

Standing in the basilica at Wroxeter, we could almost relive the experiences of this sophisticated group of people. Every stone had its own story to tell. He showed us how it was possible to use the site as a resource for problem-solving, placing the children in the position of the Roman builders and other citizens. By the second day our enthusiasm had increased and it was then that we decided in the forthcoming summer term, to attempt a whole-school study of the Wroxeter Roman Site and nearby village.

Preparations for the project began soon after the spring half-term. We discussed our ideas as a staff deciding to tackle the project in a variety of ways. We also started to make enquiries as to the availability of resources and began to collect together books, maps and pictures from both the county and Local Studies Libraries. I decided that with my fourth-year juniors I would take as my theme 'Communication' - what the site and village communicated to us and how we could communicate this to others. I felt, therefore, that it was important that we communicate to the residents of Wroxeter that the project was to take place. The



English Heritage

Measuring

class compiled a letter on the word processor explaining the nature of the project and also produced a questionnaire asking the residents if they had any relevant information that would be useful in their research. Before the Easter holidays, I took a small group of children to distribute these letters to the 20 or so houses of the village. On this initial visit we established many contacts that were to prove extremely useful later on. Most of the residents replied to the questionnaire, many offering to help in a variety of ways.

All the classes began the project after Easter with some form of detective work and work on research skills. They looked at buildings in their own vicinity for clues as to who lived there; they examined plans and maps and the foundations of buildings on building sites; they looked at different methods of retrieving information from a variety of sources and they thought themselves of the type of evidence they would leave behind for future generations. Later in the term interesting comparisons were made between the types of materials that have survived from the past and those that will survive from today.

Each class then proceeded with the project in their own particular way. I will give a brief synopsis of the type of work each class covered and a more detailed account of my own class's contribution.

The first years decided to study 'Water' and its effect on the environment and people, comparing our use of water today



Research

with that of the Roman inhabitants of Wroxeter. They found evidence of the aqueduct, built models and examined different ways of moving water from one place to another. They looked at the posts that held the old Roman bridge and speculated as to the kind of bridge the Romans would have built across the river. They considered the uses of water today and how the Romans used water in the bath house, the heating and drainage systems and they also looked at the dangers of water and water as a health hazard. Much detailed work was done with maps and plans and the children built a variety of working models.

One second year class did a detailed study of Wroxeter Church examining the church for evidence from the different historical periods. Much of their research work was conducted in the churchyard examining the tombstones and using the



Photography

data processor to catalogue and sort all the information. There was evidence in the church and churchyard of Roman Wroxeter particularly in the building materials used in the construction of the church and comparisons were made

between modern religions and the ways in which the Romans worshipped their gods.

The other second year class decided to study the Roman Military life. Because there is so little visible evidence from the Roman fort at Wroxeter, much of their research work was from secondary sources and they also received a great deal of help from the military museum at Northampton and from the historian, Graham Webster, who is an expert on Roman military history and on Wroxeter in particular. They were helped in their reconstruction of the past by the exhibits in the site museum and in the Rowleys House Museum in Shrewsbury. They built a fort and designed their own weapons and armour and produced some excellent writing on life in the Roman army.

One of the third year classes studied farming and the farm at Wroxeter in particular. They compared the farming and food production of today with that of the Romans at Wroxeter. Roger White, a resident archaeologist at Wroxeter, provided them with evidence of animal bones found on the site and they were able to reconstruct a picture of the type of



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Presentation

animals kept and the ways in which they were farmed.

The other third year class posed the question, 'Why Wroxeter?' putting forward theories as to why the Romans built a fort at Wroxeter, why it was later developed as a civilian settlement and why the population there today is so small. They then searched for evidence to prove their theories. They also looked at how Wroxeter was built and built a model of how they imagined the bath complex would have looked. They examined Roman everyday life comparing it with life today and one group published a Roman school magazine!

