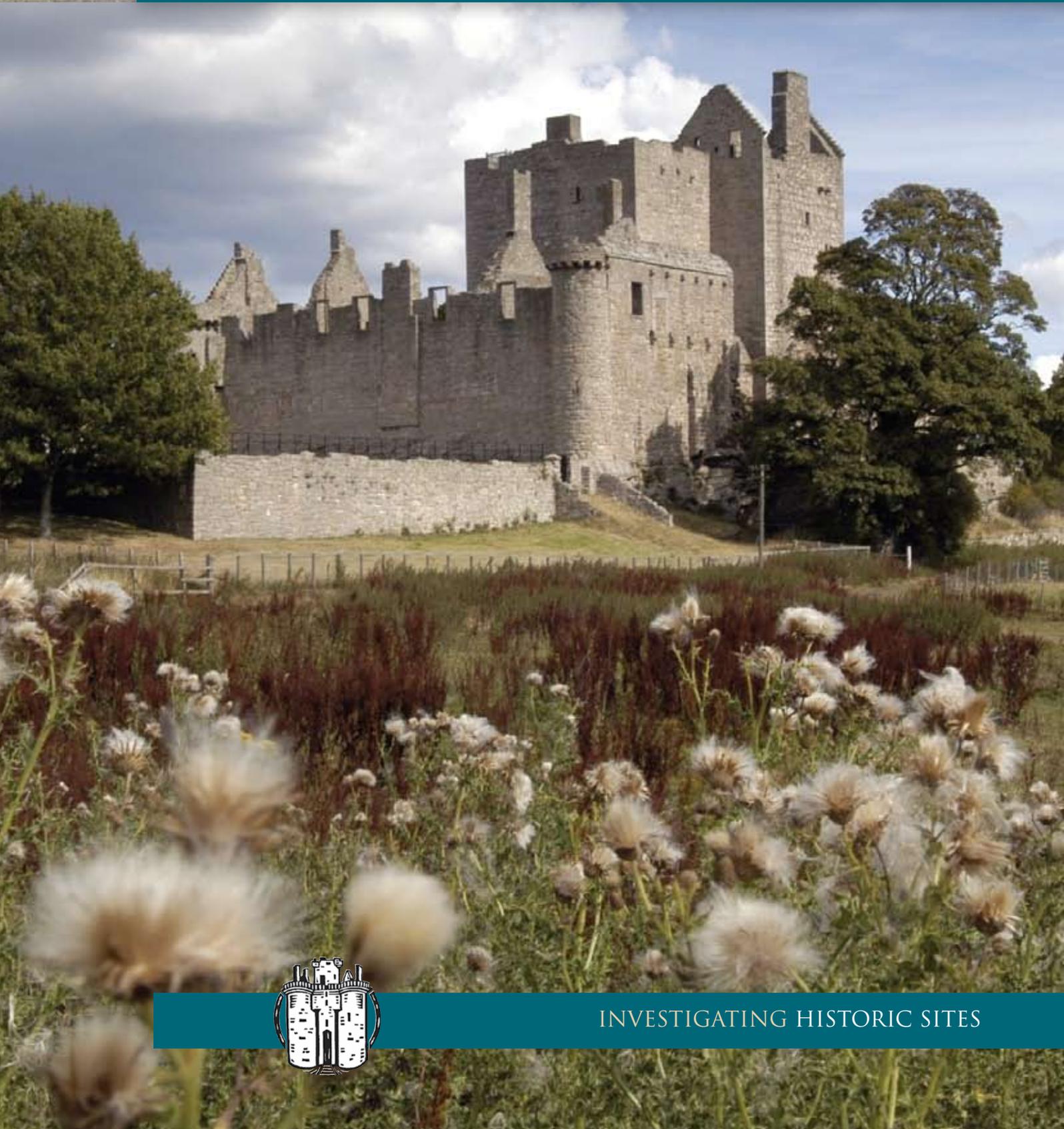


Craigmillar Castle is one of the most perfectly preserved medieval castles in Scotland. Its setting is dramatic, surrounded by the remnants of forests where deer were once hunted.

