



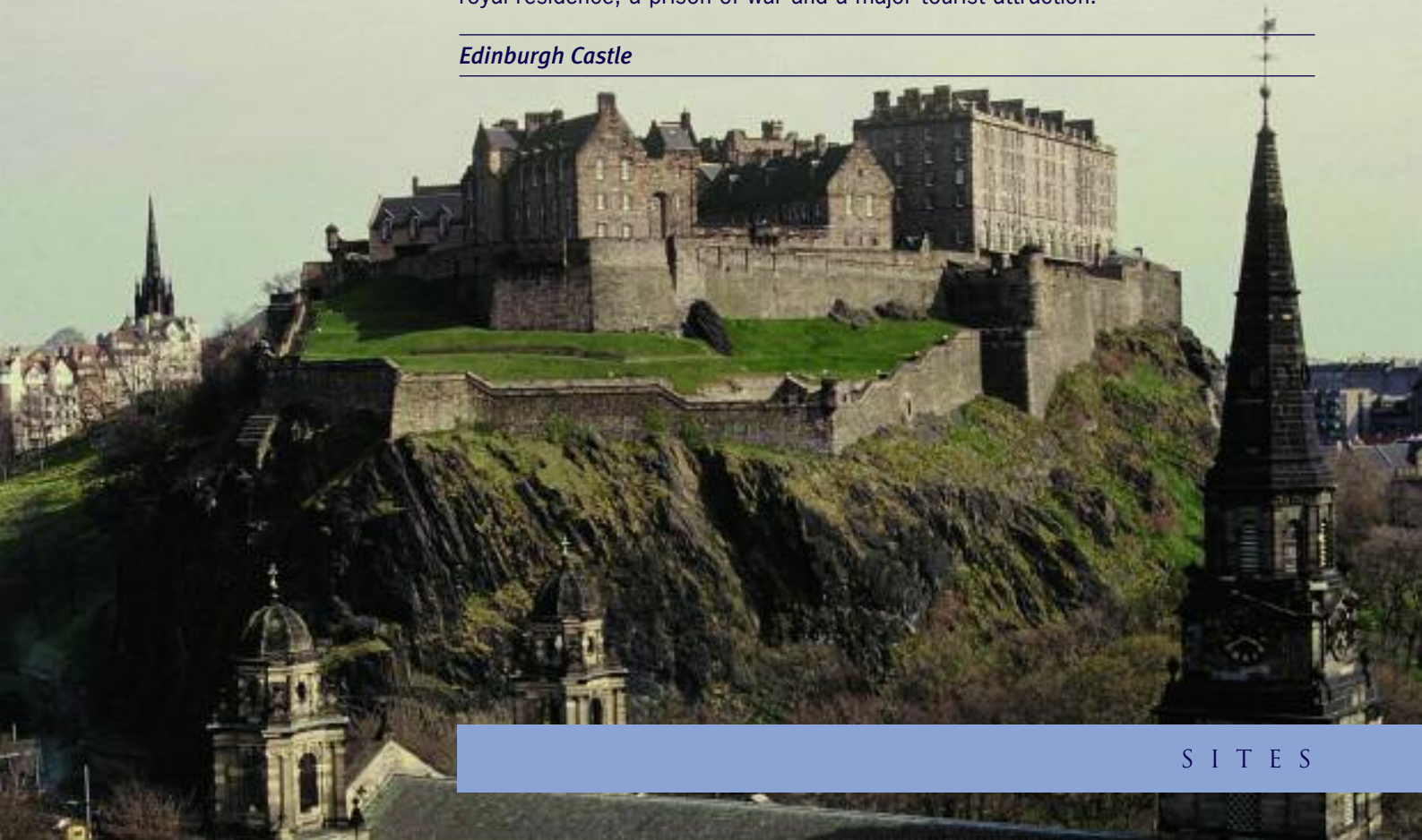
# Investigating Edinburgh Castle

In many ways Edinburgh Castle has everything: a huge, forbidding presence, magnificent royal rooms, the priceless Honours of Scotland and Stone of Destiny, large numbers of weapons and grim prisons. The castle is unparalleled for the potential to explore in a single building the defensive role of castles, a medieval royal residence, a prison of war and a major tourist attraction.

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## *Edinburgh Castle*

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# Edinburgh Castle: an overview

Edinburgh Castle is one of over 300 historically significant properties throughout Scotland that are looked after by Historic Scotland. It is situated on an extinct volcanic outcrop that has provided a natural defensive site for settlements and forts since the Bronze Age. By the 11th century, kings used the castle as a fortress and the oldest surviving castle building, St Margaret's Chapel, dates from this period.

There have been many changes since then and much of the castle we see today was built by James IV (1488–1513), including the Great Hall and the Royal Apartments. However, by the time his granddaughter, Mary Queen of Scots, came to the throne, Stirling Castle and Holyrood Palace had become the favoured royal palaces.

Edinburgh Castle was probably used as a prison from its earliest days as a fortress and from the mid 18th century held hundreds of soldiers and sailors captured in the wars with Europe and America. The castle was an active army garrison until 1923 and even today, the regiment stationed there still guards the castle.

## How to use this resource

This resource is aimed at teachers planning to visit Edinburgh Castle with their pupils.

It focuses on three different aspects of castle life, inspiring learning about the role of Edinburgh Castle throughout the centuries, as a **fortress**, as a **royal residence** and as a **prison**.

In this resource you will find:

- suggestions for how a visit to Edinburgh Castle can provide support for the 5–14 National Guidelines
- ideas for integrating a visit with classroom learning through pre- and post- visit activities
- a map of Edinburgh Castle with background information and detailed guidance notes for three teacher-led themed tours:

**Tour 1: Attackers and Defenders**

**Tour 2: A Royal Household**

**Tour 3: Prisons and Prisoners**

## How to book a visit

Historic Scotland operates a free admission scheme for education groups visiting Edinburgh Castle between the months of September and April (inclusive). During the months of May, June, July and August there is a small charge per pupil. You can book a visit by telephoning Historic Scotland's Education Unit on 0131 668 8793.

Find out more about the Education Unit and the service it offers by logging on to the Historic Scotland website: [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)



*Pupils at Edinburgh Castle*



## Supporting learning and teaching

Many of the activities suggested in this resource complement the Social Subjects component of the Environmental Studies 5–14 Curriculum Guidelines. They focus mainly on the attainment outcome People in the Past at levels A–D and can be easily adapted for all levels of pupils.

The activities also support Environmental Studies 5–14 in relation to skills development by providing opportunities for pupils to:

- find simple pieces of information from displays/fieldwork
- select, record, process and classify information
- present simple conclusions based on findings

### Education for Citizenship

A visit to Edinburgh Castle can help pupils to develop informed attitudes, recognise their role as young citizens, be aware of their heritage and of the need to conserve it.

You might want to explore matters about how and why Historic Scotland preserves Edinburgh Castle for the future.

Similar issues can then start to be explored in relation to pupils' local heritage, raising awareness of their local environment and their place within it. For example:

- are there any buildings locally in the care of Historic Scotland or similar organisations?
- how and why do the organisations look after them?
- what problems are there in looking after historic buildings?
- what part do local people play in looking after them?
- what part can pupils play?

### Environmental Studies 5–14 – Social Subjects: People in the past

Knowledge and Understanding – Strands	Teaching Activities	Learning Outcomes
People, events and societies	Visit Edinburgh Castle and follow the themed tours outlined in the pack	Recognise that Edinburgh Castle was the home of Scottish kings and queens in the past and be able to describe some of the events that took place there
Change, continuity, cause and effect	Look for evidence of damage, rebuilding and strengthening defences	Be able to explain some reasons why Edinburgh Castle has changed over hundreds of years
Time and historical sequence	Look at different parts of the castle and weaponry from different periods of time	Be able to identify some of the changes that have taken place and put them in sequence
Nature of historical evidence	Visit the castle and look for actual evidence that survives today as well as ways in which we preserve the past	Be able to identify the variety of real historical evidence around them in the castle  Be able to explain the role of Historic Scotland and similar organisations in preserving our heritage



## Integrating a visit with classroom studies

Educational visits have the greatest value if they are built into the original planning of topics. We recommend you plan your visit somewhere in the middle of your studies, giving your pupils time to become familiarised with the project and what they might expect to see.

