INVESTIGATING THE BISHOP’S AND EARL’S PALACES, KIRKWALL

Information for Teachers

Built by forced labour under the tyrannous Earl Patrick, the Earl's Palace has been called one of Scotland’s finest surviving Renaissance buildings.
Three buildings lie at the heart of the ancient burgh of Kirkwall: St Magnus’ Cathedral, its Bishop’s Palace and the nearby Earl’s Palace. Built by forced labour under the tyrannous Earl Patrick, the Earl’s Palace has been called one of Scotland’s finest surviving Renaissance buildings.

Historical background

The story of the Earl’s and Bishop’s Palaces is closely linked to the story of the nearby St Magnus’ Cathedral. Built as a tribute to his martyred uncle, the cathedral was founded in 1137 by the Norse Earl Rognvald. The Bishop’s Palace was built at around the same time, under the benign leadership of its first Bishop, William ‘the Old’. The Palace complex was known as the Palace of the Yards.

Orkney was under Norse control at this time, and in 1263, after his disastrous defeat at the Battle of Largs, King Hakon IV of Norway came to recover in the Bishop’s Palace. The detailed and moving description of his subsequent death here provides a good source of evidence for life in the Bishop’s Palace at this time.

Despite a visit from James V in 1540, the Bishop’s Palace by this time was falling into ruin. Major reconstruction work was carried out by Bishop Reid, later founder of Edinburgh University, including the fortified round tower which still stands today. Shortly after the Reformation of 1560, the Palace and its land fell into the hands of the infamous Stewart Earls of Orkney.

Earl Patrick took over the Bishop’s residence and then started construction of a fine Renaissance residence for himself, adjoining the Bishop’s Palace. It was built by his tenants and the tenants of neighbouring landlords, who were forced to quarry stone and labour without any form of payment. These extreme actions earned him few friends and in 1610 he was tried and imprisoned in Dumbarton, having enjoyed his Palace for only a few years. His son, Robert, seized the Palaces in 1614 and held out against the Earl of Caithness, who bombarded the Earl’s Palace with huge cannons. Eventually Robert was hanged and Earl Patrick executed on the Maiden guillotine in Edinburgh.

Considering how badly he treated the people of Orkney, it is perhaps the more surprising that the Earl’s Palace is still a delight—spacious, light and elegantly decorated.

After the demise of the Stewart Earls, the Earl’s Palace was inhabited by the Earl of Morton, whose inventory of the Palace in 1653 is an invaluable source of evidence of the long-gone interior of the building.

The bishops returned to their Palace very briefly before their abolition in 1689, after when both buildings fell into ruin. They were taken into state care in 1921.
Supporting Learning and Teaching

A visit to The Earl’s and Bishop’s Palaces is particularly appropriate for teachers working on class study topics as:

- The Norse in Orkney
- The Middle Ages
- Castles and Palaces
- The Renaissance in Scotland

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

- It is helpful if pupils have some of architectural terminology as this makes discussion on site easier. Words particularly relevant to the Earl’s Palace might include: gunhole, oriel, latrine, turret, bay/bow window, chamber, great hall.

Pupils could produce an illustrated class dictionary to explain these and other terms. Other useful terms to discuss are: tenant, Bishop, Norse, Reformation, Earl, cathedral, founder.

- 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 in the history of the two buildings. This could be added to after the visit.
- The story of the Palaces is closely linked with the nearby cathedral. It is helpful if pupils are familiar with the story of its development and Orkney’s Norse past. Pupils could investigate the lives of people associated with the two sites: St Magnus, Earl Rognvald, King Hakon, Bishop Reid, Earl Patrick and his son.

- Discuss the organisation of life in the Palace. Pupils could investigate the roles of the key palace ‘managers’: the steward, the constable or keeper, the marshal and the chaplain.

- Some children find it hard to grasp that a ruined building was ever anything other than a ruin. Discuss how wind and weather can affect the look of a building as well as the many deliberate changes that people choose to make to buildings as their use evolves. Discuss which materials survive and which decay over time – what did the Palaces used to look like?