One of the fourth year classes studied baths, toilets and plumbing. Each group was placed in the position of a group of Romans and given a problem to solve. Examples were: to design and decorate the Roman bath house; to produce different types of oil and toiletries for use in the bathhouse and to market them; to design and decorate (using natural dyes) clothing to wear in the bathhouse etc.

I decided with my own class to examine how well the site communicated

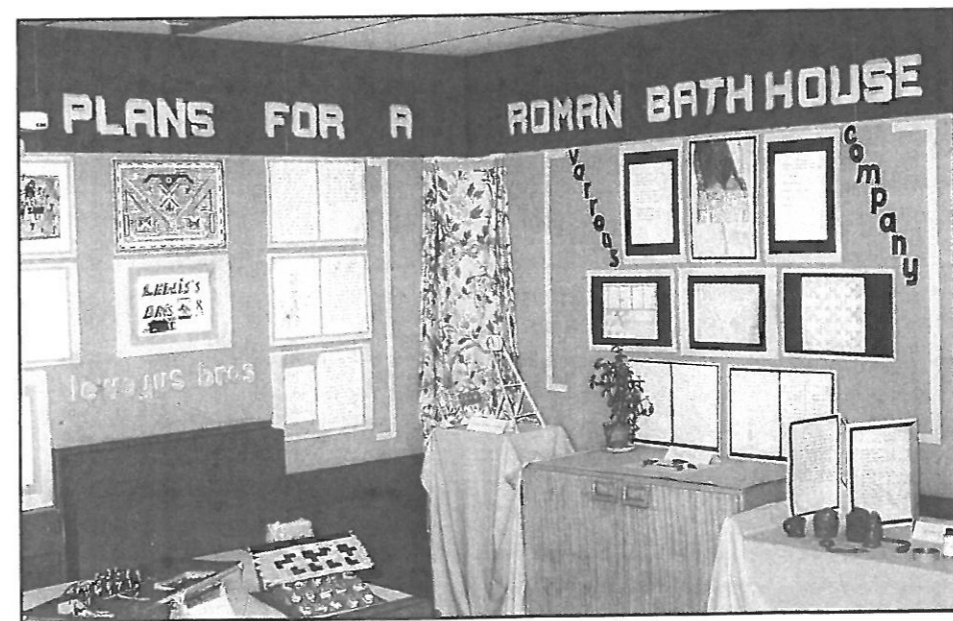


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The project on water

information to children and then for them to communicate the information they collected about Roman life to others in a variety of ways. I therefore did little in the way of preparation before our initial visit to the site except to discuss who the Romans were, where they came from and how long ago they settled at Wroxeter. I found an historical time line useful here. It was interesting asking the children to write about what they thought they knew already about Roman Britain.

On their first visit the children were asked to find out what the buildings on the site had been used for and to collect any information that would help them construct a picture of Roman everyday life. They were also asked to collect information that would be useful in preparing a child's guide to Wroxeter. When they returned they collated all the



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information and wrote a criticism of the site as a resource for children. One group decided they would produce the 'Child's Guide to Wroxeter'. The children then decided on their own group investigations and how they would communicate their work to others.

One group looked at the building stones (the types of stone, where the materials came from to build, how they were transported, shaped and lifted into position). Another group looked at decoration (mosaics, floor tiles etc) and did some interesting tessellation work using Logo on the computer as well as producing several authentic looking mosaics. They also examined decoration of clothing and the use of pigments and natural dyes. One group studied animals and farming and another Roman gods and religion. Some interesting research on conditions for growth was conducted by the group who chose to study what was growing on the walls. This led to investigative work on lichens, mosses and other parasitic plants growing in our wild



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ABOVE: Computer controlled model of part of the site.
BELOW: Bathhouse display.

area as well as some lovely art work using dyes extracted from lichens. The children mounted their own work and exhibited it in a variety of ways. One group prepared a Roman banquet and another produced their own synchronised tape/slide presentation of the site.

The whole class were involved in the production of a video. The children took on the roles of builders, architects, cooks, potters, mosaic makers etc who were involved in the building of Wroxeter. The story, written by one of the class, told of the vengeance of one of the Roman gods and how it affected the lives of these people. We had great fun filming the play on the site.

