



ENGLISH HERITAGE
EDUCATION

TEACHERS' KIT

Stokesay Castle

This kit helps teachers plan a visit to Stokesay Castle, one of the first fortified manor houses in England. It is incredibly well-preserved and remains largely unchanged since medieval times. Use these resources before, during and after your visit to help students get the most out of their learning.



KS1-2

KS3

KS4+

GET IN TOUCH WITH OUR EDUCATION BOOKINGS TEAM:

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Step into England's story

WELCOME

This Teachers' Kit for Stokesay Castle has been designed for teachers and group leaders to support a free self-led visit to the site. It includes a variety of materials suited to teaching a wide range of subjects and key stages, with practical information, activities for use on site and ideas to support follow-up learning.

We know that each class and study group is different, so we've collated our resources into one kit allowing you to decide which materials are best suited to your needs. Please use the contents page, which has been colour-coded to help you easily locate what you need, and view individual sections. All of our activities have clear guidance on the intended use for study so you can adapt them for your desired learning outcomes.

To further aid your planning, we have created Hazard Information guidance, which you can download from the Stokesay Castle **Schools page**. You can find more practical information about your booked visit to Stokesay Castle in the Education Visit Permit and the Site Information Pack which have been sent to you.

We hope you enjoy your visit and find this Teachers' Kit useful. If you have any queries please don't hesitate to get in touch with a member of our team either via bookeducation@english-heritage.org.uk or on 0370 333 0606.

English Heritage Learning Team

ICON KEY

The icons below will help you quickly identify the types of activities and information presented.

						
						
AUDIO	SPEAKING	VIDEO	HANDS ON	LOOK	LISTEN	SCIENCE
						
SMELL	WRITE	READ	ROLE PLAY	CHALLENGE	DID YOU KNOW?	MUSIC
						
MAP	QUOTE	EXAMINE	MATHS	ART	INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY	GROUP ACTIVITY

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KSI-2

KS3

KS4+

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PRE-VISIT

Information and activities you can use in the classroom before your visit.

STOKESAY CASTLE

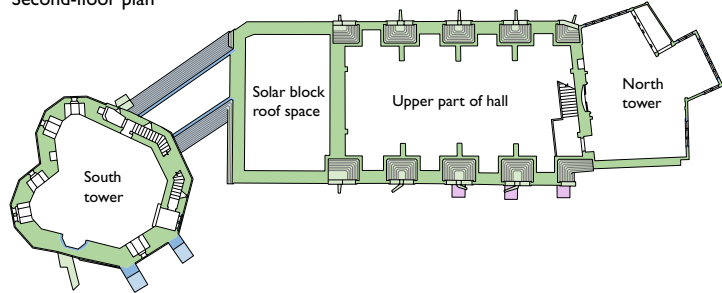
SITE PLAN

STOKESAY CASTLE SITE AND FLOOR PLANS

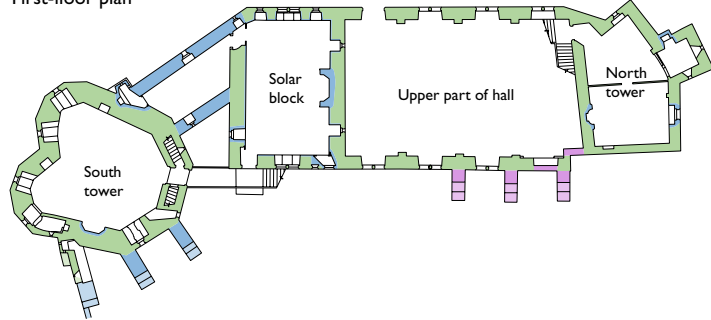
- Early 13th century
- 1285–1305
- 1639–64
- 19th century and later



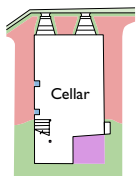
Second-floor plan



First-floor plan



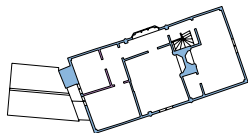
Solar block basement plan



Ground-floor plan



Gatehouse first-floor plan



HISTORICAL INFORMATION

DISCOVER THE STORY OF STOKESAY CASTLE

Below is a short history of Stokesay Castle. Use this information to learn how the site has changed over time. You'll find the definitions of the key words in the Glossary.

STOKESAY: A SYMBOL OF SUCCESS

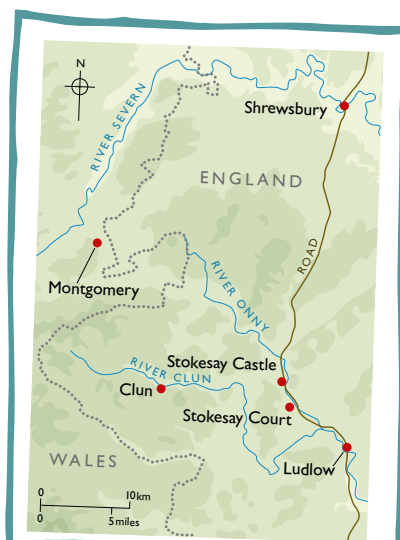
Stokesay Castle is one of the finest examples in England of a **fortified manor house**. Almost all the surviving buildings were built by Laurence of Ludlow in the 1280s and early 1290s and remain largely unchanged.

Laurence of Ludlow was an enterprising medieval wool **merchant** who had become one of the richest men in England, thanks to a thriving trade in **exporting** wool overseas.

Laurence knew that owning land was a sign of status, so he bought the **manor** of Stokesay in 1281, and built an impressive home there. At a time when merchants preferred to live in town, leaving the nobles to live in the country, Laurence took a bold step and invested in land, in effect turning himself into a country gentleman.

It's not clear how much Laurence paid for the land but in 1270 the manor was estimated to be worth £26 13s. 4d. per year to its owner. If Laurence had paid the usual price (equal to ten years' income) then it would have cost him £266. This was a large sum but Laurence was very rich and could afford it.

Find out more about **Laurence of Ludlow and the medieval wool trade** online: www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/stokesay-castle/history-and-stories/laurence-of-ludlow



A map of the area surrounding Stokesay. The castle was located in the good sheep-rearing lands of the Welsh Marches and close to the markets of Ludlow and Shrewsbury, making it an ideal place for doing business.

LAURENCE'S MEDIEVAL MANOR HOUSE

The buildings of the manor house were largely completed by 1291, when Laurence obtained a licence to **crenellate** from King Edward I (r.1272–1307). Laurence was a successful businessman, not a knight, so his request to fortify his building was probably more for show than defence. The fact that Laurence's request was granted suggests he was very important to the king.



A view of the south tower from across the moat, showing its rooftop crenellations.

Edward I conquered Wales in 1284, ending the conflicts along the English and Welsh border. This made **Shropshire** much safer, but the late 13th century was also a period of increasing activity by dangerous gangs of thieves. In an age before banks, Laurence probably kept much of his money at home. That, plus his luxurious clothes, furnishings and jewellery, could have made Stokesay Castle an easy target for robbers.

Stokesay's **moat**, towers and **curtain wall** were not enough to withstand a siege but were enough to intimidate thieves and impress visitors to the castle. For Laurence, Stokesay Castle struck a balance between being secure while also being a symbol of his wealth, taste and influence.

LORD OF THE MANOR

Stokesay Castle was at the centre of a working farm for crops and livestock, notably cattle, sheep and pigs. Estate surveys show that the manor of Stokesay included 120 acres of **arable** land and six of meadow (for hay), along with a wood, two watermill and a **dovecote**. The castle also provided easy access to the valley of the **river Onny**, where there was a **fishery** and routes into central Wales.



A reconstruction drawing showing how Stokesay Castle may have looked in about 1290. It was a secure building and also a symbol of Laurence's impressive status.

Being **lord** of the manor gave Laurence of Ludlow control over the people who lived and worked on his land. Medieval society was a social **hierarchy**, with the king at the top, noblemen and religious officials in the middle, knights and merchants like Laurence beneath them and **peasants** right at the bottom. The peasants of Stokesay took the cereal grains, which they grew on the farmland, and paid to grind them at Stokesay's **mill**. They had to pay fees or services to Laurence and they could be fined for minor offences such as not turning up to court or stealing foodstuff.

