

# SELF-LED ACTIVITY

## HANDLING COLLECTION



### Recommended for

KS2 (History)

### Learning objectives

- Use objects to learn more about everyday life at Helmsley Castle in medieval and Tudor times.
- Make judgements about the construction, use and function of objects through close observation.
- Consider where and how objects were used within the castle and reflect on modern comparisons we may use today.

### Time to complete

Approx. 30 mins



The handling collection has been designed to introduce students to daily life at Helmsley Castle and includes this green glaze jug.

### SUMMARY

This activity encourages students to develop their observation skills by investigating objects to discover more about life at Helmsley Castle during the medieval and Tudor periods. We've made suggestions for how to use the handling collection and supporting information with your group in the Teachers' Notes on pages 2–3.

### BOOKING AND USING THE RESOURCE

To ensure that the handling collection is available on the day of your visit, please book the resource as part of your visit booking. When you arrive at Helmsley, the group leader should check in with staff in the shop. They will welcome you to Helmsley and direct you to the handling collection. Please use the collection upstairs in the Tudor mansion and replace all the objects and supporting information when you have finished so it's ready for the next group.

There is enough room in this space for 15 students to explore the handling collection comfortably. For larger groups, we suggest 15 students start with the handling collection while the rest discover the outside areas of the castle before swapping over.

### MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, students could consider the kinds of evidence that survive from medieval and Tudor England. What characteristics do the objects that they handled have? What materials are they made from? How has this helped them to survive?

# HANDLING COLLECTION

## TEACHERS' NOTES

### WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE HANDLING COLLECTION

There are 21 objects in this handling collection, some of which are grouped together:

- Spoons (pewter, wooden and horn)
- Watering pot
- Green glaze jug
- Pattens and leather shoes
- Bowl
- Trencher and pewter plate
- Salt holder
- Horn cup, leather goblet, pewter goblet
- Rushlight holder, tallow candle, beeswax candle
- Horn book and quill
- Keys
- Pomander

Each object or group of objects has a prompt card with information about the object(s) on one side (date, use, materials) and questions to help students explore the object(s) on the other.

The object cards will be available in printed form during your visit. You do not need to bring them with you.

### SUGGESTED APPROACH FOR EXPLORING THE OBJECTS

Depending on how much students have already learned about this period, you may wish to refer to the Helmsley Castle History page on the English Heritage website to provide extra context for the objects in this handling collection.

We suggest that you assign objects to a small group of two to three students. They will work together to investigate their object. You may wish to select particular objects related to your topic of study and learning objectives.

Continued...

You may choose to ask students to work through the question side of the card first so they can make their own assessments about what the objects are and how they were used. You could then reveal the object information on the other side of the card to allow for comparison between students' assessments and the object's historical information. Remind students that the focus of this activity is to ask good questions and make assessments based on what they can see – just like archaeologists and historians. They shouldn't worry about getting the right answer straight away.

Allow time for students to share their object and observations with the wider group. This will ensure that all students have the chance to find out about all the objects. There are further prompts on the object information side of the cards. These encourage students to consider modern comparisons to the object they have been studying and where in the castle it may have been used. There are laminated site plans in the handling collection to support this.

We have also developed an artefact enquiry form (page 29) that you can print in advance of your visit and use to help students record their observations while using the handling collection on site.

## OBJECT 1: SPOONS



**DATE:** 1180s–1300

**USE:** In medieval times people usually carried their own spoon – to eat their meals with. They also carried their own knife. Forks were not commonly used in England until the end of the Tudor period.

**MATERIAL:** The materials the spoons are made of show the wealth of their owner. Wooden or horn spoons were used by poorer people; pewter and silver were used by the wealthy.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** Spoons like these were mostly used to eat dishes like pottage, soups and stews.

### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Use** the site plan to **find** places in the castle where you think people may have eaten during the medieval period.

### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Compare** and **contrast** these spoons with those you use today. What differences and similarities can you see?

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**TIP:** Think about the colour, shape and texture of the object.

