



Dirleton Castle was home to three different families over the course of four hundred years: the de Vauxs, the Halyburtons and the Ruthvens.

INVESTIGATING DIRLETON CASTLE

Information for Teachers





Timeline

c.1160 de Vaux family acquire estate of Dirleton

c.1220 New castle begun

1298-1314 Castle under siege by Edward I's forces; changes hands between English and Scots several times

post-1314 Castle partly demolished

c.1350 Castle passes to Halyburton family

c.1450 Halyburtons rebuild castle including east wing

1505 Castle passes to Ruthven family

mid-1500s New house built within close; gardens remodelled and developed; dovecot built

1600 Ruthvens forced to leave Dirleton

1650 Castle partly demolished following attack by Cromwell's troops

1663 Nisbet family buys Dirleton estate; builds and lives in nearby Archerfield; develops castle gardens

1923 Castle taken into state care



Dirleton Castle from the bowling green

Dirleton Castle was home to three different families over the course of four hundred years: the de Vauxs, the Halyburtons and the Ruthvens. Each family left its mark and, though now in ruins, the castle remains an exciting and rewarding place to explore medieval life.

Historical background

There are three distinct phases of building at Dirleton Castle. The first castle was started in the early thirteenth century by the de Vaux family, originally from Normandy. John de Vaux became the steward to Alexander II's Queen Marie de Coucy and the round towers of the first castle may have been modelled on her father's French chateau at Coucy, near Amiens.

The five-towered castle, perched on top of a rocky knoll and given extra height by the deep ditch surrounding it, must have been a magnificent sight. A high curtain wall protected the living quarters of Lord and Lady de Vaux and enclosed the multitude of castle workers.

The formidable defences were tested with the Wars of Independence when the castle was besieged by the forces of Edward I of England. It changed hands several times until, following the victory of the Scots in 1314, Robert the Bruce ordered the demolition of the castle to prevent it ever being used against the Scots again. However, significant portions of this early castle survive.

Dirleton passed by marriage to the Halyburton family in about 1350. In time they rebuilt the battle-scarred

castle to their own design. Most significant was the new east wing, incorporating an impressive Great Hall, capacious vaults and a block of private apartments to replace the cramped quarters in the de Vaux towers.

In 1505 the castle changed hands, again through marriage. Its new owners were the ambitious and powerful Ruthvens, involved in many of the key events of the sixteenth century. When not plotting political intrigue, the Ruthvens found time to remodel the castle a third time, building an elegant and gracious house adjoining the de Vaux tower. The fourth Lord Ruthven, the first Earl of Gowrie, had a keen interest in gardens and it is under the Ruthvens that the gorgeous gardens at Dirleton first started to flourish.

Involved in one plot too many, in 1600 the third Earl of Gowrie was killed during an attempted royal coup and as punishment the family forfeited the castle and lands.

Following Cromwell's invasion in 1650, the castle, one of the bases for resistance, was besieged by 1600 men. The castle was taken, and again partially demolished. After a brief stint as a field hospital the castle was never inhabited again. The Nisbet family bought the estate in 1663 but built themselves a new home in nearby Archerfield. From the late 1700s the castle gardens were developed, with the castle itself as an elaborate garden ornament. The gardens continued to be developed in Victorian times and into the 1920s when the castle was taken into state care.



Supporting learning and teaching

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

- 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:

- Help pupils gain a clearer grasp of the time scale by making a time line with them, counting back the centuries and then marking on key events. It may help to identify the different periods of construction by the different families. This could be added to after the visit.
- Discuss the organisation of life in a castle. Pupils could investigate the roles of these key 'managers': **steward** (household staff); **constable** (security and defence); **marshal** (transport and communications), **chaplain** (writing and spiritual matters).
- Discuss with pupils all the different activities which would have gone on in a castle. Pupils could research different topics (e.g. food, travel, entertainment, weapons) to prepare them for the visit.
- It is helpful if pupils have some of the architectural terminology of castles as this makes discussing on site easier. Useful words might include: *courtyard, chamber, drawbridge, portcullis, dovecot, shield, archway, gun loop, turnpike stair, battlement, curtain wall, beam.* Pupils could produce a class illustrated dictionary to explain these terms
- Some children find it hard to imagine that a castle was ever anything other than a ruin. 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.
- There is plenty of good evidence on site relating to defending and attacking castles. Discuss with pupils the range of ways that castles could be attacked and defended.

