

Leeds Castle Teachers' Guide

With Links to Castle Features

Welcome to Leeds Castle. We hope you enjoy looking around. This guide will tell you more about the Castle features you will find at Leeds Castle and once inside it will explain the different rooms in the castle and tell you about who lived here. If a room is closed today, we are sorry that you cannot view it, but it is probably being used for a meeting. It is also possible that pictures or furniture may be removed temporarily. We ask that if talking to the children in a room, you group them in such a way that they do not block any doorways, and other visitors can get past.

A Brief history of Leeds Castle

When the Normans invaded England in 1066, William the Conqueror and his knights built many castles. Some were built for defence; others, like Leeds, were built as homes, to show off wealth and strength. Leeds Castle was built in 1119 by a Norman Knight called Robert de Crevecoeur. The moat that runs around the castle was made in the 13th century and is fed by the river Len. In 1278 King Edward I became the owner and it stayed a royal castle until 1552. Its most famous owner was Henry VIII. Soon after his death, the castle passed into private hands where it remained until 1926 when a very rich lady called Lady Baillie bought it to create a fabulous country house. She spent over £20 million in today's money restoring it.

Castle Features

Before going into the Castle look first at The Mill. You are standing at the Barbican and here you can see the remains of a portcullis. The Mill was here before the Castle, it was fortified and it is likely that it was a contributory factor to the Castle being built here. Turning towards the Gatehouse you will see ahead of you a stone bridge. This was originally a wooden drawbridge, leading to the Bailey. As you walk across the bridge, look up. Here you will see the Machicolations, commonly known as Murder Holes. You have now walked over the moat, created in the 13th century for defence, by damming the River Len and flooding the valley. Once on the Bailey island you will see the 1822 building directly in front of you, and behind to the left you can see the Keep, called the Gloriette at Leeds Castle.

The Heraldry room

Along the walls of this room, you will find a timeline of the history of Leeds Castle and the people who owned it. Look at the aerial photograph to be able to clearly see the Barbican, Bailey and Gloriette.

The Queen's Room

This room is set up as it would have looked in 1420 when Henry V's widow, Catherine de Valois owned the castle. It is actually a day room where the Queen would sit (on the chair beside the bed) and receive guests. Beds at this time were very expensive, with only royalty or nobility being able to afford them, and the bed was purely for show and to impress her visitors. The fireplace was put in at the time of Henry VIII – Look out for his insignia (Tudor Rose, Dragon) carved in the stone.

The Queen's Bathroom

The bath is made from wood. The cloth covers would stop the Queen from getting splinters.

The Queen's Gallery

The Marble statues of Henry VIII and his three children were made when Elizabeth I was alive. The picture above the fireplace of a child in a white dress is of John Smythe. Boys wore dresses up to the age of 7. The fireplace is again a Tudor one.

Henry VIII Banqueting Hall

England's most famous King held parties in this room and ate banquets of exotic food such as roast peacocks and swan! His face appears in a few paintings in here.



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The Chapel

King Edward I and his queen, Eleanor of Castile had 16 babies! When she died, he built a chapel at Leeds Castle to remember her. This chapel was opened in 1978 and re-consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Boardroom

This staircase was put in during Lady Baillie's time here but some medieval castles had a spiral staircase that spiralled the other way!

The Seminar Room

This room used to be Lady Baillie's private sitting room, but was turned into a meeting room in 1978.

The Dressing Room

As you pass through this room, look at the luxurious bathroom on your right. Every bath in the castle has a bell next to it, to ring for a servant to help you get dressed!

Lady Baillie's Bedroom

This room follows the French regency style of the 18th century.

Catherine of Aragon Bedroom

When Henry and Catherine stayed here in 1520, this side of the upper floor housed Catherine's suite of rooms.

Upper Corridor

Look out of a window on your left and you will see the last remaining Drum Tower. There were 6 when the castle was built, and they provided look out points all around the Castle.

Main staircase

Upstairs, where you can't go today, are the bedrooms that are used by people who visit the castle for meetings, weddings and parties.

Yellow Drawing Room

The walls in this room are covered in silk, not wallpaper. The piano is over 150 years old and sometimes played by volunteers.

Thorpe Hall Drawing room

The wooden panelling on the walls comes from Thorpe Hall in Cambridgeshire. The panels were taken out of the house in 1928 and sold. So the walls are 200 years older than the room, and they had to alter the room to fit the panels.

The Inner Hall

The 16th century Horseman is carved from oak and is the oldest horse statue in England. The knight holds a battle hammer – look behind you and there is one above the door.

The Library

This room was once the schoolroom for Lady Baillie's two daughters. When they grew up it was turned into a library – there are now 3,000 books in this room. If it took you a week to read each one it would take 57 years to read them all!

The Dining Room

If this room is open you may see a large dining table that can seat up to 30 people. This room is also used for weddings and dinners.