### Before the visit

Log on to the Historic Scotland website: [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk) for more information about Edinburgh Castle, other educational resource materials and our programme of on-site activities and events.

A free planning visit before taking your class to Edinburgh Castle helps to familiarise you with the site, its facilities and the evidence it offers. To book a free planning visit telephone 0131 668 8793.

### With pupils:

- Have a general discussion about who lived in castles and what they were used for in the past. Ask them how this is different from the way castles are used today
- Look at maps of the Edinburgh area. If possible compare maps from different time periods and discuss the changes they see
- Discuss the castle's defensive position
- Explain that during their visit pupils will see:
  - *A fortress: built to protect its inhabitants over the centuries*
  - *Royal apartments: where kings, queens and their households lived in the past*
  - *Two types of prisons: vaults that held prisoners of war captured when they were fighting for their country; a Victorian military prison where soldiers from the castle's garrison were imprisoned for minor offences*
  - *A major tourist attraction: that attracts over a million visitors a year*

For assessment purposes you might want to conduct a benchmarking activity prior to the visit which records pupils' knowledge and understanding about whatever aspect of castles your visit will be focusing on.

For example, you could ask pupils to draw/design a castle with strong defences to keep out the enemy and withstand a siege. Pupils could label all parts of the defences. Pupils could undertake the same activity after their visit and compare the two designs to see how much they have learned.

### Working on site

The guidance notes for the themed tours (page 8) will help you to concentrate pupils' efforts on looking for physical evidence of construction and events that took place at Edinburgh Castle. If you wish, they could compile their own evidence record. The aim of the evidence record should be to encourage development of observational, descriptive and recording skills rather than to look for answers to specific questions which they can equally well find out from books or other media in the classroom.

The evidence record can ask pupils to use the headings 'I see', 'I hear', and 'I feel' at chosen locations, to look for clues to explain what went on at the site, and to look for evidence of changes or damage to buildings.

Pupils can record by:

- *taking notes of factual information*
- *making quick diagrams of specific details*
- *taking photographs of significant features or views*
- *using tape-recorders to describe what they see, hear, feel and smell*



## A decorated box

### You will need:

A box or tin

Old magazines,  
wrapping paper,  
postcards, stamps etc

Scissors

Glue

Clear water based  
varnish

Fine sandpaper

A paintbrush

### To do:

- 1 Make sure the box is clean and smooth. Peel off any labels.
- 2 Cut out pictures you want to decorate the box with.
- 3 Stick them on to the box, smoothing them out to get rid of any air bubbles. Carry on until you have covered the box.



## Suggestions for follow-up work

Following the visit your pupils can pool their findings to form a broad view of Edinburgh Castle and what life would have been like for those who defended the castle, lived or were imprisoned there.

This can form the basis for a wide range of Language and Expressive Arts activities, such as role-play, drama or compiling their own guidebook/leaflet. To augment their learning you might want your pupils to interview local historians or museum curators to get their view. These activities can:

- Develop skills and techniques in Language and the Expressive Arts
- Consolidate and expand knowledge and understanding about people in the past and people and place
- Help to develop informed attitudes about the ways in which our heritage is preserved

Here are some ideas for follow-up work related to the specific themes.

### Attackers and Defenders

- Ask pupils to use what they have found out about the defensive features of Edinburgh Castle to write an account imagining what it would be like being a soldier in an army that is either attacking or defending the castle.
- Increase pupils' understanding about the development of weapons in the Middle Ages by making their own timeline of the weapons they have seen.
- Activities in the Historic Scotland Siege Engines resource pack help pupils to further their knowledge and understanding about the technology involved in medieval siege warfare (see page 27).

### A Royal Household

- Use a comic strip approach to encourage pupils to tell their own story about a banquet which took place in the Great Hall at Edinburgh Castle.
- Devise drama activities following a visit to the Great Hall, e.g. secret discussions between the king's enemies that are overheard by the king sitting behind his listening hole.
- In and around the Royal Palace and Crown Square you will see examples of the intertwined initials and important dates of certain kings and queens. Pupils could experiment with designs using their own initials and/or their date of birth.
- Discuss what a coat-of-arms is and who is likely to have one. Look at examples in books, badges, shields (your school may have one) etc and discuss colours, shapes and symbols. Pupils could design their own coat of arms and think of a motto to accompany it. The Historic Scotland Heraldry resource pack can help you with this (see page 27).

### Prisons and Prisoners

- Compare life in the prisons of war with the military prison. The class could be divided to write diary entries of a prisoner from one or other of the prisons and compare the results.
- Discuss how prisoners used scrap materials such as straw and bone to make games for passing the time or craft work which they could sell. Pupils could make their own games and objects from recycled materials.



## Timeline: Edinburgh Castle

**1100s**

Edinburgh Castle becomes David I's royal fortress. He builds St Margaret's Chapel

**1296**

Edward I invades Scotland and captures the castle during the Wars of Independence



**1314**

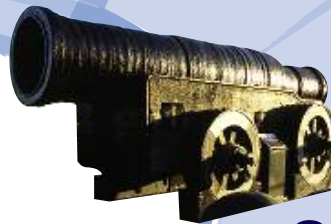
The Scots recapture the castle. Sir Thomas Randolph plans to retake the castle

**1367**

David II rebuilds the castle. David's Tower is named after him

**1457**

Mons Meg is presented to James II



**1488–1513**

James IV rebuilds much of the castle including the Great Hall and Royal Apartments

**1617**

James VI of Scotland and I of England remodels the Royal Palace

**1571–73**

The Lang Siege. The Portcullis Gate and Half Moon Battery are built to provide better defences after the siege

**1566**

James VI of Scotland and I of England is born to Mary Queen of Scots in the castle



**1730s**

The Argyle Battery built as the main defence on the north side of castle

**1775–83**

Prisoners of War (PoW), mainly captured during the wars with France and America, held in the Vaults



