

Bessie Surtees House

One of the last Tudor buildings in the Newcastle area, Bessie Surtees House provides an intriguing mix of architecture and romance, set against the backdrop of Newcastle's medieval streets. This resource will help you to interpret the properties that make up the house and provide you with engaging activity ideas to undertake with your students.



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HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

Romans, British, English and Vikings

Bessie Surtees House stands in the Sandhill area, near the Quayside. This has been a focal point of Newcastle-upon-Tyne since Roman times when, around AD 120, the first Tyne Bridge, the Pons Aelius, was built.

The Middle Ages

In 1080 William the Conqueror founded his wooden 'new castle' on the steep hill overlooking the river crossing. By 1178 the castle was rebuilt in stone and Sandhill developed on the slopes behind it. In the 14th century, the area was used for recreation ground and as a space to muster troops in times of unrest.

In the 15th century the north side of Sandhill contained a row of narrow medieval burgage plots. Burgage plots were pieces of land that were owned by the lord or king and rented out. Each plot had houses, gardens and outbuildings which came up tight against the castle hill. It was two of these properties that would eventually become Bessie Surtees House. As you explore the Quayside and Sandhill, your group will still be able to see the characteristics of the burgage plots. Your students should look out for the narrow courts, chares (narrow

alleys) and long flights of stone stairs. Remind your group that it was this area that was the centre of Newcastle until the Georgian period.

The Tudors and Stuarts

Over the next two hundred years, the Sandhill area developed into a lively commercial and administrative centre.

At this point the Tyne was reasonably shallow and ships couldn't go beyond the point of the present Tyne Bridge. So it was here, near Bessie Surtees House that the port developed and the fleets of cargo ships would unload their goods to be taken through the gates of the town wall to the cellars and warehouses in streets close by. This was a popular spot for merchants to live, as they could save on their expenses by having their homes and warehouses near the port, without having to pay further transport costs for their cargo.

The houses on this row also commanded a prime social spot, with the long lines of windows acting as a viewing gallery for the passing royal parades and events taking place in the city. A real mixture of people and nationalities would have walked through Sandhill at this time.

The Cock family owned the house during the 1600s. When Ralph Cock,

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T 0191 2691255 E NorthEast@HistoricEngland.org.uk



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the junior, lived at Surtees House, he was the Governor of the Merchant Venturers' Company and became Mayor of Newcastle in 1634. He had 15 daughters, one of whom was called Ann and married Thomas Davison in 1657, who also became Mayor of Newcastle.

During the Civil War, the siege of Newcastle in 1644 caused considerable damage to the area and severely affected trading. By 1647 local people were able to repair the damage and this was an ideal opportunity to replace older homes with more elegant and fashionable buildings.

Both houses were probably rebuilt and extended at this time and the Guildhall, directly opposite, was demolished in 1655 to make way for a new one. From this point in 1649, Sandhill was described as a teeming, bustling area full of shops and opulent merchant's houses.

The Georgians

In 1741 the front of Milbank House (one of the houses that makes up the present Bessie Surtees House) was re-faced in brick, resulting in a flat frontage which matched the Georgian fashions seen elsewhere in the country. However, by the late 18th century the wealthier citizens had moved away from the densely packed and busy

Quayside to new high-class residential areas in the city such as Charlotte Square and Hanover Square.

The properties along Sandhill were given over to a more commercial use and many were divided up into smaller units. The houses making up the modern Bessie Surtees were used separately as coffee houses. The Milbank House coffee shop closed in 1757. The one in Surtees House, known as 'Nellies Coffee House' traded until 1781 and then afterwards as 'Bella's Coffee House' under a different proprietor.

In 1771, after weeks of heavy rainfall, the Tyne rose above the high tide mark by four metres. A great flood devastated the Sandhill area, destroying all of the bridges along the Tyne Valley, except for one at Corbridge. The residents of what is now Bessie Surtees House, including Aubone Surtees, could only enter their property by boat. A year later, the daughter of Aubone, Bessie, would make her infamous escape from the first floor window and turn the house into a tourist magnet. You can read more about this on page seven.