The children were also all involved with the measuring of the heights and widths of all the walls on site. These were used in the building of an accurate model. Lights were placed in the different areas and a tape made explaining the original use of each area. Computer control was used to work the lights in conjunction with the tape.

After half term we studied the more recent history of the Wroxeter houses and their residents, trying to search for links with the family names on the tombstones in the churchyard.

The climax of the whole project was an open evening to which we invited the parents and governors and the residents of Wroxeter. All the children and some of the staff dressed in Roman costume and Roman food and drink was provided. This proved a fitting end to what had been a very exciting and worthwhile venture.

Pam Jeffries,
Mount Pleasant Junior School, Shrewsbury

Wroxeter Roman City, 5m E of
Shrewsbury 1m S of A5. OS map
126 ref SJ 568088. Tel: 0902
765 105 to book a free school visit.

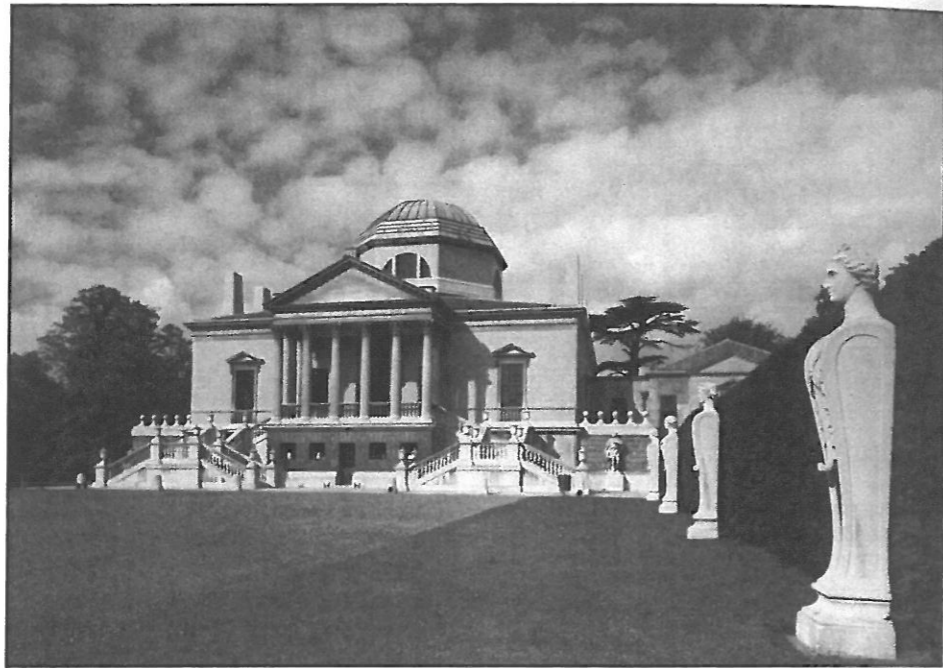
Arts and the environment at Chiswick House

Chiswick House formed the perfect setting for an imaginative expressive arts project by pupils in Brentford, West London, bringing the building alive with music, dance and art.

At the start of the Summer Term 1989 I embarked on a new stage in my career as Curriculum Co-ordinator Expressive Arts at Brentford School for Girls, a multi-ethnic 11-18 city comprehensive. My brief at Brentford was to devise and implement an Expressive Arts course for years 2 and 3 to begin in May. I was fortunate enough to be invited to attend a meeting concerning links with English Heritage. The aim of the meeting was to develop a theme which had first been introduced at a teachers in-service day at Chiswick House when Heads of Drama from the London Borough of Hounslow participated in a collaborative arts day with the Company of Imagination. This had culminated in a presentation of music, drama and creative writing reflecting the Drama teachers' impressions of Chiswick House. The opportunity of using Chiswick House and the resources available for Expressive Arts was irresistible. With due consultation with my colleagues at Brentford school we began work based on the architectural shapes of the house entitled 'The Arts and the Environment'.