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:

- Why do you think the castle was built here? What are its natural defences?
- What evidence is there for everyday life (eg eating, heating, toilets and washing)?
- What evidence is there to tell us about the owners of the castle?
- How has the castle changed over the years?

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

On the Historic Scotland website: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/education_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 or promotional leaflet for future visitors
- A slide show with commentary of their visit
- Imaginative writing based on the lives of the inhabitants or attackers of the castle
- A series of drama sketches showing different snapshots of life in the castle through the ages



Plan of the Dirleton Castles

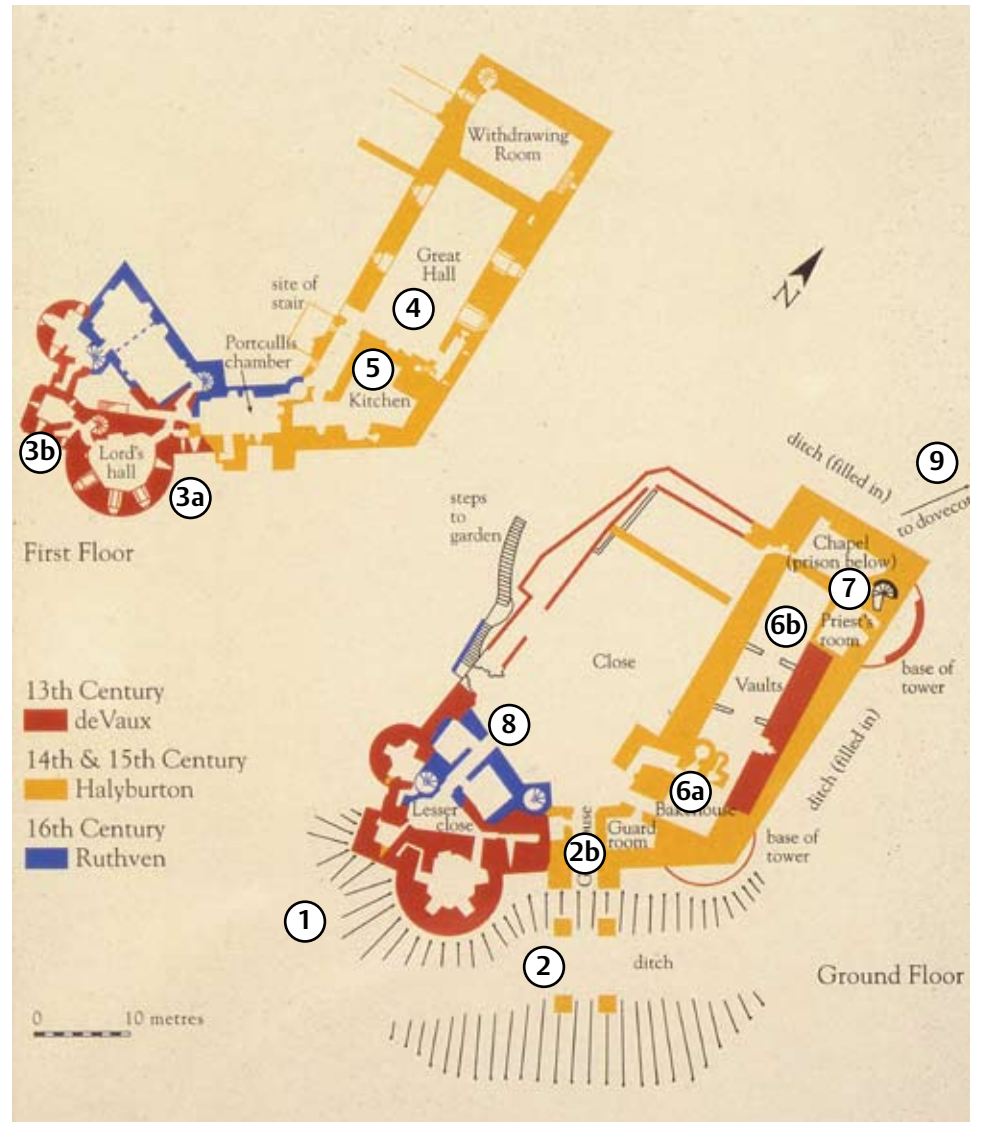
On the trail of the Dirleton Castle

Our suggested tour route guides you and your pupils around the complex site at Dirleton and helps you to make sense of the different ruins remaining from different ages. The route is broadly chronological, but it doesn't really matter if you do it in a different order.