The Victorians

In the 19th and 20th centuries the buildings had a variety of uses including a wholesale druggist, consular offices,

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maltster (a place where malt, for brewing, was made) and seamen's lodgings.

as offices by Historic England

SITE DESCRIPTION

In 1880 John Clayton owned Milbank House and by the 1890s he had acquired Surtees House too. Milbank House was given a new shop front around 1900 and the two properties were joined together internally, giving the house the appearance that you will see today.

The Exterior

Bessie Surtees House shows a rare blend of styles. Ultimately, it is a medieval building which has been adapted to show a Jacobean façade.

The Modern Age

In 1931 the combined property was bought by the Right Honourable S. R. Vereker, later Lord Gort, whose wife was a descendent of the famous Bessie. He wanted to restore the house owned by his ancestors and recreate an historic Tudor mansion.

Both houses were originally only one room deep. Since building space was limited by the shape of the medieval site, the only way to build light and comfortable rooms was to extend upwards. This has resulted in two very tall buildings, at five and six storeys high each.

He appointed R. F. Wilkinson, an engineer injured in the First World War, to supervise the restoration and obtain period fittings from other buildings to furnish the house as it would have looked in Tudor times. At this point room layouts were altered and evidence of these changes can still be seen throughout the house. The work lasted for six years and ultimately ensured the survival of the house.

Parts of the timber frame of Milbank House and the sandstone dividing walls are medieval. These stone walls stand three storeys high and are over one metre thick, complying with medieval building regulations. The upper storeys were added later in brick. A document mapping the differing architectural styles of the house can be found in the Images section of this pack.

Entrance and staircase

The present entrance is through a shop front, installed in the 1930s using old timbers. The heavy 17th century door (bought in London), the Tudor windows and the large stone fireplace were salvaged from other

In 1978 Tyne and Wear Council bought the house and undertook further restoration. The building is now used

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buildings and date from the Jacobean period.

The square staircase is probably original, however Lord Gort no doubt brought in the current balusters (upright supports) and the rails. Cupboards and doorways lead off most of the landings. Nothing remains of the staircase in Milbank House since the two houses were amalgamated.

In this area your students should be able to find evidence of the changing layout of the site, for example, part of the ground floor is taken up by the adjacent building - a result of the building having been subdivided into smaller units which were later united.

Public room one

The main room in this apartment was the finest in the house and was intended to impress. Here a wealthy merchant would have entertained his guests and conducted his business. The room is lit by a continuous strip of windows, one of which is marked in blue to show where Bessie Surtees eloped from.

Today, the room has been laid out as it would have looked during Tudor times. The table and dresser have been reproduced using traditional Tudor building methods, and your students should be able to spot that no glue or

nails have been used. Instead, wooden dowels were hammered into pre-made holes and this held the pieces of wood together.

The oak wall panels are finely carved and decorated with pilasters (flat strips on the wall). At the top of these are cherubs' heads. The ceiling was installed by Lord Gort in the 1930s and is a copy taken from another house in the local area. It is opulent with plaster panels featuring birds, fruit and floral motifs including Tudor roses and fleur-de-lys.

The fireplace is dated 1657. Its rear hearth is plastered and decorated with Tudor roses. Resting on the brick base are a cast iron firebasket and a fireback used to retain and throw out heat. The fireback shows the arms of Charles I, a lion and a unicorn, together with the initials C.R. (Carolux Rex, Latin for King Charles).

The elaborately carved oak overmantle is made up of three panels, flanked by pairs of Ionic columns. The centre panel has two carved arches while the outer two have geometric designs. Above each pair of columns are four small carved shields showing the arms of:

- Newcastle - three castles
- the Cock family - a circle between three cockerels
- the Davison family - a wavy band

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between six cinquefoils (a five sided shape that looks like a star)

- The Merchant Venturers' Company – a wave below roses and lions for England.

Carved underneath each pair of columns are the initials ANNO AC TD 1657, dating the columns to the time of Ralph Cock junior.

Public room two

You are now in what was Milbank House. You can see as you walk between the two rooms, that the door has been cut through the thick wall that once divided the two houses.

Little survives of the 17th century decoration in the second public room. Only the medieval beams and the stone fireplace are original - the empty mortices (holes in the timbers where another piece would fit) indicate that they have been reused from an earlier building.