INVESTIGATING CRAIGMILLAR CASTLE

Information for Teachers





Timeline

1374 Robert II grants the land of Craigmillar to Sir Simon Preston

1400s Construction of tower house begins; then inner curtain wall built

1479 James III's younger brother kept at Craigmillar on suspicion of witchcraft plot against the King

Early 1500s Outer walls, gardens and fish pond constructed

1544 Craigmillar Castle damaged and captured during the English invasion

1550s Rebuilding and expansion of castle

1566 Mary Queen of Scots stays at Craigmillar after murder of Riccio

1660 Craigmillar sold to Sir John Gilmour; west wing built

1687 Chapel built

1700s Gilmour family moves to Inch House in Gilmerton; Craigmillar castle falls into ruin

1946 Castle placed in care of the state

Craigmillar Castle is one of the most perfectly preserved medieval castles in Scotland. Its setting is dramatic, surrounded by the remnants of forests where deer were once hunted and with wide views to Edinburgh and beyond. A visit to the castle will breathe life into your Social Subjects: People in the Past study.

Historical background

The story of Craigmillar Castle starts in 1374 when King Robert II granted to Sir Simon Preston the right to the lands of Craigmillar. The Prestons were an important local family and several of the family were at times sheriffs of Edinburgh. In exchange for the lands, the Prestons had to provide an archer for the king's army whenever he needed one. The first part of the castle to be built was the sturdy tower house in the centre. The Prestons also had a more comfortable residence in the centre of Edinburgh, where the City Chambers stand today.

In the 16th century the castle became closely associated with Mary Queen of Scots. In 1544 the castle came under attack and was partly destroyed by English troops when they invaded Scotland to force the Scots to marry

off the infant Mary to the heir to the English throne. In 1566 Mary came to the castle, ill and depressed shortly after the murder of Riccio at Holyrood. Sir Simon Preston was one of Mary's most loyal supporters, and as lord provost of the City had rallied 4-500 armed men to protect her after Riccio's murder. While Mary was staying at the castle, a group of advisers met there to discuss how they would kill her husband, Lord Darnley. This pact became known as the Craigmillar Bond. The link with the Stewart royal family continued undamaged, however, with Mary's son, James VI visiting in 1589. By this time the castle had been rebuilt and expanded to include the inner and outer walls and the chambers of the east wing.

In 1660 the Prestons sold the estate to Sir John Gilmour, head of another influential Edinburgh family. He then rebuilt and updated the castle extensively to make it a more comfortable place to live. However, during the eighteenth century the Gilmours moved to Inch House in Gilmerton, and Craigmillar began to fall into ruin. In 1946, Sir John Little Gilmour handed the castle over to the care of the state.



Supporting learning and teaching

A visit to Craigmillar Castle is particularly appropriate for teachers working on class study topics such as:

- **Mary Queen of Scots**
- **The Middle Ages**
- **Castles**

The **Curriculum for Excellence** aspires to motivate and challenge pupils through a wide range of varied learning experiences. Site visits have a particular role to play in joining up learning outcomes across the curriculum. A visit, and use of the supporting materials, will help to:

- **develop successful learners** by challenging pupils to consider how life has changed for people. It will help them to think critically about evidence and arrive at their own conclusions.
- **develop confident individuals.** Pupils will learn about aspects of their community's past, develop an understanding of social changes, establish some of their own values and communicate their views on different historical and social issues.
- **develop responsible citizens.** It will help to increase pupils' social and historical knowledge and understanding and encourage greater respect for their own historic and built environment.
- **develop effective contributors** by broadening pupils' knowledge and understanding through investigative, creative and critical thinking.

Before the visit

- Discuss an ideal location for a military castle. Pupils could look at a range of landscape scenes on postcards, for example, and then mark with a cross the best place and explain why. As well as defensive considerations, pupils could think about sources of food.
- Discuss with pupils all the different activities which would have gone on in a castle – defence, stabling of horses, hunting, cooking, entertaining. Pupils could design and draw their own cross sections of castles to help them think about the organisation of these activities. Pupils could research different topics (e.g. food, travel, entertainment, weapons) to prepare them for the visit.
- Some children find it hard to imagine that a castle was ever anything other than a ruin. Discuss how buildings change with age – does the house they live in look the same now as it did a few years ago? Has their family made any changes to the house? If so, why? Discuss how wind and weather can affect the look of a building as well as the deliberate changes that people choose to make to buildings. Can they think of any buildings which have been converted into other buildings? (e.g. banks into restaurants, churches into houses).
- It is helpful if pupils have some of the architectural terminology of castles as this makes discussing on site easier. Useful words might include: **doo'cot, courtyard, chamber, shield, coat of arms, spiral stair, archway, curtain wall, dungeon.** Pupils might enjoy the challenge of learning what a **machicolated parapet** is - a slotted wall-top defence.

