

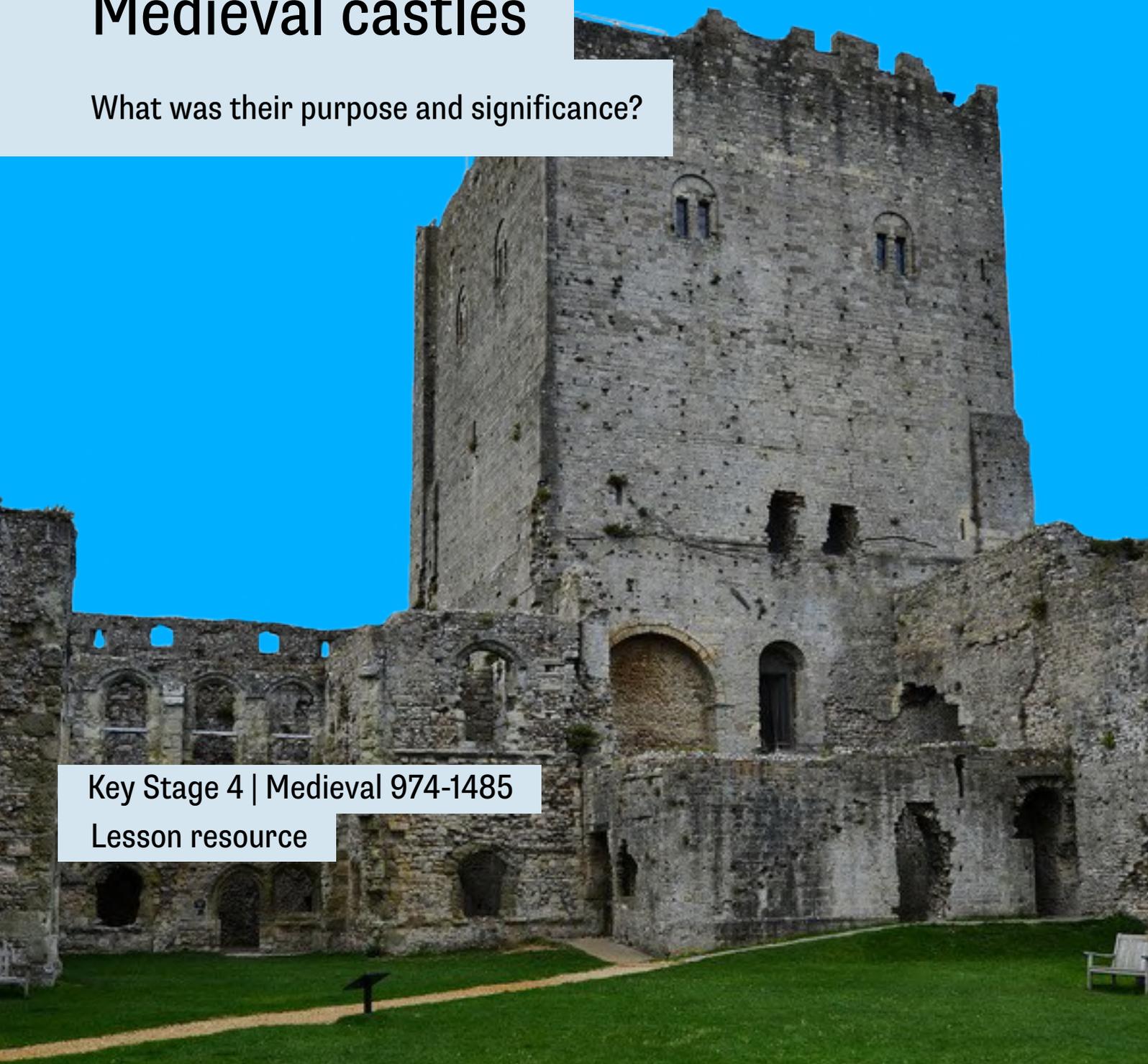


# Medieval castles

What was their purpose and significance?

Key Stage 4 | Medieval 974-1485

Lesson resource



# Introduction

The castle as we know it today was introduced into England in 1066 during the Norman invasion led by William the Conqueror. After their victory at the Battle of Hastings, the Normans settled in England. They constructed castles all over the country in order to control their newly-won territory, and to pacify the Anglo-Saxon population. These early castles were mainly of motte and bailey type. The 'motte' was made up of a large mound of earth with a wooden tower on top, while the 'bailey' was a large ditch and bank enclosure which surrounded the motte.

