



HELMSLEY CASTLE TEACHER'S KIT

THIS PHOTOCOPIABLE TEACHING RESOURCE INCLUDES:

- history • site plan & tour • timeline • activities • site photos • reconstruction drawings •
- details of how to visit • support resource information •

UNITS OF STUDY: What were homes like a long time ago? What was it like to live here in the past? What were the differences between the lives of rich and poor people in Tudor times? How did medieval monarchs keep control? How hard was life for medieval people in town and country? The Civil Wars – was England 'turned upside down' in the 17th century?

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS: Art & Design, Citizenship, Design Technology, English, Geography, Maths

The history



Above: The west range, east tower and south barbican.

The spectacular ruins of Helmsley Castle, surrounded by huge earthworks, are situated on a rocky outcrop overlooking the Rye Valley. The remains of the medieval defences are extensive and parts were converted into a substantial Tudor mansion during the 16th century. An information booklet on the historical background and educational approaches for the Tudor mansion is also available.

After the Norman Conquest, William the Conqueror needed to establish control of the North. Many manors and estates were granted to his supporters or relatives including the manor of Helmsley, which was given to his half-brother Robert de Mortain. There is no evidence that Mortain himself built a castle here but by 1088 William II, the new king, had confiscated his estates which included Helmsley. Little more is known until the 12th century. Walter Espec, a member of the Royal court of Henry I and an army commander, built the first

castle between 1120 and 1150. He built a great rectangular earthwork, which unlike many Norman castles had no motte (mound) or central strongpoint. Inside the earthwork there is no evidence of stonework of this date, and so it is probable that the first castle was constructed of earth and timber. Walter Espec had no direct heir and the castle passed to his brother-in-law, Peter de Roos. It was his great-grandson Robert de Roos, known as Fursan, who rebuilt Helmsley Castle in stone after 1190. The east tower, curtain wall, north and south gates and parts of the west tower date from this period. Through the 13th and 14th centuries, Fursan's descendants remodelled parts of the castle and added new buildings including a new hall and domestic buildings in the south-west corner of the bailey. In 1478 Edmund de Roos sold the castle to Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III), although following Richard's death in 1485, Helmsley was