Working on site

When exploring the castle, pupils should be encouraged to look critically at what they see, and to make and test theories based on physical evidence. Useful starting points are:

- What materials were used to build the castle? Where did the materials come from? Are there any materials which might have rotted or been stolen since then?
- What uses did the castle have? How do you know?
- What evidence is there for everyday life?

Pupils can record evidence by taking notes, sketching, taking photographs or by recording impressions into a tape recorder.

On the Historic Scotland website: [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/education_](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/education_unit) unit teachers can find additional resources to help with work on site. These include compiling an *Evidence Record* and a *My Impressions Record*.

Suggestions for follow-up work

Following the visit pupils can pool their findings in groups to create a fuller record of the castle and the lives of the people who lived and worked there. This could form the basis for a range of presentation activities, for example:

- A guide book for future visitors
- A slide show with commentary of their visit
- Imaginative writing based on the lives of the inhabitants of the castle – a spy guide on how to attack the castle!
- A series of drama sketches showing different snapshots of life in the castle through the ages



Tour of Craigmillar Castle

There is much to explore in this wonderful and well-preserved building. Our suggested tour route focuses on the central tower house during the time of the Preston family (1374 – 1660). It takes in six key locations, marked on the plan at right:

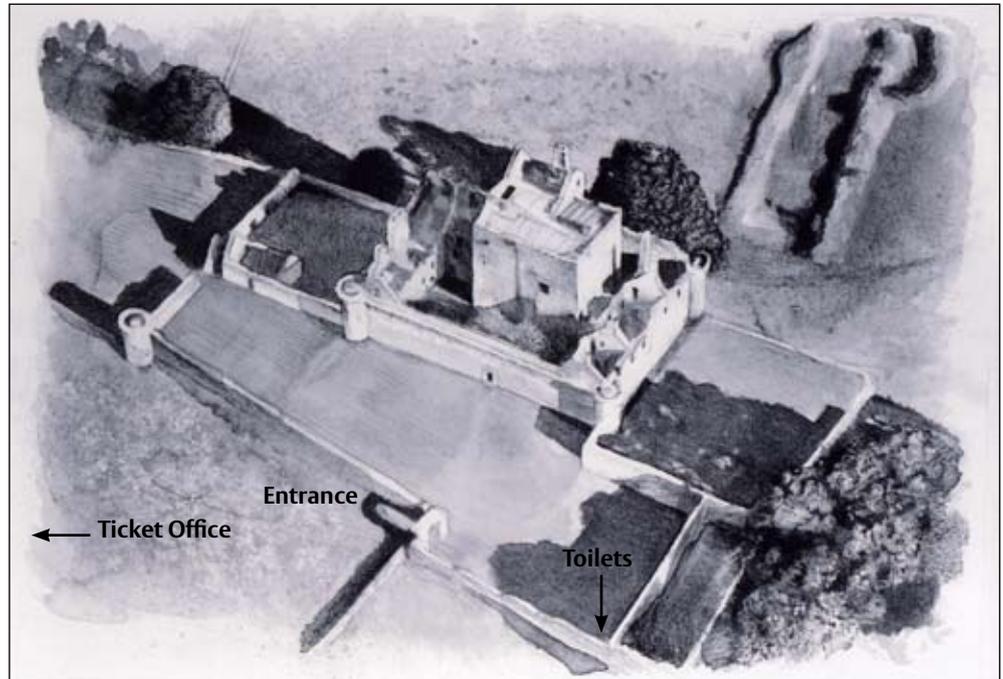
1. Entrance in inner curtain wall
2. Entrance to the tower house
3. The hall
4. The kitchen
5. On the roof
6. The prison and bakehouse

Background information is given in the pack for each location. It is written in fairly simple language so that it can be read aloud to pupils if desired. Also included are suggested **questions for discussion**.