Working on site

When exploring the castle, in addition to our suggestions for discussion, pupils should be encouraged to look critically at what they see and to make and test theories based on physical evidence. Some general starting points could include:

- What materials were used to build the castle? Why were these materials chosen? Are they any materials which might have rotted away or been stolen since then?
- Do you think this room has always looked like this? Can you see anywhere it has been altered? Why might it have been changed?

Pupils can record evidence in a range of ways: by taking notes, sketching, taking photographs, recording impressions on to video clips or on 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 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 visit. This could form the basis for a range of presentation activities, for example:

- A guide book or leaflet for future visitors
- A slide show with commentary
- Imaginative writing based on the lives of the people who lived or worked at the Palace – maybe one of the hapless labourers
- A series of drama sketches showing snapshots of life in the palaces through the ages
On the trail of the Palace of the Yards

Our suggested tour route guides you and your pupils around the two adjoining sites. Though it is preferable for the Earl’s Palace to be visited before the Bishop’s, within the Earl’s Palace it doesn’t matter in which order you visit the locations, so you may wish to split your class.

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

1. Earl’s Palace courtyard
2. The Well
3. The Kitchen
4. The Cellars
5. The Stairs and Doctor’s Chamber
6. The ‘Between’ Rooms
7. The Great Hall
8. The Withdrawing Room and Chamber
9. The Bishop’s Palace
10. Bishop Reid’s Tower

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

Allow about an hour for the tour.
Tour notes: On the trail of the Palace of the Yards

Outside the Earl’s Palace, by the ticket kiosk

Stand by the picnic benches at the back (north) of the castle.

Setting the scene: this can be read to pupils.

- We are standing surrounded by three important buildings: St Magnus’ Cathedral, the Bishop’s Palace and the Earl’s Palace. The two palaces are here because of the biggest building, St Magnus’ Cathedral.

- People started building the cathedral more than eight hundred years ago, in 1137. At that time Orkney was part of the Norse kingdom, and wasn’t part of Scotland and the idea for the cathedral came from one of the powerful Norse leaders, Earl Rognvald. The head of the cathedral is called a Bishop, and the first bishop of St Magnus’ Cathedral was called William ‘the Old’.

- The Bishop was an important person, who often had important visitors, like the King of Norway. He had to have a house grand enough for them to stay in, so he built himself a palace next to the cathedral. Other bishops who came after him altered parts of the palace and added the tower we can still see. The building and the grounds around it was known as the Palace of the Yards.

- In the 1500s, the Palace of the Yards and all the land belonging to the cathedral was handed over to Robert Stewart, Earl of Orkney in a deal. Earl Patrick Stewart, Robert’s son, made lots more changes to the Bishop’s Palace and also decided to build himself a grand home, inside the Palace of the Yards. This became known as the Earl’s Palace. There used to be a wall all around it.

- Earl Patrick and his family treated the people of Orkney very badly. He made the ordinary people work for him and build the palace like slaves – without any payment, food or drink. He also fell out with all the local landowners, and later on fell out with the king too. In the end he was tried and executed, and so was his son – so they didn’t have much chance to enjoy their beautiful new palace.

- We’re going to have a look at the two palaces, starting off with the Earl’s Palace. It was one of the grandest and most beautifully decorated palaces in Scotland.

Teacher prompts

Look at the three buildings. What colour is the stone that each of them is made out of?

What does this tell us about where the stone came from?

Desired pupil responses

Cathedral – pinky-red sandstone
Palaces - light golden brown.

Stone came from different places.
**Teacher prompts**
When Earl Patrick built his new palace, it joined on to the Bishop’s Palace. Look to the right. Can you see any signs of where there used to be a building joining them together?

NB On the information panel by the kiosk room of the Earl’s Palace, you can see – inset - an artist’s reconstruction of what the whole site might have looked like.