These timber castles were quite cheap and very quick to build. However, the timber castles did have disadvantages. They were very vulnerable to attacks using fire and the wood would eventually start to rot. Due to these disadvantages, King William ordered that castles should be built in stone. Many of the original timber castles were replaced with stone castles.

Over time, stone castles were built in different architectural styles as builders experimented with castle-building techniques. In their infancy, castles were primarily military fortifications used to defend conquered territories from attack. The strategic location of the castle was paramount. However, once the Normans began to consolidate their control over England, castles began to take on a variety of different roles. Castles could serve as a centre for local government, administration and justice. They were also used by powerful lords to display their wealth and power through lavish architectural styles and decoration. Castles were not only built and used by the crown. In fact, the majority of castles were granted by the king to his loyal lords and nobles along with large areas of land. In return for these grants, the king expected his nobles to control and administer these lands on his behalf. The castle itself also represented a whole group of people who contributed to its function from constables, masons, blacksmiths and servants to name a few.

Use this lesson with original documents to find out more about the role of Framlingham, Portchester, Stokesay, Berwick, Alnwick, and Pevensey castles in medieval society.

## Suitable for:

KS 4

## Time period:

Medieval 974-1485

## Connections to the Curriculum:

Key Stage 4:

AQA GCSE History:  
Britain: Power and the people: c1170 to the present day

OCR GCSE History:  
Castles Form and Function c1000-1750.  
Framlingham Castle was the first named site for the Historic Environment module, this is now Kenilworth Castle from 2019. The set site will be reviewed after three years and may be subject to change.

# Contents

Introduction	Page 2
Contents	Page 3
Teachers' notes	Page 4
External links	Page 4
Tasks	Page 5
Source 1	Page 9
Source 2	Page 11
Source 3	Page 13
Source 4	Page 15
Source 5	Page 17
Source 6	Page 19
Source 7	Page 21
Source 8	Page 23
Source 9	Page 25
Source 10	Page 27
Source 11	Page 29
Source 12	Page 31

## Teachers' notes

The purpose of this enquiry is to allow students to explore documents relating to the general function of castles. Did some people find them intimidating? Did a king view a castle in the same way as a peasant? Did a queen think about a castle in the same way as a builder?

The questions provided with each source act as prompts for students to answer the overarching question: What was the purpose and significance of castles?

The records used cover a range of material including royal grants, extracts from pipe rolls and the Calendar of Patent Rolls, royal orders, licences and pardons. We hope that these documents will offer students a chance to develop their powers of evaluation and analysis. All sources have been provided with a transcript and, as the language may prove challenging, we have also provided a simplified version with more difficult words defined within the text. Each source is captioned and dated to provide a sense of what the document is about. Alternatively, teachers may wish to use the sources to develop their own lesson in a different way or combine with other sources.

## External links

[Images of historic sites](#)<sup>1</sup>

[An overview of the 'Middle Ages'](#)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/educational-images>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle\\_ages](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages)

# Tasks

## Source 1

Framlingham Castle demolished 1175, catalogue ref: E372/22, rot. 5, m.1, Pipe Rolls, Henry II, 22, 1175-1176, p. 60

In 1175 a group of carpenters and masons, led by Alnoth the Engineer, travelled to Suffolk to dismantle Framlingham Castle on royal orders. King Henry II ordered that the castle should be knocked down because Earl Hugh Bigod had joined a rebellion against his rule.

- Do you think this order would have changed Alnoth's opinion of castles?
- Clue: think about what a castle might represent: an intimidating fortress? An impressive building? An important centre of government? A building to be demolished like any other – all part of the day job?

## Source 2

Grant of Portchester Castle by Edward I, catalogue ref: C 66/92 m.5, Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1271-1281, p. 27

In 1273, King Edward I gave Portchester Castle to his mother.

- What does Portchester Castle represent for the king?
- What does Portchester Castle represent for Queen Eleanor?
- What does the granting of Portchester Castle mean to the bailiffs of Portchester (the people who worked at the castle)?

## Source 3

Order to arrest spies, 1323-27, catalogue ref: C 54/143 m. 11d., Close Rolls 1323-1327-19 Edward II Membrane 11d – cont. p. 551

This document reveals that King Edward II ordered that Portchester Castle should be garrisoned with soldiers if there was any sign that England might be invaded by forces from abroad. If this were to happen, any people who were suspected of being spies within the castle were to be arrested.

- What does Portchester Castle represent to the king?
- What does Portchester Castle represent to the constable?
- What does Portchester Castle represent to foreign spies?