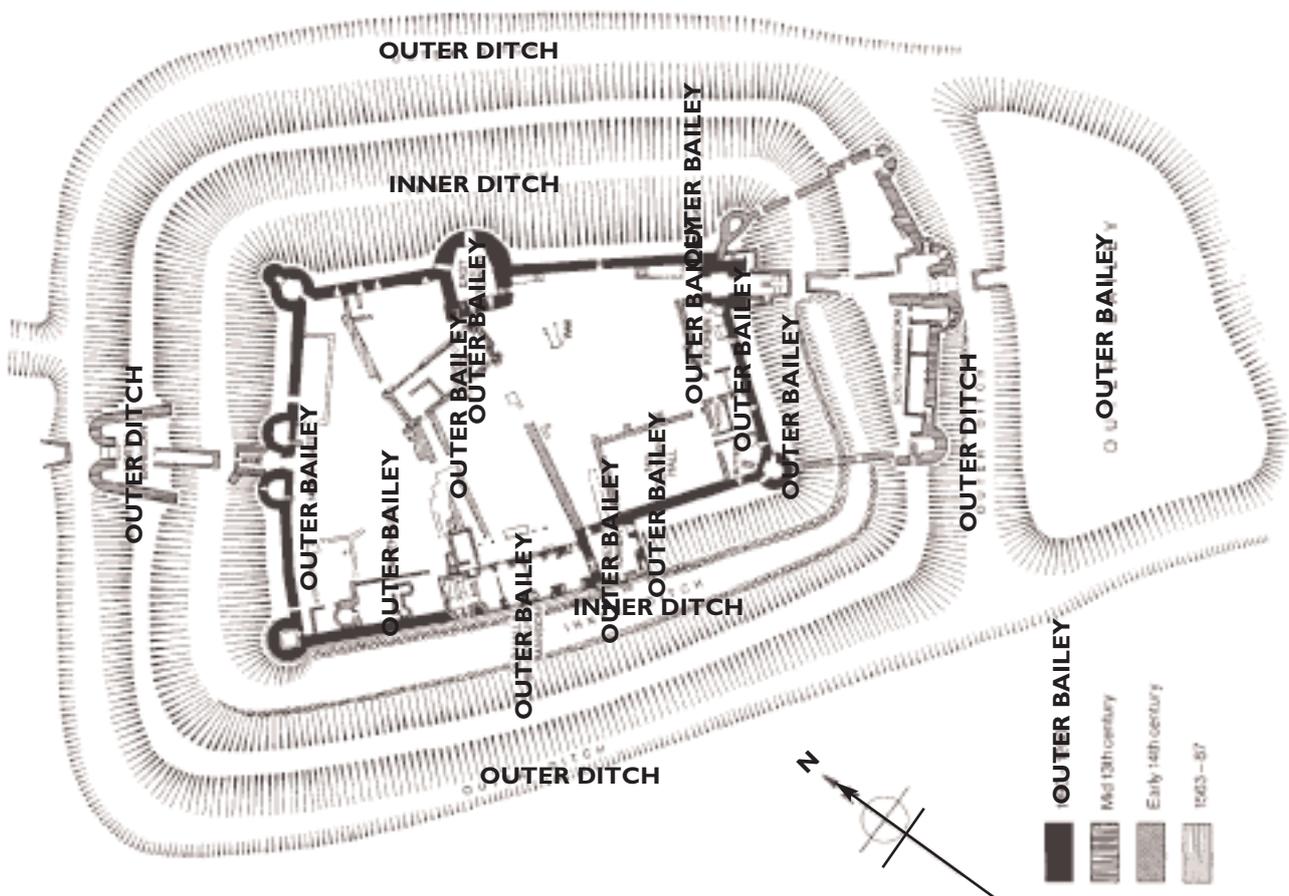
The history continued

restored to Edmund de Roos. Edmund had no direct heir and when he died Helmsley passed to his cousin, Sir George Manners of Etal, Northumberland. His descendant, Edward Manners, built a substantial house within the basic structure of the west tower and Fursan's 12th-century hall. After Edward's death Helmsley Castle remained in the Manners family until 1632 when it passed to George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, as part of the dowry of his wife Katherine Manners. Villiers had grander houses and it is unlikely that he ever lived at Helmsley. Helmsley Castle was garrisoned by royalist forces during the Civil War and was besieged from September to November 1644. Attempts to lift the siege were foiled by Sir Thomas Fairfax with his parliamentary forces and the castle was forced to surrender through lack of

food. The east tower was blown up and the curtain wall with the gates and towers also seems to have been partly demolished to ensure that the castle was indefensible. The Tudor mansion was not destroyed even though its owner, the second Duke of Buckingham was a royalist. Helmsley Castle was sold to Charles Duncombe after the death of the Duke of Buckingham. Charles Duncombe's brother-in-law Thomas Brown inherited Helmsley Castle and took the name of Duncombe. He found the Tudor house unsuitable and abandoned the castle in favour of a new house built in the adjacent park. His descendant, the present Lord Feversham, still owns Helmsley Castle, which is now in the guardianship of English Heritage.



Site plan



Site tour

South barbican The main entrance to the castle is through the south barbican or defended gateway, which was added in the 13th century. The gatehouse was altered in the 16th century creating a room above the passageway. The passageway through the gatehouse has a simple rib-vaulted ceiling. Immediately inside the passage are slots for

pulling up the drawbridge and runners for a portcullis can be seen within the inner arch. Walls extend across the inner ditch to join up the south barbican with the main defences of the castle.



South gate The inner ditch was cut through the rock in the 12th century and was crossed by a drawbridge to the south gate, which formed the original entrance to the first stone castle. Steps were later cut down into the drawbridge pit providing the defenders with access to the bottom of the inner ditch.

East tower The east tower, as the stronghold of the Norman castle, and the ultimate refuge in time of siege, has walls about 3m thick. Fursan built it as a great round-fronted tower overlooking the town of Helmsley. It had a single room, used as a chapel, with vaulted basement below for storage. In the 14th century the tower was altered and an additional storey was added for a new chamber. The join between the original limestone blocks and the later sandstone can be seen on the outside wall of the tower. The rows of small square holes are 'putlog' holes, for scaffolding poles used during the tower's construction. Huge sections of the tower lie in the castle ditch where it fell when it was blown up after the siege during the Civil War.

Curtain wall and inner bailey The 12th-century stone curtain wall enclosing the inner bailey was originally 4.6m (15 ft) high and the wall-walks were reached by stairs near the east tower. Outside the wall was a flat berm or bank that could be reached from the inner bailey by narrow doors in the curtain wall. Within the bailey are the remains of stone buildings that date from various periods.