The fireplace in this room has a stone surround with a brick hearth and rear. The firebasket and fire-back, again show the royal arms of Charles I. The 18th century sash windows, shutters and seats were installed at the same time as the brick front.

The third public room

The passage way to this room was knocked through a chimney flue in the

1930s. This room looks authentic but is actually a complete reconstruction.

The floor was raised by a metre to bring it level with the courtyard and the floorboards were brought in from a building in Sunderland which dated back to 1620.

The stone archway is said to have come from a demolished priory at Pandon and the doorway opens onto a wall.

The stone fireplace was salvaged from a house at Shotley Bridge. The panelling came from a house in Broad Chare, along the Quayside, and has been carved to look like folded linen, a popular Tudor style.

The courtyard and rear wing

The rear wing was a warehouse and site for cheap lodgings which was demolished in the 1930s. A new building, Maddison House, was built in its place in a Tudor/Jacobean style. The neighbouring buildings were also completely rebuilt, but the tight space gives an impression of how the local medieval streets once looked.

Other rooms

Today, you are unable to see the ancillary areas such as the servants' quarters, washrooms, brew houses and kitchens that would have served the Tudor house.

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HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Sandhill described by William Gray, in the first history of Newcastle, published in 1649.

“... first of the Sandhill, a market for fish and other commodities; very convenient for merchant adventurers; merchants of coal; and all those who have their living by shipping....”

In the marketplace is many shops and stately houses for merchants, with conveniences of water, bridge, garners [store], lofts, cellars and houses of both side of them. Westward they have a street called the Close. East the benefit of the houses of the Key Side. In this Sandhill standeth the Towne-Court, or Guild-Hall, where is held three guilds every year by the major and burgesses, to offer their grievances, where the major keep his court every Monday, and the sheriff hath his county-court upon Wednesday and Friday.”

To make this passage easier to read, the text has been modernised.

H Bourne's History of Newcastle, 1736

“It (Sandhill) is a spacious Place, adorned with Buildings very high and stately, whose Rooms speak the Ancient Grandeur, being very large and magnificent. It is now that Part of the Town where the chief Affairs of Trade and Businesses are transacted. The

Shops in this Street are almost altogether those of Merchants, which have many of them great Conveniences of Lofts, Garners (store) and Cellars.

The east and north sides of Sandhill are enclosed by lofty and commodious buildings, many of which contain very large and magnificent rooms, that indicate the grandeur of the merchants of Newcastle.”

To make this passage easier to read, the text has been modernised.

R F Wilkinson, an engineer employed in the 1930s to restore the house

“From being mansions these houses have been maltsters, manufacturing chemist, lodging house, meeting place and seamen's mission. The shops have been Id. Gaffs (a cheap or disreputable music hall), as they called the old houses, wax works, seed shop, refreshment house and warehouse.

When I started the seamen's mission was still there, I am sorry to say that the majority of frequenters were not fishermen. They removed to Board Chare. Other parts of the premises were mostly unoccupied. The first job was to get rid of the accumulation of filth and rubbish.”

Turn over for the story of Bessie Surtees.

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The story of Bessie Surtees

Bessie Surtees was the daughter of the wealthy merchant and Mayor, Aubone Surtees. In 1772 Bessie went to stay with relatives in the Durham village of Sedgfield, where she fell in love with 22 year old John Scott.

Aubone did not approve of John, whose father, William, was a coal dealer and keel boat owner. Whilst John was an Oxford college tutor, Aubone thought he wasn't good enough for Bessie. He wanted Bessie to marry Sir William Blackett, known as 'the King of Newcastle', who was nearly 50 years older than her, but was very rich.

Bessie was sent away to relatives in the South of England to break up the romance. Upon her return, in spite of her father's objections, John and Bessie continued to see each other in secret, usually along the Shields Road, where Bessie took her morning ride. When John found out that she was going to be married against her will, he asked Bessie to run away with him and get married in Scotland.

On the night of 18 November 1772 John put his plan into action, with the help of a friend, James Wilkinson. James was an apprentice in Mr Clayton's clothes shop, underneath Aubone's apartments. James hid a

ladder in the shop and when everyone was in bed they quietly lifted it up to the first floor window. Bessie climbed down into John's arms and they hurried to a carriage.

