

# INVESTIGATING ROCHESTER CASTLE

During your visit to Rochester Castle today you will be investigating its remains to find out about :

Your name and form:  
 .....

- why it was built in this particular place
- how it was defended against attackers
- the layout and different rooms of the keep
- when different parts of the castle were built

You will learn that you can work out lots of things about the history of castles from the remains of their buildings ..... but not everything .....

**Remember to keep your work ; you will be able to use it in your revision for the GCSE History examination**

## CASTLES SPOTTER'S GUIDE

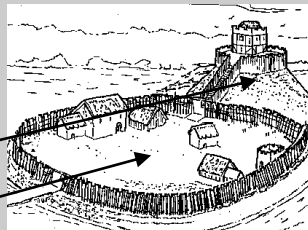
Use this guide to help you work when different parts of the castle were built :

### 1066 - 1080 : MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLES

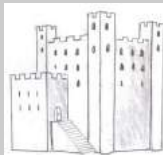
Earth and timber defences

Motte

Bailey



### 1080 - 1200 : NORMAN CASTLES



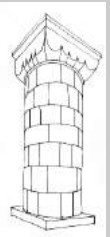
Square stone keeps



Square towers

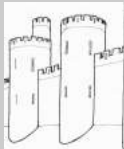


Doorways and windows with round arches



Thick pillars

### 1201 - 1300 : 13th CENTURY



Round towers



Doorways and windows with plain pointed arches

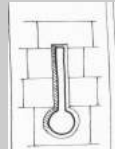


Slender pillars



Machicolation (overhanging stone gallery above an entrance)

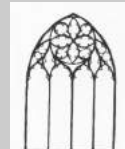
### 1301 - 1400 : 14th CENTURY



Gun-loops



Doorways and windows with decorated pointed arches



Very slender pillars

 Start at the north-west tower of the curtain wall :

**ACTIVITY 1**

**WHY DID THE NORMANS BUILD A CASTLE AT ROCHESTER ?**

The Normans built castles all over the country soon after 1066. They built them in places which would help them control the local Saxons and defend the area from attackers. So, why did they choose to build a castle in this particular place at Rochester ?

For each of the possible reasons below, explain if it **was** or **was not** a reason why the Normans built a castle at Rochester **and how you can tell** :

**On high land with a good view of the surrounding area**

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.....  
.....

**Close to an important river, road or bridge**

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**Close to a town to control the local people**

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**Near the coast to protect the area from invaders**

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.....  
.....

**Somewhere with defences which the Normans could improve**

.....  
.....  
.....

Can you think of any other reasons ? .....

.....

**You will be able to check your answers later on from the top of the keep.**

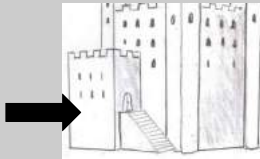
 Start at the bottom of the steps outside the keep ; walk up to the main entrance to the keep :

## ACTIVITY 2

# HOW WAS THE KEEP DEFENDED AGAINST ATTACKERS ?

Here are some of the methods which were used to defend the entrance to a medieval keep. Look for clues to help you decide which ones were used at Rochester - tick the pictures of those you find and briefly describe what the clues are :

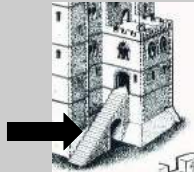
### FOREBUILDING



A building on the side of a keep to protect its main entrance

CLUES : .....

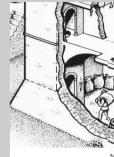
### STAIRCASE



A flight of steps leading up to the entrance

CLUES : .....

### THICK WALLS



The thick walls of a keep were difficult to break down

CLUES : .....

### BATTLEMENTS ABOVE



For archers to fire arrows down onto attackers

CLUES : .....

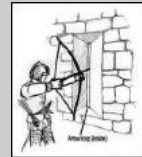
### DRAWBRIDGE



A wooden bridge which could be lifted up during an attack

CLUES : .....

### ARROW SLITS



Narrow openings in walls for archers to fire through

CLUES : .....

### TIMBER HOARDINGS



A wooden platform at the top of the keep for firing down or dropping rocks on attackers

CLUES : .....

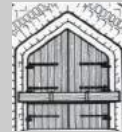
### OAK DOORS



Heavy doors which could be shut in an emergency

CLUES : .....

### DRAW-BARS



A sliding wooden bar which was pulled into place behind a door to stop it being broken down

CLUES : .....