The domestic range A new hall and domestic buildings were built in the south-west corner of the bailey in the 14th century. The foundations of these buildings remain with steps leading down from the buttery into the vaulted basement of the corner tower, which would have served as the buttery cellar where butts of beer and wine were stored. A passage between the buttery and pantry led from the kitchen into the screen passage, from which meals were served to people in the hall. The kitchen has a large open hearth and two large ovens built into the masonry of the gate house.

The high status part of the hall, furthest from the kitchens, was where the lord and his family sat, perhaps on cushions on the low stone bench on the north wall. A door led from the hall to the family's private apartments in the west tower.

West tower The west tower was built in the twelfth century with two storeys above a barrel-vaulted basement. The tower contained the private apartments and chambers for the lord and his family and was linked to the original hall. The tower was updated in the early 14th century and linked to the new hall built in the bailey. The west wall was

rebuilt at some stage and a series of garderobes or toilets added. In the late-16th century the west tower was again linked to the original hall which was converted into a Tudor mansion. Alterations made to the west tower such as the addition of large windows and numerous fireplaces helped to make life more comfortable. Outside the west tower are the remains of a dividing wall that stretched across the bailey. This substantial wall was built at the same time as the new hall in the bailey. The area to the south of the wall, including the west tower was for the lord and his family. The area to the north was for the steward of the castle and his household.

The old hall and Tudor mansion The 12th-century hall adjoined the lord's chambers in the west tower and would have been at first floor level with stores at ground level. There is evidence of a blocked doorway under the wooden stairs and doorways indicating different floor levels inside the later remodelling of the building. Edward Manners used the shell of the original hall and the west tower when he built a more comfortable Tudor mansion. Within the hall the remains of the 16th-century interiors survive, giving clues to the functions of the rooms and the layout of the house.

Latrine tower This tower was added in the 14th century, probably for the steward's household. It was remodelled in the 16th century with alterations to floor levels and the addition of fireplaces, perhaps to create chambers. Adjoining this tower, towards the chapel/kitchen are the foundations of a range of buildings, possibly a further chamber block. The metal ring in the end wall of the latrine tower was for tethering a horse; it was added when the ground level in the bailey was higher during the 19th century. There are also the remains of a bakehouse and brewhouse built against the west curtain wall, with evidence of fireplaces and ovens.

Chapel/kitchen The chapel, built in the 13th century, was converted to provide a kitchen for the new Tudor mansion in the 16th century. There is evidence of a great open fireplace in the east wall and the doorway through to the foundations of a long covered passage from the kitchen to the Tudor mansion.

North gate Only the basements of the two gate towers now remain, together with the foundations of the gate passage.

North barbican This extension of the gateway protected the less important north gate with two round towers and a drawbridge over the outer ditch.



Left: The timber buildings at Helmsley may have been similar to those shown in this reconstruction of the earthwork or ring-work castle at Goltho, Lincolnshire.

10th Century **11th Century** **12th Century** **13th Century** **14th Century** **15th Century**

- 11th century** The manor of Helmsley was granted to Robert de Mortain by William the Conqueror.
- 1088** Robert de Mortain's estates were confiscated by William II.
- 1120** The estates were granted to Walter Espec by Henry I.
- 1120–54** First earthwork and timber castle was built by Walter Espec.
- 1154** Peter de Roos, husband of Walter Espec's sister Adelina, inherited Helmsley
- after 1190** The castle was built in stone by Robert de Roos I, known as Fursan, great grandson of Peter de Roos.
- 1227–58** The castle was occupied by Fursan's eldest son William.
- 1246** The new chapel in the bailey was dedicated.
- 1275–1300** William's son Robert de Roos III remodelled the castle adding barbicans at the north and south gates, increasing the height of the east tower and building a new hall in the bailey
- 1478–1508** Edmund de Roos sold the castle to Richard, Duke of Gloucester (Richard III) although it was returned after his death in 1485.
- 1508** The estate was passed to Sir George Manners, the cousin of Edward de Roos.
- 1513–43** Thomas Manners, son of George Manners inherited the castle
- 1560–87** Edward Manners built a new mansion within the shell of the west tower and 12th-century hall.

1632 George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, inherited the estate through his wife Katherine Manners.