**1780s**

The Lang Stairs relaid by Prisoners of War

**1842**

The military prison is built. Soldiers also stationed in the castle

**1861**

The One O'Clock gun is fired for the first time

**1887**

The Argyle Tower is built

**1888**

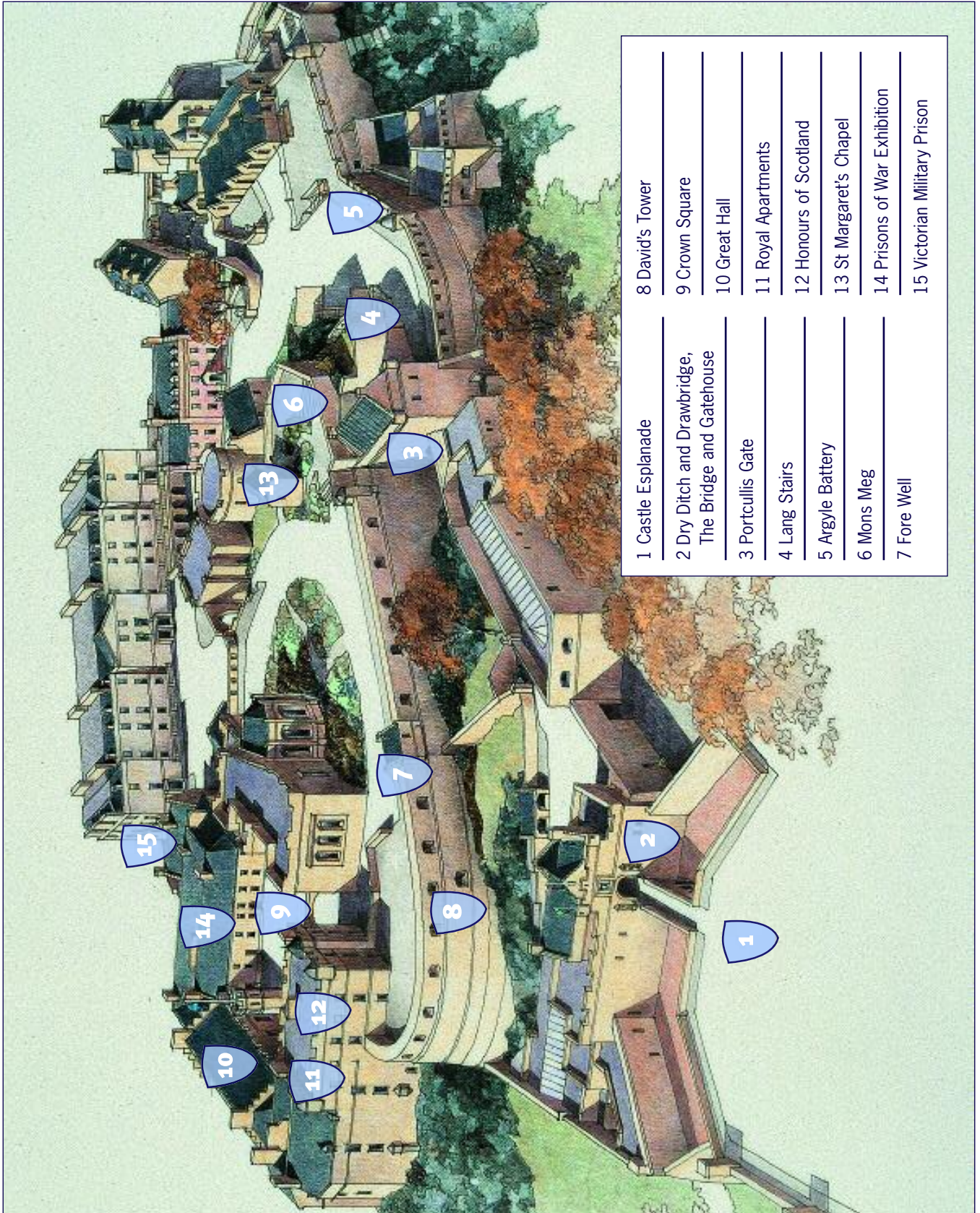
The Bridge and Gatehouse are built to make the castle look more picturesque

**2000+**

Edinburgh Castle attracts over a million visitors a year



# Map of Edinburgh Castle





## Themed teacher-led tours of Edinburgh Castle

### Introduction

Three tours have been devised for teachers, each of which has background information for teachers about the locations and suggestions for questions to get pupils thinking! The locations for each are marked on the map of Edinburgh Castle on page 7.

Each tour concentrates on a specific theme and works as a stand-alone, on-site activity. However, two or more of the tours can be combined according to the focus of your study or how much time you are spending on-site. Key aspects of looking at castles today have been integrated as appropriate into the tours.

### Tour 1: Attackers and Defenders

(time: approximately 45 minutes)

This tour will explore the defences and look at how castles were built to withstand attacks from enemies.

Locations include: the Castle Esplanade; Dry Ditch & Drawbridge; Portcullis Gate; Lang Stairs; Argyle Battery; Mons Meg; Fore Well; David's Tower.

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*Pupils with a costumed interpreter at Edinburgh Castle*

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### Tour 2: A Royal Household

(time: approximately 45 minutes)

This tour focuses on the castle as a royal residence. It will be particularly relevant for teachers and pupils studying the Stewart kings or Mary Queen of Scots but also raises awareness of how kings and queens lived in medieval Scotland.

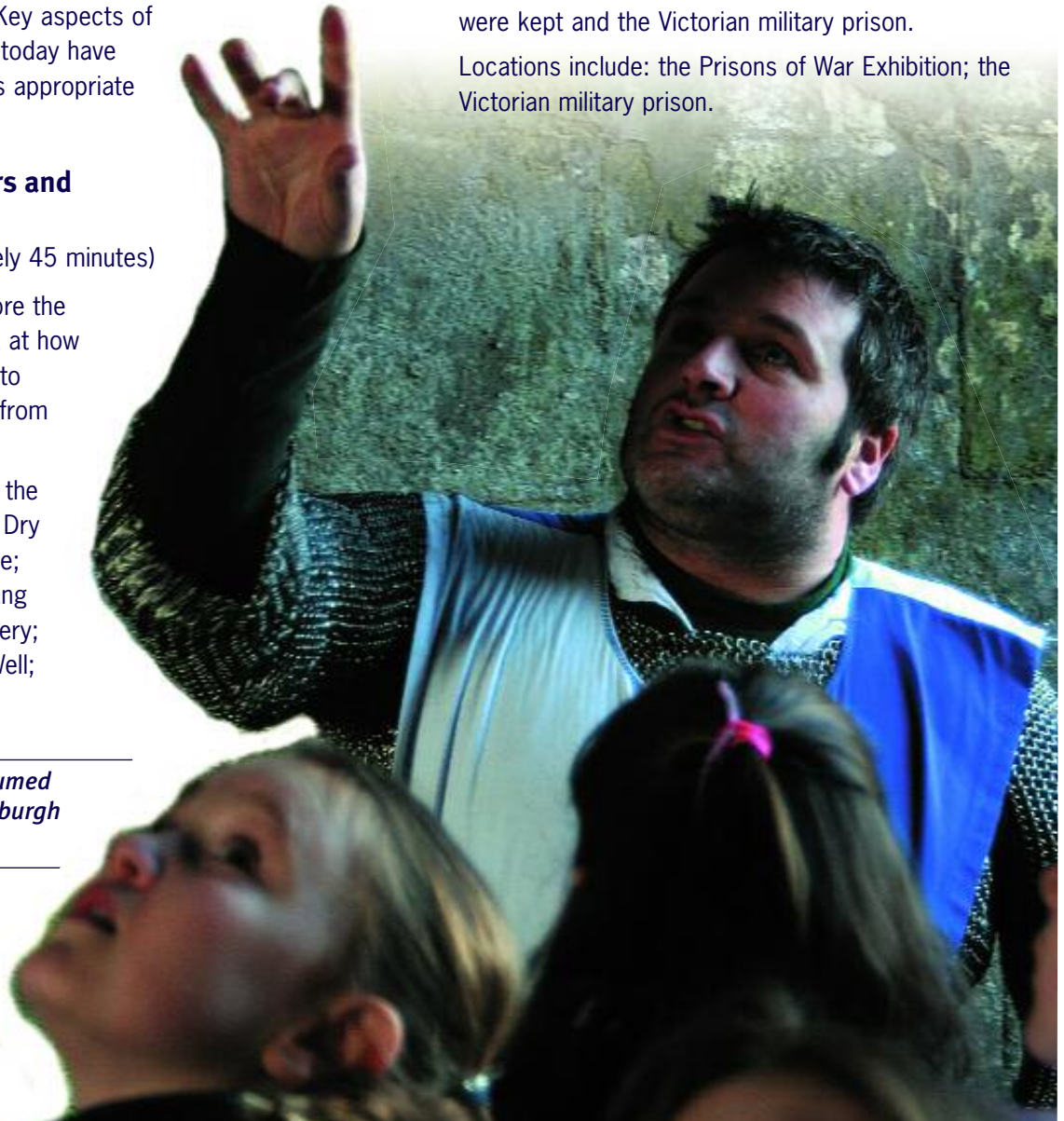
Locations include: Crown Square; the Great Hall; the Royal Apartments; the Honours of Scotland; St Margaret's Chapel.