### PORTCULLIS



A grille made from wood and iron which could be lowered to protect an entrance

CLUES : .....

### MACHICOLATION



An overhanging stone gallery above an entrance

CLUES : .....

### GUARDROOM



A room for the guards and to store weapons near an entrance

CLUES : .....

 Walk down into the basement of the keep :

### ACTIVITY 3

## WHAT WAS THE GROUND FLOOR USED FOR ?

This is a good place to see how the inside of the keep was designed :

● how was the keep divided into two parts ? .....

.....

● why do you think the keep was divided into two parts ? .....

.....

● how many floors are there ? .....

● how can you tell ? .....

● what is the 'tube' which runs all the way to the top of the keep ? .....

● why do you think it has an opening on every floor ? .....

Now look at the ground floor rooms :

How many rooms are there ?

How many windows are there ?

How many fireplaces are there ?

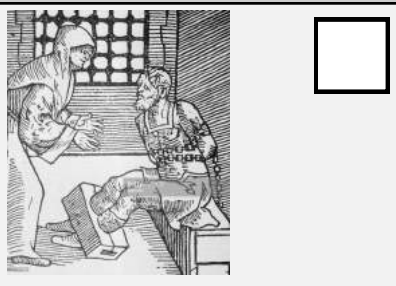
How many cupboards are there ?

Is there access to a water supply ?

What do you think the rooms on the ground floor were used for ?



Living accommodation for the lord and his family ?



A prison ? (prisoners were valuable because they could be held for ransom)



Storerooms ? (castles always needed 6 months supply of food in case of a siege)

 Walk up to the first floor of the keep :

## ACTIVITY 4

# WHAT WERE THE FIRST FLOOR ROOMS USED FOR ?

The rooms on the first floor are the same size as the rooms on the ground floor, but otherwise they are very different. Look carefully for :

- windows
- doorways
- fireplaces
- access to the well

1. Describe (and label on the plan) what you can see in the two main rooms :

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2. What was this room used for ?

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Your reasons :

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3. What do you think this door was used for ?

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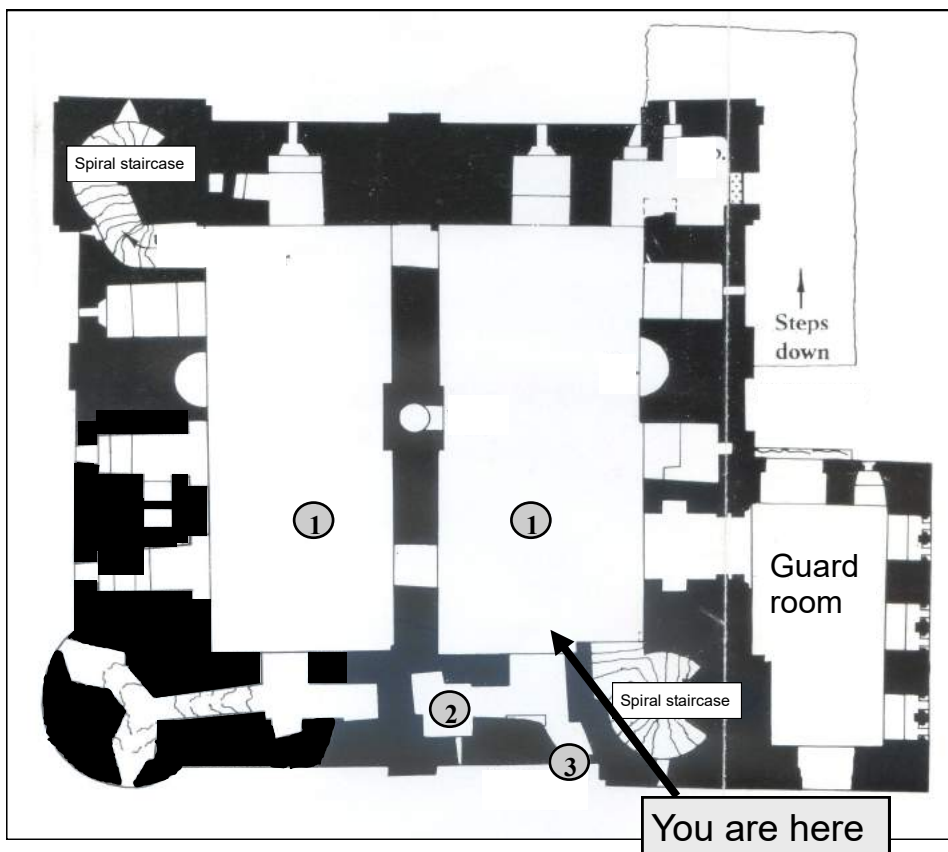
.....