They were married at Blackshiels, near Dalkieth, and with the adventure over, they returned to face their parents' anger.

John's father made the best of the scandal and asked the young couple to live in his house on Love Lane. Aubone, however, was furious. He disowned Bessie and refused to see her for two weeks. Once he had calmed down, the couple married again in an English ceremony at St Nicholas Cathedral in January 1773 with their parents present.

Aubone did not stay in Sandhill for long. Bessie's story made the house famous and Aubone could get little peace for people staring at the window from which she had eloped.

As the years passed Aubone had to admit he had been wrong about John Scott. John became a successful barrister, an MP and in 1801 Lord Chancellor of England.

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TIMELINE

PREHISTORY (to AD42)	ROMANS (43 - 409)	BRITONS, ENGLISH, VIKINGS (410 - 1065)	MIDDLE AGES (1066 - 1484)	TUDORS (1485 - 1602)
	<p>120 The first bridge over the river Tyne is built..</p>		<p>1080 William the Conqueror finds his 'new castle'.</p> <p>1178 The castle is rebuilt in stone.</p> <p>1465 Robert Rhodes, famous for co-funding the St Nicholas church spire, sells the house.</p> <p>1478 Peter Bewyck, Mayor of Newcastle from 1490 to 1491, lives in the house. castle is rebuilt in stone.</p>	<p>1568 The house is sold by Andrew Bewyck, a Merchant to Gawan Mylbourne, also a Merchant.</p> <p>1578 The house is described as having a brewhouse and a tap stone.</p> <p>1581 Richard Hodgson, the Mayor of Newcastle, sells the house to Ralph Cock (the elder).</p>

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TIMELINE

STUART (1603 - 1713)	GEORGIAN (1714 - 1836)	VICTORIAN (1837 - 1901)	MODERN TIMES (1902 - 1950)	MODERN TIMES (1951 - TODAY)
<p>1634 Ralph Cock (the younger) becomes Mayor of Newcastle.</p> <p>1644 The local area is damaged during the Civil War.</p> <p>1655 The Guild Hall is demolished and rebuilt.</p> <p>1657 Anne, Cock's daughter, marries Thomas Davison, later Mayor of Newcastle in 1669.</p> <p>1694 Timothy Davison, Anne's son, leaves the house to his son Thomas.</p>	<p>1754 Aubone Surtees moves into the house as Thomas Davison's tenant.</p> <p>1758 & 1765 Thomas Davison leaves his estate to his nephew, also Thomas Davison, who in turn leaves it to his brother, Morton.</p> <p>1770 Snow Clayton buys the house and inherits the tenant Aubone Surtees. Mr Clayton uses the ground floor as a shop.</p> <p>1772 Bessie, daughter of Aubone Surtees, elopes with John Scott.</p> <p>1772-81 The house is known as Nellie's Coffee house.</p> <p>1781-94 The house is known as Bella's Coffee House, run by Isabella Webb.</p> <p>1798 The house is owned by Nathaniel Clayton who leases the house to tenants.</p>	<p>1848 The house slips into slow decline. It is used as tenements and lodgings for the poor.</p> <p>1851 The businesses in the house are listed as a grocers owned by WM Potts & Mowbray and a corn merchants owned by Roger Marshall.</p> <p>1854 A huge fire sweeps the Quayside, the house is undamaged.</p> <p>1880 John Clayton buys Milbank House (it having been refaced in red brick in 1741).</p> <p>1880 John Clayton buys Bessie Surtees House.</p>	<p>1925 The house is known as the 'Seamen and Boatmen's Friend Society Sailors Rest'.</p> <p>1931 English The Rt Honourable Standish Robert Gage Prendergast Vereker, later Lord Gort buys and begins restoring the house.</p> <p>1934 The restoration is complete and Lord Gort holds an exhibition on the transformation.</p> <p>1950 Lord Gort leases the lower floors as shops and the upper as accommodation.</p>	<p>1970s The house once again falls into disrepair.</p> <p>1978 The house is bought by Tyne and Wear County Council who begin restoring it.</p> <p>1986 The house passes to Newcastle City Council.</p> <p>1989 English Heritage begins using the upper floors as offices and opens the lower levels to the public.</p> <p>2013 English Heritage buy Bessie Surtees House in December 2013</p> <p>2015 English Heritage splits into the English Heritage Trust and Historic England. Historic England now own and operate the building.</p>

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LOCATION

Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE1 3JF
OS Grid Reference NZ 25167 63873



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HOW TO GET THERE

Bus: The Q1 and Q2 routes run from the surrounding area.