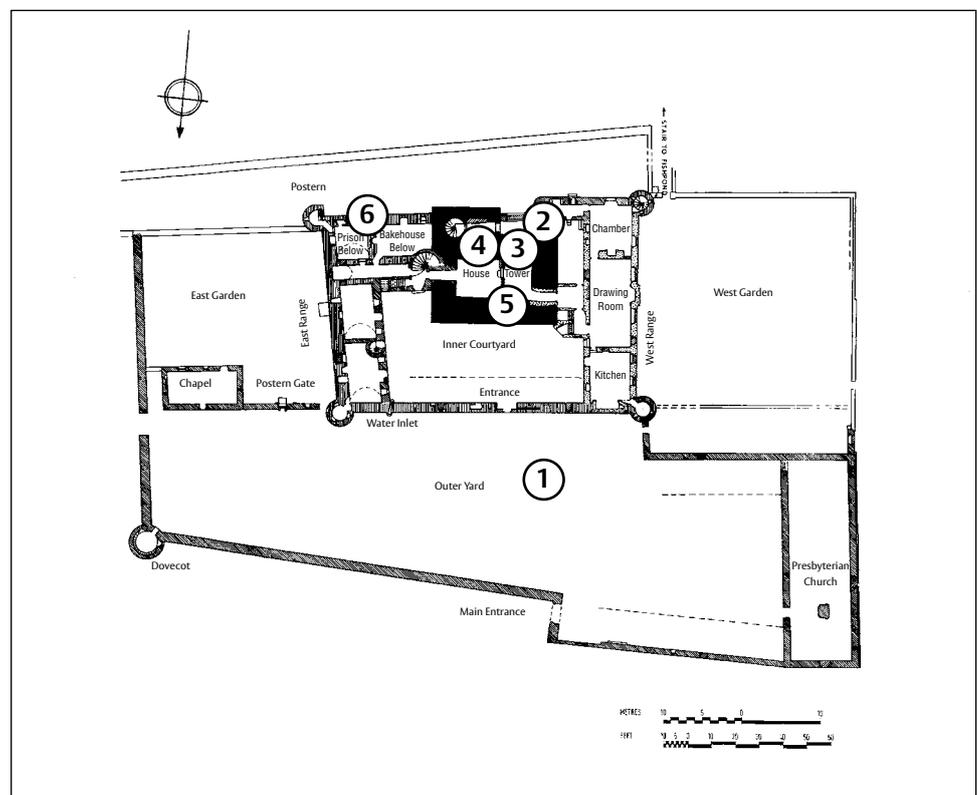
The focus is on encouraging pupils to **interpret** the building and deduce what they can from clues they see around them. A key theme is that of **change**: how the castle has been used and adapted over the course of its 600 year history.

As the castle itself was designed to disperse large groups, we recommend that if possible, e.g. you divide your class into **groups of 8-10** for the tour.

Plan of Craigmillar Castle



Suggested tour route





Did you know...

There might have been as many as 150 people living and working in and around the castle of an important person?



Curtain wall and tower house beyond



Entrance gate in inner curtain wall



Looking up to gap in machicolations

Tour notes

Walk along the outer wall, past the dovecot, through the first gate and across the grass of the outer courtyard. Stop in front of the entrance gate

Location 1: Entrance Gate in Inner Curtain Wall

Background information for teachers. This could be read to pupils.

- This is the main way in to the oldest part of the castle. It is more than 600 years old.
- Above the gate you can see the coat of arms of the Preston family, who built the castle. **Can you see the two gun holes in the corners of the shield?** Above the Preston arms, you can see the royal coat of arms of King James V. This shows us that kings and queens would stay here sometimes. Underneath the shield you can see a spout. Maybe this was used for pouring things on to unwelcome visitors!
- The big wall is called a curtain wall. It is to protect the building inside. **Can you see the watchtowers at each corner?** If you stand close to the wall and look up you can see that there is a gap in the balcony above you. If you were attacking the castle, and trying to climb up the walls, the soldiers defending the castle might pour red hot sand through this gap on to you or might shoot down at you.
- Step back. **Can you see where they would fire their crossbows from?** Later on guns were used. Look for where there are three holes on the battlements. These are called gun ports, for firing guns out of.
- We are standing in a big courtyard. The outside wall was built later. This courtyard might have been where horses and other animals were kept – kind of like a car park for horses when people visited the castle.