### Tour 3: Prisons and Prisoners

(time: approximately 45 minutes)

This tour concentrates on two places of imprisonment within the castle: the vaults where prisoners of war were kept and the Victorian military prison.

Locations include: the Prisons of War Exhibition; the Victorian military prison.



## Tour 1: Attackers and Defenders

This tour explores the castle's defences and looks at how castles were built as fortresses to withstand attacks from enemies.

### Setting the scene

Ask pupils to imagine that they are living long ago, hundreds of years before there were cars and buses driving up to the castle and stewards welcoming visitors from all over the world. Invite pupils to go on a hunt for evidence that shows how the castle was constructed to keep people out and how it would have been defended if it was under attack.

### Did you know?

At the bottom of the Esplanade is a small well called the 'Witches Well'. It was near here that over 300 people were burned for supposed witchcraft. Many more were drowned in the Nor' Loch as part of witchcraft 'trials'.



*The Esplanade*

### 1 Location 1: Esplanade



*Edinburgh Castle was built on top of a volcanic rock*

### Background information for teachers

- The castle occupies a natural defensive site on top of the core of an extinct volcano. Pupils will be able to see for miles.
- At the edge of the Esplanade, pupils can see the steep sides of the rock and imagine how hard it would be for attackers to climb up and how easy it was for the defenders to see them.

#### Teacher prompts

Where is the castle situated?

How would enemies have tried to attack the castle?

Would it have been easy?

Why do you think the castle was built up here?

#### Desired pupil responses

High up on a hill

Climb up steep cliffs or try to walk up gentle slope without being seen

No – and could be dangerous!

Easy to defend/ clear view for miles around/ see people approaching



## Did you know?

The motto above the main entrance 'Nemo Me Impune Lacessit' is Latin for 'No-one attacks me with impunity', or in Scots 'Wha daur meddle wi' me?' – in other words "If you hit me, I'll hit you back – harder!" See if you can find it written on the side of a one pound coin.



*The statues of Robert the Bruce (top) and William Wallace (bottom)*

2

## Location 2: Dry Ditch and Drawbridge, the Bridge and Gatehouse



### *Dry Ditch and Drawbridge, the Bridge and Gatehouse*

Today we can see evidence that Edinburgh Castle welcomes visitors. The ticket office has information outside it printed in many languages. Castle Stewards, dressed in distinctive hats and tartan trousers, stand on the drawbridge ready to take visitors on tours.

### Background information for teachers

- There were once three ditches around Edinburgh Castle. The present one dates from 1650 and has never had water in it.
- The Bridge and Gatehouse were both built in 1888, not to defend the castle but to make it look more picturesque. The Bridge would have originally been a drawbridge.
- The statues on the gatehouse are Robert the Bruce (with crown) and William Wallace who fought in the Wars of Independence.
- The royal coat-of-arms above the drawbridge shows that the castle was a royal palace.



### Teacher prompts

Look to see how deep the ditch is.

What kind of bridge often crosses a deep ditch around a castle?

How would it help defend the castle?

Can you see evidence of any other defences?

What can you see above the drawbridge that tells us the castle was a royal home?  
What are the symbols on it?

### Desired pupil responses

A drawbridge

It could be raised to stop enemies getting in

Thick walls, cannons, gun-holes

The royal coat-of-arms with crown (for royalty) and lion rampant (for Scotland)

### The castle today

On the way to the Portcullis Gate look for further evidence that many tourists now visit Edinburgh Castle (audio tour, toilets, gift shop and information plaques attached to the walls).



## Did you know?

On the wall to your left there is a coat-of-arms with a man's head above it. This commemorates the story of William Kirkcaldy and the Lang Siege. William Kirkcaldy was a loyal supporter of Mary Queen of Scots and was Protector of the Castle. After Mary was forced to abdicate, her enemies wished to take the castle back. William Kirkcaldy would not allow this and courageously defended it for almost two years until his starving and exhausted troops were forced to surrender. William was dragged backwards down the Royal Mile, hanged outside St Giles Cathedral and his head was displayed on a spike on the walls of the castle as a warning to anyone else who would fight for the deposed Queen – hence the head you see above the coat of arms.



*Mary Queen of Scots*

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### Location 3: Portcullis Gate



*The Portcullis Gate*

#### Background information for teachers

- This is the main gateway into the castle, built after the Lang Siege (1571–1573).
- It consisted of two outer doors, an iron portcullis and another door at the rear.
- Look back down the narrow roadway. You will see two pillars that once held another large gate known as the inner barrier.

#### Teacher prompts

One door can be seen. Can you see evidence of any other doors? How many?

Look up at the iron grating. What is it called?

What is its purpose?

Why do you think there are spikes on the bottom?

If you look high up you can see more defences – what are they?

It is very narrow here – imagine you are in an army trying to get in through all these gates, what do you think the defenders might do?

#### Desired pupil responses

The hinges of two other doors

A portcullis

To be lowered if the castle was under attack. It is more secure because it can't be opened like a door

To look threatening

Battlements/ramparts, cannons

Throw things down on you, shoot you, fire arrows or guns from above



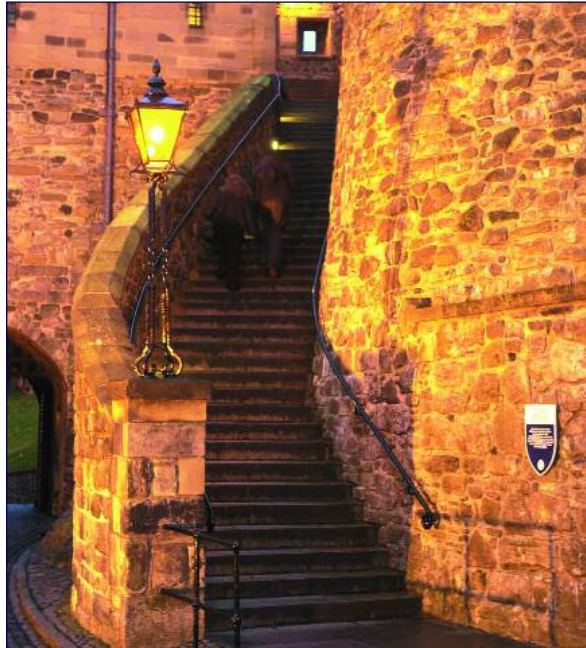
## Did you know?



On the wall right of the Lang Stairs you will see a plaque commemorating Sir Thomas Randolph. During the Wars of Independence Edinburgh Castle was in the hands of the English. Thomas Randolph was the nephew of Robert the Bruce and hatched a plan to re-take the castle in 1314. One of his men, William Francis, had lived in the castle when he was younger and had discovered a secret pathway down the rocks beneath the Argyle Battery that allowed him to sneak out to see his girlfriend. William Francis led a party of men up the rock face, over the walls and into the castle, catching the English guards off-guard. They were then able to open the gates for the rest of the Scottish troops to enter and take the castle.

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## Location 4: Lang Stairs



### Lang Stairs

#### Background information for teachers

- This steep, narrow flight of steps was originally the main way up into the castle in the Middle Ages.
- There are three gun loops at the top of the stair where cannon would have faced downwards.
- The road ahead, which is now the main route further into the castle, was made during the 16th century so that heavy guns could be moved more easily.

#### Teacher prompts

Why do you think these stairs are called the Lang Stairs?

In the Middle Ages this was the main way to the castle. Imagine that you have fought your way up the cliffs, over the drawbridge and through all the doors at the Portcullis Gate and are now standing at the bottom of the Lang Stairs wearing heavy armour and carrying heavy weapons. What advantages do the defenders still have?