Your reasons :

.....

.....

.....



Sometimes the rooms on the first floor of a keep were kitchens and stores. Sometimes they were living accommodation for the soldiers. Historians think that these rooms at Rochester were living rooms for the **constable** (or governor) who was in charge of the castle.

 Walk up to the second floor of the keep

**ACTIVITY 5**

**WHY WERE THE SECOND FLOOR ROOMS SO GRAND ?**

1. Turn right into the smaller room (the second floor of the forebuilding). Look for these clues to help you work out what it was used for :

It is directly above the entrance to the keep

There is a small room probably for storing clothes and valuables



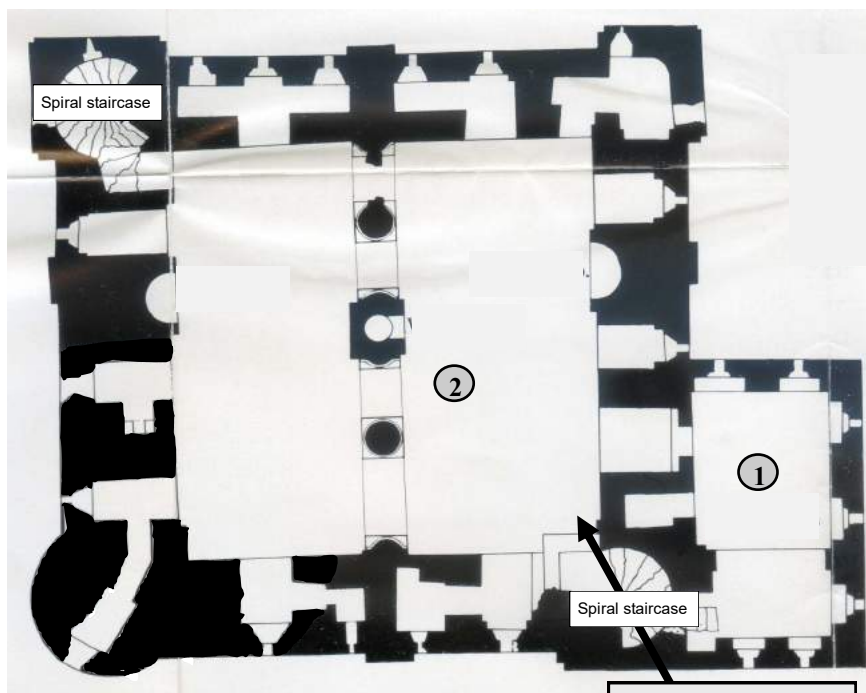
It is divided into two parts, separated by a large arch ; one is bigger than the other

The smaller part has :

- a domed ceiling
- large windows facing east
- A piscina (stone basin) for washing holy vessels

What was this room used for ?

.....



You are here

2. Now look at the main room on this floor of the keep. It is the **Great Hall**.

The Great Hall was the grandest room in a medieval keep. It was used for feasts, receiving guests and holding court. Its design reflected the power of the lord of the castle.

Identify **five** ways in which this floor of the keep is so grand :



Reconstruction drawing of the Great Hall at Goodrich Castle, Herefordshire (English Heritage)

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 Now walk around the gallery and up to the third floor and the top of the keep :

## ACTIVITY 6

### THE TOP FLOOR AND ROOF OF THE KEEP

1. Look at the rooms on the third floor. These were usually private rooms for the lord and his family.

How can you tell that these rooms were for living in ?

.....

Why was the third floor a good place for private rooms ?

.....

Can you find any evidence of rebuilding or repairs on this floor ?

.....

2. Now look at the top of the walls. Can you find .....

Holes in the wall for timber hoardings ?



Rows of pigeon holes ?



'Scars' where the timber roof was joined to the walls ?



What was the shape of the roof of the keep ?



or

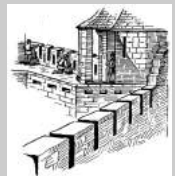


or



3. Walk round the top of the keep - and look at the view !

This is a good opportunity to think again about why Rochester Castle was built in this particular place - and check your answers to Activity 1 on page 2.



 As you walk back down ....

