The first castle was built by Alan 'the Red'. He had fought alongside William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings who gave his most trusted followers large estates along the frontiers of his new kingdom. Alan was granted his estate in order to suppress Yorkshire, to act as a buffer defence against the Scots and Danes, and to ensure the permanency of Norman rule. This estate became known later as the Honour of Richmond. Earl Alan probably chose Richmond for his main residence and administrative centre because of its defensive position. He began building his castle shortly after 1071. Most early Norman castles were built of earth and timber but much of Alan's castle was built of stone from the beginning. Conan 'the Little' (1146–71) inherited the castle at a time of increased turmoil and insecurity. He set about strengthening the castle's defences, building a new keep, constructing the barbican, replacing the wooden palisade on the south with a stone curtain wall and rebuilding the Cockpit with stone walls, towers and a gate. On his death these were completed by Henry II, who was the guardian of Alan’s daughter, Constance. In 1174 King William the Lion of Scotland was captured while invading England and imprisoned in the middle chamber of the Gold Hole Tower. During the baron’s rebellion against King John in 1215 the castle was held by Raold the Constable, for the rebel barons, and appears to have withstood a siege. In 1265 Richmond was held by supporters of Simon de Montfort against King Henry III. In 1384 the castle was confiscated by the king and became a royal possession, eventually belonging to the Tudor who in 1485, became Henry VII. The castle by then had no military value and was not needed as a residence. Consequently, it was abandoned and fell into ruin. The 18th century saw a revival of interest in medieval ruins, as sources of romantic inspiration and for their picturesque quality. Between 1761–1764 £350 was spent on repairs to the castle. In 1855 the castle once again became a military installation and was used as the HQ of the North York Militia. A large barrack block was built along the west side of the Great Court (demolished in 1935). The keep was converted into a military store, the Great Court was levelled to form a parade ground and the main entrance was rebuilt. In 1910 the castle was placed under...
The history continued

The keep
This was built to defend the main gateway, but only fragments of it remain. Modern brick walls now enclose its original area. It was defended by a moat and drawbridge. A visitor centre and museum at the entrance to the castle provides a good introduction to the main periods of the castle's history. The displays include building the stone castle, the domestic life of the castle and links with the town. The military history of the castle includes a reconstruction of one of the prison cells and a computer interactive that allows visitors to explore the cells. There is a booklet for teachers that provides further information about conscientious objectors and the Richmond Sixteen.

The north curtain wall
This side of the castle was the most vulnerable. It was defended by three rectangular towers – Robin Hood Tower, a collapsed tower known as the Fallen Tower and Gold Hole Tower. There are traces of Norman herringbone masonry along this stretch.

The east curtain wall

Site tour continued

The keep
This was built to defend the main gateway, but only fragments of it remain. Modern brick walls now enclose its original area. It was defended by a moat and drawbridge. The present gatehouse was built in the 19th century and stands on the site of the 12th-century gatehouse.

The barbican and gatehouse
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The east curtain wall

The basement
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The keep
This is a very fine example of a keep. It has many features to help teachers demonstrate castle design and function. External features to note are the:

- sloping plinth (batter) around the base of the keep
- shallow buttresses strengthening the walls
- circular double-splayed windows
- window sill with recesses on either side, used as the altar.
- barrel-vaulted roof
- arcading (decorative arches placed against a solid wall)
- gabled roof of the keep. This was probably unblocked in the 19th century. Features to note include the:
  - different stonework on the south face where the older building was incorporated into the present keep
  - ribbed vaulted roof, inserted around 1330
  - very thick walls of the keep
  - nine faintly recessed slots at the eastern end of the main chamber. It has been suggested that these are evidence of an additional floor as other larger holes at the same level in the north and south walls may have housed supporting beams for the long east-west beams
  - central pillar over a well
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maintenance of the Earl's large household. They were probably made of timber and included stables, guest lodgings, stores, kitchens, bakehouses, bревні і, a dovecote, slaughterhouse and workshops.

Scolland's Hall
This was named after Earl Alan's steward and is one of the earliest examples of a stone built hall in England. This was Earl Alan’s living accommodation, designed for defence as well as providing a palatial residence. The ground floor was probably used as a lower hall for retainers and was divided by a wall near the eastern end. This eastern section contained a passage to the Cockpit. The upper floor contained the Great Hall. The Earl would have sat on a raised platform (dais) at the solar end. This was nearest the hearth and furthest away from the noise and smells of the service areas. Features to note are:

- holes at the sides of the ground floor windows. These housed the fittings for shutters and wooden partitions subdividing the space
- small, plain square-headed windows and lintelled doorways on the ground floor
- large, round-headed Norman windows on the first floor
- small, plain square-headed windows and lintelled doorways on the ground floor
- a piscina. This is a stone container for washing sacred vessels
- the chaple window. It used to be divided into three sections
- the groove along two walls. It shows where supporting beams for the chapel floor had rested
- the chapel chamber window. It is divided into two sections
- joist holes. These show where the floor of the chapel chamber was.