#### Desired pupil responses

From Scots word 'lang' meaning long – they are long stairs

- A long, hard climb up a narrow winding stairway
- Attackers clearly visible from the top
- Castle guards could easily attack anyone climbing up

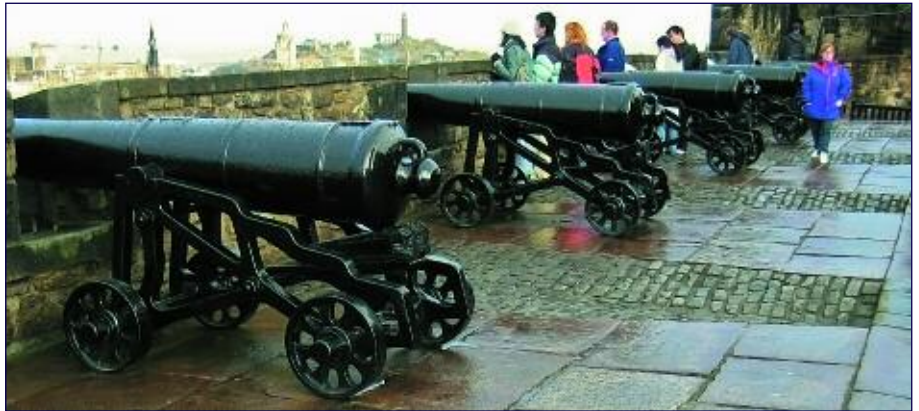


## Did you know?

Until 300 years ago the view from the Argyle Battery would have been very different. New Town (Princes Street etc.) was open fields and Edinburgh was a tightly packed city surrounded by a defensive wall on three sides. Princes Street Gardens used to be a loch called the Nor' Loch that served as a natural defence, a water supply and a place to dump the town's waste.

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### Location 5: Argyle Battery



#### The Argyle Battery

#### Background information for teachers

- The Argyle Battery was the main artillery defence on the north side of the castle.
- It was built in the 1730s on the orders of General Wade and named in honour of the Duke of Argyle, who led George I's army against the Jacobites at the Battle of Sheriffmuir, near Stirling, in 1715.
- The zig-zag fortifications include embrasures for cannons and smaller vertical slits for muskets.

#### Teacher prompts

What type of guns can you see here?

Why does the wall have high parts and low parts?

Can you see any evidence to show that smaller guns might have been used here too?

How would soldiers firing these guns have been protected?

#### Desired pupil responses

Cannon

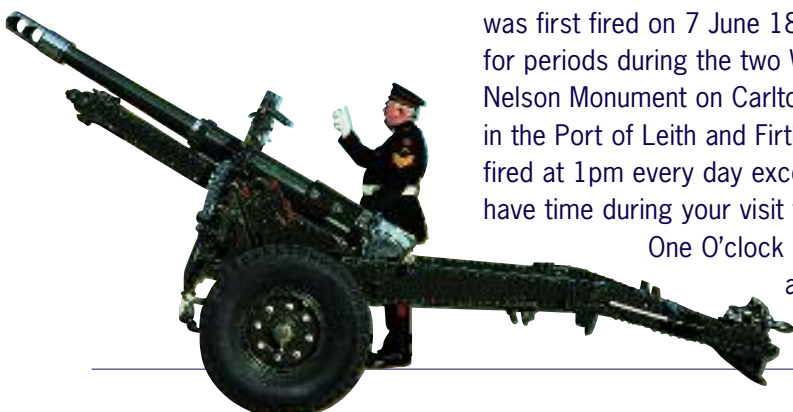
Low parts for the cannon to fire through and high parts to protect the soldiers

Small slits in the battery wall for muskets (up the steps to the right of the cannon)

Slits are just big enough for guns to poke through. Soldiers hide behind the wall. Very hard to get shot through gun slits

#### The castle today

The One O'clock Gun is one of the most famous visitor attractions in Edinburgh. It was first fired on 7 June 1861. It has continued uninterrupted ever since, except for periods during the two World Wars. It is linked to the time ball at the top of the Nelson Monument on Carlton Hill, serving as an audio – visual time signal for ships in the Port of Leith and Firth of Forth. The present gun was installed in 2001 and is fired at 1pm every day except Sundays, Christmas Day and Good Friday. If you have time during your visit to the castle, it is worth descending the steps to the One O'clock Gun exhibition, where the children can press a button to activate a model of the time ball dropping and gun firing.





## Did you know?



When Mons Meg was fired to celebrate Mary Queen of Scots' first wedding, the cannonball was eventually found two miles away, where the Royal Botanic Gardens are today.

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## Location 6: Mons Meg



### Mons Meg

#### Background information for teachers

- Mons Meg is a medieval siege gun, built for firing at castles or town walls not from them.
- It was named 'Mons' after the place in Belgium where it was made in 1449 and was presented to James II in 1457.
- Although it was used in action several times, the great weight (6 tons – heavier than 10 cars!) made it far too cumbersome to be useful in battle.
- It made a very loud bang, but could only travel 3 miles (5km) a day and required 100 men to move it. It could only fire one cannonball every half an hour.
- Mons Meg was last fired in 1681, when her barrel burst (see the damaged section on her gun barrel).
- After that she was dumped within the castle until 1754, then was taken to the Tower of London to be melted down. She was too big to go in the furnace and was returned to Edinburgh Castle in 1829.

#### Teacher prompts

How is Mons Meg different from other cannons you have seen in the castle?

Look at the size of Mons Meg and her cannon balls. What do you think it would be like to move and fire her?

The last time Mons Meg was fired, she became damaged and could not be used any more. Can you find evidence of the damage that was done?

#### Desired pupil responses

Larger, bigger cannonballs, wooden wheels

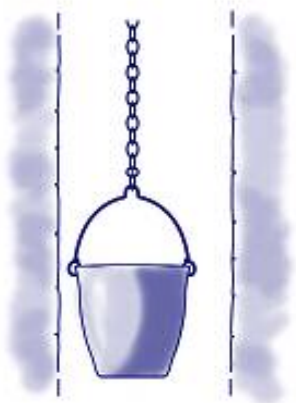
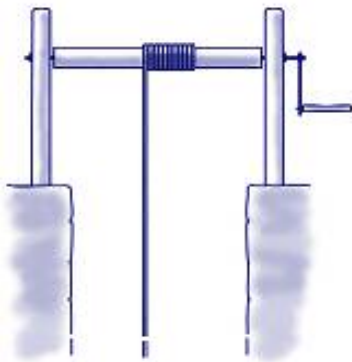
Hard work/very slow/very difficult and tiring/needed lots of people

There are broken gun-barrel hoops on the left hand side



## Did you know?

There was a siege at Edinburgh Castle in 1573. One of the main reasons why the garrison surrendered was because this well was blocked up by falling rubble when David's Tower collapsed.



*The lifting mechanism for Fore Well*

## 7 Location 7: Fore Well



*Fore Well*

### Background information for teachers

- The Fore Well was the main water supply from at least the early 14th century.
- It is 110ft (34m) deep.
- A well was really important in a castle especially in a siege where you had no other access to fresh water.
- The well was replaced by a piped water supply from the town in the 19th century.

### Teacher prompts

Look down into the well. How deep do you think it is?

What do you think the well was used for?

Why do you think it was important to have a well inside a castle?

How would water be taken from it?

What would that job be like?

Whose job do you think it was?

If you were attacking Edinburgh Castle, why might you plan to block or damage the well?