## ACTIVITY 7

### WHEN WAS THE KEEP BUILT ?

As you walk down back to the entrance of the keep, look again at the main features of the building and use the Spotter's Guide on page 1 :

When was the keep of Rochester castle built ?

I think the keep was built in the ..... century; this is because : .....

.....

.....

.....

 Now walk around the bailey of Rochester Castle ...

## ACTIVITY 8

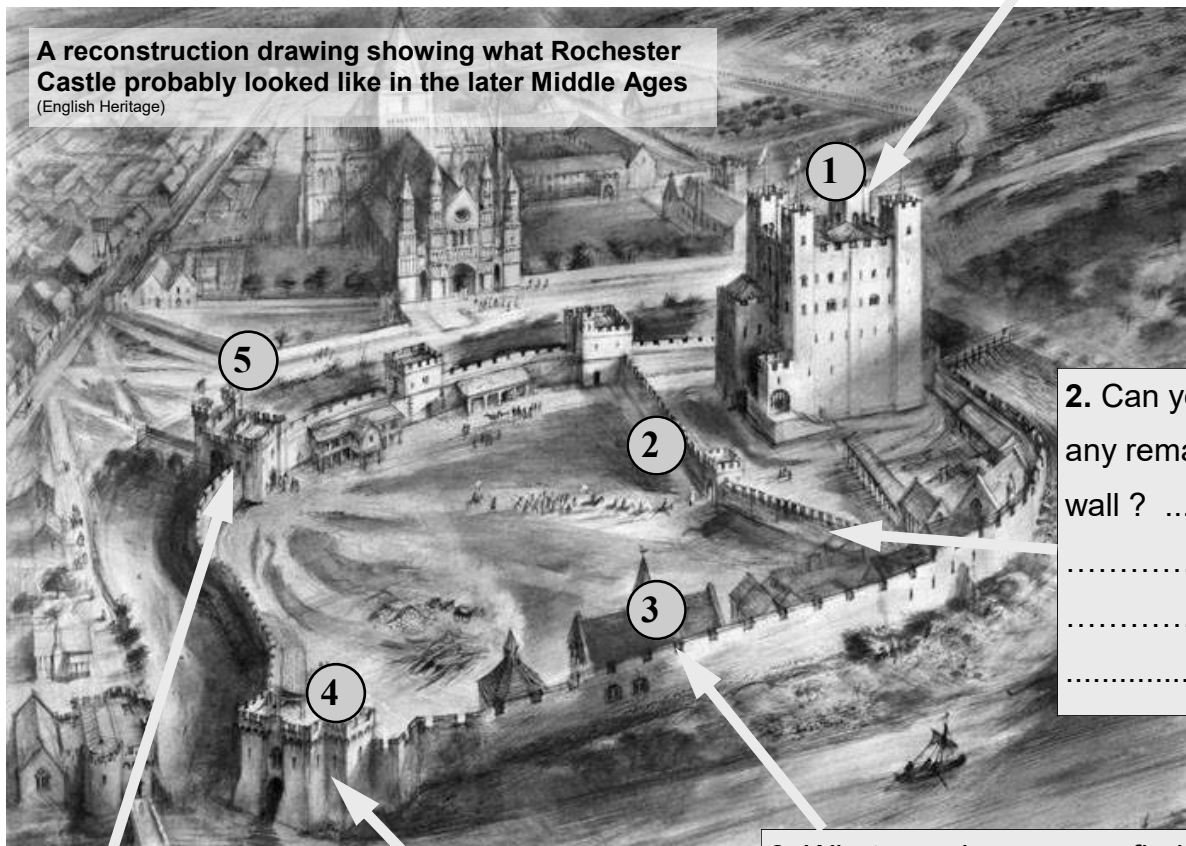
# INVESTIGATING THE BAILEY

The keep was the most important building of a medieval castle. There were many other buildings in the bailey including kitchens, workshops, stables and accommodation for the soldiers. They were surrounded by a strong curtain wall and wall-towers.

1. Walk around the keep to the south-east tower. How is it different to the other towers ? .....

When was it built ? .....

A reconstruction drawing showing what Rochester Castle probably looked like in the later Middle Ages  
(English Heritage)



2. Can you find any remains of this wall ? .....

.....  
.....  
.....

3. What remains can you find of these buildings ? .....

.....  
When were they built ? .....

.....  
.....

5. This was the main entrance to the castle. How much of it survives today ? .....

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.....

4. This tower still survives but it was changed in the 19th century. How was it changed ? .....

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