1294–1498: THE LATER LUDLOWS

Laurence of Ludlow drowned in a shipwreck in 1294 while shipping wool to the Low Countries (parts of Belgium and the Netherlands). Laurence's descendants remained lords of Stokesay for more than two centuries, until 1498. Their extraordinary inheritance allowed them to live as country **squires** and they enjoyed a respected position among Shropshire's elite upper class.



An aerial view of Stokesay Castle, which stayed in the Ludlow family for over 200 years.

Laurence's grandson, Sir Laurence, met a violent end when a fight broke out in 1353. However, on the whole, the Ludlows stayed away from danger as they devoted themselves to running their estates and furthering family interests.

The Ludlows made essential repairs to the buildings at minimal cost, but didn't alter much. They employed labourers to farm the land and used the buildings as Laurence had intended: to promote the family name, impress important guests and entertain visitors with food, drink and music.

TUDOR DEBTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

The Ludlow family's involvement with Stokesay Castle ended when Sir Richard Ludlow died in 1498, with no male **heir** to pass his estates on to. Stokesay passed through one of his granddaughters, to Thomas Vernon, from a wealthy Derbyshire family.

Thomas's grandson, Henry Vernon, was obsessed with climbing the social ladder. He invested huge amounts of time and money into establishing his claim to the lands and title of the Baron Grey of Powys. His account books show that he visited Stokesay Castle from time to time, probably doing business there to raise money for his cause. Henry Vernon was eventually ruined when he was arrested for debt. In 1598 he sold his Shropshire properties, including Stokesay, to Sir George Mainwaring of Ightfield.

Mainwaring soon sold Stokesay Castle on at a profit to a group of buyers in 1620 who in turn sold it to a rich widow, Dame Elizabeth Craven, and her son William, later first Earl of Craven.

William was a soldier and also a keen builder. In 1640–41 he spent just over £530 on works at Stokesay, mostly on building a new **gatehouse**.



A reconstruction drawing of the gatehouse as it may have looked in about 1640, soon after William Craven built it.

STOKESAY IN THE CIVIL WAR

During the **English Civil War**, William Craven was a committed **Royalist** and he stationed a **garrison** at Stokesay Castle on the king's behalf, the only time in its history that it was put to military use. But when **Parliamentarian** armies moved into Shropshire in 1645, the castle was surrendered, apparently without a shot being fired. The victors demolished the curtain walls almost to the level of the moat, but left the new gatehouse standing.



Cannons like this were used by both sides during the English Civil War. Stokesay was apparently surrendered to the Parliamentarian army before a single shot was fired.

William Craven recovered all his estates after Charles II (r.1660–85) was restored to the throne in 1660. The garrison had left the castle in a run-down state, but it was restored by its tenants, members of the Baldwyn family.

VICTORIAN VISITORS

For most of the 18th and 19th centuries, Stokesay Castle was let to a series of tenant farmers. Some buildings were used as stores and workshops, the hall became a **granary**, while the basement of the south tower was converted into a **smithy** – a fire there 1830 burnt out all the floors above.

While the buildings were becoming more and more run-down, Stokesay Castle was beginning to interest antiquaries and artists. Increasing numbers of sketches, watercolours and engravings were made.

Visitors who understood the castle's historical value were concerned about its poor condition. Frances Stackhouse Acton, a talented artist and **antiquary**, appealed to Lord Craven in 1853 to save it from total ruin. Just over £100 was spent two years later on 'Clearing out and securing Stoke Castle', but it wasn't enough to reverse the effects of centuries of neglect.



A sketch of the hall at Stokesay, made by Frances Stackhouse Acton.

in

REPAIRING AND PRESERVING STOKESAY CASTLE

In 1869 John Derby Allcroft, a successful London glove maker, bought the estate and soon began to repair it. He built himself a new mansion nearby, at Stokesay Court, and ‘decided that the Castle should be left empty but kept safe and sound as an historic monument’.

By 1887 the castle buildings were structurally sound, while probably looking much as they had done in the late 17th century. Allcroft’s restoration included making the gatehouse fit to be lived in by a **caretaker**, which he did very carefully, without altering its external appearance.

Allcroft’s descendants opened the castle to the public, and spent most of what they received from admission fees on its upkeep. In 1986 Jewell Magnus-Allcroft entered into an agreement whereby English Heritage would care for Stokesay Castle during her lifetime, and assume ownership of it upon her death, which occurred in 1992.



Stokesay Castle as it looks today, viewed across the pond, from the west.

GLOSSARY

TRICKY TERMS AND
WHAT THEY MEAN

Below is a list of words you might come across while exploring Stokesay Castle. Use this Glossary to find out what they mean.

antiquary – someone who researches, collects or sells old things, such as historic objects and buildings

arable – land that is fit for planting and growing crops

caretaker – a person employed to look after a property

crenellate – a protective feature along the roofs and rooftop walkways of defensive buildings, recognisable by a repeated pattern of indented squares or rectangles

curtain wall – a strong wall around a castle, designed to protect the buildings and people inside

dovecot – a shelter with many separate entrances and nest compartments, used for housing pigeons to eat

English Civil War – a series of armed conflicts between the Parliamentarians and the Royalists. They were disputing the way in which the country was governed.

exporting – the act of sending goods to another country for sale

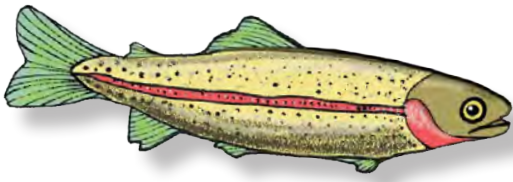


The south tower is the most castle-like building at Stokesay. It is self-contained and has a crenellated roof.



A 19th-century watercolour painting of the demolished dovecote at Stokesay.

fishery – an area of water where fish are reared, caught and processed for eating, then sold



fortified manor house – the home of a lord with defensive features built into the design

garrison – a group of troops, including foot soldiers, gunners and cavalry (on horses), living permanently in a castle, with the job of defending it

gatehouse – room(s) built over a castle entrance, used by guards on duty, for living in, receiving guests and sometimes as prisons



The gatehouse at Stokesay was added in about 1640 by William Craven.

granary – a place for storing grain, which is used for making bread

heir – a person who is legally entitled to the family estates. In medieval England, only male children could be heirs, and the eldest son would have the first claim.

hierarchy – a system in which members of society are ranked according to their status or authority

lord – a general title given to a nobleman. In medieval Britain, lords were also landowners.

manor – an area of land held by a nobleman in the medieval period

merchant – someone who buys and sells goods

mill – a building or group of buildings where cereal grains (e.g. wheat) are pressed and ground by a rotating machine to make flour. The mill at Stokesay was powered by water.

moat – a ditch that wraps around a castle, for defensive purposes. These can be dry or filled with water.



It's not clear whether the moat at Stokesay was originally filled with water, or kept dry. Either way, it would have been an effective barrier against animals and low-level crime.

Onny (river) – a waterway that flows through Shropshire, which gets its name from old Welsh and means 'the river on which Ash trees grew'

Parliamentarian – the name given to people who supported and/or fought on the side of Parliament in the English Civil War. They believed King Charles I should be removed from the throne and that England should be ruled by Parliament instead.



Illustration of King Charles I as he may have looked in the 1640s. The English Civil War ended when the Parliamentarians successfully removed him from the throne.

smithy – the place where a blacksmith works, making and repairing iron and metal objects such as horseshoes, nails and tools. All estates as large as Stokesay would have had their own blacksmith on site.



An iron horseshoe from the 13th century, found at Stokesay. It was made at a smithy.

peasants – people at the bottom of medieval society (also known as the feudal system) who worked on the land owned by a lord, paying him fees, growing crops and raising animals

Royalist – the name given to people who supported and/or fought on the side of the king in the English Civil War. They believed the king, Charles I, should remain on the throne and keep his law-making and decision-making powers.

Shropshire – a county in the West Midlands, bordering Wales

squire – a country landowner in England, often the main local landowner

MIEVEAL BRITAIN

1066–C.1500

1216–72

Reign of King Henry III.