The task was introduced to second year pupils who had skills in music, dance, drama, art and creative English through having completed the relevant introductory courses. We began by developing the principles and practices required for collaborative, expressive arts, an experience as neither teachers or pupils had combined the arts in such depth.

The next step was to introduce the pupils to the theme itself — Chiswick House. Our first visit to the house was



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Exploring the grounds.

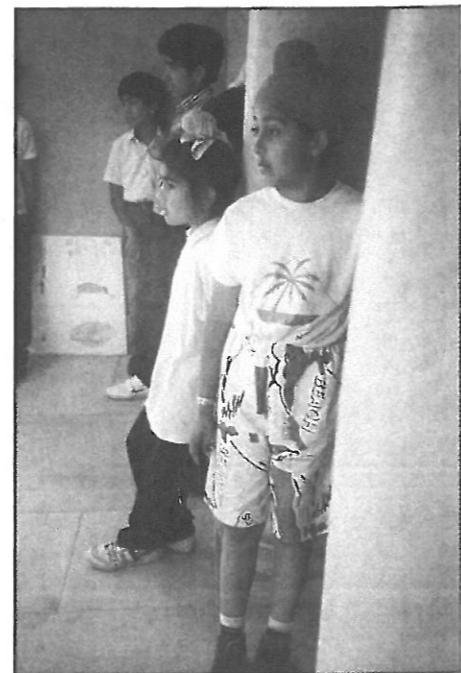
idyllic (if teachers can use such a phrase). The weather was superb and the house shone brilliantly in its green setting. Chiswick House, without furniture proved to be a haven for children. They explored the grounds, drew sketches, described their first impressions and began their group work with a vengeance.

The following week consolidated the theme, although the tarmac of the tennis courts at Brentford School was to prove no match with the grass in the grounds of Chiswick House. Musical rhythms and historical facts combined to produce a

base for the presentation. Pupils and teachers alike were rapidly coming to terms with the cross-curricular process.

The Company of The Imagination then visited the school for a day. Each pupil was to design and produce a classic costume made from a variety of paper and staples! The result was colourful and reflective. The most important contribution made by the Company to the theme was through discussions which raised awareness of the pupils of the shape of the house.

BELOW: Primary pupils intrigued by the performance.



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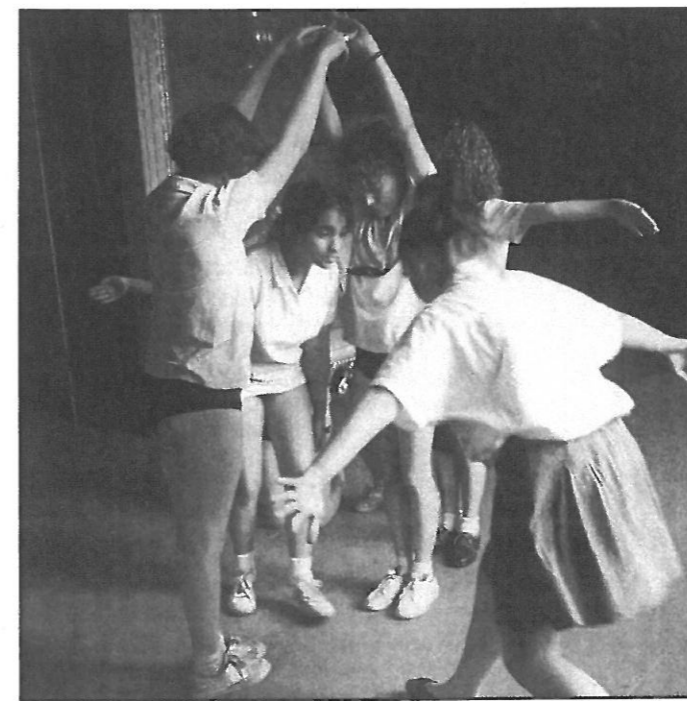
Interpreting the house through drama.