Rail: Newcastle Central Station 1/2 mile.

Metro: Newcastle Central Station 1/2 mile.

FACILITIES

Parking: Not available on site. Coaches may pick up and drop off outside of the property.

Disabled access: The house is split over multiple floors accessed by steps.

Shop: A selection of Historic England publications are available to purchase from reception.

Toilets: Available on site.

Picnics: Due to the historic nature of the rooms food is not permitted. Please ask at reception for advice on suitable alternatives in the area.

Please remember that you are responsible for completing your own risk assessment. Hazard information available when booking.

Limit on party number groups are limited to 35 on site (children plus teachers and adult helpers).

Required teacher/adult helper to pupil ratio 1:6 for school years 1-3 and 1:15 for all other groups aged under 18. Pupils must be supervised at all times.

LEARNERS GO FREE

Educational visits are free to this Historic England property and should be booked at least 7 days in advance. For bookings please contact Bessie Surtees House via:

Tel: 0191 2691255

Email:

NorthEast@HistoricEngland.org.uk

A GUIDE TO RESOURCES:

- A room with educational resources is located on site and must be pre-booked. Within the education space is a large collection of handling items, costumes and resources.

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PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

We recommend that you visit ahead of your planned school trip to familiarise yourself with the site, and to prepare any activities that your group may undertake.

Within this pack are a series of activities which can be undertaken in and around the site using the resources provided. Also enclosed is a series of more generic activities which do not require handling items.

ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

Below is a list of the key handling objects and resources that you will find at Bessie Surtees House, along with ideas for how to use the items with your class. The collection mainly draws upon the Tudor history of the house.

Maps

A selection of local maps from throughout the ages have been provided. To help your group to understand the changing landscape of Sandhill and the Quayside, encourage your students to look for evidence of changing:

- street patterns
- sanitation and health facilities
- street names
- recreation
- educational sites
- religious buildings
- transportation.

You might also ask your group to look for changes in industry, and how the past is often reflected in street names. For example, John Scott, who married Bessie Surtees became Lord Eldon whilst his brother became Lord Stowell. Your group will be able to find Eldon Square and Stowell Street in the modern city centre.

Ask your group to consider how these changes to the town would have affected the local population. This could form the basis of a wider local history study, looking at the changing industry in Newcastle.

Photographs of the house and quayside

This detailed selection of photographs will enable your group to see some of the changes that have taken place in the local area. Many of the images show the changes that took place in the 1930s during Lord Gort's ownership. These images are invaluable when explaining the changing layout of the house and renovations that took place.

Encourage your students to:

- look at the clothing worn by people
- look at transport and street furniture
- consider the changes that have happened to the house



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- identify the elements of the house that have stayed the same
 - consider the smells and sounds that people would have experienced.
- Tudor homes. Ask your students to consider why fire was so important during this time; what it was used for and how we use it now.

Pottery tankard

This item reflects the use of the building as a coffee house in the 18th century. Coffee houses were places for socialising, reading newspapers and discussing business – much as they are today. This coffee house was run by women, but the customers were mainly men. The coffee that was drunk was very expensive and was served in tiny cups. Ask your group to consider if the role of coffee houses and cafes have changed over the years. If so, how?

Children's clogs

These would have been worn by a child in the 19th century. There were lots of clog makers in this area, whose shops were found in the narrow staircases leading from the castle to the Quayside. Shoes, even clogs, were very expensive, and most children would have gone barefoot. What does this tell your group about the living conditions of children in the 19th century?