**Desired pupil responses**
On end wall of right hand (south – by Sheriff’s Court) of Earl’s Palace you can see the roof marks showing where there used to be a building.

*Go and stand by the information board close to the ticket kiosk.*

*Wall of Earl’s Palace, showing traces of former roof*
Location 1: The Palace Courtyard

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

- Earl Patrick started building his palace in about 1601. At that time, the fashion in building in Europe was for lots of decorations. Earl Patrick brought this fashion to Orkney and to buildings in Shetland too.

- Parts of the palace have rotted away. In the old days, if we’d been allowed in at all, the palace would have looked very different.

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| Look at the picture on the information board next to the ticket kiosk. It shows us what the Palace might have looked like when it was first built. | Roofs and tops of turrets have gone
No glass in windows now
Some windows have been turned into doors; also doors into windows |
| What differences can you see between then and now? | Rotted because of weather, or stolen or burnt |
| What has happened to these missing materials? | |
| Earl Patrick liked the kind of window that sticks out from the wall, in a little turret. They are called oriels. How many oriels can you see? | 6 |
| Are they all the same? | No – some have a circular stone pattern, others have a kind of ‘battlement’ pattern. |
| Where else can you see any patterns or decorations? | At top of turrets; stone line between turrets, patterns around gun holes |
| On the big hall on the first floor there is a huge fireplace. Can you see the back of the chimney and fireplace here? | At right end of facing (west) wall. |
| Why do you think they decided to show it, rather than building it into the wall? | Similar style to oriels - decorative |
| Underneath some of the windows you can see small round holes. What do you think these were for? | Gunholes for shooting through. |
| It’s possibly that some of these were just for effect and weren’t really meant to be used for shooting through. | |

*Go close to the main entrance door.*
**Teacher prompts**

- What clues are there that this was the house of an important man?
- Can you see the coat of arms of Scotland’s royal family?
- What do you think might have been on the other two panels?

**Desired pupil responses**

- Pillars either side; Carved shields above door; gun hole to left
- At the top – very worn now.
- The coat of arms of the Earls of Orkney; maybe the date when the house was built.

The wooden door we can see is modern. In Earl Patrick’s time there would have been a strong wooden door and then inside there would have been a strong metal grille gate called a yett. Can you see any signs of either of these gates?

- Large bolt holes can be seen either side of the door on the inside.

**Go through the door. Turn left and go down a few steps to stand by the well on the right in the corner.**
Did you know...
Long ago people in castles didn’t drink water, as it was often not pure enough. Instead, they brewed their own beer to drink – even the children!

Location 2: The Well

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

- This was the water supply for the Palace. Although it looks green and gungy on top, the water is still fresh. It comes from an underground spring.
- Historians think that the well was built long before the Palace itself. Maybe it was used by the Bishops of the cathedral.

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<td>What would the people in the Palace need water for?</td>
<td>Washing, cooking, cleaning; to give horses and other animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look carefully at the top of the well and to the sides. Can you see some holes carved into the walls and the top? What do you think these were for?</td>
<td>For the handle and support to wind up heavy buckets of water.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turn the corner to the right, and go along the corridor towards the kitchen. On the way you will pass the servants’ entrance to the Palace, and on the right the strong room, where valuables were kept locked up.
The Bishop’s and Earl’s Palaces

Location 3: The Kitchen

Background Information: this can be read to pupils

• This was the kitchen: where Earl Patrick’s cooks would prepare wonderful feasts for the Earl and his guests. It would have looked and smelled very different then.

• All the cooking took place over the fire. Food could be cooked in a number of ways: roasted over the fire, boiled up in a big pot over the fire or baked in an oven next to the fire. It is surprising that there isn’t an oven here – but maybe there was a separate bakehouse.