After checking in with the steward we suggest you visit nine key locations, marked on the plan to the right:

1. Outside Dirleton Castle
2. The Drawbridge and Gatehouse
3. The Lord's Hall and Withdrawing Room
4. The Halyburton Great Hall
5. The Kitchens
6. The Bakehouse and Vaults
7. The Prison and Pit
8. The Ruthven Lodgings
9. The Dovecot

Background information is given in the pack for each location. It is written in 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. Allow about an hour.



Note: the current steward has a model of the castle as it might have looked in 1450 which he is happy to show to pupils.



Did you know...

If you look out to sea you might be able to see the Isle of Fidra. This used to belong to the de Vaux family too. Historians think that they might have had their first castle on the island. Handy if you like swimming!



Corner of castle with towers



Donjon tower

Tour notes: On the trail of Dirleton Castle

From the steward's office, go through into the gardens. Walk round the bowling green and up the middle path to the castle. Turn right and go to the corner of the castle, where a tongue of rock juts out on to the grass.

Location 1 : Outside Dirleton Castle

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

- This castle is more than 700 years old. It is one of the oldest castles in Scotland. It was built by three different families – the de Vauxs, the Halyburtons and the Ruthvens. They each added new parts to it. It was attacked by lots of different sets of people at different times in its history.
- The first family to build a castle here was the de Vaux family. They chose this place because of the rock. **Look around – can you see the rock?** The castle had to be built in the shape of the rock.
- The de Vauxs also dug a huge ditch all around the castle. Some of it has been filled in, but you can still see part of it by the bridge. The ditch might have had water in it.
- The first castle was surrounded by a high wall, called a curtain wall. **Can you see the steps leading down to the garden?** The steps were added much later, but at the top of the steps you can see part of the old wall. It stretched right round the whole castle.
- The castle used to have five towers. **How many of them can you see now?** Later on if you have time you can walk round the whole castle and see if you can find the remains of all five of them. Some of the original towers were round – **can you work out which ones?**

Teacher prompts

Why was it such a good idea to build a castle on rock?

Look at the round tower on the corner. It's called a **donjon**. It used to be even higher. What is good about having a tower which is round?

Why do you think the bottom of the donjon is wider than the top?

Desired pupil responses

Higher – able to see people coming; harder to attack

Difficult for attackers to burrow under walls.

You can see in every direction very clearly – the enemy can't hide round the corners.

For strength

Also if you dropped something from the top of the tower it would bounce out on to the enemy



Did you know...

If you look over the bridge – carefully – you can see the remains of the stumps for the original drawbridge.



Bridge and Gatehouse

Go and stand on the modern bridge over the ditch.

Location 2a: The Drawbridge

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

- This is a modern bridge. In the old days there would have been a drawbridge which could be raised or lowered across the ditch to let friendly people in and to keep the enemy out.
- Look to the right. **Can you see the base of an old round tower?** The square tower was built on top of it.
- Look down to the left. **Can you see a very small doorway?** This is called a 'sally port'. If the castle was under siege, the defenders would sometimes come out of this door on to a small wooden platform. They would attack the besiegers for a while before retreating back into the castle.

Teacher prompts

Why do you think there were no doors at ground level?