Tinder box

This Tudor replica contains everything you would need to make fire: flint, steel, charred linen and flax. Keeping a fire going was of huge importance in

Watering pot

The risk of fire was great in wooden Tudor buildings, particularly as the walls and floors were covered in reed mats. To stop sparks from igniting, the mats would be dampened with this sprinkler. The pot was dipped into a bowl of water, and a finger covered the hole at the top to act as a vacuum. When water was needed, the finger was moved away from the hole.

Ask your group:

- How often would this need doing?
- Why was it done?
- How do you create a vacuum?

Cowick

This is a urinal. The handle allowed the user to position it when relieving themselves. It was used by men and women, and often at the dining table.

- Does this surprise your students?
- Why might the cowick have been used at the table?

Wooden horn book

These books were used to teach children to read and write by rote (repetition) learning. A printed page is held in place by a sheet of animal horn.

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Ask your students:

- What exercises are used and why?
- Why was the horn used?
- What does this tell us about the way children were taught?
- What were the advantages and disadvantages of each form of lighting?
- What material is each object made of?
- How clean and efficient were each forms of lighting?

Quill pens, ink well and sand shaker

The quills were made of goose feathers, ink was made of soot, and fine sand was shaken over newly written documents to dry the ink.

Discuss with your group:

- Why feathers were used e.g. it was a cheap by-product and is easily sharpened.
- How the writing tools today are similar or different.
- How easy or hard it would have been to write with such tools.
- How information was recorded and shared during this time.

Lighting items

The oil lamp in this collection provided domestic lighting for many centuries. You will also find a rush light, and these were used by the poor/people in rural areas. The pewter candlestick would have been used in receiving rooms and would have held expensive beeswax candles. The brass lantern was used to allow a flame to be carried around, similar to a torch.

Ask your group:

Food and drink

In this collection we have provided:

- a beaker made of horn
- a pewter chalice for use on special occasions
- a leather tankard for drinking mead, wine or beer
- a pottery tankard for hot drinks
- a loving cup to pass hot liquids around
- a pewter plate for a rich person
- a wooden trencher for serving meat
- horn spoons
- a face jug which used a pagan symbol of plenty to bring a good harvest
- a chafing dish to keep food warm
- a skillet which was used as a saucepan and to cook in the embers at the edge of the fire.

With your group ask them to discuss:

- The range of materials provided, which items would the rich use and which would the poor use?
- What were the advantages and disadvantages of the materials used to make each item?

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- What other items do we use when we're dining today?

As these are fragile items, we ask that your group only look at these items and don't touch them.

Tudor clothing and resources

There is a range of Tudor costumes for you to use. These include servants' clothes and clothes that would have been worn by the children of a rich merchant family in the 16th century.

There are two trunks in this collection which contain items such as Tudor food, clothes and games which are intended to help your students draw conclusions about the lives of Tudors using evidence.

Ask your group:

- to consider what the clothes would have been made of
- if people would have dressed themselves or if a servant would have helped
- how clothes were washed and how often

FURTHER ACTIVITY IDEAS

These short, informal activities work as icebreakers for Key Stage one to three visitors to Bessie Surtees House.

You may also like to ask your group to make detailed drawings of the clothes and design a new costume.

For students, this can be a daunting site which is hard to interpret as only a small portion of the building is open to the public. To aid their investigations, it may be easier to agree a thematic approach to their initial exploration of the site. The use of a theme will enable students to lead independent enquiries and become reflective learners.

We have also provided some children's leather shoes which would fit a modern 9 year old. These were strapped over wooden patterns to protect the leather from the dirty streets.

Example themes might include:

- Your students should discuss:
- why these shoes would have been expensive to buy
 - why patterns were needed
 - what children from less wealthy families would have worn
 - how these shoes differ from their own.

- people who lived here
- changes to the building
- a changing Quayside.

With these themes your students can explore the site using recording devices such as digital cameras to track their research for later use. You may also wish to encourage your group to set themselves goals as part of their theme.

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For example under *people*, they may want to find out more about the shop keepers and merchants who lived and worked here.

Creative writing

Provide your students with a copy of the Bessie Surtees story, which can be found in the History section of this pack, or read it aloud to/with them at the site. Ask the students to identify whose point of view the story captures. Ask your class to rewrite the story from another characters' point of view, e.g:

- Bessie
- John
- James Wilkinson.