2. What materials is your object made from?

**TIP:** Consider whether your object is natural, manmade or both.

3. Was your object used by a wealthy person or a poorer person?

**HINT:** Expensive objects are usually made from expensive materials and have more decoration than cheaper objects.

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**TIP:** Look out for any wear marks like thumb prints or damage to your object.

5. What do you think your object was used for? Why?

## OBJECT 2: WATERING POT



**DATE:** 1200–1600

**USE:** Medieval and Tudor people laid long grasses called rushes on the floor of their homes. Dirt blown and walked inside could make rooms dusty. To help reduce the dust moved around a room, water was sprinkled over the floor. These pots were dunked into a bowl of water. You placed your thumb over the hole at the top. When you lifted the pot and released your thumb, water came out of the holes at the bottom of the pot.

**MATERIAL:** This replica shows a type of glazed clay pottery called York Glazed Ware. The glaze is green because it has had copper added to it.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** Larger sprinklers were used in gardens later, while smaller sprinklers settled dust and made floors easier to sweep.

### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Find** a room on the site plan where this pot could be used to help reduce dust. (HINT: Areas used by the lord and lady of the castle were more important, so it was important to keep them clean.)

### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Compare** and **contrast** this jug with any similar cleaning objects you use today. What differences and similarities can you think of?

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### OBJECT 3: GREEN GLAZE JUG



**DATE:** 12th–13th centuries

**USE:** This replica green glaze jug is an example of the kinds of pots used to store and serve liquids at Yorkshire castles like Helmsley.

**MATERIAL:** Green glazed ware is made from clay and copper carbonate or copper oxide. This gives the glaze its green colour.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** Most people drank ale, beer or cider in the medieval period. A diluted ale was given to children to drink. People of higher status also drank imported wine from places like France.

#### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Find** a room on the site plan where green glaze jugs like these may have been used to store and serve drinks like ale, beer or cider at Helmsley Castle.

#### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Compare** and **contrast** this jug with any similar objects you use today. What differences and similarities can you think of?



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## OBJECT 4: PATTENS AND LEATHER SHOES



**DATE:** Medieval period to 19th century

**USE:** Wooden pattens like these were slipped over a person's leather shoes to keep them out of the mud as they were walking along medieval streets.

**MATERIAL:** Pattens were often wooden like these replicas, with leather straps to keep them fastened to a person's foot.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** The castle bailey, town streets and lanes were often very muddy and dirty with animal manure (poo). Leather shoes could be expensive so medieval people were keen to keep them as clean as possible.

### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Find** a location on the site plan where people living at the castle may have wanted to wear pattens like these.

### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Discuss** any overshoes you may use today and **compare** and **contrast** these with medieval wooden pattens and leather shoes.

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## OBJECT 5: BOWL



**DATE:** Medieval and Tudor periods

**USE:** Bowls like this were everyday objects used by the less wealthy members of the household, like servants.

**MATERIAL:** This replica bowl is made of wood. Wood was a less expensive material than pewter, which was used to make bowls for richer members of the household.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** Most food was served in communal bowls or on platters, and people would help themselves and eat from their trencher (a piece of bread or a square block of wood).

### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Find** a location on the site map where members of the castle's household ate their meals and used wooden bowls like this one.

### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Compare** and **contrast** this wooden bowl with crockery you use today. What materials are your bowls at home or at school made from?

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## OBJECT 6: TRENCHER AND PEWTER PLATE



**DATE:** 16th century

**USE:** Trenchers were used as plates during the medieval period. The large central hole held the meal and the small hole in the corner held some salt that could be used to season the meal.

**MATERIAL:** This replica example of a trencher is made of wood. By the 16th century, wooden trenchers like this were replacing bread trenchers.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** Until the 15th century, meat was often served on large squares of coarse stale bread called trenchers. The bread acted as a plate and mopped up the juices from the meal. The lord and his guests may have used pewter plates or bases. They could place the bread onto a base and use it as a personal chopping board.

### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Find** a building on the site map where members of the household used trenchers like this one. (HINT: You're looking for somewhere that people ate during the medieval period.)

### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Compare** and **contrast** this trencher with crockery you use at home and at school. Can you think of any similar objects you use today?



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## OBJECT 7: SALT HOLDER



**DATE:** 15th century

**USE:** Salt was an expensive item in the medieval period. It was stored in expensive holders on a lord's table to show his wealth and status.

**MATERIAL:** This replica is made of pewter, a common material used to make crockery for wealthier members of the household.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** Salt was used to preserve meats and fish to provide a source of food over the winter when harsher weather meant crops couldn't be grown to feed to animals.

### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Find** a building on the site map where salt holders may have been filled during the medieval period. (HINT: You're looking for a food preparation area.)

### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Discuss** how salt is used today. **Compare** and **contrast** salt holders you have seen with this medieval example.



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## OBJECT 8: HORN CUP, LEATHER GOBLET, PEWTER GOBLET



**DATE:** Medieval and Tudor periods

**USE:** Horn cups were widely used by poorer members of the lord's household at Helmsley Castle. Richer people used leather or pewter goblets.

**MATERIAL:** Animal horn was an easily available material in the medieval period. It was used to make cups, spoons, knife handles and even window panes. The horn could be cut, soaked, split, polished and cut into shapes.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** The base of the horn cup is also a piece of horn shaped and glued in place. The glue (made from boiled animal remains) sealed the join to make it watertight. Leather goblets were made by shaping leather using boiling water. Pewter is a tin-based alloy.

### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Find** a building on the site map where horn cups and goblets like these may have been used by medieval people. (HINT: You're looking for a place where people ate their meals in the medieval period.)

### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Compare** and **contrast** this cup with cups you use at home or at school. What materials do we often use to make cups today?

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## OBJECT 9: RUSHLIGHT HOLDER, TALLOW CANDLE, BEESWAX CANDLE



**DATE:** Medieval and Tudor periods

**USE:** Rushlights were used by people in the countryside or poorer people in towns and cities. Rushlights were held using the pincers on this holder. They were held diagonally and moved up as the flame burned down the light.

**MATERIAL:** Rushes are a natural material that grow in moist areas like the edges of lakes and ponds and in boggy soil. Rushlights were made by dipping peeled field rushes in warm animal fat (tallow) over and over to make a candle.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** Tallow candles were very smelly and smoky when lit. Richer people used candles made of beeswax which burned without smoke or a bad smell.

### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Find** a building on the site map where rushlights may have been used to light the rooms. (HINT: You're looking for rooms where servants worked.)

### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Compare** and **contrast** this rushlight holder to portable light sources we use today. How do we power them?

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## OBJECT 10: HORN BOOK AND QUILL



**DATE:** 1485–1603

**USE:** Horn books like this one were used to teach children to read and write during the Tudor period. Quills were dipped in ink and used to write with.

**MATERIAL:** A printed page is held down and protected by a transparent sheet of animal horn. This has a wooden case around it for further protection. Goose feathers were often used to make quill pens.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** This horn book shows the alphabet, vowels, simple pronunciation exercises and the Lord's Prayer.

### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Find** a building on the site map where the lord's children may have used horn books to learn to read and write. (HINT: You're looking for rooms used by the lord's family rather than where servants worked.)

### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Compare** and **contrast** this horn book to resources you use to learn how to read and write today. What similarities and differences can you spot?