Meanwhile the Expressive Arts Team were working with the remaining pupils on a plan of action/performance for the day. It was decided that our audience, local junior school pupils from our feeder schools, would be invited to participate in a treasure hunt prior to the presentation. The clues were to be placed inside the house and around the grounds. This would enable the junior pupils to form an impression of the English Heritage site before experiencing the work of the Brentford pupils.

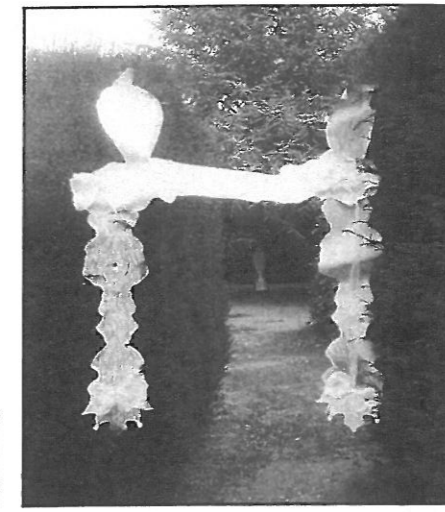
The remaining weeks were used productively to create and rehearse the musical, dramatic and artistic items for the presentation. Music and dance combined to present the external shape of the house, which, in reality, is dramatic in its white splendour (no lack of paint there!). The pupils used the shaped dome down to the cellars as the frame for their work. The architectural layout of the house as it emerged, created a strong image.

The Art department at Brentford School also viewed Chiswick House in a

BELOW, LEFT & RIGHT: Dance reflects the house.



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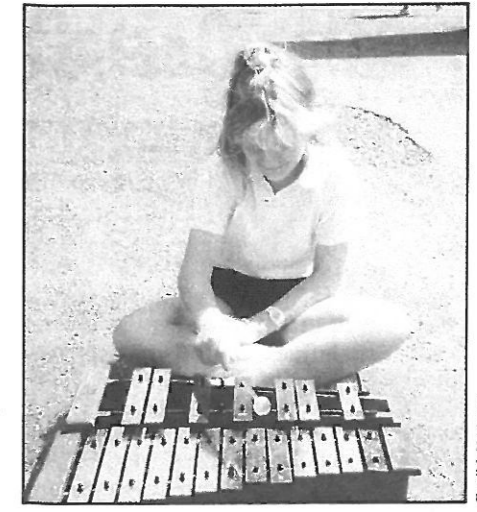
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Large-scale artwork inspired by the site.

unique way. Rolls of white paper were used to cover the hedges in the grounds with shapes of lions and romanque figures. The pupils were imaginative, creative and thrifty with their designs. The visual impact of their work was outstandingly true to life. As an artistic novice, I was amazed with the results.

The final element in the mammoth presentation was to be situated inside the house. The pupils were asked to improvise an event or happening which may have taken place in the heyday of the house. Parties, fights and romance were discussed as stimuli for the mimes. The pupils were more than adequate in their interpretation of the idea which truly reflected the period. Pupils and teachers were now satisfied that task was ready for presentation.

The day arrived complete with rail strike, coach problems and charity mini buses. Over 100 pupils from Brentford School for Girls and 400 local junior school pupils were to participate in the presentation at Chiswick House. The house came alive with music, drama,