Teacher prompts

How many ways of defending the castle can you see?

What kind of people do you think the Prestons were?

Desired pupil responses

- On a high point – good view all round
- Watchtowers to keep a look out for attackers in all directions
- Very high and strong curtain wall
- Gun holes in coat of arms
- Gun loops for defenders to shoot at attackers
- Rich – to build a big castle like this
- Friends with the king/queen if she stayed here sometimes – probably powerful.

Go through the arch into the cobbled courtyard between the yew trees. Turn to the right and go through the door with a modern shield above it. Go up a short flight of steps, turn left, go through two doorways, down two steps, over uneven rocky ground and then turn left into a narrow open-roofed passage.



Did you know...

The two yew trees in the courtyard are a symbol of everlasting life. The tree does not lose its leaves and is green all year round. They are more than 300 years old.



Yews in the inner courtyard



At the entrance to the tower house

Location 2: Entrance to the tower house

Background information for teachers. This could be read to pupils.

- This is the entrance to the old tower house. Look down at your feet. You can see the bare rock that the castle was built on. Where we are standing, there used to be a big crack in the rock. To get in, we would have to cross on a little wooden bridge which would be put out by the guard and then dragged in again afterwards. **Can you see the little slit on the left for the watchman to look out of?**
- Look at the doorway. The extra stone rim of the gate made it impossible to push the door in. Inside the archway there was once an iron gate called a **yett** here which opened outwards.
- When you go through the doorway, you would have to be careful because there would be guards above you on a wooden bridge, ready to attack you from above.

Teacher prompts

Why do you think there was such a narrow passage here?

Just inside the doorway, you can find some deep holes on the left. What do you think they were used for?

Why do you think the inner doorway is so small?

Desired pupil responses

- To make it easier to defend the castle – you could deal with one or two people at a time.

- Probably for bolting the yett gate shut.

- To allow only a few people through at a time
- To make people bend down as they went through – in a weaker position.

Go through the low arch, up the narrow spiral stairs and turn left at the top into the hall.



Did you know...

When this part of the castle was rebuilt after the fire, they built special safes to keep treasures in. One of the treasures was a crystal cross that had been carried at the Battle of Bannockburn.



The hall



Banquet taking place in hall
– artist's impression

Location 3: The Great Hall

Background information for teachers. This could be read to pupils.

- This was the main room in the tower house. The Preston family would entertain their important visitors here, maybe even kings or queens. Sometimes they might also have court cases here. **Can you see the fireplace? What do you think might have been painted on the shield at the left?**
- The walls were probably covered with plaster and paint, like in houses today. There might have been wall hangings on the wall to help keep it warm and for decoration.
- At the back of the hall there used to be a big wooden screen. Servants would get the food ready to serve behind this screen and it would also help keep the room warm.
- The windows would have had glass at the top and wooden shutters underneath.
- If you look very carefully at the north (Edinburgh side) wall, you might be able to find a stone that is decorated with part of a shield. Some people think this might be part of Mary Queen of Scots' shield. **Who can spot the stone?**

Teacher prompts

Where do you think the best place to sit would be and why?

Who would sit here?

Why do you think the fireplace is so big?

Can you see the small stone ledges jutting out half way up the wall? What do you think they were for?

Desired pupil responses

- By the fire for warmth and in the light of the big windows.
- The Prestons and their most important guests would sit here.
- It would be the only way to heat up the room – no other central heating.
- Possibly there was once a lower ceiling here and these were the supporting ledges.

Go towards the door you came in by and turn right into a small room



Did you know...

It used to be difficult to get clean water, so everyone, including the children would drink ale – a kind of beer!



The old oven and fireplace



The cold cupboard

Location 4: The kitchen

Background Information for teachers. This could be read to pupils.