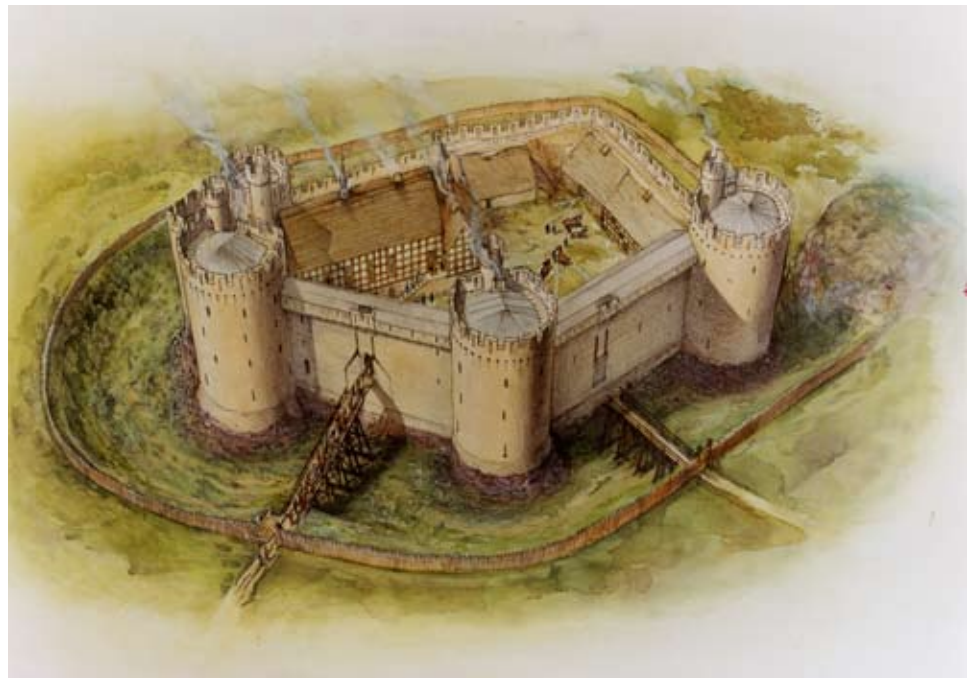
The entrance gate is very narrow – why do you think this was?

Desired pupil responses

Because of ditch. Also to make it harder to get in.

To let only a few people in at a time.

Cross the drawbridge and stand in the gatehouse.



The Castle as it may have looked about 1290.



Did you know...

The English surrounded the castle in 1298 and tried to force the de Vauxs to surrender. The de Vauxs refused, and sat inside getting hungrier and hungrier. The English sat outside and waited, getting very hungry themselves. Eventually more food arrived for the English as well as a giant catapult for smashing up the walls and the de Vauxs surrendered. But in the end the Scots won and the de Vauxs got their castle back.



Looking up to murder hole



Marks made by guards

Location 2b: the Gatehouse

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

- When any visitors had crossed the drawbridge, they still had to get through lots of doors. There was a metal gate called a **yett**, at least two wooden doors and finally a grid called a **portcullis**. You can see one on a penny. **Can you see any signs of these gates?** (grooves for portcullis are visible to right of guard room).
- Look up above the inner gate. **Can you see where the coat of arms for the family used to be?**

Teacher prompts	Desired pupil responses
Look up. Can you see a hole above you? This was called a murder hole . What do you think it was used for?	For attacking people from above.
Look for where a wooden beam used to slot into the wall. It was like a giant bolt.	Just inside stone archway.
Most of the time life would be quite boring for the guards. Can you see where they would have passed the time by sharpening their weapons against the stone?	Very clear marks on stones either side of the gateway.
How many ways can you find of defending the castle?	<p>Rock – can't tunnel into it.</p> <p>Towers – can see enemy coming. Can shoot down on to enemy.</p> <p>Ditch – an obstacle to cross.</p> <p>Drawbridge – could be raised to stop people coming in.</p> <p>High curtain wall – to keep people out.</p> <p>Arrow slits in walls – to shoot people.</p> <p>Murder hole above doorway – to attack people from above</p> <p>Narrow gate way – only a few people could get in at a time.</p> <p>Yett, two wooden doors and portcullis – to stop people who got to the gatehouse.</p>
The castle was attacked by the English in the early 1300s. If you were attacking the castle how would you do it?	<p>Pupils' own ideas – for example:</p> <p>Besiege castle – surround it to stop food and supplies of ammunition getting in.</p> <p>Attack and try to smash down walls with huge round stones fired from a kind of giant catapult.</p>

Go through the gate and into the courtyard.