# Tasks

## Source 4

Order to protect the castle in times of war, 1323-27, catalogue ref: C 54/144 m. 10., Close Rolls 1323-1327 – 20 Edward II Membrane 10 – cont. p. 603

King Edward II ordered that Portchester Castle should be garrisoned with soldiers if there was any sign that England might be invaded by forces from abroad.

- What does Portchester Castle represent to King Edward II?
- What does Portchester Castle represent for foreign invaders?

## Source 5

Building works at Portchester Castle, 1396, catalogue ref: C 66/343 m.15. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1391-1396, p. 700

This document records that, during the last three years of the reign of King Richard II, a lot of building work took place at Portchester Castle. A new range of domestic buildings – hall, kitchen, chambers and offices – was constructed.

- What does Portchester Castle represent to King Richard II?
- What does Portchester Castle represent to John Cook and Peer Geveyn?
- What does Portchester Castle represent to the masons and carpenters employed to work on the castle?

## Source 6

Forced labour and threat of imprisonment, 1396. Catalogue ref: C 66/343 m. 14, Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1391-1396, p. 702

This document reveals that those given the responsibility of overseeing the repair and expansion of Portchester Castle struggled to find craftsmen and labourers to work on the project. The King gave them the authority to 'arrest' people and force them to work on the castle. If anybody who was arrested refused to work on the castle, they were to be imprisoned.

- Compare this document to Document 5.
- Does this change your impression of what Portchester Castle represented for John Cook and Peter Geveyn?
- Does this change your impression of what Portchester Castle represented for the masons and carpenters employed to work on the castle?

## Tasks

### Source 7

Licence to build Stokesay Castle, 1291, catalogue ref: C 66/110 m. 2 continued, Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward I, 1281-1292, p. 450

The wool merchant Laurence of Ludlow, who had become one of the richest men in England, was granted a licence to fortify his home with a stone wall and 'crenellations' [rectangular gaps at intervals along the wall that allowed defenders to shoot arrows/missiles from within the castle].

- What does Stokesay Castle represent to Lawrence of Ludlow?
- Do you think he wanted to build fortifications around his home?

### Source 8

Pardon for murder, 1326, catalogue ref: SC 8/266/13290

William Perheved asks to be pardoned for murder because he served in the king's army at the sieges of several castles.

- What do you think castles represented for William Perheved?

### Source 9

Reward for fighting in a siege, 1330, catalogue ref: SC 8/261/13034

John de Leycestre asks the king to follow up on his promise to reward John for his service in the king's army during the siege of Berwick.

- What does the castle of Berwick represent to John de Leycestre?

### Source 10

Woman is robbed of lands following the death of her husband at the siege of Alnwick, 1474, catalogue ref: SC 8/344/E1309

Following the death of her husband at the siege of Alnwick, lands that belonged to Anneys Wynslow's family were taken forcibly by a man called Richard Croftus, who then held the lands for ten years. In this document, Anneys asks the Prince of Wales to use his legal power to intervene on her behalf and help her family regain her lands.

- What does Alnwick Castle represent to Anneys?
- What does Alnwick Castle represent to Richard Croftus?

# Tasks

## Source 11

Farmers of Pevensey castle petition for a survey for repairs, 1307

John Fillol, farmer of Pevensey castle; William Golding, farmer of Pevensey castle. The petition dates to 1307 when Abel was appointed in accordance with the endorsement to this petition (CPR 1301-7, p. 523). Catalogue ref: SC 8/331/15663

This document records the request of the tenant farmers of Pevensey castle as they attempt to maintain the castle buildings.

- What does Pevensey Castle represent to the King?
- What does Pevensey Castle represent to John Fillol and William Goldyng?
- What does Pevensey Castle represent to John Abel?

## Source 12

Requesting a tax for repairs, 1302. Catalogue ref: SC 8/315/E159

In this document, John de Vynterselle, Bailiff of the Honour of Eagle, requests a tax to raise funds for repairs.

- What does Pevensey Castle represent to the King's Treasurer and the Barons of the Exchequer?
- What material is being used to repair the castle? Is it being used to repair defences? What does this suggest about the Castle's function?



## Source 1: Transcript

Et in custamento prosternendi castri Waleton' .XXXj. l. et .viiij. s. et. iij. D. per breve regis et per visum Roberti de Willauesham et Ailnoði ingeniatoris. Et pro prosternendo castro de Framingeham .vij. l. et .x. s. et. vj. d. per idem breve et per visum predictorum.

### Simplified translation

Payment of £7 10s 6d (seven pounds, ten shillings and six pence) to Alnoth the engineer for dismantling the castle of Framlingham, by order of the king.