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<td>Why do you think the fireplace is so big?</td>
<td>So that lots of different pots could cook at once.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Earl’s assistant, the Steward, was in charge of all the household servants. He had a special place where he would watch what was going on in the kitchen and shout at people. Can you find where this was?</td>
<td>Hatchway on the stairs for him to watch through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In those days salt was very expensive and very hard to get. It was always kept locked up in a special cupboard close to the fire to keep dry. Can you find the salt cupboard here?</td>
<td>In wall opposite the window.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know what it was used for?</td>
<td>For stopping food going off – a kind of preservative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Imagine that the kitchen is in use again. What sounds and smells are there all around you? Look at the picture on the wall to give you some ideas.

Smell of fire, cooking, sweaty people rushing about, herbs hanging from ceiling, smoke

Sounds of fire crackling, shouting, chopping, meat sizzling

Originally the kitchen was going to be smaller - and then the Earl changed his mind. Look on the ceiling. Can you find any signs of where the kitchen was going to end in the first place?

Line of masonry on the ceiling.

We saw that the outside of the Palace was decorated with lots of carved patterns. Look around the kitchen. Is it decorated?

No – very plain.

Why do you think it wasn’t decorated?

It was never seen by important people – no one to impress in the kitchen

Would you say it was well built or not?

Fireplace is well constructed and solid.

10

Go back to the well. Turn left along the corridor. Stop by one of the cellar rooms on the right.
Location 4: Cellars and Exhibition Area

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

- All along this floor were Earl Patrick’s cellars. These were where he kept sacks of food and barrels of wine.
- Most of the food came from the Earl’s tenants. These were people who lived on his land. They paid their rent with food instead of money.
- In the times before tins and deep freezers, people had to find different ways of keeping food. Some meat, including fish was dried, some meat was salted or kept in barrels of salty water. Herbs were dried and fruit could be preserved or turned into jam.

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<td>How does it feel inside the cellars?</td>
<td>Cool, dark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why is this a good thing?</td>
<td>Food doesn’t go off so quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of food and drink did people in those days have?</td>
<td>Fish from sea Fruit and vegetables which could be grown nearby (no bananas or oranges) herbs Meat from farmed animals – cattle, sheep, goats, chickens, geese, pigeons Meat from hunted animals – rabbits, deer, wild birds Dairy products such as cheese and milk Beer – brewed locally – and wine from abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of meals could they cook with these ingredients?</td>
<td>Bread, puddings, sweet and savoury pies, soup, roast meat and fish – many of the same things we enjoy today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why was it useful to have so much food in store?</td>
<td>In case the palace was under siege and you couldn’t get out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at the doorways to the cellars. Can you find any evidence that there used to be doors here?</td>
<td>You can see where the doors used to be bolted shut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at the cellars. Do you think Earl Patrick expected that visitors would look at his cellars or not?</td>
<td>Probably not – very plain, solid style of building; nothing fancy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the room around the corner there are some information panels with further details about the Earls of Orkney and the Palace. Most suitable for adults, there are some useful pictures of the palace under construction.

Go back to the main entrance and then up the stairs. Stop on the second landing.
Did you know...
In 1653 the new owner made a list of all the furniture in the castle. In this room there was one long oak table and a bench to go with it, four pieces of green embroidered hangings and in the latrine closet there was a little pine table.

Location 5: Stairs and Doctor’s Chamber

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

- These stairs are unusually wide and light compared to most palace or castle stairs. When you go to the Bishop’s palace, compare the stairs there.

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<tr>
<td>On the right there are two very shallow shelves. What do you think Earl Patrick might have used them for?</td>
<td>Showing off his valuable silver ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think Earl Patrick had the stairs built so wide?</td>
<td>To show off – new light airy style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Turn right up wooden steps into the Chamber.**

- In one description of the Palace, this room is called the Doctor’s Chamber. It is unlikely that there was a doctor who lived at the Palace all the time. It was probably a general guest room for any important people visiting the Palace.

- It looks very bare now, but like the other rooms for living in, it would have had wooden panelling on the walls, tapestries for decoration and rushes on the floor. There would have been glass in the windows and wooden shutters to keep warm at night.