1644 The castle was garrisoned for the king and endured a three-month siege by parliamentary forces

1699 The estate was sold to Charles Duncombe. When he died in 1711 his brother-in-law Thomas Brown, who took the name of Duncombe, succeeded him as owner of Helmsley Castle. Thomas Duncombe found the Tudor house unsuitable and abandoned the castle to build a new house in the adjacent park.

**16th
Century**

**17th
Century**

**18th
Century**

**19th
Century**

**20th
Century**

**21st
Century**

1920s The Office of Works, later English Heritage took guardianship of the castle.

Right: Artist's impression of the 14th-century hall and kitchen.



There is a variety of documentary sources relating to Helmsley Castle and estate. Such primary sources give valuable insights into the lives of the people who lived in the castle.

1231–2 Records from Westminster regarding a dispute between William de Roos and the Abbot of Rievaulx over the use of land granted to Rievaulx by Robert of Ros, William's father

...William grants that the 9 carucates and the woods thereto belonging, in woods, plains, moors and all other places, with the assart etc. which he had from Everard of Ros, shall henceforth be entirely disforested for ever: so that William and his heirs shall never demand any rights within the metes and bounds thereof, as a forest; nor shall they take birds nesting there nor put in keepers or forester: but the Abbot and his successors shall have their keepers and foresters to keep the woods and lands within the said 9 carucates and assart; and may take the wild beast and all sorts of game with their dogs and greyhounds and with bows, arrows and all other ways soever at will, unhindered by William and his heirs.

Pupils can research the meaning of 'carucates' (a measure of land) and 'assart' (land cultivated from moorland).

1353 Writ concerning the value of the Helmsley Estate

...Helmesley. The extent includes the castle, worth noting within the walls, land at 'le haghe', two water-mills in the hands of the lord, worth only 10l yearly because most of the tenants there are dead through the great mortality

of men lately arising in those parts; a common oven in the hands of the lord, worth only 40s. yearly for the same reason; parks with deer called 'le Neupark' and 'le Oldpark', rent of the free burgesses who hold in fee from of old the borough of Helmsley, with the toll of market, fair and court of the said borough and render yearly for the same 11l. ...There should be made in the castle of Helmesley a constable for the keep ing of the same, receiving 3d. a day and a robe yearly, price 20s.; and a parker for the said parks, receiving 1d. a day and a robe yearly, price 10s.; and a maker of the paling of the said parks for the mending thereof yearly receiving every 12 weeks a quarter of corn and of fine wheat, price now 5s. and for

his stipend 3s. yearly. The walls of the said castle, the houses and buildings now existing within the same cannot be maintained and repaired for less than 100s. yearly if they are to be kept in sufficient state until the lawful age of the said William's heir....

(l. = pounds, s. = shilling, d. = pennies. 1s.=5p)

Pupils can consider the jobs of people employed by the Helmsley estate and if there are similar jobs today. By looking at the site pupils can try to work out or imagine where the constable may have lived in the castle.



Above: The remains of the east tower.



A visit to Helmsley Castle supports varied curriculum projects. Aspects of history, English, mathematics, art, design and technology can all be explored using the castle as a focus.

Preparation

Teachers should visit the site to plan their on-site work choosing one or two activities to develop during a site visit. The ideas and suggestions outlined show the range of work that could be undertaken within each curriculum area. Decide before the visit what information your pupils will be given and what they will find out themselves. Some of the following could be discussed before the visit:

- castle terminology such as curtain walls, moat, ditches, keep, bailey. What do pupils expect to see?
- why castles were built: strategic position, defence, as a power base, as a home
- how castles were defended: drawbridges, battlements, arrow slits, thick walls, and towers
- the many different people who lived and worked in the castle: the lord and his family, the steward and his household, servants
- the different uses of a castle: military, domestic political and how these changed over time.

On site

Helmsley Castle is a large site and although activities can be concentrated in the bailey there are interesting views from the earthwork banks. Care needs to be taken with the steep ditches and banks. The circular walk around the banks or an orientation activity can be used to introduce pupils to the site:

- pupils can use a site map to plan a simple route around the site, compass readings can be used or co-ordinates with a grid drawn over the site plan for older pupils
- places can be marked on a plan for groups of pupils to find. Ask them to write down three words to describe each place such as cold, wet, huge, scary, safe. Back at school the words can be used as the basis for creative writing, a word wall or as key words for a poem.

History

The relationship between the strong, easily defended castle and the town can be studied. Pupil activities can look at specific aspects of Helmsley Castle which help them



Above: Aerial view of the castle.

understand how and why it was built, defended and altered over the centuries.