Did you know...

In big castles like this there might have been 150 servants working here! They all had to be fed too and have somewhere to sleep.



Window in de Vaux hall



Fireplace in de Vaux hall

Location 3a: The Lord's Hall

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

- We are now standing inside the courtyard. In the old days this would look very different. It would have been busy with servants. There would have been people carrying food to the stores or barrels of beer; there might have been people waiting to see Lord de Vaux. People would be getting the horses ready to ride and there would have been chickens and dogs running around.
- You can see the three parts built by the three different families from here. The part to the right - now in ruins - was built by people called the Halyburtons who lived in the castle after the de Vauxs. They also built the gatehouse we've just come through. The ruined house you can see to your left is the newest part of the castle - only about 450 years old! It was built by the Ruthvens. We'll see these parts later. First we're going to see where Lord de Vaux would have lived.

Turn left up the steps. Take a left turn before the top of the stair. Go through the passage and down one step. Go more or less straight on to find yourself in a round tower room.

- This room is called the Lord's Hall. Lord de Vaux would have private dinners here with his closest friends. There would have been another great hall for official dinners and business meetings in the courtyard, but it's gone now.
- In the old days the ceiling was brightly painted with red and black zig zag patterns. There were sweet smelling rushes and herbs on the floor. Curtains and wall hangings would keep out the draughts. The room would be lit by the fire and by flaming torches. The furniture would be simple but would be covered with rich fabrics and embroidered cushions.

Teacher prompts

Why do you think there are seats by the windows?

Lord de Vaux would have had lots of fine silver plates and dishes. Can you see where he would have put them in this room?

The cupboard might have had wooden doors in the past, so that they could be locked up.

Why do you think the fireplace has a sticking out bit at the front?

Desired pupil responses

Good place for watching what was going on. Ladies might have done their sewing here.

Small cupboard alcove to the left of the fire.

Grooves - possibly where door used to be.

To stop smoke coming into the room.

Go out through the other door and into the small room called the Withdrawing room.



Did you know...

Toilets in castles are sometimes called **garderobes** – a place where you would keep your clothes or robes. This is also how we get our word ‘wardrobe’



Withdrawing room



Garderobe

Location 3b: The Withdrawing Room

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

- This might have been Lord de Vaux’s bedroom. Lady de Vaux would have her own separate bedroom. They would have proper beds, perhaps with a wooden top to it to keep out beetles or bats. The servants would probably sleep close by, wrapped in blankets on the floor.

Teacher prompts

There isn’t a fireplace in here. Although in the old days wall hangings would help to keep it warm, it would still have been very cold in winter. In the corners either side of the window there are clues telling us how the room might have been heated. What’s your theory?

Desired pupil responses

You can see or air vents leading outside (one is blocked up) – designed to let smoke out, so there were probably fires of some sort. Historians think that there were probably portable fires called **braziers** in metal baskets, which would have been put in these corners.

On the way back out, turn right into a tiny room. See if you can work out what this room was!

Lord de Vaux’s toilet.

He would also have kept his clothes or robes in here – can you think why? It was called a **Garderobe**

It was thought that the smell from the toilet would keep away the moths who might eat the clothes!

Go back out and turn left up a narrow stair up to the battlements.

You can clearly see the round roof of the lord’s hall sticking up. There used to be another floor on top of this one but you can still get a good impression of what it might have been like to be a look out on top of the donjon.

Go back out to the entrance gate via the same route. Go across the courtyard and up some modern wooden steps to the Great Hall.



Did you know...

In 1585 there was a plague in Edinburgh. The young James VI came to Dirleton to escape. He had a wonderful time here feasting and play acting until his host fell sick....