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| Look around the room. What can you see which would have made the room comfortable for a guest? | Fireplace  
Two cupboards  
Big windows for light |
| This room is immediately above the kitchen. Do you think this would have been a good thing or not? | Advantage - warm from the huge fire underneath.  
Disadvantage – noisy, smelly |
| What do you think the little cupboard on the left of the door is for? | A latrine – toilet – closet. |
| There are lots of latrines in the palace. As you go around, count how many there are. | Guests would use a chamber pot which would be taken away and emptied. |

Go out of the room on to the stairs. Go up the next flight of stairs and turn right into the vaulted room.
Location 6: The ‘Between’ Rooms

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

- This little room might have been a kind of waiting room. People who wanted to see Earl Patrick, or whom he had summoned, would wait nervously in here before going to meet him in the Great Hall.
- Look up at the ceiling. The stones almost look like wooden beams. Maybe in the old days they were decorated and painted.

### Teacher prompts

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<tr>
<td>Can you find a basin in this room?</td>
<td>Just to the right of the entrance arch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think there was a basin here?</td>
<td>For washing hands before meeting Earl Patrick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where would the water come from?</td>
<td>Brought up in a jug from the well below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There probably used to be a curtain separating the room from the stair. Can you think of two reasons why the curtain might have been there?</td>
<td>For privacy For warmth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people think that this wasn’t a waiting room at all. They think it might have been kind of serving room, where servants would get the food ready to take into the Great Hall. Which do you think is more likely?</td>
<td>Pupils’ own ideas – backed up with evidence from the room.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Look at the room on the other side of the stair. Earl Patrick’s main official was called his Steward. He was in charge of the household, which meant he managed all the servants and checked that everything in the palace ran smoothly. If the Earl was away, he might stand in for him. This room was probably his office.

### Teacher prompts

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<tr>
<td>As a steward, he would probably have a lot of paper work to do, or might have to look after Earl Patrick’s documents. Where do you think he would keep all his papers?</td>
<td>Two deep cupboards by the door.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why was this a good place for him to have his room?</td>
<td>Good view on to courtyard – could see who was coming and going. Close to kitchen – could check what was going on there. On the stair - could control who went into the Great Hall to see the Earl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any decorations here?</td>
<td>No, very plain and a bit cramped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does this tell you about what the Earl thought of his steward?</td>
<td>No latrine, draughty chimney, no proper fireplace, dark...the Earl obviously did not value his steward.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Turn left out of the room and into the Great Hall.**
Location 7: The Great Hall

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

- This was the most important room in the Palace. As the Earl of Orkney, this was where Earl Patrick dealt with all the official business. This was where people would come to pay their rent, where court cases might be decided and where punishments would be given out. Earl Patrick treated his people very badly, using them as free labour, so it is unlikely that there was much real justice here.

- This was also where the Earl would entertain his friends or people he wanted to impress. You will have to rebuild the hall in your imagination. The walls were covered with wooden panelling and rich tapestries, the windows were glass with shutters and curtains for warmth, the floor covered with rushes. The hall would be lit with candles or flickering lamps, and Earl Patrick would bring out his silver plates to glitter in the candlelight. Musicians would play from a special gallery and there would be eating, drinking and dancing.

**Teacher prompts**

| How many fireplaces are there? | Two |
| Why do you think there is more than one? | For warmth and light if lots of people were dining in hall |
| Look at the big one on the left. We saw the outside of it from the courtyard. Look carefully at the stones. Why do you think the edges have got a zig zag in them, rather than being straight? | For extra strength – the zig zag meant that the stones could also support weight. |
| Either side of the fireplace there are columns. On top of the columns there are letters carved in stone. What letters can you see? | PEO |
| What do you think they stand for? | Patrick Earl of Orkney |
| Where else can you see decorations in here? | Small remnant at top right of other fireplace. Arches on big windows. |
| If there was a feast here, where do you think the best place for Earl Patrick to sit would be? | At the far end, in front of one fire to keep warm and lit up by huge windows either side. |
| Where do you think the Earl would display his silver plates to show off? | Alcove between windows or on shelved alcove to left of smaller fireplace. |
| How many windows are there in this room? | 4 big ones; one small which was probably in attic |
| What size are they? | Light by day; could see people coming from three directions |
| Why was this useful? | Palace easier to attack – windows are weak points |
| How could it be dangerous? | He wasn’t very worried about the Palace being attacked. |
| What does this tell us about Earl Patrick? | |
Location 8: The Withdrawing Room and Chamber

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

- These next two rooms were part of Earl Patrick’s private suite of rooms. This first room could have been for private parties.

