En route

Old Wardour Castle

We are a London secondary school whose visits to Wardour are usually part of a week's integrated studies for second year groups, based on a nearby field centre. Since most of the teachers involved are not history specialists, and our time is limited, it suits us best to be selective so we often concentrate on the medieval castle. One of the simplest and most satisfying opportunities for spontaneous empathy you can give younger children is the chance to trap up and up a spiral staircase, sometimes stopping to look out of a high window, quietly and alone, to make sure there are no intruders in the woods. You can't do that at the Tower of London.

The grotto

Montacute. However, we can find plenty of examples of continuity and change without leaving Wardour itself, for its hexagonal tower-house has been castle, Elizabethan country seat, Royalist stronghold with a second portcullis hastily installed, the principal feature in a Georgian landscape composition (then picturesquely covered in ivy), and now whatever you choose to make of it. The visual evidence of its changing past is not immediately obvious but there is enough — windows, doorways, room layouts, postholes — to provide clues to what happened. If our school were closer, we would go back again when we study the Civil War, and again to see Capability Brown's landscape, and at other times to sketch and photograph. What we can do is to observe and sketch on site and use the displays, slides and guidebooks we keep at school to remind us of what we saw.

GCSE students using Wardour would need other sources to support their observations on the spot and fortunately these exist, engravings and estate maps, portraits and letters — all good contemporary evidence. In the seventeenth century Edward Ludlow describes the explosion in the Civil War that split the castle in two: "Upon the Thursday morning, being very early, I lay down and slept until ten or eleven ... when the noise began I was suddenly lifted from the floor with much dust around me." In the eighteenth century Lord Arundell, anxious to improve his castle, invited Capability Brown to "take a full view of this place, say, I flatter myself I shall be worthy of anything."

The text of this letter is included in the landscape exhibition in the Gothic Pavilion. There are other illustrated displays in the tower-house basement describing the building of the castle, and what happened there during the Civil War, including how the Royalist Lady Blanche Arundell heroically defended her home.

As a more specialised level, teachers and sixth form students of the Elizabethan Renaissance will connect the damaged but

The castle from across the lake

An elevation drawing could be used for a "read aloud‘’ study

Old Wardour Castle

elegant ceremonial doorway leading from the courtyard up to the hall with other work by Robert Smythson at Longleat. And the history of the Arundell family is interesting in itself; the position of the Catholic gentry in post- Reformation England is one of a variety of topics that could be investigated later.

In the evening after our visit we asked the group what they thought Lord Lovel would have said to them if he had met them at Wardour that afternoon. Rosa felt, "he might have thought we were very elegant and chummy, because in those days children were supposed to speak when spoken to", but Hannah said, "he would have noticed that the grounds were being put to good use, and liked that.

Old Wardour Castle

Old Wardour Castle, Wilts is 2 miles S W of Tisbury off the A36. Entry is free to schools who pre-book through our Area office at Bridge House, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4XA.
Reviews
Gerald of Wales
This video produced by Sisral Animation for CADW, runs for 24 minutes. Copies are available from Gerald of Wales Information Centre, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF 11.5F. £6.95 + 75p postage (cheques payable to the Welsh Office, please).

Have you ever despised putting over the essentials of medieval life to pupils who never go inside a church and have the usual romantic view of knights and castles? If so, try Gerald on them — or, rather, his page, narrated by Max Boyce, stripped of raggy scarf and giant-sized leek, bearing his master’s holy banner around Wales recruiting Crusaders in 1188. They won’t forget 1188 or that the Saracens lived in the Middle East, and they’ll grasp what a thing it was to try to cross the Solway, to try to cross the Channel, to try to cross the Alps. The actors are good, the background music is good, the historical information is good.

The presentation is excellent. Graeme Gardiner’s measured delivery puts points across clearly and Bill Odle’s childlike enthusiasm will carry along the most reluctant young historian. The approach is evidence-based. With humour, children are taught to look for visual clues, to ask questions about what they see and to draw conclusions from the evidence they have gathered. Basic historical skills are taught in a painless way.

The video is too long. Whilst the assumption is that it will be used in sections you have to be very self-disciplined to do this. Watched as a single unit the lack of variation in pace becomes apparent. With familiarity and judicious use, however, teachers will find Castles Clues a valuable tool in preparing children to look at castles and the clues that the past contains. Gail Durbin


‘Look Around Outside’ is for 9-13 year olds. It speaks directly to the children making it clear that the study of the built environment is more than a school activity. It is a very interesting hobby. It not only enthuses its readers, but provides all the advice and resources necessary for independent study.

The book gives a broad historical and geographical background to building types, building materials and styles of housing against which children may investigate their own locality. It isolates how site work might be organised and explains how to find and use resources to illustrate and extend this study. Preliminary information includes reminders about the country code and rules for the children’s own safety.

Cynthia Cooksey

The video falls into three sections: part 1 covers the Norman castle, part 2 attack and defence and the Tower as a royal palace and the final section gathers up raven, yeoman warders, prisoners, armour and all those images people have in their minds when they think about the Tower of London. Extensive notes suggest further lines of enquiry and a form is helpfully enclosed for teachers wanting samples of the Tower worksheets and learning resources.