Halyburton Hall



Buffet in Great Hall

Location 4: The Halyburton Great Hall

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

- When the Halyburtons became the owners of the castle, it was in a terrible state. After the war with England, the Scottish king, Robert the Bruce, said that the castle had to be demolished so that no one could ever take it and use it against the Scots. Luckily a lot of the castle did survive. Eventually the Halyburtons got round to building a whole new part of the castle, all along this side of the castle rock.
- This part was the grandest and most important part of their new building. It was the Great Hall. It was used for court cases, for business meetings, for collecting rent from people round about and of course for great ceremonial feasts and performances.
- In the old days there was a high beamed roof. There were big windows on either side. At the far end was a special platform where Lord Halyburton and his family used to sit. They sat close to the fireplace, which used to be against the end wall.
- Other guests would sit on long tables running along the hall. They would keep warm by sitting next to portable fires in metal braziers, so there were probably ventilation holes in the roof to let the smoke out.
- While the guests were eating their dinner, they would listen to music. The musicians would play on a wooden gallery high up against the back wall.
- There is a picture showing what the hall might have looked like on a board at the far end of the hall. **Can you match up what the artist has drawn with what you can see today?**

Teacher prompts

Lord Halyburton liked to show off his wealth. Can you see where he might have displayed all his grand pots and silverware?

How many people do you think could fit into this hall? Stand in groups and see if you can work it out!

Desired pupil responses

On the carved 'buffet' at the south end of the hall.

200+

Go and stand in the passage to the right of the carved buffet.



Did you know...

The fireplaces are so big that there used to be space for a boy to stand right by the fire to turn the roasting spit. He was known as the 'turnbrochie'.



Fireplace in kitchen



Salt cupboard and well shaft

Location 5: The Kitchen

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

- As you go out of the hall, you'll walk through a wide passage. This is the serving area. Servants would wait here while the dishes were handed through from the kitchens. **Can you see the remains of the wide stone shelf that the dishes would be set out on?**

Turn left down steps into the kitchen.

- The kitchen was very handy for the great hall. **Can you see the two huge fireplaces?** This was where all the cooking took place. The fireplaces are big enough to burn whole tree trunks!
- Food could be cooked in four ways: boiled in a cauldron hanging over the fire, roasted on a spit which turned over the fire, or baked in an oven. Sometimes food was smoked on shelves above the fire.

Teacher prompts

It would get really hot in here. Look up and see if you can spot how they would have let fresh air into the kitchen.

This hole would probably have had a little roof over it to stop rain getting in.

Modern kitchens always have a sink with water. Have a look in the kitchen and see if you can find where they would get their water from and what they would do with dirty water.

The other hatch leads down to the bakehouse and the store rooms. What do you think it was used for?

The Halyburtons produced most of their own food, but had to buy salt and spices. These were very precious and were kept locked away. Look around the kitchen and see if you can find where the cook kept the spices.

Desired pupil responses

Large ventilation hole in the roof.

Well beneath one of the two hatches
Slop drain below the window for dirty water.

There was probably a pulley system to haul up food to the kitchen on a rope.

Cupboard alcove by the window.

Go back into the hall and then down the wooden steps. Take the second entrance on the left down stone steps into the bakehouse.



Did you know...

People ate about two loaves of bread a day! The bakers were kept very busy. After the baking was finished, the bakers would use the oven to dry out herbs or even firewood.



Ovens in the bakehouse



The well in the bakehouse

Location 6a: The Bakehouse

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

- The Halyburtons and their servants ate a lot of bread – and all of it was made here. The bakers would knead the bread or roll out the pastries on big wooden tables here while the ovens heated up. Then the loaves were baked in the two big ovens here.

Teacher prompts	Desired pupil responses
Have a look at the ovens from the back as well. What shape do you think they used to be?	Rounded.
How do you think they were heated?	Wood burned in the middle of the oven. When the stones were hot enough, the ashes would be raked over and the uncooked bread would be placed in.
How do you think the bakers got the hot bread out of the oven?	With flat scoops on long sticks – like in a pizza oven.
Where did the bakers get their water from?	They had access to the same well as the kitchen.
The well is very deep – 11.5 metres! It goes deep down into the castle rock.	

Walk through into the vaults.



Did you know...

They had to have plenty of food – families used to be much bigger. One of the Ruthvens, Lady Dorothea had fifteen children!



The Vaults



Entrance to Vaults from courtyard

Location 6b: The Vaults

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

- This huge space was where the Halyburtons stored their food. As well as growing food themselves, they were also paid rent in the form of food by the people who lived on their land.
- **Can see the castle rock coming through the floor?**

Teacher prompts

What kinds of food do you think the Halyburtons had?