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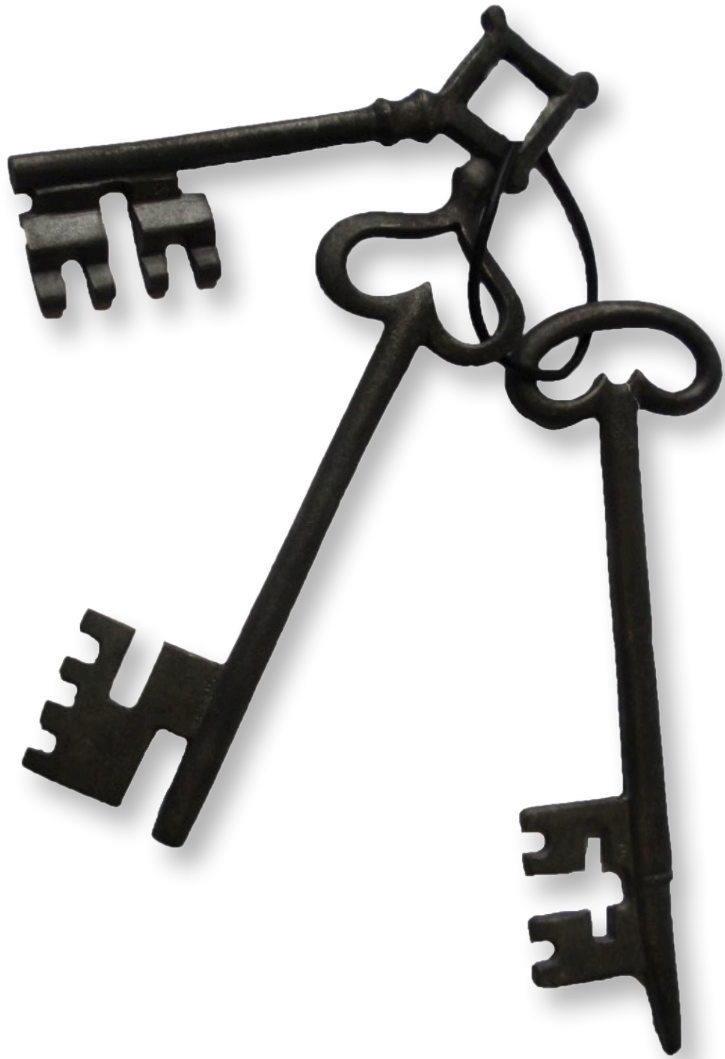
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## OBJECT 11: KEYS



**DATE:** Medieval and Tudor periods

**USE:** Security was important to the people who lived at Helmsley Castle. The keys to outer doors were kept safe by trusted people. Inner doors, cupboards and chests holding expensive or important items had locks. Keys to these may have been looked after by the constable or the lady of the castle.

**MATERIAL:** Medieval and Tudor keys were usually made of iron, like this replica set.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** Doors to the castle buildings were made of strong wood held together with many iron rivets. Outer doors often had wooden draw bars to help prevent them being battered down.

### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Find** some examples of places around the castle that had heavy doors, locks and keys to keep people out. (HINT: You're looking for areas where expensive items were kept.)

### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Discuss** things that we keep locked away today. Are they similar or different to items under lock and key in medieval and Tudor times?



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## OBJECT 12: POMANDER



**DATE:** 16th–17th centuries

**USE:** A pomander was carried on a belt or worn around the neck. It was filled with scented cloth or balls of scented wax. They were worn to ward off bad smells which the Tudors believed carried diseases.

**MATERIAL:** This pomander is made of metal and has a metal chain. An object like this was probably worn by someone who was fairly well off.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** Pomanders masked bad smells at a time when people didn't bathe as regularly as we do today. Expensive clothes were often difficult to wash so only underclothing was changed and washed regularly.

### WHERE IN THE CASTLE?

**Find** a place on the site map where rich people wearing pomanders may have gathered. (HINT: You're looking for a large inside space where people came together.)

### MODERN COMPARISONS

**Discuss** ways that we keep ourselves and our clothes fresh and smelling nice today. Are these similar or different to using a pomander?