- This used to be the kitchen serving the hall but later on it was turned into a bedroom. **Can you see the hole in the wall in the corner?** This used to be an oven but later it was partly blocked in.
- The fireplace was where all the cooking took place. **Can you see that it used to be bigger?** Cooks might have hung a big pot over the fire, or might have had meat turning on a spike over the fire.
- The hole in the wall opposite the door was probably a kind of food cupboard. It might have had a wooden door lined with leather to try and stop air getting in. **Can you see where the shelves would have been?** If they wanted to make it even colder, they would put ice on the bottom shelf.
- To the right of the chimney area is another big hole. This was where salt was kept. Salt was very expensive in the those days and was used to help make meat and fish last longer.
- Later on this room became a bedroom, and a bigger kitchen was built on the ground floor when the family built and moved to a new part of the castle outside the tower. Mary Queen of Scots stayed at the castle in 1563 and 1566 and some people think this might have been her bedroom. **What do you think? Do you think she would have stayed in a converted kitchen?**

Teacher prompts

Why do you think they built the kitchen here?

Can you see a stone with big scratches on the sticking out corner of wall near the window? What do you think this was for?

In kitchens today there is always a sink. Where would the cooks get water from and where would they get rid of the dirty water?

Desired pupil responses

- Next to the hall – handy for serving.

- This was where the cook would sharpen knives.

- Water would be carried up from a well outside – very heavy work, maybe for a child servant.
- It would be tipped away to end up outside.

Continue up the stairs, past entrances to other bedchambers until you come out on the roof of the tower. Turn up the little flight of steps to the left first.



Did you know...

The Preston family must have loved word games. As well as making a pond in the shape of their initial, another shield in the castle makes a word play on the name Preston. It shows a picture of a **press** and then a **tun** – a kind of barrel.



Shield with word play



View north to Edinburgh



P-shaped fishpond

Location 5: On the roof of the tower house

Background information for teachers. This could be read to pupils.

- This view would have looked very different 500 years ago, but some things would have been the same.

Look to the north (towards the sea). **Can you see Edinburgh Castle? St Giles' Cathedral? Duddingston Kirk this side of Arthur's Seat?**

If you stayed at Craigmillar, you would have felt a long way from the city. It was a very good look out point.

Go down and then up a short flight of steps to stand on the other side of the roof.

- 500 years ago people would grow or catch most of the food they ate. They would keep and preserve as much food as possible in the store cellars in the tower house.

Look to the south of the castle (away from the sea). **Can you see a large P shape in the ground?** This used to be a fish pond in the castle garden. In the garden they would have grown fruit and vegetables and herbs for eating.

Look for woods. These used to be much bigger and people hunted deer here. Look out for rabbits too. 500 years ago people farmed rabbits for eating.

Can you see little steps on the tower of the roof? These were supposed to attract pigeons for eating, which were then kept in the dovecot you can see at the front of the building.

- People would also have used the land around for sport and exercise. They would have practised archery in the fields around, enjoyed hunting in the woods, or maybe have practised falconry: training birds of prey.

Teacher prompts

How many places could the people at Craigmillar get their food from?
Would you have liked this food?

Why do you think the fish pond was built in the shape of a P?

If you look at the roof, some of the slabs for the roof are original, and some of them are modern. Can you work out which ones are which?

Desired pupil responses

- Fish from fish pond
- Rabbits from rabbit warren
- Deer and game from woods
- Vegetables, herbs and fruit from gardens
- Pigeons and eggs from doo'cot.

- After the Preston family.

- It should be easy to see which are original stone and which ones are modern concrete.

Go all the way down the stairs, past the hall. When you get to the bottom turn right through two low doorways into a large basement storage room. Turn right through a tunnel, then left out into the courtyard. Turn right immediately into a doorway, down some steps and then left. There are three basement rooms here, a bakehouse, a cellar and a prison. Go into the prison first.



The prison

Location 6: The Prison and Bakehouse

Background information for teachers. This could be read to pupils.

- **Would you like to have been locked up as a prisoner in here?** This room was partly carved out of rock, so it would have been really cold and damp.

Teacher prompts

Can you find the place where the prisoners might have gone to the toilet?

Where do you think they got water to drink from?

Desired pupil responses

- Toilet at far end of prison.
- Drinking water is the dirty water from the rest of the castle!

- Outside the prison, by the entrance to the other cellar, you can see a hole in the wall on the right. In 1813 they discovered a skeleton here. It was completely blocked in! Someone must have been walled up and then left to die there.
- The room next to the prison is the **bakehouse** where all the bread was made. It must have been terrible for the prisoners being so close! Look at the big oven.
Why do you think the stones near it are black?