## Source 2: Transcript

'Writ de intendendo directed to the bailiffs, etc. of the following castles manors, etc. assigned in dower to Eleanor , the king's mother, queen of England :-

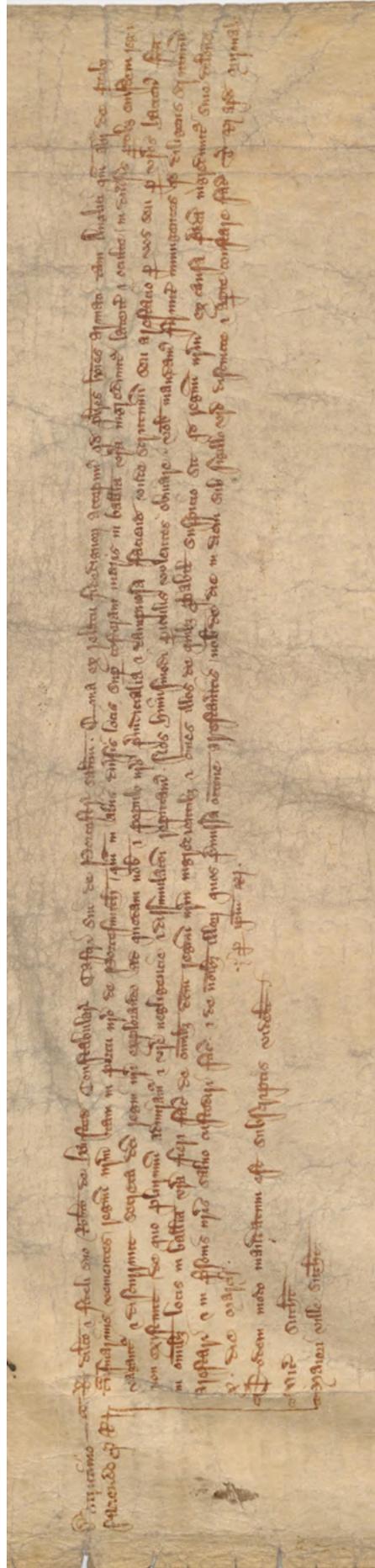
...Bailiffs and good men of Portchester, Guldeford and Aulton, the foresters, etc. of Porcestre forest, the hundredors and good men of the hundred of Aulton, and the parker of Guldeford – Castle and manor of Porcestre with the forest, manor of Guldeford with the mills and park, manor of Aulton with the hundred...' (Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1271-1281, p. 27)

### Simplified translation

'A writ of intent to the bailiffs [kept law and order in a castle] and any other relevant persons to say that the following castles and manors are to be given, in dower [property given by law to a man's widow in her lifetime], to the king's mother...the castle, manor and forest of Portchester, the manor of Guldeford [Guildford] with its mills and park, and the manor of Aulton [Alton] with its hundred (an area of land)...

# Source 3: Order to arrest spies, 1323-27.

Catalogue Ref: C 54/143 m. 11d.



## Source 3: Transcript

To Robert de Hausted, constable of Porchester castle. Order to cause diligent search to be made in all places within his bailiwick [bailiff's area of control] of all persons entering the realm, and to cause to be arrested all of whom there is probable suspicion that they are entering the realm to spy out the secrets of the realm in order to do certain things prejudicial to the king and his realm, and to certify the king from day to day of the names of those whom he shall thus arrest, as the king learns upon trustworthy information that many armed men, Englishmen and others, coming from parts beyond sea, are entering the realm in the port of Portesmoth [Portsmouth] and in other places on the sea coast in Robert's bailiwick, and are wandering about secretly in divers [various] parts of the realm for the purposes aforesaid, and no search or arrest has hitherto been made by Robert or his men... 1326. March 10. Merevale.

### Simplified translation

An order for Robert de Hausted, constable of Portchester castle, to make sure that all places within his bailiwick are searched for people entering the realm who are suspected to be foreign spies. These people are to be arrested, and the constable of Portchester castle is ordered to send a daily report to the king listing the names of those he has arrested.



## Source 4: Transcript

'To him who supplies the place of the treasurer and to the barons of the exchequer and to the chamberlains. Order to provide with all speed, by the advice of Adam de Lymbergh, king's clerk, 100 crossbows with windlass for two feet, 200 crossbows for one foot, with the baldricks and quarells sufficient for the same, 100 hand-bows with 1,000 cords for the same, 1,000 arrow-heads, 20 lbs. of glue, 100 lbs. of thread suitable for the strings of crossbows, and of catgut as much as shall suffice, and to cause them to be taken to Portchester castle, so that they be there by Sunday the morrow of the Decollation of St. John the Baptist next at the latest, to be delivered to those whom the king shall depute to receive them, giving credence to what Adam shall tell them in this matter on the king's behalf.' 1326. Aug. 18. Clarendon.