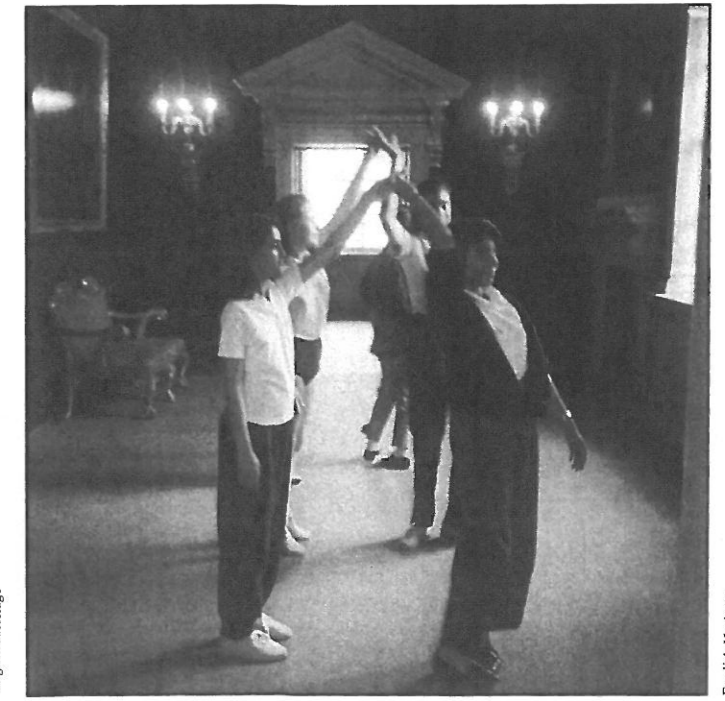
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Making music.

dance and art. The 'outcome', as educationalists are trained to predict, was the unpredictable: eight to thirteen year olds from multi-ethnic backgrounds relishing in the marvels of a building unused for many years. Within the realms of the pupils' imaginations Chiswick House was real and approachable. What was sensed through the 'Arts and the Environment' of the Chiswick House presentation remain within the experiences of the pupils involved.

Sonia Blandford
Curriculum Co-ordinator Expressive Arts
Brentford School for Girls

Chiswick House, Burlington Lane, London W4. A Palladian villa built c.1725 with interior decoration and landscaped gardens by William Kent including classical buildings and statuary. Tel. 01 853 0035 to book a free group visit.



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BELOW: Feeder primary school watches a performance.



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Castle and community in Middleham

Site visits can be a valuable part of further education course work. B/TEC students in Wakefield focussed on Middleham Castle for their integrated leisure studies project.

The presence of a castle, historic house or other monument in an area had tremendous influence on the lives of those who lived in its shadow. Few people realise how, now that the soldiers have gone and the lords and ladies are long since laid to rest in their family tombs, the presence of that monument continues to influence the lives of all those who live around it.

This was the theme of a two day study undertaken by students in Year 2 of the B/TEC National Diploma in Leisure Studies course at Wakefield District College. The group of 20 students visited the small town of Middleham in Wensleydale, which is dominated by Middleham Castle, once the home of the ill-fated King Richard III.

The Leisure Studies course covers a wide range of subject areas including: Marketing, Tourism, Cultural Recreation, Countryside, People in Organisations and Business Law. The aim of the visit was to produce an integrated study of the town of Middleham, looking at how the increasing popularity of the Castle as a tourist attraction has affected life in Middleham. The visit followed up preparatory work done in college in the individual subject areas.

For those not familiar with B/TEC, the National Diploma is regarded as A-level equivalent for entry to degree courses, but adopts a more practical application of learning over a wider range of subject areas. The work is generally not as

'academic' in style, and places emphasis on assignment-based learning. In their assignments students are usually given a role to play within a real-life scenario.

For the integrated study the students were given the role of an officer of the Yorkshire Tourist Board, who had been approached by Middleham Town Council for help in producing a guide booklet for visitors to Middleham and the Yorkshire Dales.

On arriving in Middleham the students first visited the castle where custodian Susan Constantine gave a 'guided tour' and spoke about the history of the castle. Students then split into groups of three or four to spend the afternoon, armed with a list of pre-arranged questions, finding out about life in the town. Each group had arranged an interview with a Middleham resident, including people such as the Mayor, the Postmaster, Mrs Constantine and the town's former blacksmith.

Our evening meal at Aysgarth Youth Hostel was followed by an informative talk given by Mrs Constantine about English Heritage, its role in preserving the nation's architectural inheritance, the organisation of special events and about her job as the Custodian of Middleham Castle.

The following morning was spent at the National Park Visitor Centre at Aysgarth, and in the afternoon we returned to Middleham to allow students to complete their fieldwork before returning to Wakefield.