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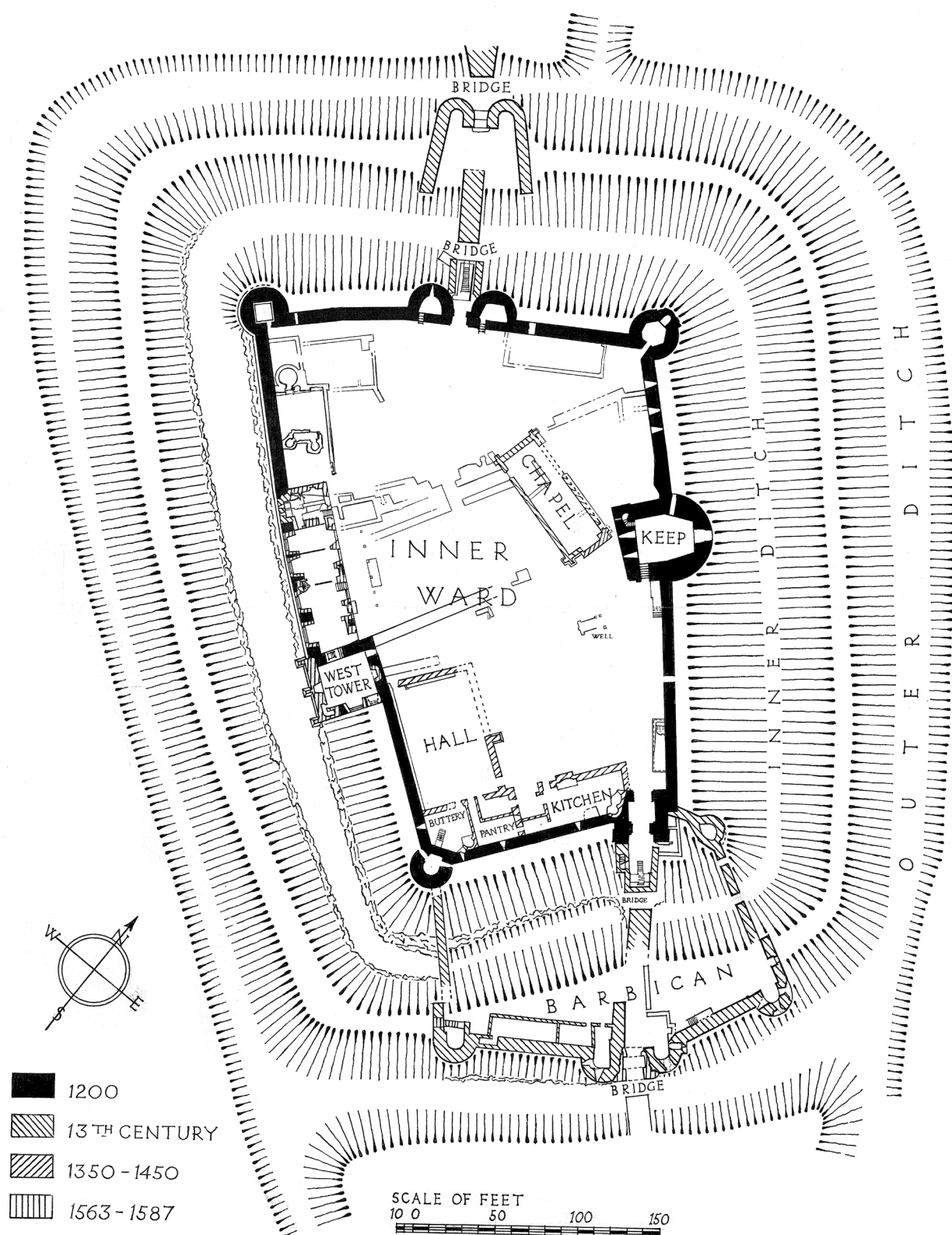
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Explore this site plan of Helmsley Castle and use it to find where the objects in the handling collection were used.

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# ARTEFACT ENQUIRY FORM



**Object Name** (what is the object?)

**Date** (when was it made or used?)

**Material** (circle or write)

Stone   Metal   Pottery   Glass   Wood   Bone   Plastic   Cloth   Paper

Other:

**Completeness** (circle)

Whole

Broken

Don't know

**Size** (measure or estimate)

Length:

Width:

**What do you think your object was used for?**

**Sketch of object:**

**Written description:**

**Recorded by:**

**Date:**