### Simplified translation

An order, issued upon the advice of Adam de Lymbergh, the king's clerk, to quickly provide 300 crossbows, their associated windlasses [machines for hoisting or hauling], baldricks [belts worn over one shoulder that is used to carry a weapon, usually a sword] and ammunition; 100 hand-bows with 1,000 bow strings; 1000 arrow-heads; 20lbs of glue; and 110lbs of thread suitable for the strings of crossbows. All of these should be delivered to Portchester castle by Sunday, the morrow [following day] of the Decollation [beheading] of St John the Baptist, at the latest.



## Source 5: Transcript

'Appointment of John Cook of Wykenham and Peter Geveyn to repair all defects in the castle of Porchestre, and to pay by view and control of William Hursel, prior of Suthwyk [Southwick, Hampshire], masons, carpenters and other workmen their wages at the king's charges. By bill of treasurer. Mandate to the said prior in pursuance.' 1396, April 29. Westminster.

### Simplified translation

Appointment of John Cook of Wykenham and Peter Geveyn to repair Portchester Castle, and to pay, under the control of William Hursel the prior of Suthwyk [Southwick, Hampshire], masons, carpenters and other workmen.

# Source 6: Forced labour and threat of imprisonment, 1396.

Catalogue Ref: C 66/343 m. 14.

Et scilicet castri (E) de  
 p[ro]vident[ur] reparand[um].  
 Et scilicet Joh[ann]es Crok[er] de Wykeham et Petrus Wedem[an] et Petrus de Wykeham et Petrus de Wykeham et Petrus de Wykeham  
 committunt et dimittunt ad omnes et singulos castri n[ost]ri de p[ro]vident[ur] reparand[um] et ad omnia latentes et alios laboratores  
 quibuscumque in hac p[ar]te necessarios quocumque indiguit sumptibus n[ost]ris solvend[is] p[ro] sumptibus et concurrend[is] d[omi]ni n[ost]ri in p[ar]te castri n[ost]ri de p[ro]vident[ur] de  
 Suth[er]land[ia] Et d[omi]no Joh[ann]e medietate et ea facta et exequantur in forma p[re]dicta in omni et p[ar]te apud Westm[onasterium] die  
 xxvij. Junij.  
 Et mandatum est eidem Joh[ann]i quod supra defac[to] de tempore in tempore supradict[is] de quocumque denariis p[ro] ipso Joh[ann]e et Petrus supra reparatores et emendatores  
 castri p[re]dicti apponere applicand[is] et expensand[is] contingerent et sup[er] compoto suo ad eundem Joh[ann]em et Petrus testificet in omni et p[ar]te et  
 p[er] eundem test[is].

## Source 6: Transcript

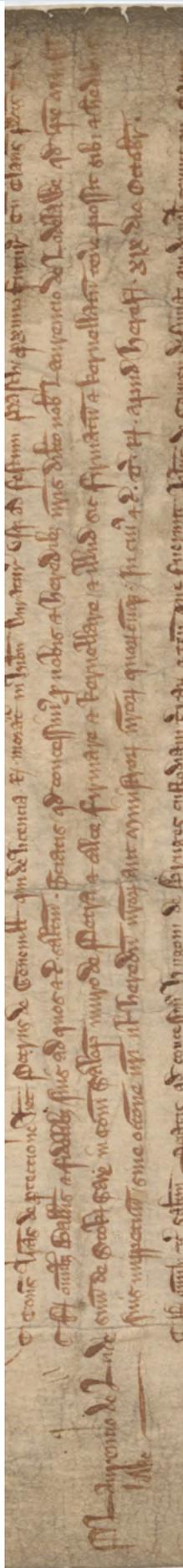
Appointment of John Cook of Wykeham, Peter Geveyn, Walter Walton, mason, Walter Weston and Thomas Clevere, carpenter, to arrest the masons, carpenters, sawyers, artificers and labourers necessary for the repair and fortification of the castle of Porchestre and set them to work at the king's chargers, also to provide the necessary stone, lime, lead, boards, tiles, cinders, timber and materials, with power to imprison contrariants. By bill of treasurer. The like of John Grenford, John Wrythoke and Thomas Clopton, for the works at Calais.' 1396. April 29. Westminster.