1272–1307

Reign of King Edward I.

1277

Edward I reduces the territory of Wales.

1282–3

Edward I conquers Wales, ending Welsh independence.

1294

Laurence of Ludlow, the most important wool merchant in England and lord of Stokesay, lends more than £600 to Edward I and advises him on trade policy.

1200

1281

Laurence of Ludlow buys the manor of Stokesay.

1285

Building work probably begins on the manor house.

1291

Laurence obtains a licence to crenellate (fortify) his manor house and adds defensive details. The building work is largely complete.

1294

Laurence drowns while shipping wool to the Low Countries (parts of Belgium and the Netherlands). His estates stay in the Ludlow family until 1498.

13TH
CENTURY

TUDOR BRITAIN

1485–1603

1506–47

Reign of King Henry VIII.

1536–43

King Henry VIII passes a series of measures, known as the 'Laws in Wales Act', making Wales a full and equal part of the Kingdom of England. Edward I began this process centuries earlier when he conquered Wales.

1585

England, now ruled by Elizabeth I (r.1558–1603), declares war on Spain.

1500

1543

The antiquary John Leland passes through Shropshire and notes that Stokesay is 'buildid like a castel'. The title 'Stokesay Castle' becomes more commonly used.

1563

Ownership of the castle passes to Henry Vernon, who makes repairs to the north tower's top floors and uses it to do business, in a vain attempt to climb the social ladder in England.

1598

Henry Vernon, crippled by debt, sells Stokesay to Sir George Mainwaring for £6,000.

16TH
CENTURY

STUART BRITAIN

1603–1714

1603

England makes peace with France and Spain when James I (r.1603–25) becomes king.

1642–49

The English Civil War.

1649

The Parliamentarians win the English Civil War. The monarchy is abolished and the Commonwealth of England is declared.

1660

The monarchy is re-established when Charles II (r.1660–85) is restored to the throne.

1600

1620

Sir George Mainwaring sells Stokesay on at a profit to a group of buyers who in turn sell it to a rich widow, Dame Elizabeth Craven, and her son William.

1640–41

William Craven spends just over £530 on building works at the castle, mainly on a new gatehouse.

1645

William Craven garrisons the castle with a Royalist army. Parliamentarian armies move into Shropshire and the castle is surrendered, apparently without a shot being fired.

17TH
CENTURY

VICTORIAN BRITAIN

1837–1901

1837–1901

Reign of Queen Victoria.



1800

1830

The basement of the south tower is now being used as a smithy. A fire in the smithy burns out all the floors above.



1853

Frances Stackhouse Acton, a talented artist and antiquary, appeals to Lord Craven to save Stokesay from total ruin, which he does.

1869

John Derby Allcroft, a successful London glove maker, buys the estate and begins to repair it. His descendants open the site to the public and use the admission fees to care for it, eventually passing this responsibility on to English Heritage.

19TH
CENTURY

STOKESAY CASTLE TIMELINE

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

MEDIEVAL FEAST ROLE PLAY

KS2

KS3

Recommended for

KS2 and KS3
(History, Drama, English)

Learning objectives

- Learn about feasting in medieval society; explore how people dined, ate and drank in a medieval manor house.
- Develop role-play skills by becoming a medieval character and carrying out a medieval feast in the classroom.

Time to complete

30–40 minutes



Reconstruction of a medieval feast in the hall at Stokesay. You can find a full-page version on page 42.

SUMMARY

The hall at Stokesay Castle was used by Laurence of Ludlow to host elaborate feasts. Servants prepared food in the rooms connected to the hall. The lord, his family and his guests were served first at the 'high' end of the hall, furthest from the service rooms and closest to the fire. Temporary tables stretched down the hall for Laurence's staff and servants.

Look closely at Source 2 on page 42 and lay out the classroom like a medieval hall. Assign roles to your students and seat them in order of importance to re-enact a feast.

ROLES AT A MEDIEVAL FEAST

- Lord of the manor – sitting at the high table, hosting the feast
- Lady of the manor – sitting next to the lord
- Family and guests – sitting with the lord and lady
- Steward – organising the food and directing the waiting servants
- Sewer – head waiter and official taster of the food
- Musicians – entertaining with songs
- Jester – entertaining with juggling and comedy
- Carver – carving the meat at the table
- Pot boy/girl – collecting empty glasses and, serving drinks
- Butler – in charge of the buttery and kitchen staff
- Cook – directing the assistants
- Cook's assistants – stirring sauces over the fire, chopping vegetables, mixing, turning the meat on a spit, whisking
- Scullion – scraping the food off dishes into a drain in the scullery
- Washer boy/girl – washing up (scouring with twigs and sand)

During your visit, explore the hall and connecting rooms. Go down into what was probably the buttery, where ale and wine were stored in butts. Discuss with students what they might have seen, heard and smelt during a feast.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

For an example of a real feast that took place at Stokesay in 1290, explore Source 3 (on page 43) with students.

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

STOKESAY CASTLE

RESEARCHERS



KS3

KS4+

Recommended for

KS3 and KS4
(History, Geography)

Learning objectives

- Use sources to develop skills of research and historical enquiry.
- Understand where, when and why Stokesay Castle was built.

Time to complete

May vary, depending on scope of research



An aerial view of Stokesay Castle and the Church of St John the Baptist.

SUMMARY

Ask students, in groups of about three, to research the history of Stokesay Castle and the surrounding area as a pre-visit research project.

We suggest students undertake a depth study, focusing on a specific time period at Stokesay, e.g. early 14th-century architecture.

SETTING UP THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Provide each group with the research project worksheets on the following pages.

Each group should decide on an enquiry question to guide their research, e.g. 'What is a fortified manor house?', 'What can Stokesay tell us about medieval architecture?' or 'Was Stokesay Castle built for defence or comfort, or something in between?'

Provide students with Historical Information (on pages 6–10), Timeline (on pages 14–16) and Sources (on pages 41–48) to kick-start their research. The English Heritage website is also a good reference: www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/stokesay-castle/history-and-stories

Use this research project to develop interrogation skills, opening up discussions about primary and secondary sources, plus issues of reliability, bias and utility. You could create a list of effective research skills and techniques before students begin the project. Each group can then use this list as success criteria to interrogate historical sources along the way.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

During your visit, students should use the site as a primary source, working in their teams to take notes and make sketches as they explore.

Back in the classroom, ask each group to present their research to the rest of the class, as a poster or PowerPoint presentation.

STOKESAY CASTLE RESEARCHERS



1 Decide on a research question.

.....

.....

2 In the table below, list some different sources you could use to answer this question.

HINT: aim for three–five sources.

TYPE	SOURCE	NOTES
Objects		
Documents	e.g. Licence to crenellate (1291)	
Sketches and paintings		
Reconstruction drawings		
Buildings	e.g. the south tower	

3 **Choose** one source to investigate. **Write** down three pieces of key information this source tells you.

HINT: sketch, highlight, label and make notes.

Title of source:

1:

2:

3:



4 **Discuss** your source with the rest of the group to delve deeper into what it is telling you.

HINT: ask who, what, where, when, why and how questions.



5 For each additional source on your list, **repeat** steps 3 and 4:

Title of source:

.....

1:

.....

2:

.....

3:

.....



Title of source:

.....

1:

.....

2:

.....

3:

.....



Title of source:

.....

1:

.....

2:

.....

3:

.....



6 Conclude your research.

HINT: answer your question but be honest about any remaining gaps in your knowledge.

Large light blue writing area with horizontal dotted lines for text entry.





AT THE CASTLE

Activities for students to do at Stokesay Castle to help them get the most out of their learning.

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

SHOW DOWN VS SHOW OFF



Recommended for

KSI-2
(History, Art)

Learning objectives

- Inspect and sketch/ photograph key features of the castle to identify their purpose.
- Deduce whether this castle was mainly built for defence or show.