### Desired pupil responses

Answers may vary greatly! 34m is about the same as 2 very tall trees or 20 children standing on each others shoulders

Water for drinking, washing, cooking

- No taps/running water
- Needed when under siege

Lowering and raising a bucket on a rope

Very hard work, slow, tiring

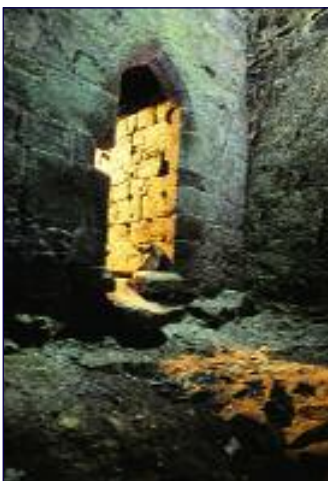
One of the servants/soldiers in the castle

During a siege, a lack of water would mean people in the castle might become ill or die and therefore have to surrender



## Did you know?

One of the most ruthless incidents in the castle's history took place in David's Tower in 1440. The King, James II, was only a teenager at the time and rival families were trying to take power for themselves. One of the most powerful of these was the Douglas family. The King's protector, Sir William Crichton, invited the Earl of Douglas and his brother to dinner in David's Tower. During the meal a bull's head was presented on the table (a traditional sign that someone was about to die). Before they could do anything the Douglases were taken outside and beheaded. This dinner became known as The Black Dinner.



David's Tower

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### Location 8: The remains of David's Tower

NB. At this point, you are advised to split your class into two groups, as there are two separate areas within the tower.

#### Background information for teachers

- David's Tower was named after David II (1329-71) who built it.
- It once stood over 100ft (30m) high, the equivalent of a ten storey block of flats, and had three storeys of royal accommodation.
- Only part of the ground floor remains after it was brought down during the Lang Siege.
- After the Lang Siege, the Half Moon Battery, which still stands, was built in its place.
- Parts of David's Tower and its original defences (gun loops and arrow slits) still remain.

#### David's Tower (through the left hand door)

##### Teacher prompts

Walk to the far end of this room and up the steps. What can you see?

What can you see through it?

The hole is called a gun loop. Imagine you were defending the castle, what would you use this for?

Would you feel safe? Why?

##### Desired pupil responses

A large hole in the wall

The Royal Mile/hill/road leading up to the castle

To look out for the enemy and fire guns at them

The enemy can't see me. I am protected but can see them clearly

#### David's Tower (through the right hand door)

##### Teacher prompts

Walk up the steps on your right.

What are these figures doing?  
[image of the models]

The little hole in the wall is called an arrow slit – what do you think it was used for?

Why were arrow slits good for defending a castle?

Describe what the figures are wearing.

Look for parts of their clothing that give them protection. What might they need these for?

##### Desired pupil responses

(Getting ready to) shoot crossbow bolts

Firing arrows through if enemies were trying to attack the castle

The narrow hole in the thick wall widens towards the Bowman, so he has plenty of space to work in but is well protected as it would be hard for the attacker to fire an arrow through the narrow end of the slit

Tunics, tights, belts, soft shoes etc

Elbow and knee pads  
Kneeling/working near rough stone walls, protection in battle



*The Scottish Coat of Arms*

## Did you know?

Beneath the Scottish Coat of Arms on the outside of the Great Hall is a thistle and a rose which commemorates the wedding between the Scottish King, James IV, and the English princess, Margaret Tudor. This marriage became known as 'The Union of the Thistle and the Rose'.

## Tour 2: A Royal Household

This tour focuses pupils on Edinburgh Castle as a royal residence. It will be particularly relevant for teachers and pupils studying the Stewart kings or Mary Queen of Scots but also raises awareness generally of how kings and queens lived in medieval Scotland.

### Setting the scene

The tour starts in Crown Square. Ask pupils to look for evidence that Edinburgh Castle was once the home of Scottish kings and queens. You might want to pay special attention to the various carvings and plaques on the walls of the buildings.

9

### Location 9: Crown Square



### Background information for teachers

- Crown Square was created in the 15th century as the main courtyard of the castle. Royalty used it for welcoming visitors, leaving horses and carriages, or exercising.
- The Great Hall and the Royal Apartments are situated around the Square.
- The Honours of Scotland and the Stone of Destiny are displayed here.
- The coat of arms of Mary of Guise (mother of Mary Queen of Scots) and the plaque beside it commemorates her death in the Castle in 1560.
- There are many royal symbols on the buildings in the Square (e.g. thistles and crowns).



### Teacher prompts

Why do you think this area is called 'Crown Square'?

Why were the Royal Apartments found at the top of the castle?

What royal symbols can you see on the buildings round the square?

### Desired pupil responses

Because the Royal Apartments are here.  
Because of shape of it

Safest place

Crowns, royal coats-of-arms, initials, thistles



## Did you know?

If the Queen visits Edinburgh Castle today, she has to ask to be presented with the special key which is kept in the Great Hall. If not, she has to pay to get in like everyone else!



*Presenting the key to the Great Hall to HM The Queen*

## 10 Location 10: The Great Hall



*The Great Hall*

### Background information for teachers

- The Great Hall was built on the orders of James IV and completed in 1511, with the intention that it served as the chief place of ceremony in the castle.
- When Cromwell captured the castle in 1650, he converted the enormous space into soldiers' barracks, as it remained for the next 200 years.
- When the army vacated the building in 1886, work began on restoring it to its former glory. With the exception of the great hammer beam roof and the spy hole (the Laird's Lug) to the right of the fireplace, everything you see inside is Victorian, but pupils will still gain an overall impression of a large, grand room used by kings and queens of long ago.
- In a case at one end of the hall, there is the ceremonial key to the castle which dates from the 17th century. Attached to it are the names of all the British kings, queens and governors of the castle since then.
- The weapons and armoury you see in the Great Hall today would not have been a feature in the past.

### Teacher prompts

What do you think this room was used for?

Where do you think the king and queen would have sat?

Who would have contributed to a large feast or banquet?

Look for a little window with bars on it beside the fireplace. This is called the Laird's Lug. Sometimes, the king would sit behind it. Why do you think he did that?

### Desired pupil responses

Big banquets/feasts/parties held by the king and queen

Beside the fireplace where they could be seen and be warm!

Musicians/jesters or other entertainers, cooks, servants, guards, local farmers etc

To listen to what people were saying about him, in case they were plotting against him



## Did you know?

Above the fireplace is the royal coat-of-arms of Britain. The unicorn represents Scotland, the lion represents England. When this room was in use, Scotland and England had joined under one king, James VI of Scotland and I of England.

The coats of arms of all the Stewart kings and queens of Scotland up to James VI are painted on the walls.



*A gilded panel with the date 1566 and the entwined initials MAH, (Mary Queen of Scots) and Henry (Lord Darnley), parents of James VI, is above the doorway to the birth chamber where James was born.*

11

### Location 11: The Royal Apartments

#### Background information for teachers

- The Royal Apartments include the Laich Hall and the tiny chamber where James VI was born, called the Birth Chamber or Mary Room.
- The Mary Room is very small and will only admit around 6 children at a time. You will see James VI birthdate in Latin on the walls and his initials on the ceiling.
- When James VI returned to his birthplace in 1617 for his Golden Jubilee celebrations, the Royal Apartments were remodelled both inside and out. Much of what you see dates from this time.
- The Laich (Lower) Hall was used instead of the Privy Chamber on the floor above the Great Hall as a room for less exalted receptions.

#### The Birth Chamber (The Mary Room)

##### Teacher prompts

Can you find the painting of the king who was born in this room?

Describe what he looks like and is wearing.

Can you find any other symbols of royalty in this room?

Can you find anything that tells you when he was born?

His mother Mary, Queen of Scots was afraid that her enemies would harm her baby. Why do you think she chose this room for her baby to be born?

