



## **GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHIVES TAKE ONE CASTLE - PRIMARY TEACHERS' NOTES**

### **INTRODUCTION**



This resource is intended to allow teachers to use the Gloucester Castle accounts roll in an inspiring, cross-curricular way. It is based on the National Gallery's Take One Picture programme (see: [www.takeonepicture.org.uk](http://www.takeonepicture.org.uk)), which promotes the use of one picture as a rich and accessible source for cross-curricular learning. The Take One approach follows three stages: imagination, evidence and pupil-led learning. The Take One model was adopted for the use of archive documents by Gloucestershire Archives after the Take One Prisoner project funded by the MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives) Council.

### **ABOUT THE DOCUMENT**

The Gloucester castle account roll (Gloucestershire Archives Reference: D4431/2/56/1) is a list of the financial expenditure on the castle that was undertaken by the King's Custodian of Gloucester castle, Sir Roger de Clifford, from December 1263 to March 1266. It was compiled by de Clifford as a record of the expenditure he undertook to strengthen the castle and its defences as ordered by Prince Edward when he was present in the castle in March 1262.

This roll is an original document that was part of the collection of Sir Thomas Phillipps, a 19<sup>th</sup> century antiquary of Gloucestershire and which is now held at Gloucestershire Archives.



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A transcript in English was created in 1976 by Mrs M Watson of Painswick and is also held at Gloucestershire Archives under the reference GMS 152.

There exists a shorter duplicate copy of the roll (which omits the names and details of the building works), that was created by a government official in the Crown's Exchequer soon after the original had been written. It is held in the National Archives under the reference SC6 1271/1(1)

## THE PHYSICAL DOCUMENT

### Materials

The document is made of parchment which is the cured skin from a sheep, goat or calf. The latter was known as *vellum* after *veau* the French word for calf. The parchment would have been prepared locally, possibly in the Hare Lane area of Gloucester, part of which was known as Tanners Street in the 1230s.

To make the parchment, the animal hide was first flayed to remove any flesh and then soaked in water for a day to remove most of the blood and grime. The hide would then have been placed in a large vat of slaked lime (calcium hydroxide,  $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ ), water and urine in order to start loosening and dissolving the hair. This chemical process was temperature dependant and could take several weeks, during which time the hides and vats had to be stirred with long wooden poles to ensure even treatment.

After this treatment, the hides would be hauled out of the vats and the remaining hair scraped off. The skin was then cleaned in water and stretched over a frame so that it could be scraped. This process used a special, semi-circular knife called a 'lunar' (as it resembled a crescent moon) and was critical as it controlled the thickness of the parchment and its quality.

After scraping the skin would be left to dry' after which it was cut out of the frame to form large sheets. Some parchment received finishing treatments such as sanding with dogfish skin (to smooth the parchment) and rubbing chalk or lime into the surface (to improve the whiteness of the skin).

The lengthy production process meant that the cost of parchment was high, about 3d (pennies) per sheet. The account roll would have cost around 90d or 7s 6d, which equates to about £200 in today's money.



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The material used to stitch the sheets together is made from plant fibres, probably flax, which was grown locally, probably in the Forest of Dean area, where it was common. Production of this thread-like material was another industrial process. Firstly the long-stemmed green flax plants would be harvested whereupon they would be 'retted' - either being spread in the field where they would catch the dew or soaked in a vat or pond. The water would rot down the outer stem, allowing it to be stripped off to gain access to the inner fibres. These fibres were then combed to separate the individual fibres before being spun to produce a stout thread or cord.

### Construction

The pages of the document are comprised of separate regular sized sections that are stitched together to create long continuous sheets, which are termed membranes. The membranes are stitched together at the top and then the whole assemblage is rolled for storage. This takes advantage of natural tendency of parchment to roll or curl and is also far cheaper to produce than a bound book.