Time to complete

Approx. 45 minutes



We recommend you watch our YouTube video 'A Mini Guide to Medieval Castles' (1 min 55 sec) with your class: <https://youtu.be/RXXDThkj3Ew>

SUMMARY

Watch 'A Mini Guide to Medieval Castles' on our YouTube channel as an introduction to the castles topic: <https://youtu.be/RXXDThkj3Ew> (1 min 55 sec)

Explain to students that there were two main reasons to build a castle in medieval Britain:

- 'Show down' – to provide a place of protection.
- 'Show off' – to show your importance and wealth.

Discuss: How might they find out the purpose of a castle? Answers include: by looking closely at the buildings, by comparing it with other castles and by exploring other sources (images, objects, text).

MAIN ACTIVITY

During your visit, challenge students (in pairs) to deduce whether this castle was mainly built for 'show down' or 'show off' reasons. **Please remember a maximum of 30 students are allowed inside the castle at any one time.**

Supervise students as they explore the castle for 10–15 minutes, armed with their features checklist (on page 26–27). Next to each feature on the list, they must put a mark in either the 'yes' box if they find that feature at Stokesay, or in the 'no' box if they don't. For each feature they find, they should draw a sketch or take a photo as supporting evidence.

We have provided answers on the next page.

Recall everyone after the allotted time and, as a whole group, discuss their findings, especially what evidence they used. Finally, each pair must decide if the castle is 'show down' or 'show off'.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, students could design their own medieval fortified manor house.

TEACHER ANSWER SHEET

SHOW DOWN VS SHOW OFF

- Motte – No, this is a clue that the castle wasn't built in a particularly defensive position.
- Moat – Yes.
- Crenellations – Yes, although most of the big wall that used to surround the castle has been destroyed. This was crenellated.
- Stone curtain wall – Yes.
- Stone gatehouse – No, there is a wooden gatehouse but it is more decorative than defensive.
- Arrow loops – Yes, but not used consistently, which suggests they might be more for show.
- Big windows – Yes, these make the castle walls weaker and more vulnerable to attack; they are a sign of the owner's wealth.
- Murder holes – No.
- Portcullis – No, but we can't be sure whether the original 13th/14th-century gatehouse had one before the new gatehouse was built.
- Stone towers – Yes, there are two towers, but neither is especially defensive.
- Hall – Yes.
- Stone keep – No.

Students should have ticked five grey boxes and seven white boxes, which confirms that the castle is mainly a 'show off' castle.

On closer inspection, you will notice that, while Stokesay Castle does have five 'show down' features, these are not used consistently around the site (e.g. crenellations and arrow loops), which further supports the conclusion that it was not built for defence.

Explain to students that although we call it a castle, it's technically a fortified manor house.

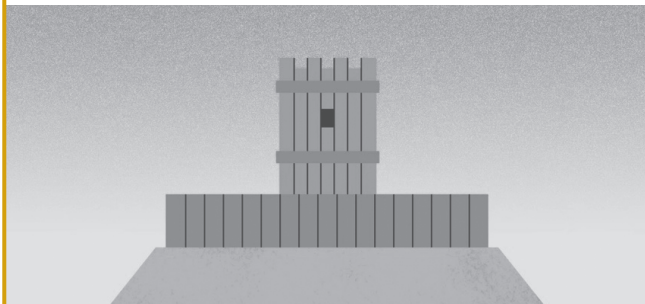
SHOW DOWN VS SHOW OFF CHECKLIST



Explore the Castle and **look** for these things. **Tick** the 'yes' box if you find it and the 'no' box if you don't. **Sketch** each thing you find (or take a photo of it) as evidence.

MOTTE

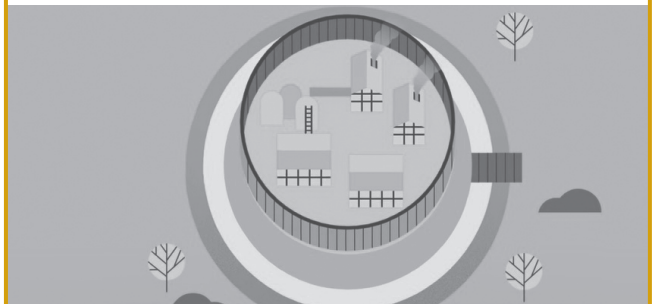
YES NO



An earth mound or high ground.

MOAT

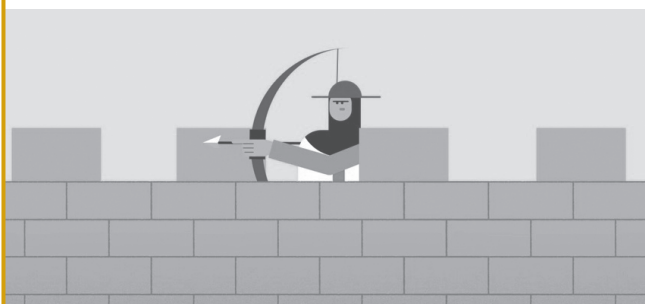
YES NO



A surrounding ditch (dry or filled with water).

CRENELLATIONS

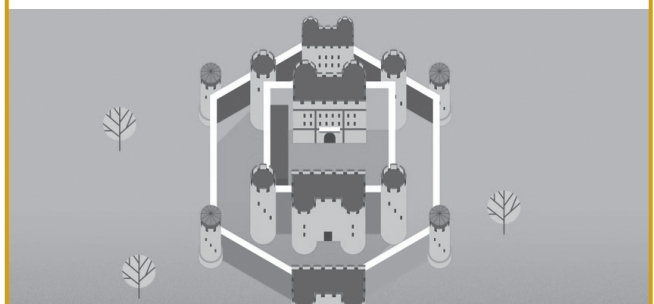
YES NO



A repeating pattern of rectangles on wall tops and towers.

STONE CURTAIN WALL

YES NO



An outer wall to protect the buildings inside.

STONE GATEHOUSE

YES NO



A highly defended, main entrance to the castle.

ARROW LOOPS

YES NO



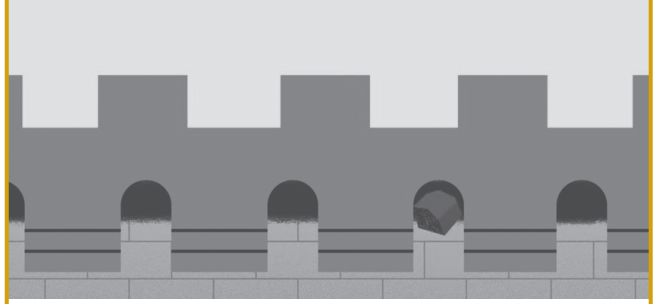
Narrow slits to fire arrows through.

BIG WINDOWS



Large enough to let lots of light into the rooms.

MURDER HOLES



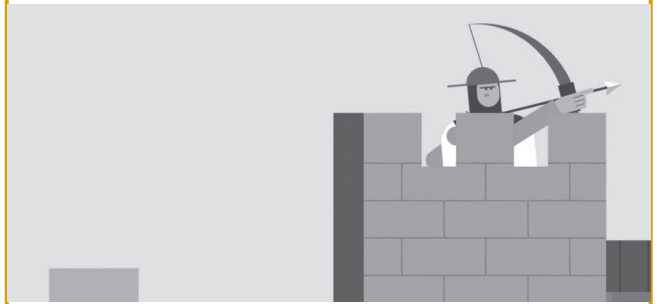
Holes overhead used to drop things on attackers.

PORTCULLIS



A strong wooden gate that can be dropped and raised from above.

STONE TOWERS



Used to look out for the enemy and fire down on them.

HALL



A grand space for receiving/entertaining guests and having feasts.

STONE KEEP



A strong tower in the centre of the castle used as a last defence.

Add up the number of grey boxes and white boxes you have ticked.

TOTAL

Grey boxes ticked White boxes ticked

If you have more grey boxes, the castle is mainly a 'show down' castle.

If you have more white boxes, the castle is mainly a 'show off' castle.