##### Desired pupil responses

Above the fireplace

Serious/sad/thoughtful etc. Long beard. Hat/dark clothes except for white lacy collar/old fashioned clothes

Thistles/crowns/initials of king and queen on ceiling. Scottish Royal coat of arms on the wall

James VI date of birth

It was safe and secure. Small – nowhere for enemies to hide  
Only one doorway – difficult for enemies to sneak in etc.

#### The Laich Hall

##### Teacher prompts

This room was used for entertaining and as a dining room. Look at the decoration. What tells you that the rooms were used for important occasions?

Walk behind the screen to the right of the fireplace. What difference is there in the way this part of the room is decorated?

Why? Who do you think would have stood here?

Look at the fireplace. If you have a fireplace at home, how is this one different? Why?

##### Desired pupil responses

Gold designs on the walls and the coats of arms of kings and queens

Same designs, but not so grand – not painted gold

Servants – not as important as king, queen and their guests

Much bigger/wider/taller because room is bigger and no other heating in it. No electric or gas fire in it – meant for a “real” fire!



## Did you know?

Visitors to Edinburgh Castle in the 19th century were allowed to pick up and handle the Honours of Scotland.



*The Honours of Scotland*

12

## Location 12: The Honours of Scotland

### Background Information for teachers

- The Honours of Scotland are the Crown Jewels, the second oldest in Europe.
- They were first used together for the coronation of Mary Queen of Scots at Stirling Castle in 1543.
- Following the 1707 Treaty of Union between Scotland and England, a Scottish Parliament no longer sat in Edinburgh. The Honours, which had previously sat in the parliament to represent the absent monarch, were locked away in a wooden chest in the Crown Room.
- They lay there for 111 years until Walter Scott obtained permission from George III to open the Crown Room. He found the Honours just as they had been left over a century before.
- Today, the Crown Room also houses the Stone of Destiny. This ancient stone was the seat on which the Scottish kings were crowned until the English king, Edward I, took it from Scone Abbey, near Perth, in 1296.
- The Stone of Destiny was taken to Westminster Abbey and, for nearly 700 years, was used in the coronation of English, and then from 1714, British monarchs. It was finally returned to Scotland in 1996 and will leave only when there is a coronation in Westminster Abbey.
- There is a one-way system through the exhibition. Once in, you must continue in the loop system. Allow at least 20 minutes for the whole exhibition, more if the castle is very busy.
- Pupils should be primed with things to look for before they go into the exhibition and a question and answer session can then be held in Crown Square once the children have left the exhibition.

### The Crown Room

#### Teacher prompts

What did you see in this room?

Why do you think they are called "Honours"?

What three things did you find out about the Crown Jewels?

#### Desired pupil responses

The Honours of Scotland – crown, sword, sceptre (ornamental stick), stone, jewellery

Very special things/to be crowned king or queen of Scotland is a great honour etc

Variety of answers expected

### The castle today

Foreign language information boards and leaflets at the start of the exhibition are another piece of evidence that visitors from all over the world travel to view these ancient relics and learn about their fascinating history.



## Did you know?

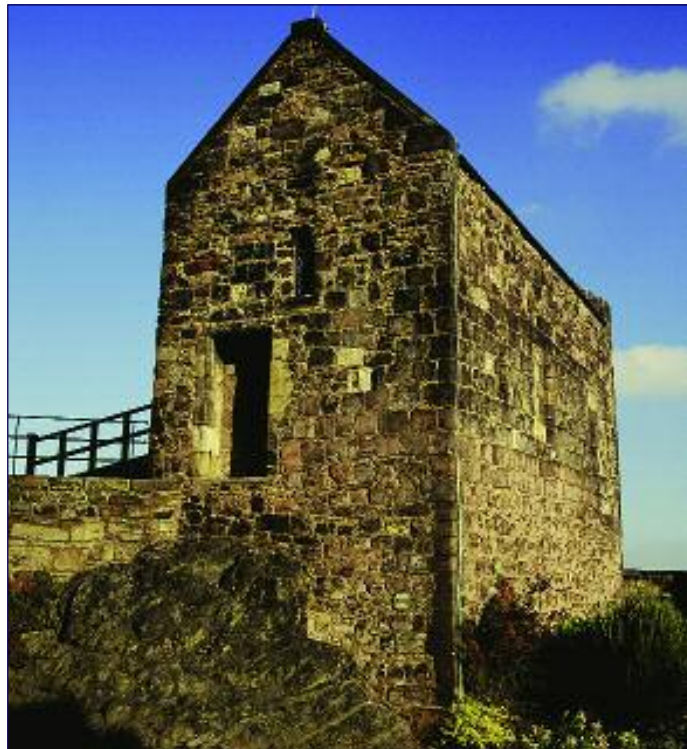
Queen Margaret wanted to make it easier for pilgrims to visit religious places such as St Andrews so she established a free ferry across the Forth. The two places where the ferry landed were named after her – North Queensferry and South Queensferry. Today the Forth Road Bridge links these two towns.



*St Margaret*

13

### Location 13: St Margaret's Chapel



#### *St Margaret's Chapel*

To visit this location you will have to retrace your steps back out of Crown Square.

#### **Background information for teachers**

- St Margaret's Chapel is the oldest building in the castle. David I (1124–53) built it as a private chapel for the royal family and dedicated it to his mother, Margaret, who died in the castle in 1093.
- Queen Margaret was very religious and spent most of her life looking after sick and poor people.
- The Chapel was restored during the 19th century and the stained glass windows added in 1922.
- Explain to the children that castles had churches or chapels within or attached to them.

#### **Teacher prompts**

What do you think this building is?

What evidence can you identify that tells us that this is a religious building?

Castles often had their own church or chapel built within or beside them. Why do you think this was?

#### **Desired pupil responses**

A church/chapel

Benches/pews, candles, font for Baptism, crosses, holy book (in glass case on wall), stained glass windows etc

So the king, queen, their family and guests could worship in private. For baptisms/weddings/funerals of important members of the household



## Did you know?

The first prisoners of war in Edinburgh Castle were the crew of a French ship, captured in 1757 during the Seven Years' War with France. They were marched up to the castle and locked away in the Vaults beneath the Great Hall. Two of these vaults are now Education Rooms where activities for schools take place.



*Inside the Vaults*

## Tour 3: Prisons and Prisoners

Edinburgh Castle has been used as a prison since the beginning of the 12th century. There were different kinds of prisons for different classes of prisoner, ranging from dark pits for peasants to guest apartments for the nobility. Around 1480, when the stone vaults beneath the Great Hall were built, the Castle became one of Edinburgh's state prisons. These same vaults, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, were used to incarcerate thousands of prisoners of war.




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### *The rebels' vault*

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This tour focuses on two places of imprisonment within the castle: the vaults where prisoners of war (PoWs) were kept and the Victorian military prison.

### **Setting the scene**

Parts of the Prisons of War Exhibition are small and narrow therefore we recommend organising this tour as follows:

- the whole class should watch the introductory video then go down the stairs to explore the first two vaults, reconstructed to show what life would have been like for the prisoners of war
- ask pupils to look for evidence; to be aware that this happened a long time ago; to find out what the prisoners had to eat and drink; to imagine what it would have been like to have been a prisoner; to think about what they did in their spare time
- after this part of the tour the class should go out into the prisoners' exercise yard for a short feedback session before dividing into two groups
- one group should go back to look at the artefacts made by the PoWs while the other investigates the Victorian military prison
- groups can swap over after 15 minutes before a final comparative feedback session in the exercise yard. NB the exercise yard is often subject to high winds so you may want to hold the final feedback session back up in Crown Square

If it is not practical for your class to split into two groups the class can go through the whole PoW visitor experience, have a feedback session in the exercise yard and then investigate the Victorian military prison before a final comparative feedback session outside the prison.



## Did you know?

In 1799 a prisoner planning an escape hid in a hand barrow used to take dung from the prison. He was discovered when someone threw the dung over the wall and his cries of fright and pain attracted the guards' attention!