Where did it come from?

Which end of the vaults would be the warmest?

Which kinds of food would be stored nearest this end?

Which kinds of food would be stored furthest away?

This area used to be divided into separate rooms. How many separate rooms were there?

Each had its own entrance from the courtyard. The doors were tightly guarded. Can you see where they were bolted shut?

Why do you think the Halyburtons wanted so much space to store things here?

Desired pupil responses

Fish from sea or from rivers
Fruit, herbs and vegetables from castle garden

Deer, boar – hunted in woods

Sheep, pigs, cows, goats – farmed outside castle walls

Vegetables and fruit – grown outside castle walls

Rabbits

Chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons

Dairy produce such as cheese

Grain for grinding into flour or for making beer – wheat, barley, oats

The end nearest the ovens

Food that didn't rot easily – such as sacks of flour or grain.

Food that rotted more easily – such as dairy products or meat.

Three

Bolt holes visible by some doors (more easily viewed from the courtyard).

A lot of people lived and worked at the castle.

If it was attacked, you would need plenty of food to last you.



Did you know...

In 1649 two suspected witches were held in the pit. The couple, a man called Patrick Watson and his wife were tested in the Great Hall by a witchfinder called John Kincaid. They were found guilty and were condemned to death.



Entrance to pit prison

At the far end of the vaults go through a doorway on the right. Go up some stone steps and turn left at the top into the Priest's chamber. Turn right and go through the chapel. Go through the door at the far end of the chapel and turn right down some steps. Take care – these steps can be slippery in damp weather and there is no railing!

Location 7: The Prison and Pit

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

- At this end of the castle there used to be another whole block for living. It had private rooms for Lord and Lady Halyburton. There is also a private chapel and a room for the priest to live in.
- On the lowest floors of the block was the prison. In the old days the Lord of an area was also in charge of law and order. If someone had committed a crime, he or she was kept in the castle prison until their trial took place in the Great Hall.
- Below this prison is another room, called the pit. This was another prison. You can look down into it. It has no windows but it does have its own latrine.

Teacher prompts

Where do you think that more important or richer prisoners were kept – in the prison or in the pit?

What makes you think this?

The ladder you can see is modern. How do you think prisoners got down to the pit in the old days?

What do you think it would feel like down there?

There is a picture on the end wall showing what the prison might have looked like. Can you see where the prisoners would have slept?

What did they use the fireplace for?

Desired pupil responses

In the prison.

Slightly more comfortable – fireplace, window.

Probably lowered down – or maybe thrown.

Cold, damp, completely dark. Terrifying.

On rocky area in corner – probably on simple mattresses.

Warmth and cooking.

Go up the prison steps and out on to the grass. Walk past the wooden steps leading up to the hall and stop where you have a good view of the Ruthven Lodgings.



Did you know...

The Ruthvens were often involved in politics and plots. They even kidnapped the young James VI once! Eventually the last Lord Ruthven was killed while taking part in another plot. As punishment the Ruthvens had to give up their coat of arms and leave their castles, including this one.



The Ruthven Lodgings



Steps leading to garden from Ruthven Lodging

Location 8: The Ruthven Lodgings

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

- The last family to live in the castle was the Ruthven family. They built this new house inside the castle walls in the 1500s. It used to be covered in white plaster.

Teacher prompts	Desired pupil responses
What do you think used to be in the rectangle above the door?	The Ruthven family shield.
How many floors did this house have?	Originally had three floors.
It was decorated with stone patterns called string courses . Can you see them? Why do you think they were called string courses?	Looks like string or rope.
Remember the windows in the de Vaux chamber? What is different about these windows?	Much bigger.
Why do you think the Ruthven windows are so much bigger?	More peaceful times – less dangerous. Also, the windows are facing into the close rather than on the outside.
The windows had glass at the top and shutters at the bottom half which could open.	Slots are clearly visible where bars would have been.
Can you see any clues as to how the windows were protected?	
Underneath the windows there are small holes. What do you think these were used for?	Pistol holes for shooting at enemies.
Which of the three houses would you most have liked to live in – the de Vaux tower, the Halyburton range or the Ruthven Lodging? Why?	[pupils' own responses]

- The Ruthvens were very interested in the castle grounds and gardens. They planted a lot of trees - the ones you can see today are the descendants of those trees. Where the bowling green is now, there used to be a kind of garden called a knot garden which had lots of little hedges planted in patterns.