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

GEOGRAPHY SPOTTERS



KS2

KS3

Recommended for

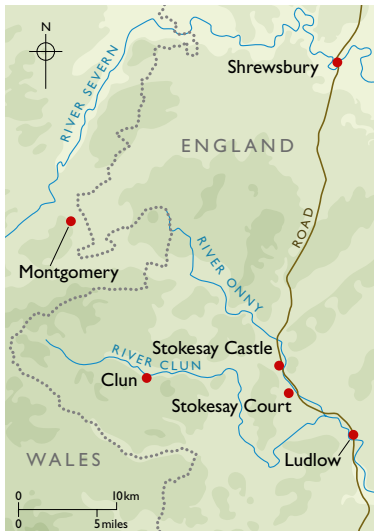
KS2 and KS3
(History, Geography)

Learning objectives

- Place Stokesay Castle in its geographical context.
- Understand Stokesay's relationship with the surrounding landscape.
- Develop skills of orientation.

Time to complete

Approx. 20 minutes



The castle was located in the good sheep-rearing lands of the Welsh Marches and close to the markets of Ludlow and Shrewsbury, making it an ideal place for doing business.

SUMMARY

During your visit, take students up the narrow staircase to the roof of the south tower, where they will get an excellent view of the surrounding area.

Please remember a maximum of 30 students are allowed inside the castle at any one time. If your group is larger than 30, you could split them in two and complete 'Geography Spotters' with one half while the other half do 'Scoping the Castle' (on page 28), which takes place entirely outside the castle walls. We advise you to climb the stairs of the south tower in small groups and be aware that the roof is sometimes shut during bad weather. Once you are at the top, ask students to identify north, south, east and west; you might like to bring some compasses with you to help.

MAIN ACTIVITY

From the roof, ask students to spot these things:

- To the west – a late 13th-century pond that made the castle look more attractive if viewing it from the west, but it also added an extra element of protection, acting as a potential water supply for the moat, and no doubt also contained fish.
- To the east – Norton Camp, an Iron Age hillfort on top of the hill nearest the castle; the hill is visible from the tower, but not the fort.
- To the north – the church was an important part of the landscape of the castle; everyone in the parish had to go to it on Sundays and for major religious holidays and important events like marriages, burials and baptisms.
- To the south – in the time of Laurence of Ludlow, the fields around the castle may have been planted with cereal crops or used as enclosures for animals.

Now ask students to list the reasons why this was such a good spot for Laurence of Ludlow to build his fortified manor house.

Some answers include:

- It was at the centre of a working farm.
- It provided Laurence with land on which to rear sheep so he could sell his home-grown wool.
- It had good routes into central Wales.

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

SCOPING THE CASTLE



KS2

KS3

Recommended for

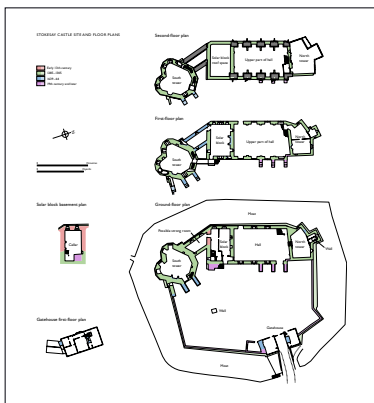
KS2 and KS3
(History, English)

Learning objectives

- Understand how Laurence of Ludlow used Stokesay Castle to protect his riches and possessions from gangs of thieves in medieval times.
- Imagine what it might have been like to try to get past Stokesay Castle's outer defences.
- Write a report to summarise what has been learnt about Stokesay Castle's level of security.

Time to complete

Approx. 20 minutes



A preview of the Site Plan students can use with this activity. Go to page 5 for a full-page version.

SUMMARY

In the late 13th century, an age before banks, Laurence of Ludlow probably kept much of his money at home. That, plus his luxurious clothes, furnishings and jewellery, could have made Stokesay Castle an easy target for dangerous gangs of thieves (bandits).

MAIN ACTIVITY

Ask each student to imagine they are a medieval bandit tasked with scoping out Laurence of Ludlow's castle. Their job is to report back to their gang about how secure Stokesay Castle is.

Print enough Site Plans (on page 5) for each student to use. Take your class down into the moat through the gate to the left of the gatehouse. Walk clockwise around the castle and ask them to make a note of any obstacles they might face, or any weak spots they could exploit, to get inside the castle. On their Site Plan, students should label each part of Stokesay Castle with a security rating of 'high', 'medium' or 'low' and a reason why they gave it that rating.

The layers of security you can see from the outside include:

- Moat – we do not know if this was dry or filled with water, either way, it would've been a formidable barrier.
- Gatehouse – the original 13th-century gatehouse was probably made of stone and may have had a portcullis and drawbridge.
- Curtain wall – part of the 13th-century curtain wall survives by the south tower; you would have to climb over it, dig under it or smash through it.
- Towers – designed for surveillance and intimidation; you would have to cross the moat, scale the curtain wall and climb up to one of the basement windows to get inside.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, students could turn their notes and labels into a written report. They should give the castle an overall security rating and make a final recommendation about whether their gang should break into Stokesay Castle, and if so, how.

TOP THINGS TO SEE

EXPLORE STOKESAY CASTLE

See if you can find all of these things.
Tick each one off as you find it.



1 MOAT



2 CURTAIN WALL



3 GATEHOUSE

Creation story Dragons



4 COURTYARD

Well



5 HALL

Service rooms
Stone hearth (for fire)



6 NORTH TOWER

Fireplace Recess (for lamp)



7 SOLAR BLOCK

Strong room



8 SOLAR

Peep holes Carvings



9 SOUTH TOWER

Latrine Views from the roof



TOP THINGS TO SEE

EXPLORE STOKESAY CASTLE

See if you can find all of these things and complete each challenge. Teachers can use this resource to guide students around the castle, or students may want to lead their own learning in small groups supervised by an adult.

Can't find your way?

Use the map at the back to help.



1 MOAT

Laurence of Ludlow, a rich medieval wool merchant, developed Stokesay Castle between 1281 and 1291, to show off his taste, wealth and importance. Stokesay may be called a castle; in fact, it's more like a fortified manor house. Defensive features, like the moat, were as much about show as they were about security.



WHERE IS IT?

Outside, wrapping around the buildings

CHALLENGE TIME!



Imagine you are a poor medieval peasant who has been called to the castle to explain why you stole food from your lord. How would you feel as you approach?

DID YOU KNOW?



The moat helped protect Laurence's home and possessions from dangerous gangs of thieves called 'bandits' who roamed the roads of England in the late 13th century.



2 CURTAIN WALL

Combined with the moat, the curtain wall made it very hard to get inside. Laurence of Ludlow was a businessman, not a knight, so it was very unlikely he'd ever find himself being attacked by an enemy army, but the curtain wall did help to keep his riches safe.

 **WHERE IS IT?**
Just inside the moat

CHALLENGE TIME!



Why do you think Laurence of Ludlow felt the need to build this wall around his home? **Discuss** what it tells you about him and what was important to him.

DID YOU KNOW?



Most of the curtain wall was demolished during the English Civil War, but in medieval times it had crenellated tops (a repeating pattern of rectangles) all the way round.

3 GATEHOUSE

The original 13th-century gatehouse was probably stone and intended to intimidate anyone approaching it. The gatehouse you see today, which replaces the older one, was added in 1640–1 by William Craven. The first floor overhangs the ground floor and the timber pattern on each storey is different.



CHALLENGE TIME!



Stand back and **look** up at the wooden carvings on the gatehouse. **Spot:** 1. the creation story from the Bible (Adam, Eve and a serpent), 2. a pair of dragons.

DID YOU KNOW?



Most people had to enter through the small gate called 'the wicket'. The heavy main gates were only thrown open for important visitors.

 **WHERE IS IT?**
Entrance to the courtyard



4 COURTYARD

In the 13th century, the courtyard was probably a muddy, smelly area cluttered with buildings and humming with life as children, animals, servants and visitors passed through here. You couldn't get water from taps at medieval Stokesay, so the well in the middle was an essential water supply.

WHERE IS IT?
In the courtyard

CHALLENGE TIME!



Imagine you are a servant whose job it is to get water from the well. Discuss what you might see, hear and smell as you cross the courtyard.

DID YOU KNOW?



Around the courtyard, there was a kitchen, a smithy (for making and repairing metal objects), a brewhouse (for ale) and a bakehouse (for bread).