When the document was first produced, it was probably stored in a wooden or leather tube with end caps. At this time, the document may have been wrapped around a wooden rod or 'pipe', which gives rise to an alternative name for this type of document, a 'pipe roll'.

The most famous pipe rolls are those of the annual accounts of Crown revenues, which were sent by county sheriffs to the Exchequer. These are held at the National Archives and survive in an almost unbroken series of records from 1130 to 1832. Some are over 30m in length.

### Ink

The ink used on the document would have either been made by the clerk or scribe who wrote the document or his apprentice. A number of different recipes exist for medieval inks, but most rely on the same chemical principle; that the ink oxidises the surface of the parchment to create the black colour. This reaction is why many medieval inks become darker over time and also why some become corrosive and burn the material they are used on, ultimately destroying it.



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Ink could be made from a mix of local ingredients, all of which were easily available in the surrounding countryside. These ingredients included shaggy ink-cap mushrooms, soot, honey and even egg white but the most common ingredient were oak galls (rich in tannin) and a few more exotic ingredients such as copperas (also known as green vitriol).

The latter was a sulphate of iron that was extracted from iron pyrites nodules and these were probably obtained from either Garden Cliff at Westbury-on-Severn or Wainlodes Hill, Gloucester, where the local geology means this mineral is plentiful.

The document would have been written using a quill pen from a goose, swan or pheasant (again sourced locally). The writing is on the flesh side of the parchment, which was generally deemed the best side.

### **The Authors**

We have no information about who wrote the document, as there are no signatures on it. The document appears to be written in one or two different hands, most probably belonging to senior clerks in Roger de Clifford's household.

The writing is extremely good and indicates that the writers were quite skilled and wrote often. They would have used a quill pen, which would have held enough ink to write about 3-5 characters before it needed re-dipping. The document probably represents well over two week's work.

The conditions for writing the document would have been difficult with illumination being provided by an open window or candles and rush lights, a writing wedge and a table available. It would have been written inside Gloucester Castle, probably in the Great Hall or Keep. It was probably transcribed from a rough copy taken by dictation.

## **WHAT THE DOCUMENT CONTAINS**

As mentioned above, the document is a list of financial accounts and it is incredibly detailed. The total cost of the work undertaken, materials and the garrison comes to £911 19s 9¾d, which is just equivalent to about £486,000 at today's prices.

The document contains different sets of accounts, which deal with the following items:



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### 1. Works at the Castle

This chiefly consists of repairs undertaken on the castle walls, battlements, timber defences (brattices), gates, portcullises and repairs to the 'old' siege engine.

New work includes the construction of a new bridge over the River Severn (complete with a defensive brattice, gate and portcullis), the construction of a new siege engine, digging a new defensive ditch and dam, making crossbow bolts and building a furnace for a forge.

### 2. Workers and materials

Labour costs for the workers are also included in the account, together with the cost of new tools and all materials used in the repairs and new works. New hand mills for grinding wheat to make garrison's bread are also listed.

### 3. Clothing for the garrison

This lists the quantities of cloth required for the garrison at various times.

### 4. Cost of the garrison

This covers the costs in wages of the garrison at various times and with varying numbers of troops, including knights, esquires, archers, crossbowmen, foot soldiers and the castles' watchmen and porters.

An appendix is included that provides details of various sections of the account roll. This is taken from the 1976 transcript and is intended to give a flavour of the language, dating and feel of the document. A series of images of the roll itself, including views of the handwriting, are shown in the Take One Castle PowerPoint.

## Starter Activities

The following activities can be undertaken as an introduction to the topic or can be delivered by Gloucestershire Archives as part of a taught session (chargeable).

- **In the News!** – become a reporter and report on the siege of Gloucester Castle in 1265.



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- **Get orf my land!** – role play, an improvised dramatic interpretation of the events surrounding the creation of the 'Bearlands' district of Gloucester.
- **How much?** – draw graphs/pie-charts of the castle accounts for the following:
  1. Cost of making the small catapult and the greater catapult.
  2. Cost of garrison.
- **Let's Make a Plan?** – Create a ground plan of a castle. What do think should be there and what would you put there!

