costumes needed. Pupils should then advertise this event using different media such as radio announcements, large posters, leaflets and press coverage. A programme for the day may also be needed.

An excellent stimulus for creative writing is to ask pupils to record their impressions and feelings in different parts of the castle such as the top of the keep, in the basement, the gatehouse, by the north curtain wall or in one of the latrine blocks. Short sentences or words to describe what they see, hear, touch, smell or feel could generate many forms of written work such as poetry, scripts for a drama, diaries, letters or prose.

Extend this into a paired activity by asking pupils to become two characters of equal status (two servants, knights, members of the family, guests or delivery men) having a conversation as they are walking through the castle. Their conversations should include references to their route and convey their impressions of what they encounter. Back at school compare the attitudes of this cross-section of medieval society.

Exercises could be based around the Middleham Jewel, who owned it and how it was lost.



David Walmsley

*An understanding of the elements featured on the statue of Richard III could help pupils appreciate the politics of the fifteenth century.*

The compact nature of the castle makes it ideal for role play and storytelling. Begin a story or piece of drama in one area and ask groups of pupils to develop it further involving more characters and using different areas. Alternatively, pupils could collect physical descriptions of features as background material for a story that they have already drafted at school or as resource material for an adventure, mystery, tragedy, romance or spy story.

### Art and design

Projects can be devised which will develop pupils' use of the graphic vocabulary - line, tone, texture, shape, colour and pattern. Use sketches as a stimulus for creative, abstract two- or three-dimensional work back at school.

The interiors are an ideal source for work in light and shadow. Looking through doorways and windows enable pupils to focus on the shapes and patterns.

The geometric nature of the structures of the castle make it an excellent subject for modelmaking. This could be extended by asking pupils to record both internal and external evidence which will allow them to make their own interpretive models of how they think parts of the castle would have been like.

Create a model of the whole site by giving pairs of pupils sections of the curtain wall or elevations of the keep to draw (interior and exterior) and assembling either on site or back at school.

Drawings could be used to develop theatrical backdrops and stage scenery based around real or imaginary events. Charcoal or ink drawings can provide dramatic imagery, especially if enlarged.

## MAKING A VISIT

### Opening hours

1 April-31 Oct; 10am-6pm  
1 Nov-30 March; Wed-Sun,  
10am-4pm, closed 1-2pm.

### Booking procedure

Educational visits are free but must be booked at least two weeks in advance by contacting English Heritage, 37 Tanner Row, York, YO1 6WP.  
Tel: 01904 601901.

### Maximum party number:

80 with an adult/pupil ratio of 1:15. Please supervise pupils at all times and do not allow them to climb the walls or enter the ditch.

### How to get there

The castle is signposted from the centre of the village.

### Facilities

**Parking:** limited parking nearby.

**Picnics:** permissible but please take all litter home.

**Wheelchair access:** most of the ground floor area is accessible.

**Toilets:** are a short distance from the castle in the village.

**Shop:** Our custodians welcome school parties as all proceeds contribute towards the continuing work of English Heritage.

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### Books for teachers

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*Maths and the Historic Environment*, English Heritage, 1992, ISBN 1-85074-329-0.

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### Videos

*Maths, Science and Technology*, English Heritage, 1992, 17 minutes. Based around a visit to a castle.

*Looking at a castle*, English Heritage, 1980, 14 minutes. This looks at clues to be found in a medieval castle.

*Role Up-* history through role play, English Heritage, 1994, 30 minutes.

### Posters

Looking at Castles, Six A3-size b & w posters looking at different aspects of medieval castles.

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