5 HALL

The hall was used by the lord to host fabulous feasts. The beautiful timber ceiling and large windows were designed to impress. The steps of the staircase are cut from whole tree trunks. Jugglers, musicians and singers entertained the lord and his guests who sat at the high table, closest to the fire and furthest from the service rooms.



CHALLENGE TIME!



Imagine the room filled with tables, glittering with rows of metal dishes, goblets and bowls. **Find** the spot near the middle where the fireplace would have been.

DID YOU KNOW?



In 1290, the Bishop of Hereford visited Stokesay for a feast with 30–40 members of his household. They consumed huge amounts of food and drink such as bread, pigs, calves, goats, chickens and ale.

WHERE IS IT?
Across the courtyard from the gatehouse



6 NORTH TOWER

The top floor was a private living area for important guests. To make it more snug, a fireplace was put in, the walls were covered with plaster or wood panels, and expensive glass was put into the windows. The top floor overhangs the rooms below, supported by timber posts.

WHERE IS IT?
At the top of the hall staircase

CHALLENGE TIME!



Look out of the large windows in all directions.
Notice how this room overhangs the moat below. Later, take a look at the wooden supports from the outside.

DID YOU KNOW?



In medieval times, even rich people had little furniture. This room might have had a bench or two, a table, and a wooden bed with a feather mattress and a fur throw.

7 SOLAR BLOCK

Laurence of Ludlow probably used the solar block for his own living quarters before he built the south tower. The ground floor was originally one large storage room, with a cellar underneath. It was later split into two rooms and wood panels were added.



CHALLENGE TIME!



Find the room with thick walls and small windows, furthest from the castle's entrance. What do you think Laurence used it for? (Hint: it was designed to be locked from the outside.)

DID YOU KNOW?



When a feast was taking place at Stokesay Castle, Laurence, his guests and his family entered the hall from the solar block, by going through the connecting door on the ground floor.



WHERE IS IT?
Joined to the hall



8 SOLAR

This was a private apartment for Laurence of Ludlow and his family. You can look down on the magnificent hall through the peep holes on either side of the fireplace. The solar was turned into a luxurious panelled chamber in the 17th century, in keeping with the style of the time.

WHERE IS IT?
Back outside and up the stairs

CHALLENGE TIME!



This room is a good example of how interior design styles have changed over time.

Discuss how you'd update this room to suit your 21st-century tastes.

DID YOU KNOW?



The beautiful carvings of fruit, flowers and figures around the fireplace were once brightly coloured; if you look closely, you can still see traces of the original red, green and gold paint.

9 SOUTH TOWER

By 1294, Laurence of Ludlow had become so rich that he was even lending money to King Edward I (r.1272 –1307). Laurence built the south tower as a symbol of his status and powerful connections with the king. From a distance, it looks like the castles that Edward I was building in Wales, only smaller.



CHALLENGE TIME!



Spot the latrine (toilet) at the top of the stairs to the second floor. There was no flushing water; waste went down a chute and emptied straight outside, into the moat.

DID YOU KNOW?



The crenellated roof created a distinctive outline for the tower that made it look intimidating.



WHERE IS IT?
Across the walkway from the solar block

STOKESAY CASTLE TOP THINGS TO SEE MAP



- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 MOAT | 4 COURTYARD | 7 SOLAR BLOCK |
| 2 CURTAIN WALL | 5 HALL | 8 SOLAR |
| 3 GATEHOUSE | 6 NORTH TOWER | 9 SOUTH TOWER |

WHAT I'VE LEARNT

The best thing to see at Stokesay Castle is:

.....

.....

The most interesting thing I've learnt is:

.....

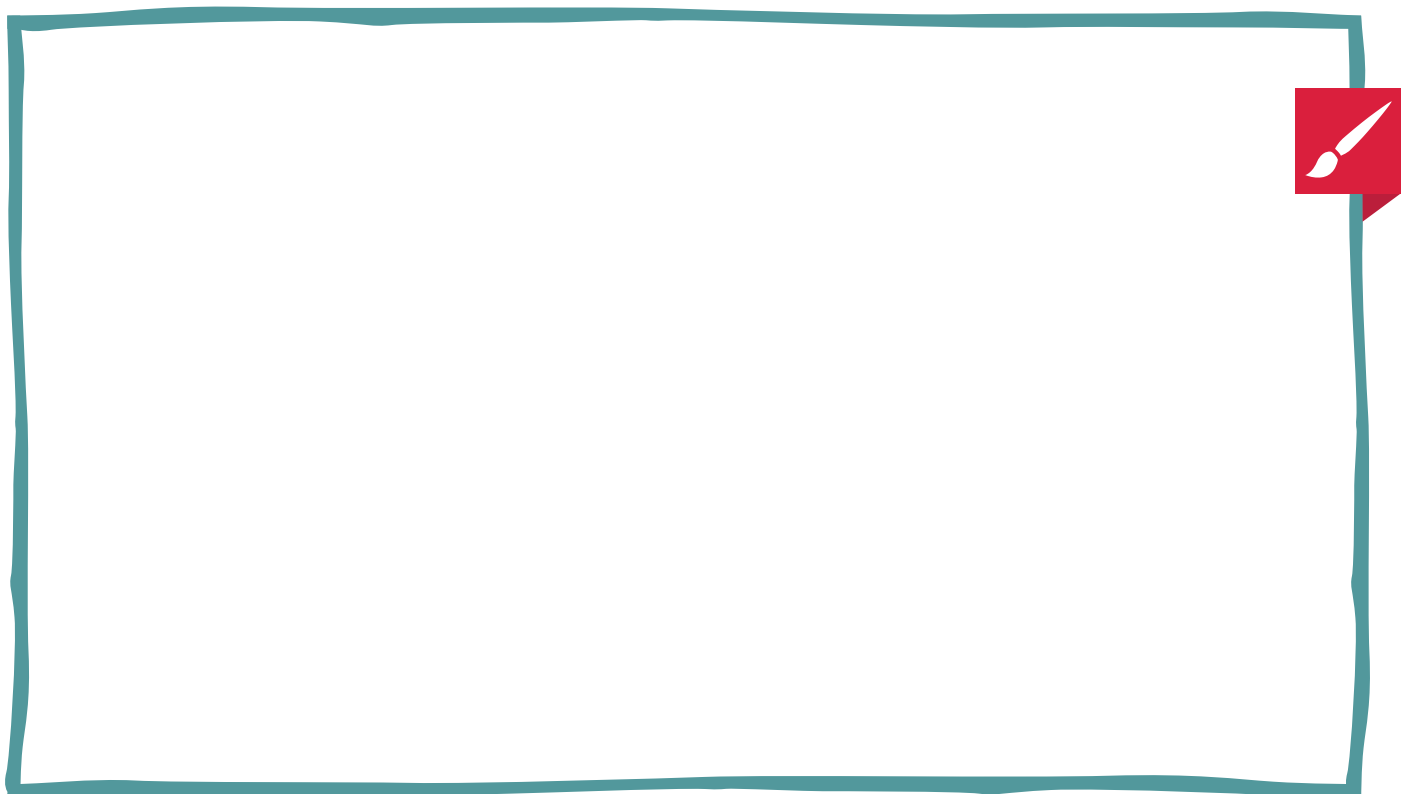
.....

I want to know more about:

.....

.....

Draw a picture inspired by your visit to Stokesay Castle:



SELF-LED ACTIVITY

THE POWER OF THE SOUTH TOWER



Recommended for

KS3 and KS4 (History)

Learning objectives

- Understand that the architecture and features of the south tower are a status symbol.
- Use the south tower as a primary source to make observations and deductions about Laurence of Ludlow.

Time to complete

Approx. 45 minutes



The south tower at Stokesay Castle, as seen from inside the courtyard.



The side of the tower facing outwards (pictured here) was designed to be more impressive than the side facing inwards (above).

SUMMARY

In 1294 King Edward I, desperate for money to finance a war with France, borrowed over £600 from Laurence of Ludlow and also took his advice on commercial policy. With this context in mind, it is likely that Laurence built the south tower to demonstrate his growing wealth, status and influence in England.