The Cockpit
This is called after its later use for cock fighting. It may have originally been the castle gardens. Its gateway was protected by the Fallen Tower. Note the drawbar slot, built into the thickness of the adjoining curtain wall. The exterior of the Robin Hood and Gold Hole Towers can be studied from here. Features to note are:

- the foundations of steps up to chapel and chapel chamber
- a squint in the wall between the Great Chamber. This small square opening allowed people to look into the chapel or watch services
- the chapel window. It used to be divided into three sections
- the groove along two walls. It shows where supporting beams for the chapel floor had rested
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The west curtain wall
The cliff end has a small square tower. Towards the southern part of the curtain wall is another postern gate. Above the gate is a large arched window, all that remains of the Greater Chapel. At various places on the curtain wall Norman herringbone masonry can be found.

Solar and Great Chamber
Leading off the Great Hall is the Solar, the Earl’s private room. It has a fireplace and two ornate thirteenth and fourteenth-century windows. A doorway led to a gallery overlooking the Cockpit. Its beam holes can be seen on the outside. A door to the north led to the Great Chamber and another door led into the Gold Hole Tower, part of which served as a private latrine for the Earl and his family. The Earl’s private rooms had their own staircase from the Great Court.

Castle Guard at Richmond, from a 14th-century manuscript Register of the Honour of Richmond.

In return for land and privileges Earl Alan’s chief men were required to do castle guard with their own men for two consecutive months each year. This 14th-century register gives the names and duties of eight men, describing where they had to guard, indicated by their coats of arms on the drawing above:

- The place of the Constable in the enclosure of the Tower (Keep).
- The place of Corman lookt next to the enclosure of the tower on the east side outside the wall.
- The place of Ralph FitzRobert in the Castle of Richmond near the Chapel of St Nicholas.
- The place of the Chamberlain on the east of Scoulandhall next the oven.
- The place of Brian FitzAlain in the Great Hall of Scotland.
- The place of Ralph FitzHenry to the west of Scoulandhall.
- The place of Tophin FitzRobert of Manfield between the kitchen and brewhouse (middle of the south curtain wall).
- The place of Thomas de Burgh on the west of the Greater Chapel of the canons on the walls.

Documentary sources
You can use old prints and artists’ impressions on site as part of your historical investigation. They are particularly good to develop observation and recording skills and can be used in familiarisation exercises. Give pupils large photocopies with some features deliberately deleted, and get them to locate and complete the missing features. Or ask pupils to identify and colour-code those parts of the site which no longer exist, those parts which are still visible and those which have been altered.

Using visual sources
Provide pupils with a plan of the castle. Then, either on site or in class, ask pupils to identify each area and say why they were selected as guard points. Before you give pupils a copy of this source ask them to identify which eight areas they would consider the most important areas to guard, and then compare them with this list. Give each pupil the identity of one of the Castle Guard and ask them to draw up a list of orders for the men under their command detailing how they would patrol or defend their allotted position. Get pupils to describe what they would see, hear or smell at their position in the medieval period.

Left: A drawing adapted from a 14th-century illustration of Richmond Castle. It shows the main features of the castle and the places of the Castle Guard, indicated by the different coats of arms.

Left: Samuel Buck’s Drawing of the castle in 1721, before the restorations to the keep.
Before the visit

To prepare pupils for the visit they could:
• study an aerial photograph of the castle and its surroundings to establish which natural features have determined the shape and layout of the castle and how natural weaknesses were compensated
• analyse the plan and compare it with the plans of other castles
• design their own castle for the site. You will need to give pupils a map of the area with all reference of the castle removed. When they have done this you could compare their designs with what was actually built and then get pupils to explain any differences
• identify defensive techniques used in castles and to become familiar with castle terminology. Get pupils to draw a checklist of possible design features. Use this on site to get pupils to locate them and then to mark them on a plan of the site. This will make a good familiarisation activity
• research the requirements of the household of a powerful earl and how it operated.

Attack and defence

The military functions of the castle are an essential topic for study. Adequate preparation in school will ensure that pupils can identify defensive elements, explain their functions and evaluate their effectiveness. Relate this to the site by asking pupils to:
• locate the naturally defensive elements of the site
• establish how any natural weaknesses were strengthened
• gather data on the height and thickness of walls
• assess the protection afforded to the various entrances to the castle
• analyse the effectiveness of the curtain wall and the positioning and distribution of towers along it.