*Locks, bolts and chains in the Vaults*

14

### Location 14: Prisons of War Exhibition

#### Background information for teachers

Americans and many other nationalities (French, Spanish, and Dutch) were imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle in 1781 because Britain and America were at war between 1776–83.

- In 1781 America was still governed by Britain but many of the people who lived there were unhappy about this and were fighting for American Independence.
- Before long, France, Spain and Holland had joined forces with America and many of the sailors captured during this war were imprisoned here at Edinburgh Castle.
- These prisoners included cabin boys, some as young as six years old.
- The reconstructed prison vaults give a good impression of what life was like for these prisoners. They enjoyed quite different conditions from normal prison inmates, with good health care and food rations, and the opportunity to exercise, make crafts and trade with the people of Edinburgh (who were allowed into the castle for a short time every day for this purpose). Some even made counterfeit banknotes, using die stamps made of bone from their rations.

#### Feedback session: The reconstructed prison vaults

##### Teacher prompts

Who were imprisoned in the vaults we have just seen?

Why were they imprisoned here?

What objects did you see that you don't think you would see in prisons today?

What would it have been like living in a vault like this?

What did the prisoners have to eat and drink?

Do you think they were well fed?

##### Desired pupil responses

Sailors from America, France, Spain, and Holland

The countries they came from were at war with Britain

Wash tubs/latrines buckets/jugs  
Candles/candle holders  
Quill pens/ink wells  
Broom/besom  
Coal/coal fire  
Hammocks

Not much space or peace and quiet.  
Dark, smelly, noisy. **But also** possibly good fun, lots of friends to talk to/play games with etc

Bread, beef, pease, cabbage, butter, cheese, beer

(Own judgement)



## Did you know?

Many of the prisoners of war were skilled craftsmen. They used the time they had on their hands to make snuff boxes, jewellery boxes, straw hats and model ships out of materials they found around the Vaults, such as meat bones, bedding straw and bits of wood. They were allowed to set up market in the exercise yard and sell their wares to the locals.



*A jewellery box made of straw*

## Setting the scene

You are now going into two more vaults. In the first vault are three big wooden doors. These are the original prison doors. Have a look at these doors and see what you can find on them.



*Graffiti on a prison door*

## Feedback session: evidence of prison life

### Teacher prompts: prison doors

What did you see on prison doors?

How do you think this was done?

Who do you think might have carved these things?

Why do you think the prisoners carved these things?

What do we call this today? Discuss what graffiti means to them today

### Desired pupil responses

Names, pictures, dates etc.

Carved or scratched out

The prisoners who were kept here

Bored, lonely, wanted to remember their ships, wanted to show how they felt

Graffiti



Then you will go into a room with glass cases. Have a look in the glass cases and look for evidence of what the prisoners did in their spare time.



*A model ship*



*Forgery objects*

### Teacher prompts: objects and forgery

Can you remember what objects were in the display cases?

Who do you think made the objects in the display case?

Can you identify the kinds of materials they were made from?

Why do you think the prisoners made these objects?

Who might they have swapped with or sold to?

What might they have got in return?

Did you notice anything else that the prisoners made?

Was this money real? (Explain what this means if the children don't know)

Did you see what they used to make the money?

How do you think the forged money was used?

### Desired pupil responses

Model ships, jewellery boxes, straw hats, games etc

Prisoners – they had plenty of spare time!

Wood, straw, canvas, bone – i.e. bits and pieces taken from their rations, bedding and belongings

To help pass the time, for their own use, or to swap or sell

Other prisoners, prison guards, people of Edinburgh

Money/'luxuries' such as soap, tobacco, sweets/information or assistance to help them plan an escape etc

Money/banknotes

No, they were forgeries/copies

They made copies of stamps out of bone and wrote on them using quill pens and ink

To buy things such as extra food, tobacco and other 'luxuries' from the guards, other prisoners, or local people. To use if they escaped

### The castle today

Today, Edinburgh Castle is the home of the National War Memorial of Scotland as well as the National War Museum of Scotland. During World War I and World War II, thousands of Scots were taken as prisoners of war overseas.



15

### Location 15: Victorian Military Prison

#### Setting the scene



*Interior of the Military Prison*

Tell pupils that they are going into a very different kind of prison and that you want them to spot as many differences as they can when comparing this prison with the prisons of war they have just seen. Look out for who was locked up, what crimes they might have committed and what punishments they were given.

#### Background information for teachers

- This prison was built in 1842 to house soldiers from the castle garrison for offences such as 'drunk on guard', 'absence from duty', desertion and fighting.
- It was a miniature version of the great civil prisons of the day.
- Prisoners were held in solitary confinement and made to do four hours of hard punishment a day; this included moving cannonballs and working a treadmill (a machine not unlike an exercise bike).
- After the prison was extended in the 1880s, the regime changed somewhat. The men were still held in their spartan cells, but they now washed in the ablution block and were regularly monitored by an army doctor.
- It is worth visiting this prison to compare the conditions with those of the prisoners of war in the Vaults.

#### Teacher prompts

Who was locked up here?

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Why?

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What did you see inside each cell?

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What do you think it would be like being locked up in a cell like this?

---

How were prisoners punished?

---

How were these prisoners' lives different from the prisoners of war in the vaults?

#### Desired pupil responses

Military people who worked in the castle  
i.e. soldiers, sailors etc

---

Been drinking, fighting, fallen asleep on duty, not turned up for duty etc

---

Not much – a hard wooden bed, bench seat, shelf and, in some, a sink and toilet

---

Boring, depressing, cold, uncomfortable, lonely etc

---

Separating strands in a piece of tarred rope, carrying a cannonball

---

On their own, no company, nothing useful to do, not as comfortable, different food

#### The castle today

Edinburgh Castle is still occupied by the military who protect the castle at night. You can see them on guard at the drawbridge in the morning, before Historic Scotland staff open its doors to welcome visitors. The castle is also the backdrop for the world-famous Edinburgh Military Tattoo which takes place every year as part of the Edinburgh Festival in August.



## Additional resources

### Further reading

#### For teachers:

*Edinburgh Castle: The Official Souvenir Guide* edited by Chris Tabraham pub. Historic Scotland. Available at castle shop and gives more interesting information about the castle and its history. It can also be ordered through the website.

Tabraham, C. *Edinburgh Castle Prisons of War* pub. Historic Scotland 2004, ISBN 1-903570-99-9

Tabraham, C. *The Illustrated History of Scotland* pub. Lomond Books 2003, ISBN 978 1 84204 026 3

Tabraham, C. *Scotland's Kings and Queens* pub. Colin Baxter Photography Ltd 2004, ISBN 1-84107-226-5

Historic Scotland Education Unit: Information and ideas for teachers, in particular:

- Medieval Castles in Scotland
- The Wars of Independence
- Siege Engines
- Heraldry

Please refer to the website for a full list of educational resources relating to other relevant themes.

#### For pupils:

Brooks, Philip *Knights and Castles* (Kingfisher)

Cox, Phil Roxbee *What were castles for?* (Usborne/English Heritage)

Douglas, E. *Scottish Kings and Queens* (NMS publishing)

Gravett, Christopher *Castle* (Dorling Kindersley Eyewitness)

Hindley, Judy *The Usborne Time Traveller – Knights and Castles* (Usborne)

MacDonald, Fiona *Castles* (Franklin Watts)

Osband, Gillian *Castles – Out and about activity book* (Kingfisher)

Paterson, J. *The History of Scotland for Children* (Glowworm Books)

Steele, Philip *The Best Ever Book of Castles* (Kingfisher)

Taylor, Barbara *The Amazing World of Castles* (Lorenz Books)

**For more information about Edinburgh Castle you can log on to the Historic Scotland website:**  
[www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)

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