Split students into four groups of about seven and ensure that each group is supervised by an adult. Ask each group to explore the castle and look for the key features of the south tower listed below. As they investigate the tower from the inside and outside, they should discuss what their observations tell them about the type of man Laurence of Ludlow was. Students should use the table provided (on page 39) to note down their observations and deductions.

We have provided an answer sheet on the next page to help the adults in your group promote discussion and guide students' learning.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Explore Source 1 (licence to crenellate, 1291) as an additional piece of evidence to help students develop a more detailed impression of Laurence of Ludlow.

TEACHER ANSWER SHEET

THE POWER OF THE SOUTH TOWER

EXTERIOR

OBSERVATIONS: The part of the tower that people can see from the outside is far more impressive than the side that faces the courtyard. From a distance, the outward-facing side of the tower looks like a twin-towered gatehouse (with two strong towers either side of the entrance), similar to those that Edward I had built in Wales.

DEDUCTIONS: Laurence of Ludlow wanted everyone to know he was wealthy and influential. We can assume he was showing off his taste by purposely imitating Edwards I's gatehouse design.

FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS

OBSERVATIONS: On the first floor, the existing fireplace is 17th century but seems to have replaced an earlier hearth in the same position since its flue leads to a medieval chimney. The main room is well-lit, with windows almost all the way round. Four of the windows have seats. To the right of the fireplace a passage led to a latrine. The second floor has a similar layout. These spaces would have been warm, light and comfortable, with good views across medieval ponds south of the castle.

DEDUCTIONS: Laurence cared about home comforts and luxury, and he could afford them. Homely features like fireplaces and window seats are not typically found in purely defensive buildings.

ROOF

OBSERVATIONS: In the event of an attack, defenders could have fired through slits in the battlements. The turret on the north side of the tower provides an observation point and fine views in all directions. The pond makes the castle nicer to look at from the west.

DEDUCTIONS: Laurence was aware that there was a small chance his home might come under attack. He also recognised that his peers wanted to show their homes as defensive buildings, even if (in fact) they were not purely defensive.

BASEMENT

OBSERVATIONS: It is dark and has no latrine. It originally had no fireplace. The one you see in this room was added later when it was converted into a forge. The windows are relatively small, all set above the moat, and would probably have had grilles or shutters.

DEDUCTIONS: Its function was to provide storage for goods and safekeeping for valuables, rather than accommodation. It was also more protected from pests and bad weather. Laurence's money and valuable possessions must've made him a target for thieves. The windows of the basement are very similar in design, location and scale to those of the rooms above. This in fact makes the basement a far-from-ideal place to store perishables, but it shows the lengths to which Laurence was going to express an architectural scheme across the building.

THE POWER OF THE SOUTH TOWER



Explore the south tower. Write your observations and deductions in the table below.

	OBSERVATIONS What do you notice?	DEDUCTIONS What does this tell you about Laurence of Ludlow?
EXTERIOR Look at the tower from inside the courtyard and outside the curtain wall.	e.g. Licence to crenellate (1291)	
FIRST & SECOND FLOORS Look at the windows, fireplaces, toilets, walls, etc.	e.g. there are lots of windows letting in light	
ROOF Look for features designed for observation and protection.		
BASEMENT Look for absence: what isn't here that was in the other rooms?	e.g. there's less light down here because the windows are smaller	



POST-VISIT

Activities and information to help you extend your students' learning back in the classroom.



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

SOURCE 1

‘Licence for Lawrence de Lodelawe to strengthen his dwelling-house of Stoke Say, co. Salop, with a wall of stone and lime, and to crenellate the same. 1291. Oct. 19. Hereford.’

Translation: ‘Licence for Lawrence of Ludlow to strengthen his dwelling-house of Stokesay with stone walls and to crenellate his castle. 19th October 1291, at Hereford.’

This extract is from Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward I, 1281–92, p. 450. It has been photographed, transcribed and made available online by The National Archives: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/medieval-castles/medieval-castles-source-7

Licences to crenellate were granted when the applicant requested them; the Crown did not seek to control the number of applications (except in times of great social unrest) nor to benefit financially from the process. Many of the licensees were knights, so lower down the social scale than kings and nobles. Some towns and monastic foundations were also granted licences. Some places were granted multiple successive licences. Many people fortified their dwellings without royal or lordly consent.

As a document, a licence to crenellate is believed to represent royal recognition of the standing of newly influential or prominent individuals. In the case of Laurence of Ludlow, it represents recognition of his importance in this part of England and to the Crown.



SOURCE 2



A reconstruction drawing by Peter Urmston of a feast in the hall as it may have looked in the 13th century. Notice the wooden screen hiding the service rooms at the far end, the most important guests at the high table (left) and the musicians in the gallery (top right).

SOURCE 3



|| 1290

|| Stokesay || on Thursday at Stoke de Say, April 27

In bread 3s. 2d.

2 Sextaries of wine 2s. 8d.

Ale 5s.

Item 2 pig (or porker) already accounted for.

Beef and pork 16d.

2 calves 22d

3 kids 10d.

2 pigs

10 capons

5 fowls

} a present

And out of them remains 1 pig.

Bread 2d.

Hay given by Master R. de Heyton.

Item 2 quarters 5 bushels of oats for 35 horses, given by the Lord Abbot of Haughmond.

Carriage of the hay 2d.

Alms for several days 12d.

Sum 16s. 2d.

This extract is from the household accounts of Richard Swinfield, Bishop of Hereford, for the years 1289–90. It is one of a small number of detailed accounts of the day-to-day business for major political figures in this period.

The translation used is from J.D. La Touche's 1878 article in the *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, series 1, vol. 1 (1878), p. 324.

The items consumed during the bishop's ten-day stay in the parish of Stokesay are detailed within the account. It appears that the bishop arrived in the parish on Thursday, 27 April 1290. Neither the castle nor Laurence is mentioned, but from the items purchased it is likely that a feast took place at the castle.

In this period of history, it was common practice for a feast like this to be rewarded with cash payments. Hence, it is likely that the cost next to each of the items listed (above) was what the bishop gave to Laurence for the item. These are distinguished from items that Laurence gave to the bishop without expecting a cash gift in return ('a present').

The drinking items illustrate the scale of the feast. The accounts record two sextaries (over 63 pints) of wine being paid for at 2 shillings and 8 pence. This was complemented by an unknown quantity of ale, which required payment of 5 shillings – double the cost of the wine. Given that ale was cheaper than wine, the volume consumed must have been substantial.

The food portion of the account is the largest. Here portions of meat were purchased alongside whole carcasses. Two calves, three kids and a pig were paid for. A gift of two further pigs, ten capons (fattened, castrated male chickens) and five fowl was made to the bishop, it is assumed by Laurence, listed here as 'a present'. An unknown, but probably substantial, amount of bread was also listed as totalling 3 shillings and 4 pence. A solitary pig remained at the end of the stay.

Also recorded was a gift of hay for 35 horses made to the bishop by the Abbot of Haughmond Abbey near Shrewsbury, who held the right to appoint the priest of the church of St John at Stokesay. Only important members of the bishop's household would ride horses; allowing for spare horses, it is likely that the bishop was travelling with a dozen senior members of his household and at least the same number again (if not twice) of supporting members.

SOURCE 4



A reconstruction drawing by Peter Urmston of the interior of the second floor of the south tower in the late 13th century.

SOURCE 5

MEDIEVAL FLOOR TILES

These tiles date back to the 13th century and can be seen on the first floor of the north tower. Decorated earthenware floor tiles like these were produced throughout England, but were expensive and usually found only in castles and large religious establishments. They are a sign of Laurence's wealth and may have been brought to Stokesay Castle from his family home in Ludlow, where very similar tiles have been excavated.

You can see a collection of these tiles on the floor in one of the rooms of the north tower at Stokesay.



SOURCE 6



A partially cutaway reconstruction drawing by Peter Urmston of the gatehouse as it may have looked in the early 1640s.

SOURCE 7

BIBLICAL GATEHOUSE CARVINGS

The biblical story of the fall of man is carved above the gatehouse entrance, with the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil at each end, and Adam, the serpent and Eve between them. Adam and Eve appear again on the brackets either side of the entrance.