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<tr>
<td>Stand in the oriel windows. Part of the style of oriel windows was to look attractive, but they were also useful. How?</td>
<td>You could see easily in more than one direction – useful if you had lots of enemies, like Earl Patrick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the small holes beneath the windows for?</td>
<td>For shooting out of; maybe for decoration too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you find a doorway which has been blocked off?</td>
<td>To the right of the fireplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think it was blocked off?</td>
<td>It was meant to lead to another part of the palace which was never built.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note third latrine on the right as you move into the next room.

- This was Earl Patrick’s bedroom. It was probably the most expensively and beautifully decorated in the whole palace. As well as sleeping, the Earl would have private meetings in here, and would also use the little rooms in the oriel windows as studies.

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<td>Why was this a good place for the Earl to have his private room?</td>
<td>Good view all round to see people coming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Furthest from the main entrance – enemies would have to fight their way past a lot of guards to reach the Earl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think there was another room above this?</td>
<td>Yes – steps, fireplace, window up above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many latrines have you found in the Palace so far?</td>
<td>Three so far</td>
</tr>
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As you leave through the hall again, you may wish to go up the other set of stairs from the main hall. This leads to ruinous further guest accommodation – little to see but a great view over the north wing of the Palace – and two more latrines!

Before you move over to the Bishop’s Palace, you might like to take a wander around the outside of the Earl’s Palace, turning left as you come out of the main entrance to the Palace and following the wall around, past the bowling green. The windows of the main hall are particularly impressive from here.

Then cross over the road called Watergate and stand on the pavement by the entrance to the Bishop’s Palace.
Location 9: The Bishop’s Palace

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

- The Palace has been changed a lot since the first Bishop built it in the 1100s. When Earl Patrick was here, he changed it too. He probably used part of it as rooms for all his bodyguards.
- There used to be other buildings to the left, where the modern houses are now – a small chapel and a private house for the Bishop, called a manse.

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<tr>
<td>Look along the wall. Can you see anything which suggests that Earl Patrick might have made changes?</td>
<td>Oriel window at first floor level, very similar to oriel windows in his Palace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look further along the wall, towards the road. Can you find an arch that was walled up? Read the panel nearby, and find out where this arch used to be.</td>
<td>This arch used to stick out at right angles, across where the road is now, and used to be the entrance to the Palace of the Yards. It was moved in the 1800s and rebuilt into the wall.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Go into the hall – down the steps, through the gate, up the wooden steps to the right and then down steps into the main hall.**

- This was the main hall for the Bishop’s Palace. This was where he entertained important guests. King Hakon of Norway came to stay here on his way home after meeting the Scots in a battle at Largs in 1263. Unfortunately he died while he was here, in a chamber close to this hall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher prompts</th>
<th>Desired pupil responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look at the picture on the information panel. This shows what the hall used to look like. We are standing in what used to be the basement. Can you find the remains of the two fireplaces shown in the picture?</td>
<td>Remains of fireplaces visible in south (end) and east (left) walls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the picture there are windows shown either side of the fireplace to your left. Are they still there?</td>
<td>The one to the right is; the others have been blocked off.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Earl Patrick changed the level of the hall floor. Look at the fireplaces – can you work out if he raised or lowered the floor?