### Simplified translation

John Cook of Wykeham, Peter Geveyn, Walter Walton, mason, Walter Weston and Thomas Clever, carpenter, are ordered to arrest all masons, carpenters, sawyers, artificers and labourers necessary for the repair and fortification of Portchester castle, and they are given the power to imprison contrariants [those who refuse to work]. They are also to arrange for the provision of stone, lime, lead, boards, tiles, cinders, timber and materials for the building work.

# Source 7: Licence to build Stokesay Castle, 1291.

Catalogue Ref: C 66/110 m. 2.



## Source 7: Transcript

Licence for Lawrence de Lodelawe to strengthen his dwelling-house of Stoke Say, co. Salop, with a wall of stone and lime, and to crenellate the same. 1291. Oct. 19. Hereford.

### Simplified translation

'Licence for Lawrence of Ludlow to strengthen his dwelling-house of Stokesay with stone walls and to crenellate his castle.'

## Source 8: Pardon for murder, 1326.

Catalogue Ref: SC 8/266/13290.

223 X  
 A me s'ign le roi a son conseil. William Perthes, se coms il fut a ses castels. Demain, me me dit seign le roi a la sege de  
 veredite a la sege de Ledes au point de souren deun. et en tance. La seure, q'il fut adonts en contrere ses rebelles a pais  
 en eson, q'il voullit p' don a p' habre. et auant de sa ire pardain de sa deite de la mort. William le Darcher. et auant seure  
 as mortels perils, et auant seure, a plusieurs amors, q'il souffre en son seruire.

226  
 1326

## Source 8: Transcript

William Perheved requests a grant of pardon regarding the death of William le Sotheren, on account of his service to the king at the sieges of Berwick and Leeds, at Burton upon Trent and in Scotland.

# Source 9: Reward for fighting in a siege, 1330.

Catalogue Ref: SC 8/261/13034.



## Source 9: Transcript

John de Leycestre states that he has served the king as sergeant-at-arms (a type of soldier) in their wars in Scotland, and is still ready to serve him. He asks that he might be given some bailiwick or office in aid of his sustenance, as the king promised to reward him at the siege of Berwick.