## Lines of Enquiry for pupil-led learning

The ideas below are lines of enquiry that pupils might suggest or which teachers can use that all could come from the document. They are intended to allow teachers to use this local resource to undertake broad learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom. The nature of the document, the subject and the material it contains can be used to enrich a number of lessons and could easily become the central source for cross-curricular learning.

### On the Castle:

**Geographical studies** – Importance of location (guarding lowest bridge crossing point on the River Severn), relationship to town. Affect on local ecology (i.e. management of rush/reed beds to use in the castle).

**Building the castle** – Financial cost, sourcing and transporting the materials (stone, iron, lime, and timber), finding a workforce, construction techniques.

**Design/make a castle** - Defences (moats, curtain walls, keeps, towers, gatehouses, portcullis, drawbridge, murder holes, etc), shapes/geometry, life styles.

**Castle stories** – Create a dungeons & dragons game, creative writing and storytelling.

### Life inside the Castle:





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**Design/draw/make a tapestry** - These were hung inside castles to help warm the rooms. Designs usually featured hunting scenes or scenes from classical literature.

**Sport & Leisure/Medieval entertainments** – Hawking, hunting/ juggling, minstrels, stilts, pipe & tabor, plays, poetry, dance.

**Living & eating** – Food in the castle (making bread, cheese, butter, etc), lighting & heating, water, toilets & washing, food storage, sourcing & growing food (fish/fishing + agriculture). Medieval feasts. Rush cutting/basket weaving (rushes these were used as floor coverings and were obtained from beds along the river Severn and Castle Meads), reeds were used for basket weaving.

**Medical care** – Health & hygiene in the castle. Medical treatments for sickness and disease – common illnesses in the area were plague, ague (malaria), dysentery and the pox (smallpox).

**Medieval warfare** – Single combat, battles, sieges and siege engines, design/make a siege engine. Logistics of medieval warfare (i.e. Gloucestershire was a source of crossbow quarrels for the Crown, with millions being made in St Briavels Castle in the Forest of Dean, especially for the Welsh wars).

### Society

**Heraldry activities** – Men's & women's lives, feudalism, young and old age, education, Life in the town/country - compare/contrast exercises. City trade, merchants, charters. Make replica medieval houses/streets. (note: why not visit Gloucestershire Archives Arise Sir Knight! web resource).

### Religion/Art

**Medieval writing** – Illuminated manuscripts/stained glass, writing with quill and ink, making a medieval roll, making paper, the calendar, Saints day.

**Religion** – Chapel in the castle, local abbeys and their impact on society (most were big landowners and very wealthy), creative writing (modern Canterbury Tales), Feast days & Saints, Making relics/ amulets/ampullas (using clay or card), Writing pardons (quill pen, parchment, rolls). Pilgrims and pilgrimages with local destinations, i.e. St Peter's Abbey in Gloucester (which would later house the tomb of Edward II), Hailes Abbey (said to hold a phial



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containing the Blood of Christ), the Way of St James to Santiago de Compostela

### **Associated/supporting documents in Gloucestershire Archives**

**1455 Rental of Houses in Gloucester** – a survey produced by the Abbot of St Peter's Abbey in Gloucester (now Gloucester Cathedral) that gives details of house ownerships, tenants, occupations/trade and rents in the city. It includes margin drawings of some city buildings.

**Gloucester Corporation Records** – a calendar of medieval deeds and charters for the city. Some excellent material regarding medieval charity/purgatory, land use, names, people, etc.

**Maps of Gloucester and Gloucestershire** – Blau map, Hall & Pinnell, Speed's Map, etc

### **Places to Visit in Gloucestershire & immediate area**

Gloucester Cathedral

Hailes Abbey

Berkeley Castle

Goodrich Castle

Chepstow Castle

Kenilworth Castle

Warwick Castle