- pupils can be either attackers or defenders of the castle. The attackers can look at the obstacles to overcome, listing them as they approach the entrance - ditches, banks, drawbridge, gatehouse. The defenders can look for the features of the castle that would help stop an attacking army – tall towers and wall-walks for look-outs, strong towers, arrow slits
- pupils can devise a checklist, before the visit, of those features they would expect to see and make notes and sketches during their visit showing the different castle features particularly any unexpected or unusual features
- pupils can look for and describe aspects of the castle that show the importance and power of the lord of the castle such as tall towers, on a hill, solid walls and buildings, imposing entrances
- the service parts of the castle (kitchen and stores) were at the opposite end of the medieval hall to the lord's apartments or private chambers. Using the foundation of the 14th-century hall in the bailey and a plan of the site, pupils can role-play the parts of the lord's family and the kitchen servants to work out which parts of the buildings would have been used by each part of the household.

English

Language used for different purposes can be explored through devising an advertisement, a formal report or a descriptive letter to a friend. For any imaginative work it is easier if pupils first make a collection of the words they will use in their work. Asking them to go to the relevant part of

the site and to think of appropriate words or phrases using the headings, I see, I hear, I feel, will give them a structure that they can build on. The documentary evidence concerning the dispute between William de Roos and the abbot of Rievaulx can be studied and pupils can describe how William and the family might have reacted when they heard the news from Westminster.

Maths

Activities at Helmsley Castle can develop mathematical skills, as well as supporting on-site historical investigations.

- the floor area of the original 12th-century hall can be compared with the 14th-century hall in the bailey, standard measures can be used or the areas estimated using paces. Pupils can find out whether the new hall provided more space for the lord of the castle
- the different styles of windows and doors in the castle buildings can be recorded. The sizes can also be measured and linked to the status of the rooms – larger windows and doors in important rooms
- estimates of the height of the east tower compared to the west tower can be made. Pupils can discuss and try out different methods of measuring or estimating the heights such as using the height of a pupil at the base of the tower and estimating how many pupils of the same height are needed to reach the top, counting the number of courses of stone or more accurately, using a clinometer to measure the angle to the top of the tower.

Using artists' impressions

Sets of artists' impressions are available for use by groups visiting the castle. Detailed educational approaches are outlined in the notes accompanying the pictures. Using one of the impressions, such as the twelfth-century hall, pupils can be asked to consider:

- what evidence is this impression based on?
- which parts of this building remain?
- which parts of the building have been added?

Design and technology

Aspects of medieval technology can be investigated by studying the design and use of materials for the different fireplaces, doors or windows at the castle. The modern use of the castle as a tourist attraction can provide the stimulus for design projects and could be presented to pupils as 'real' problems:

- the shop/kiosk at Helmsley is very limited. Pupils can consider plans to extend the range of items sold and produce designs based on sketches made during a site visit of motifs to be used for keyrings, mugs and other items
- panels for an exhibition for children can be researched and planned. Illustrations and original photographs could be collected on site and word-processing packages used in the classroom to produce the exhibition.



Above: An artist's impression of the hall and west tower as they may have looked in the 12th century.



Location: Near Helmsley town centre.

How to get there: OS map 26 ref SE 611836.
Postcode: YO62 5AB

Booking: www.english-heritage.org.uk/onlinebooking
Tel: 01904 601917

Cost: Education visits are free but must be booked at least two weeks in advance.

Maximum party numbers: 200. Adult:pupil ratio of 1:15. Pupils must be supervised at all times.

Please remember you are responsible for your own risk assessment. Hazard information available when booking.

Facilities:

- public car park
- disabled access
- shop
- picnics permissable
- toilets
- artists' impressions with teacher's notes
- handling collection with teacher's notes



Support resources from English Heritage

Big Book of Castles, The, 2007

ISBN 978-1-905624-44-7

(Comes with FREE teacher's guide)

Digital Time Traveller: Real Castles (Book & CD-Rom), 2000

ISBN 978-1-902804-01-9

Looking at a Castle (DVD), 1980

ISBN 978-1-905624-89-8

Looking at Castles (Poster Pack), 1994

ISBN 978-1-85074-490-4

Real Castles (Poster Pack), 1994

ISBN 978-1-85704-813-7

Helmsley Castle (Guidebook)

ISBN 978-1-85074-865-6

Usborne Beginners: Castles

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