Return to the courtyard by the yew trees.



The oven in the bakehouse



View west along
machicolations



Triple gun loop



The west wing from the
garden

Our suggested tour is now finished. If time allows, the following parts of the castle may be of interest to pupils:

- The **west wing** of the castle, built by Sir John Gilmour when he bought it from the Prestons in 1660. He modernised the building and made it more comfortable to live in, by adding a drawing room, a kitchen, a private room on the ground floor, and other chambers on the first floor – now inaccessible because the floor is no longer there. The windows are now blocked in, but they would have had a wonderful view of the west gardens.
- It's fun as well as interesting to go up onto the **walkway** above the curtain wall. To get up here, go up the stairs from the courtyard via the door to the right of the entrance to the prison. Just keep going! You can get close up views of the gun ports and the spaces for firing cross bows.
- The **chapel** in the east garden was built in about 1520. It is still a burial ground for the Gilmour family today – history doesn't stop! The **castle well** is here too.
- The **dovecot** or doo'cot in the corner of the outer curtain wall. You can still see the little boxes where the pigeons would have roosted.



Chapel and dovecot from roof



FAQ

Q What is the minimum number of adults required for supervision?

A 1 adult to 10 pupils – or more adults if possible.

Q Is there disabled access?

A A broad spiral staircase connects the three levels of the castle with about 12 steps for each level. These steep steps to the interior of the castle mean sadly that only the ground floor is accessible to visitors with physical disabilities who use a wheel chair. The toilets inside the castle walls are adapted.

Q Are there lunch facilities?

A Pupils can picnic in the grounds in fine weather. Otherwise they may eat in the hall of the castle, by arrangement with staff on site.

Q Where are the toilets?

A By the entrance gate to the castle, in the site of the old church.

Q Do you carry out risk assessments on behalf of the schools?

A Risk assessment of the site is the responsibility of the teacher in charge of the group. Hazard information sheets available on the Historic Scotland website provide information that can help teachers prepare their risk assessments.

Q Is there a shop?

A There is a shop that sells postcards, guidebooks and souvenirs.

Visiting Craigmillar Castle

Pre visits: We strongly recommend that teachers and accompanying helpers should make a **free** visit to the castle in advance to familiarise themselves with the site and to carry out a risk assessment before bringing school parties.

Booking a visit: Phone **0131 661 4445** to book a visit, discuss your needs and confirm opening times with the Steward. If staff are available, it may be possible to arrange a guided tour.

Cost: Admission is **free** to a range of educational groups including school parties. More information about who qualifies for free visits can be found on the Historic Scotland Education Unit website (see below).

Location: 2.5 miles south east of Edinburgh off the A7.
Grid reference: NT 283705

Parking: Buses can drop pupils off at the castle car park but should then park in nearby Craigmillar Castle Avenue before returning to pick up later.

Health and safety: Please note the following:

- Beware of heights on the upper floors.
- As this is a historic site, stairs are uneven, lighting is dim and in wet weather surfaces can be slippery.
- Pupils should be supervised at all times.

As part of our commitment to Green Tourism, we ask that all litter is disposed of back at school.

Historic Scotland Education Unit: For further information about school visits, activities and resources for teachers linked to **Craigmillar Castle** visit: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

Additional resources

For teachers:

Books

Denys Pringle, *Craigmillar Castle: the official souvenir guide* 1990 Historic Scotland

Chris Tabraham, *Scottish Castles and Fortifications* 2000 Historic Scotland ISBN 1 900168 32 4

Historic Scotland Education *Investigating Medieval Castles in Scotland* 2005 Historic Scotland

Websites

This site has some lovely photographs of the castle: <http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/edinburgh/craigmillarcastle/>

This site has a good map showing where the castle is: http://www.castleuk.net/castle_lists_scotland/66/craigmillarcastle.htm

Other

A poster of the castle with some great photographs is available from Historic Scotland – see the website for details.

For pupils:

Terry Deary, *Horrible Histories: Bloody Scotland* 1998 Scholastic

Elizabeth Douglas, *Mary Queen of Scots* published 1999 NMS Publishing

Websites

BBC: Burgh Life in Mary's Time <http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/as/burghlife/>

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