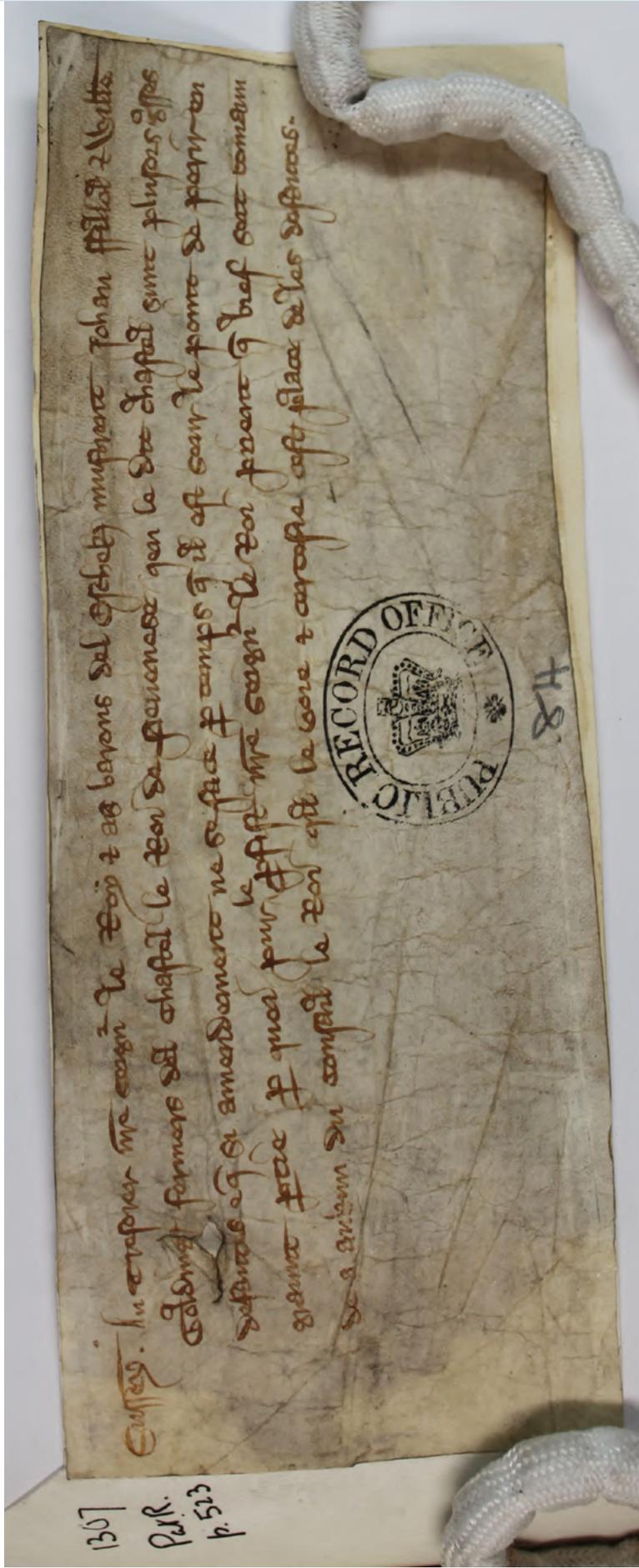
## Source 10: Transcript

Anneys Wynslow states that her husband, Thomas Wynslow, died in the king's service at the siege of Alnwick and shows that they were both seised lawfully of land and tenements in Eldersfield, Longdon and Chaceley Hole in fee tail, and afterwards Thomas Wynslow granted the same to certain people in fee, who, when seised, enfeoffed Ralph and Isabel Seymour with the same in tail with remainder to Humphrey and Elizabeth Seymour, and then the right heirs of Thomas. But now Richard Croftus wrongfully holds the same by his might and strength for ten years or more, and Anneys is of insufficient power to pursue her remedy by the common law, and Croftus refuses to restore the same despite Anneys having showed her evidences. Wynslow requests that Croftus be sent before the prince's council and cause him to restore her to her right and possession in all the lands and tenements with all the arrears and profits.

### Simplified transcript

Anneys Wynslow requests that Richard Croftus be summoned before the council of Edward, Prince of Wales, and be ordered to give back to Anneys and her family all the lands and tenements that are rightfully hers, along with all the profits that he has taken from those lands and tenements. Anneys explains that her husband, Thomas Wynslow, owned lands in Eldersfield, Longdon and Chaceley Hole before his death at the siege of Alnwick, where he was serving in the king's army. Following the death of her husband, Richard Croftus occupied these lands illegally through his might and strength (by using the threat of violence). Anneys lacks the power to reclaim the lands from him, and has been unable to make a successful case against Richard in a court of law.

Source 11: Farmers of Pevensey castle petition for a survey for repairs, 1307. Catalogue Ref: SC 8/331/15663.



1307  
P.R.  
p. 513

## Source 11: Transcript

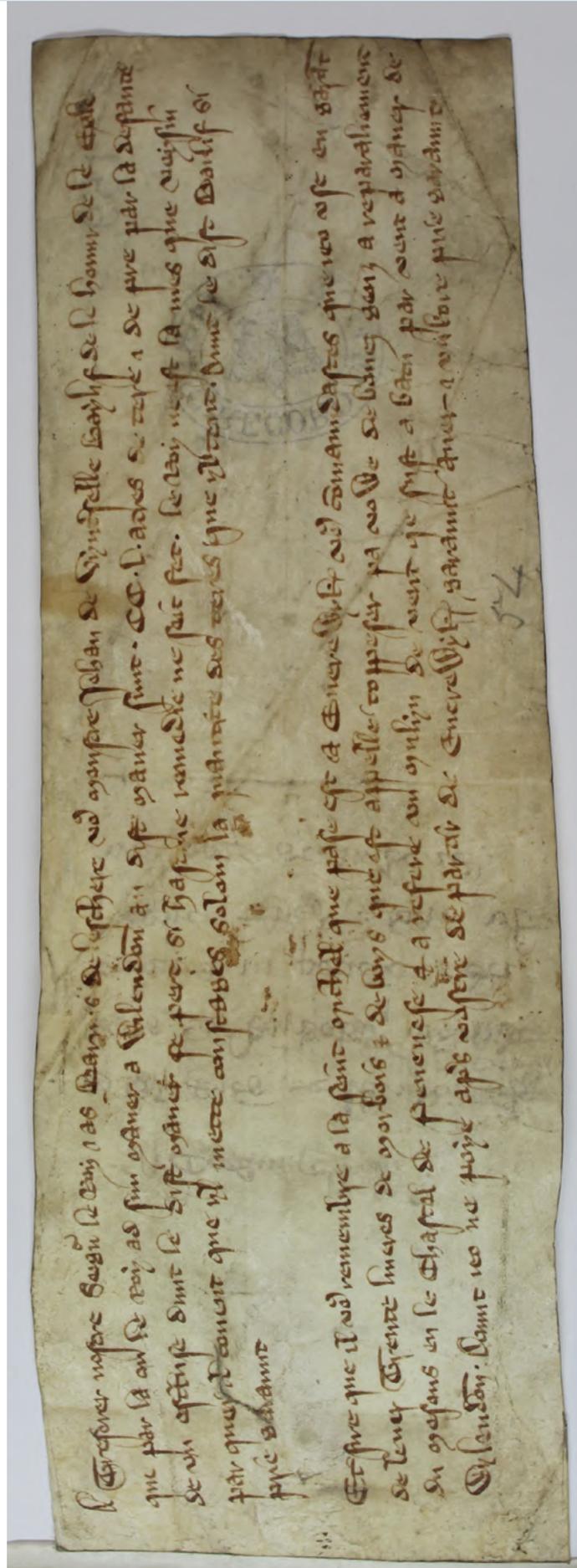
Sussex. To the Treasurer of our lord the king and to the barons of the Exchequer, John Fillol and William Goldyng, farmers of the king's castle of Pevensey, show that in the said castle there are several serious defects and that if repair is not made in due course then it is about in large part to fall into disrepair, wherefore, for the profit of our lord the king, they pray that a writ be sent to any of the king's council that he will view and certify this place concerning the defects.