The booklets produced by the students were generally of a good standard, and in addition each group gave a talk about life in the Dales from a resident's point of view. Our residents included Richard III, complete with period costume!

Although the main purpose of the visit was the integrated study, students were also given ancillary assignments in the Tourism, Countryside, Business Law and Cultural Recreation option units.

Students taking Cultural Recreation were given the role of working for a firm of leisure consultants, specialising in the development of heritage sites. They were given the following task:

'English Heritage has asked your organisation to look at Middleham Castle and submit a report, with recommendations, covering the following aspects:

- a) on-site interpretation
- b) access and facilities for disabled visitors (remember that disabled may mean other things than 'in a wheelchair').

Where your recommendations would involve English Heritage spending money on improvements, quote facts and statistics to justify your recommendations, and if possible make suggestions as to how the money could be raised.'

The students' reports identified many areas for improvement at the Castle including:

- ★ More information boards placed around the site, explaining what each area was used for.
- ★ Provision of a larger, more informative guide book, plus the provision of guides in foreign languages.
- ★ Provision of a scale model of the castle at the height of its power. Many people have difficulty in imagining what a ruined castle would have looked like in its prime.
- ★ Various schemes to improve access for blind and disabled visitors were suggested (in fact work was going on at the time of our visit to improve wheelchair access to the site).

One student applied knowledge gained at his Saturday job in an electrical retailers. He suggested the provision of a larger shop/information centre, and went on to say:

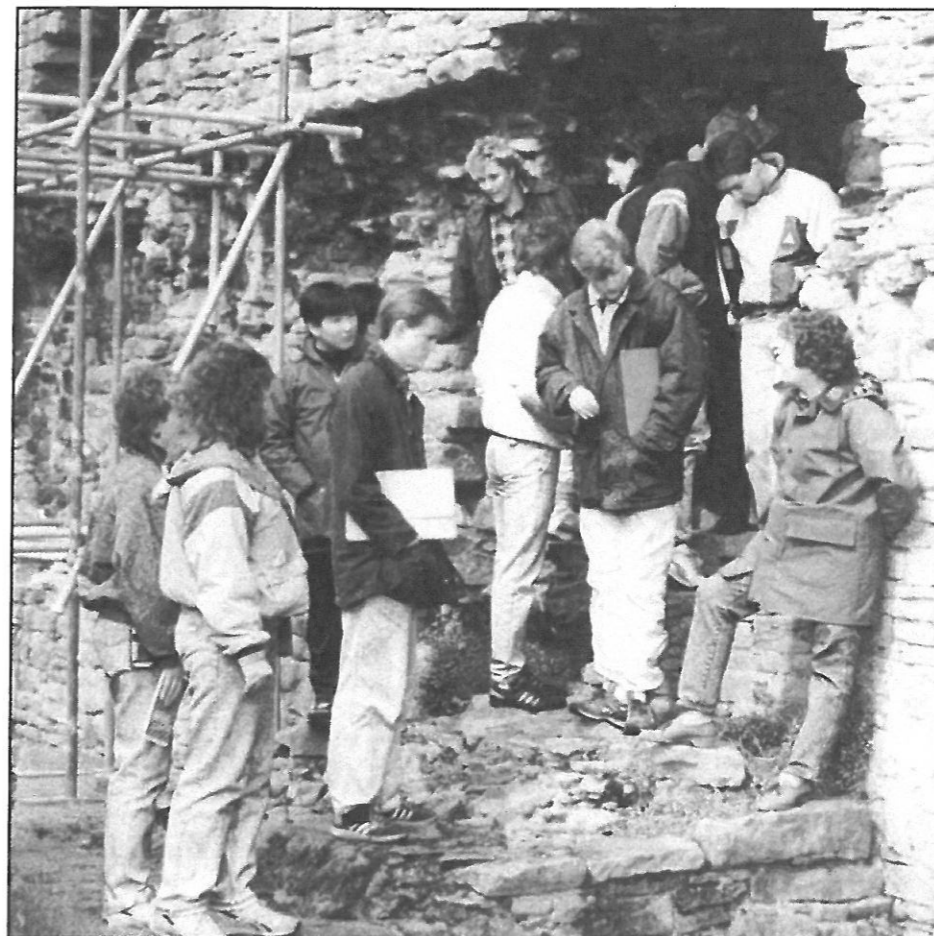
'A rope or fence should be erected to make an entrance and exit. It should be done in such a way that the exit is through the shop so that people have to go through the shop to get out. This would increase the sales of the shop. The improvements would not cost a great deal of money and the increased profits from the shop would be of benefit to English Heritage.'