He lowered it – you can see that the fireplaces used to be higher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How is this hall different to the hall in the Earl’s Palace?</th>
<th>Fewer windows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Windows are smaller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Longer and narrower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smaller fireplaces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it was first built, the builders used wooden scaffolding poles. They built the palace around the poles and then sawed them off. Can you find the holes where the scaffolding used to be?

The scaffolding poles which went here are called ‘putlogs’

Series of small square holes going right through to the outside walls

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**Go up the wooden steps to the first floor of the tower**

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*Bishop’s Hall*
Did you know...
The view you can see from here now is very different from how it would have looked eight hundred years ago. The sea would have been much closer! There used to be steps from the abbey leading directly to the harbour.

Location 10: Bishop Reid’s Tower

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

- This tower was built by one of the bishops, Bishop Reid. It was probably built as private rooms for himself. This room was probably his bedroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher prompts</th>
<th>Desired pupil responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would you prefer to sleep in this room or in Earl Patrick’s chamber in the Palace?</td>
<td>Earl Patrick’s room is much brighter, more spacious, bigger fireplace, more room. This one does have a latrine, fireplace and a cupboard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What shows you that the Bishop had enemies too?</td>
<td>Gun holes beneath windows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you work out how many floors there used to be above this one?</td>
<td>Three more – fireplaces and windows are visible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have the energy, and the wind is not too strong, climb the narrow winding steps to the top of the tower. You may wish to point out the following – weather permitting:

- **Good view of cathedral**
- **Sea used to be much closer**
- **You can look down chimney from rooms below**
- **Walkway used to have a roof – look for any signs of this.**

As you leave the Bishop’s Palace, look back at Bishop Reid’s Tower. You can see a replica of a small white statue – probably Earl Rognvald, who founded the cathedral. Round to the right of this tower you can look down a private alley and see the stone buttresses added to support the collapsing walls of the Palace wall by Bishop Reid.

Other places to see:

It is well worth visiting both the Cathedral and the nearby Cathedral visitor centre, which includes a short video on the history of the cathedral.

If you have time, the Orkney Museum in Tankerness House, opposite the cathedral has a number of artefacts from the time of the Bishops and Earl Patrick.
Visiting The Earl’s and Bishop’s Palaces

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

Booking a visit: Phone 01856 871918 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: The sites are next to each other in the centre of Kirkwall, Orkney, by the cathedral

Parking: Coaches can park to the side of the cathedral on Palace Road.

Health and safety: Please note the following:
- Pupils should be supervised at all times, particularly on the dark stairs and on the top of Reid’s Tower
- Pupils should not climb on the walls.
- As part of our commitment to Green Tourism, we ask that any rubbish be disposed of back at school.

Historic Scotland Education Unit:
For further information about school visits, activities and resources for teachers linked to The Earl’s and Bishop’s Palaces, visit: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

Other places to visit
St Magnus’ Cathedral. This 12th century cathedral is well worth a visit. The visitor centre shows an excellent short video about the history of the cathedral. Contact 01856 874894 for details.

Orkney Museum – Tankerness House. This excellent museum is close by, and contains many objects relating to the cathedral and the time of the Palaces. Contact 01856 873191 for details.

Additional resources
For teachers:
Simpson, WD The Earl’s and Bishop’s Palaces Historic Scotland 2001 The official guidebook; essential reading for teachers for further details on the architecture and history of the site.

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.

Anderson, PD Black Patie: the Life and Times of Patrick, Earl of Orkney 1992
www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk This site has some lovely photographs and a good historical overview

For pupils:
Deary, Horrible Histories: Bloody Scotland, 1998 Scholastic

English Heritage: What were Castles For? Usborne Starting Points in History ISBN: 0746052561
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.

http://kotn.ntu.ac.uk/castle/castl_fm.html Activities based on Nottingham Castle

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

Acknowledgements
Photographic credits: All photographs © Crown copyright Historic Scotland

Text: Elspeth Mackay

Series editor: Sue Mitchell

Layout and print production: The House

With special thanks for individual contributions to Chris Tabraham and Visitor Services staff at Bishops and Earls Palaces.