[Endorsement] Sussex. Pevensey. To the treasurer. John Abel is to be assigned by writ under the great seal to survey the castle and the defects, and he is to certify the treasurer and barons.

Notes: writ – a legal command from the king or court.

# Source 12: Requesting a tax for repairs, 1302.

Catalogue Ref: SC 8/315/E159.



Le tresorer nostre Seignour le Roy nos Baigues de l'eschere no gousperes selon de l'eschere de l'eschere de l'eschere de l'eschere  
 que par la au le Roy ad sin ordon a Valendon au dit ordon sur .CC. l. ades se tye a de pure par la de pure  
 de un ordon dunt le dit ordon ne fait pas. Le Roy ne est la mes que d'ordon  
 par quey d'ordon que il mette conserves selon la maniere des terres que il ont. Dunt le dit Baigis or  
 que d'ordon

Et sicut que il ad remembres a la saint onchiel que pas est a Enere d'ordon ad ordon d'ordon que ico est en ordon  
 de l'ordon d'ordon d'ordon de d'ordon que est appelle d'ordon par no de de d'ordon d'ordon a repardiamens  
 du ordon en le Chastel de Penenese a a d'ordon au ordon de vent se fait a d'ordon par vent d'ordon de  
 Valendon. Dunt ico ne poye aps d'ordon de d'ordon d'ordon d'ordon a d'ordon plus d'ordon

524

## Source 12: Transcript

To the Treasurer of our lord the king and to the Barons of the Exchequer, John de Vynterselle, bailiff of the honour of Eagle, shows that whereas the king at his manor of Willingdon has 250 acres of land and meadow which, by a defect in a sluice, will be lost if the king does not apply a speedy remedy, and likewise the message which adjoins it, for which it is agreed that he will incur the costs according to the amount of lands that he holds, for which the said bailiff prays for a warrant.

And lord, if you remember, at Michaelmas last part at York you commanded that I should warrant the levy of £30 from dead wood and wood, which is called coppeser, by view of good men, to be put to the repair of buildings in Pevensey castle, and to rebuild a windmill which has been blown down by wind at the manor of Willingdon, for which I did not have warrant after your departure from York, and for which I pray once more.

[Endorsement] Before the Treasurer. Master Richard of Abingdon and John de Kirkeby are assigned to survey the content of the petition and certify the Treasurer and Barons, or one of them, if they are both etc.

### Notes:

- £30 in 1300 is equivalent to £21,270.89 in 2017.
- warrant – a document allowing someone to do something. A record of permission.
- levy – a tax or fee.



## Why do our hyperlinks come with footnotes?

Our resources are designed to be printed and used in classrooms, which means hyperlinks aren't always accessible digitally. We include the full link at the bottom of the page so that you can type in the address without distracting from the main text of the lesson materials.

## Did you know?

The National Archives Education Service also offers free workshops onsite in Kew and online in your classroom.

Our [Onsite Workshops](#) are available for free here at The National Archives and allow students to experience genuine original documents reflecting over 1000 years of history. From Elizabeth I's signature to the telegrams of the sinking Titanic, students love the wow-factor of being able to see real history on the desk in front of them.

Our [Online Workshops](#) allow our Education Officers to teach through your projector, leading discussions and guiding students through activities based around original documents. All you need is a computer with a projector, webcam and microphone. We'll arrange a test call before your session to check the tech is working.

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## Find out more:

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