Other fund-raising ideas included selling replicas of the Middleham Jewel, a



ABOVE: Middleham Castle in the Yorkshire Dales.

BELOW: Inspecting the garderobes on a visit to Middleham Castle.



15th century pendant discovered near the castle in 1985, and the annual staging of plays at the castle, although the student's idea of starting with Shakespeare's 'Richard III' would not be too popular with many Middleham residents.

Both staff and students felt that their visit to Middleham had been an interesting, beneficial and enjoyable experience. Although Middleham and the Yorkshire Dales are only about 60 miles away from Wakefield, more than half the students had never visited the area.

I feel that the students gained in understanding by meeting people with a completely different lifestyle to their own; gained confidence and organisational skills by conducting the interviews, the fact finding and making their verbal

presentations; gained in knowledge about a very beautiful part of the country which is becoming increasingly important as a tourist destination.

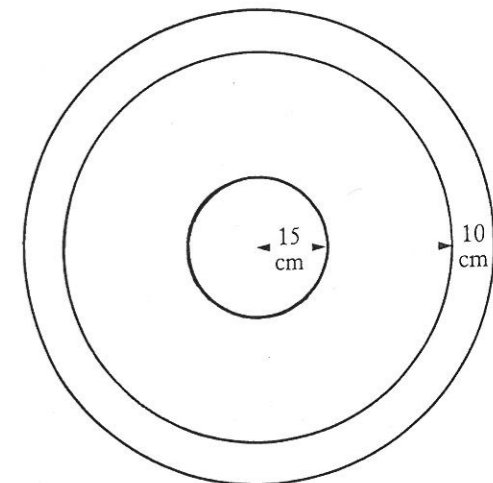
Liz Whitehouse,
Wakefield District College.

Middleham Castle, North Yorkshire. 2 miles south of Leyburn on A6108. OS Map 99; ref SE 128875. Telephone: 0904 658626 to book a free group visit. Its massive 12th century keep stands within fortifications and domestic buildings. Childhood home of Richard III. A replica of the Middleham Jewel is on display.

Games for the classroom

10. Squails

Games are frequently the subject of crazes and they disappear as fast as they emerge. This seems to be the case with the mid-Victorian game of squails. the Reverend J.G. Wood in *The Boy's Modern Playmate* in 1891 commented, 'For about one season it seemed as though, like croquet, it would take the world by storm; but in some way or other it soon lost its hold upon society, and even its most enthusiastic votaries grew cooler and cooler in their attachment'. This was due, he felt 'not to any inherent defects in the game itself . . . but . . . to a mistaken attempt to make the game amusing by a forced jocularity of technical phrases. The terms 'process', 'swoggle', 'ex-swoggle', and the like, are not very funny in themselves.'



The game is played on a circular table. A small metal weight, or 'process', is placed in the centre. Four to eight players each have two pieces marked with their own number. In Victorian times these were brightly coloured wooden discs about 4cms across. Old pennies could be substituted. Players are divided into two teams. They take it in turns to place their pieces on the edge of the table and knock them with the flat of their hands. The aim is to get pieces nearest to the weight. Other players pieces may be knocked out of the way and the process may be knocked but if it moves more than 15cms from its original position it must be replaced. If a player knocks the process off the table or to within 10cms of the edge then that player's piece is removed from the table.

Gail Durbin
Regional Education Officer,
South East, English Heritage.

BELOW: Middleham Castle looking towards the keep.