SOURCE 8



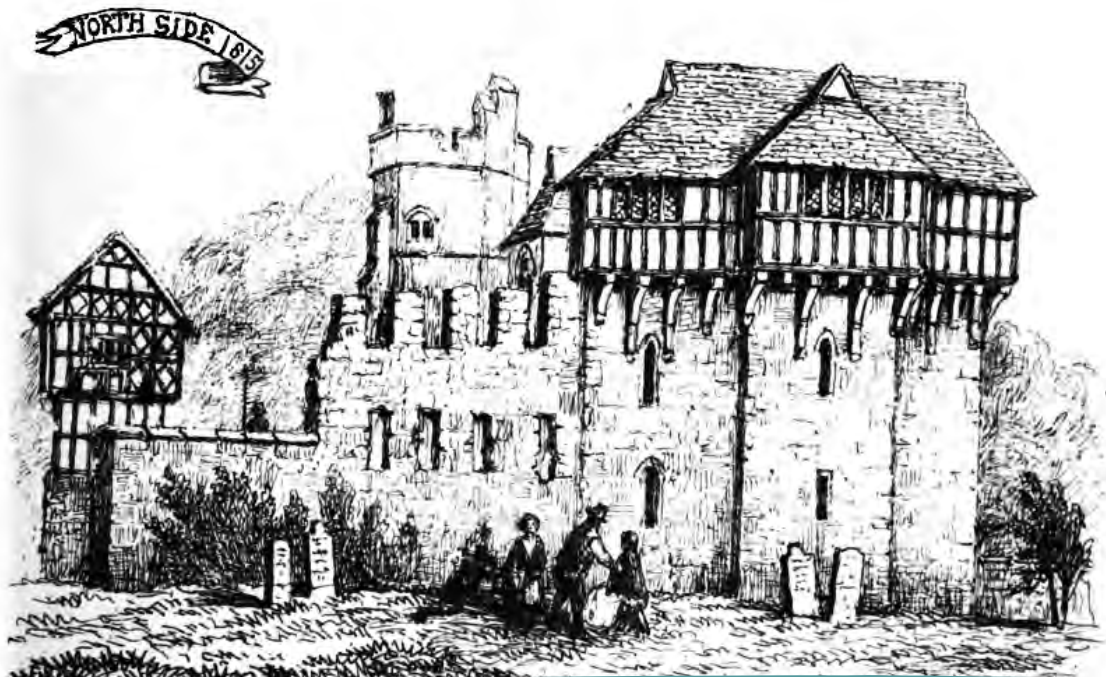
A reconstruction drawing by Peter Urmston of the solar block chamber as it may have looked in 1650, with brightly painted carvings above the fireplace. This was a very comfortable space to receive important guests and to dine and relax in.

SOURCE 9



A reconstruction drawing by Peter Urmston of the top floor of the north tower as it may have looked in the 17th century.

SOURCE 10



A sketch of Stokesay Castle from the exterior made by Frances Stackhouse Acton in 1815. Acton was an antiquarian, geologist, artist and photographer, and, until her death, she used these talents, almost single-handedly, to save Stokesay from ruin. The segment of wall with windows and crenellations next to the north tower here no longer survives.

SOURCE 11



‘Many years ago, all the country round about Stokesay belonged to two giants, who lived, the one upon View Edge, and the other at Norton Camp. Most likely they were brothers, for the land belonged to them both alike, and so did the money. They kept all their money locked up in a big oak chest in the vaults under Stokesay Castle, and when either of them wanted any of it he just took the key and got some out, and took the key back with him. And then if the other one wanted it, he shouted to his brother on the other side to throw it to him, and then he went down and got some; and so they went on, throwing the key backwards and forwards just as they happened to want it. But at last, one day, one of them wanted the key, and the other had got it, so he shouted out to him to throw it over as they were used to doing; and he went to throw it, but somehow he made a mistake and threw too short, and dropped the key into the moat down by the castle. They tried every way to find it, but they never did, and there it lies now at the bottom of the pool somewhere. Many have been to look for it, quite of late years even, but it has never been found. And the chest of treasure stands in the vaults still, so they say, but nobody can get into it, for there is a great big raven always sitting on the top of it, and he won’t let anybody try to break it open. So no one will ever be able to get the giants’ treasure until the key is found, and many say it never will be found. Let folks try as much as they please.’

This extract is from C.S. Burne ed. *Shropshire Folklore: A sheaf of gleanings* (London, 1863), pp. 7–8. It is one version of an old Shropshire myth about two giants who supposedly live on the hills either side of Stokesay Castle and keep their treasure at Stokesay Castle.

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

DIY FOLK TALES



KSI-2

Recommended for

KSI-2
(History, English, Art)

Learning objectives

- Explore some of the folklore associated with Stokesay.
- Use the story of the giants and raven at Stokesay as inspiration for story writing and shadow puppetry.

Time to complete

45–60 minutes



The giant of the eastern hill from the well-known Stokesay myth.



The giant of the western hill.

SUMMARY

Since prehistoric times, myths have been created by people to help make sense of the natural world. Different myths are unique to local areas and get passed down generations, often by word of mouth, so details of the story sometimes get lost or changed.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Use Source 11 (on page 48) as an exemplar to list the ingredients that go into making a myth:

- Places people know (e.g. the hill at View Edge).
- Supernatural or animal characters (e.g. giants and ravens).
- Magical events (e.g. throwing the key between hills).
- Special objects (e.g. treasure chest).
- Open-ended narrative (e.g. 'many say it never will be found').

Now ask students to use this list as the basis for writing their own myth with original characters and events.

Next, get students to tell their stories using shadow puppetry. You'll need: a white sheet, a torch, thin card, split pins, sticky tape and straws. Students should cut out shapes from the card to represent settings and characters, then articulate the characters' limbs using split pins. They should stick straws to the back of their shapes to turn them into puppets. Get students to perform their stories behind a white sheet, with the lights off except a torch for back-lighting.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

A riddle map based on the giants' myth has been developed for families visiting Stokesay Castle. It is aimed at 8–10 year olds and can be done in groups of four or five with a supervising adult. If you think this resource might suit your students, please ask for copies at the visitor centre.

There are two routes around the castle, each following a different giant from the story to solve riddles and eventually help him find the lost key. Both routes start at the bag storage room in the gatehouse. You could split your class into two, with half going one way and half going the other.

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

LOCAL COMPARISONS



Recommended for

KS3 & KS4+
(History, Geography)

Learning objectives

- Compare Stokesay Castle with Acton Burnell Castle.
- Identify similarities and differences between Stokesay and other medieval fortified manor houses built in England.

Time to complete

May vary, depending on depth of study



An aerial photo of Acton Burnell Castle, a fortified manor house built in Shropshire at about the same time as Stokesay Castle.



The interior of Acton Burnell Castle.

SUMMARY

From the late 1200s onwards, country knights or squires (like Laurence of Ludlow) were building ‘castles’ all around the country. These were really fortified manor houses, strong enough to deter opportunist bandits or hostile neighbours but mainly built for comfort and convenience. Stokesay Castle was one of the earliest of these to be built and is the best-preserved example. Acton Burnell Castle, also in Shropshire, is well worth a visit as a comparison:
www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/acton-burnell-castle

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Ask students to research Acton Burnell Castle and compare it with Stokesay by creating a table of similarities and differences. Students who prefer a more visual way of recording information could present this as a Venn diagram. Some points to consider:

- Acton Burnell Castle was built at about the same time as Stokesay, between 1284 and 1293, by Bishop Burnell, Edward I's Lord Chancellor.
- Like Laurence, of Ludlow Robert Burnell obtained a licence from the king to fortify his residence.
- Acton Burnell is much more palatial in appearance than Stokesay but not as well preserved.
- The rooms of both castles were used and laid out in much the same way.
- The large first-floor windows of Acton Burnell Castle suggest it never had a serious defensive purpose and was instead perhaps designed to impress, much like Stokesay.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

English Heritage cares for many fortified manor houses built in the medieval period. Students could research these further:

Aydon Castle, Northumberland (13th century):

www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/aydon-castle

Kirby Muxloe Castle, Leicestershire (15th century):

www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/kirby-muxloe-castle