Go down the steps to the right of the Ruthven Lodgings towards the bowling green. Turn right at the bottom and then follow the path around the castle until you come to the dovecot.



Did you know...

Pigeons used to be so valuable that if you shot one of the lord's pigeons, you could be punished with forty days in prison!



Dovecot with rat courses



Inside the dovecot

Location 9: The Dovecot

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

- The Ruthvens built this building for keeping pigeons in. It's called a dovecot. Can you think why they wanted pigeons? (for their meat – fresh all year. Also eggs).
- The pigeons would roost in the little boxes. When the Ruthvens wanted the pigeons, a servant would climb up a ladder to get to the pigeon holes. The ladder would be on a wooden pole which slotted into the stone in the middle of the floor. It could be moved around. Look at the picture by the door to get a better idea of this.

Teacher prompts

How did the pigeons get into the dovecot?

Desired pupil responses

Flew in and out through a hole in the roof – it used to be open.

Each of the little boxes was for a pair of pigeons. Can you work out roughly how many pigeons might have been in here if it was full?

About 1000 boxes – so 2000 pigeons!

What can you see which tells us that the pigeons were valuable?

Entrance doorway would be locked up. Also a metal gate too.

Look at the dovecot from the outside. There was a problem that rats would try and get into the dovecot to steal the pigeon eggs. Can you see how they tried to stop the rats?

Stone ridges round the outside were to prevent rats from getting in.

Our suggested tour is now finished. If you have time, it is worth exploring the following:

- The Ruthven Lodging from the inside
- the Chapel and Priest's Chamber
- the room underneath the de Vaux's Lord's Chamber and nearby well pit and servery
- the outside of the castle building to try and identify where the old towers used to be and to spot the garderobe and slop outlets
- the small display area in the gazebo tower close to the shop. Fragments of tiles and other items found on the site are on display.



FAQ

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

A 1 adult to 10 pupils

Q Is it possible to have a guided tour?

A This is likely to be possible. Please discuss when booking.

Q Is there disabled access?

A Wheelchair users can access the courtyard and gardens but the interior of the castle is by stairs only.

Q Are there lunch facilities?

A Pupils can picnic outside or shelter in the vaults in wet weather.

Q Where are the toilets?

A There are public toilets by the car park.

Q Do you carry out risk assessments on behalf of 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 Dirleton Castle

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

Booking a visit: Phone **01620 850330** to book a visit, discuss your needs and confirm opening times with the Steward.

Tours: If staff are available it may be possible to arrange a tour. Please discuss this when booking.

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: In Dirleton village 3 m west of North Berwick on the A198.

Parking: There is a reasonable sized car park to the west of the castle. Coaches should drop pupils off by the entrance gate and then park at the back of the green.

Health and safety: Please note the following:

- Pupils should be supervised at all times, particularly on the dark stairs and on the battlements on the roof of the castle.
- Pupils should not climb on the walls.
- As part of our commitment to Green Tourism, we ask that all litter be disposed of back at school.

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

Additional resources

For teachers:

Doreen Grove *Dirleton Castle* Historic Scotland 1995. The official guidebook; essential reading for teachers for further details on the architecture and history of the site. Good photographs and reconstruction drawings too.

Historic Scotland Education *Investigating Medieval Castles in Scotland* 2005 Historic Scotland. An excellent booklet designed for teachers with lots of background on castle life and suggestions for class activities.

Chris Tabraham *Scottish Castles and Fortifications* Historic Scotland 2000

www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/dirleton/dirletoncastle/ This site has some lovely photographs and a good historical overview

For pupils:

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

Phil Roxbee Cox *What were Castles For?* Usborne Publishing Ltd 2002

www.nationalgeographic.com/castles/enter.html Explore a virtual castle.

http://home.freeuk.net/elloughton13/castle1.htm A good source of pictures of castle life which can be downloaded.

www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/as/burghlife/ Explore 16th century burgh life in Scotland

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