Activities ‘in role’

Providing a context or structuring your activities around actual events can give additional motivation.
• Ask pupils to imagine that they are a spy who has just gained access to the castle. They have been instructed to make a report of the defences as their lord intends to mount an attack. This could be a paired exercise, with the other partner detailing how the castle’s garrison would respond to the various strategies suggested. Each pupil could then write their respective report back at school.
• Refer to the siege of 1215. Ask pupils to look at what human and material resources would be needed, how and where they would be housed, and how the manpower would be deployed. Develop this further by asking pupils to suggest what offensive measures the attackers might employ and how the defenders would retaliate.
• Point out to pupils that King William of Scotland was imprisoned in the Gold Hole Tower. Send pupils on a mission to help him escape. First, find an entrance into the castle and explain how they will approach it whilst defending themselves against any expected resistance. Once inside the castle get pupils to describe the route they would take to the King and then work out how they would escape from the castle.
• Get pupils to make their own preparations for an attack. Tell them they only have sufficient men to attack three places. Having surveyed the castle pupils should outline their plans, justifying their choices, identifying the obstacles which will confront them and how they will overcome them.

Communicating findings

Once pupils have collected information to show how the castle functioned and how people lived and worked in it, they could demonstrate their understanding in a variety of forms:
• write and illustrate a short book for younger children to explain how people lived in the castle
• design backdrops for a puppet show based around a real or imaginary event at the castle
• compile a storyboard for a TV documentary about the castle, summarising below each frame the text to be used by the presenter
• illustrate an educational wallchart about defences within a castle. Base this on Richmond and illustrate it with sketches taken on site
• produce a cartoon story about the Harrying of the North and the castle’s subsequent role in subduing the region. Spoken information can be relayed using speech bubbles
• write a letter which Earl Alan would have sent to King William outlining the measures which he has taken to defend the area
• devise a medieval board game about attacking a castle – the object being the movement of the garrison from the castle get pupils to describe the route they would take to the King and then work out how they would escape from the castle.

Clues for rooms

Look for evidence to show what each room was used for.
• Help pupils to do this by recording all findings on a data collection sheet or chart. Use the following list to help structure investigations.

Room: Note the size and height. What can this tell pupils about the intended use? Do they lead to other rooms or are they private? What is the stonework like on the walls? What do the rooms overlook, or do they have no outlook at all?

Windows: Note the size, design and amount. Have they been built with defence in mind, as an observation point or to provide light for interiors? Why do some windows have splayed openings and others parallel sides? Is it due to position, design or age? Which areas have no windows and why? Look for examples of alterations: some have been enlarged, others filled in.

Doors: Which are large and decorated – clearly designed to impress? Where do the doors lead to? Some rooms have many doors does this suggest a public room? Which doors are arched and which have only a flat lintel stone? Why?

Fireplaces: Which rooms have fireplaces? Which rooms have no fireplaces and why? How big are they? Do they have any decoration? On which levels are fireplaces usually found? Because so much remains of Scotland’s Hall pupils could

Above: Sets of artist’s impressions to use on site and teachers’ notes on how to use them can be obtained from the custodians, responses.

Left: An illustration produced around 1821.
Activities

make their own models of how they think it would have looked like when complete. Take detailed sketches on site, and then back at school, complete the interior fittings and furnishings through research.

English

All new environments invite exploration and stimulate verbal responses. This provides valuable material for language-based work.

• Inform pupils that they will be producing a piece of work about a daily event, incident or moment in time involving one person living in the castle. The purpose of their visit is to gather factual information for their work. This should involve detailed sensory descriptions of two or three places in the castle and the journey between them. Back in class get pupils to research the role and duties of their chosen person and find out what this person would have worn and eaten where they would have slept and what possessions they had.

• Producing a site survey uses different type of language. This activity will be more successful if you provide pupils with a reason for doing it. Ask them to imagine that the King does not need the castle any more and wants to sell it for as much money as possible to pay for a new palace. Pupils pretend to be an estate agent taking measurements and writing descriptions for a brochure. They need to stress the castle’s defensive features and its extensive domestic accommodation.

• Give pupils the headings I see, I hear, I smell and I feel. Ask them to record three words under each heading at different locations around the castle. The battlements, chapel, gateways, Cockpit and barbican are contrasting environments. Then, get pupils to think about what they would see, hear and smell in medieval times. Use this information to help with creative writing exercises.

Technology

Richmond Castle contains many examples of medieval building techniques. Explore this by asking pupils to:

• make diagrams to compare the design of types of vaulting – ribbed vault in the keep and barrel vault in the chapel.
• catalogue the different types of windows and doorways, noting which are defensive, decorative or utilitarian. Describe how each design is different and how they support the weight of the masonry above.
• identify different ways that floors and ceilings were supported corbels, joist holes or grooves.
• sketch the design of fireplaces, and how they were built into the walls.
• describe the sanitation system and water supplies. Discuss what labour was needed in extracting and delivering water.
• explain how the latrines operated.

Informing the visitor

Ask groups to produce a new series of information panels for the site. Each panel should feature a character in role who points out to visitors how that part of the castle was used and what clues remain to prove this. Additional material can be included through research back at school.

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