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English Heritage
Video and the Educational Use of the Historic Environment
A residential course for teachers.
Friday 17 March to Thursday 23 March 1989 at the Bristol Centre.
Tutors: Doug Gleave, Multum Communications
Gail Durbin, English Heritage
Mike Corbishley, English Heritage

This seven day residential course will look at the educational applications of video in relation to the study of the historic environment. It is intended for teachers with little or no experience of using a video camera who work in any phase of education from junior to further education. We will use VHS format and limit ourselves to the type of equipment usually available in schools or local resources centres.

The course will fall into two halves. In the first four days, working in small groups, course members will make a short video and in the process be introduced to programme planning and scripting, camera techniques and sound recording and editing using a video tape recorder. Having mastered some of these techniques the second half of the week will be devoted to developing educational applications. The intention is not to attempt to make a documentary but more to think about ways in which curriculum aims can be furthered through the use of video. Projects and coursework where pupils use the camera will be developed and discussed.

The course will be limited to 16 members. Preference will be given to practitioners but it may be possible to offer a few places to people from museums or other heritage organisations. We hope to follow up work after the course and to develop relationships with LEAs. For this reason you should include information on your application form about any working party or teachers’ centre group (in areas other than video) that you may be involved in or how you feel you could share the benefits of this course with your colleagues.

Equipment: We can supply the necessary equipment but you are strongly recommended to bring your own if at all possible. This course is an opportunity to familiarise yourself with the equipment normally available to you whilst you have some expert guidance to sort out any difficulties. If possible you should bring a VHS video camera record or VHS recorder, a monitor and any sound or lighting equipment you may have.

Accommodation: We will be based in the new Bristol Centre of the YHA. This is in a converted warehouse in a conservation area in Bristol docks and within easy walking distance of a very varied collection of historic sites and buildings. It is not a conventional hostel. Course members will be no more than two to a room and each room has its own bathroom.

Fee: The course fee is £12 to cover tuition and full board. Because of the nature of the course it will not be possible to accept non-resident students.

Booking: Booking for this course closes on 1 December 1988. Application should be made on the form overleaf. You will need the agreement of your head and you may need to see other official wheels turning urgently because of the nearness of the deadline. Acceptance on the course will be confirmed 14 December and the fee will then be payable by 31 January 1989.
Footnotes

Goodbye to Alison Heath

Readers will be surprised and saddened to read of the retirement of Alison Heath, Head of the Education Service, on grounds of ill health.

Alison was appointed in October 1984 to set up English Heritage’s new education section after almost sixteen years at the sole education officer for the Department of the Environment. Prior to this she had been education officer at the Geffrye Museum and had worked for the Oxfordshire Museum Service, after initially graduating from Manchester University and training as a teacher.

Alison’s name has always been at the forefront of English education both in this country and abroad. She will long be remembered with affection for her gracious presence and generous concern to help others to value their heritage and appreciate it as keenly as she does herself.

We hope, now that her health is on the mend, that she can relax into enjoying her retirement and look back with satisfaction on all her achievements.

Alison’s place has been taken temporarily by Cynthia Cooksey until her successor is appointed.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Carisbrooke Teachers’ Resource Book

Written by Rosemary Cooper, education officer at Carisbrooke Castle, this new pack will be helpful to teachers planning a visit to the Isle of Wight. Five different approaches to the castle are suggested together with the appropriate preparatory work and follow-up. Your class could act out the role of spies planning an attack or they could look for clues to the castle’s history and use.

They could examine old prints and compare the previous appearance of the castle with what can be found today or they could see it through the eyes of Charles I who was imprisoned there. Another approach is to look at the problem of the water supply and through it to consider technology in the middle ages and today.

36 pages with many illustrations. Price £2.50 (inc. p+p) available from our Rustlip address.

Totnes Castle Teachers’ Pack

This has been specially prepared to bring the castle to life and is ideal for the 9–11 age range. It provides all the information needed for your preparatory work, site visit and follow-up activities with enough ideas for half a term’s work. The 30-page teachers’ handbook includes historical background to the castle and its builder, Jubel, and project themes such as an invasion, use of evidence and building the castle. There are plans of how to make a Norman motte and a set of cards for an exciting role-play activity, “Murder in the Castle”. As well as this, the pack includes two interacting site trails for “Saxons” and “Normans” and an archaeologist’s survey sheet. All the materials may be photocopied freely for educational use.

£2.50 (including postage) available from the site custodian or our Rustlip store (see back page).

Planning and conservation: a case study of Maiden Castle

This booklet forms one of the units in the Geography 16–19 Project but it could feature in many other courses for the same age range in schools and colleges. It is the result of cooperation between English Heritage, the project team and Longman Publishers, using Maiden Castle as a focus to consider how a major site might be developed and managed as a heritage resource. It deals with the pressures and conflicting interests which inevitably arise from increased tourism and how these can be minimised by careful planning. Throughout there are exercises involving the students in group decision-making and individual roleplay.


The Avebury Monuments

The most recent Teachers’ Pack to have been published is “The Avebury Monuments”, price £2.50. This resulted from the work of two seconded teachers from Wiltshire LEA who were based in the new English Heritage Study Centre at Avebury and tailored the materials with visiting school groups. The pack contains a Teachers’ Handbook, plus separate sections which provide a stimulating variety of materials aimed at pupils in different age ranges, including secondary students preparing for GCSE. The exercises are based on first-hand observation and deduction at the sites and the use of documentary evidence in classroom preparation and follow-up work.