To expand this activity, ask your students to create a short film charting the full story, or a fragment of it. Ask the group to outline what music and sound effects they would like to use.

In another activity you might ask your students to develop a piece of writing from the point of view of the carved heads in public room one. This could chart a feast, event or conversation that they may have seen.

For sale

Using the sources provided in the History section of this pack, ask your group to develop a sales package for the house. Set a date when the house

is for sale, e.g. 1774.

They will need to:

- describe the house, including the main reception room
- give an overview of the wider area of Sandhill
- outline the available facilities
- any key selling points, e.g. the tale of Bessie
- include images of the house.

They will also need to consider what kind of person they will be marketing the house to and what will make them want to buy it.

Evidence of Tudors

As this was once a prominent Tudor residence, encourage your class to identify as many items of Tudor decoration, design and furniture as possible. Using their wider knowledge of the period ask them to locate and record items such as:

- Tudor roses and motifs on the ceiling and fireplace
- Tudor panelling
- exterior design features
- reproductions of Tudor objects.

Ask your group to consider:

- What do these items tell us about the Tudors who lived here?
 - Were they rich or poor?
 - What food did they eat?
 - What was important to them?
- Consider the images carved onto their furniture.



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Homes of the past

To explore the above activity in greater detail, open up your students' exploration to include other periods, such as the Georgians and 1930s.

- What does the evidence that has been left behind tell us about the people who have lived here?
- Why would someone like Lord Gort want to return the house to its Tudor past?

Restoration and reinvention

This site has been transformed by a series of restorations and building works. Ask your students to explore the interior and exterior of the house looking for evidence of change. Using the timeline in this pack and evidence in the house, what changes happened during which periods?

To aid this investigation, provide the group with images from the 1930s from this pack and from the drawers in the education area. In the main reception room they should be able to spot that a wall has been removed, the door moved and the fire back has been altered. Why do they think that Lord Gort changed the layout of the house? The information panels in the room might provide some additional clues.

Architecture

Bessie Surtees House is made up of a mixture of architectural styles from several different periods. Using your groups' knowledge, the images in this pack and resources from the [Historic England Education](https://www.historicengland.org.uk/education) website, ask your group to:

- look at the exterior of the building
- identify any architectural styles
- date the styles where possible.

These elements should then be marked onto the image of the building in the Images section of this pack.

What's missing?

With younger students you may want to identify the changes to the house by the rooms that are missing/not open to the public. Ask your students to write down what rooms they have in their own homes and use this as a check list as they explore the property.

Draw the group back together and ask them what is missing from Bessie Surtees House, e.g. kitchens and bedrooms. Encourage the group to think about what the house is used for now as a starting point to discuss the changing shape and use of the property over the ages.

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A Tudor feast

Using the objects provided, encourage your group to stage a Tudor feast. The students should use their knowledge of Tudor life as they consider:

- the status of the guests
- a seating plan
- crockery and cutlery
- food and drink.

Coats of arms

Within the rooms your group should be able to spot the coats of arms that are outlined in the History section of this pack. Ask the group to consider why people used coats of arms, and what the animals and motifs were used to symbolise.

Bearing this in mind, your group should create their own coats of arms, using motifs found in the house and devices of their own creation. They should consider how each item represents them, and how they would wish to be perceived if they were a rich merchant.

Charting your visit

If your visit is part of a wider exploration of Newcastle, encourage your students to keep track of their day for use back in the classroom. Students should take photographs of each location they stop at, noting what it is, where it is and how it has shaped the history of the city. You may also wish

to provide your group with a theme to explore, for example architecture.

Back in the classroom, your group can then develop a Google Map which charts their visit and shows the route that they took. To extend this activity, your class could use this tool to develop a tour of the city, with additional marketing and publicity material.

For further activity ideas visit the [Historic England Education](https://www.historicengland.org.uk/education) website.

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Bessie Surtees House

An aerial view of Bessie Surtees House taken in the early 21st century.

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Bessie Surtees House

Two images from the 1934 exhibition.

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This room was made to look like a bedroom from the Stuart period. The bed belonged to Lord Gort and is now in Bunratty Castle, Ireland. This room is now used as an office.



This was known as the Henry VIII room during the exhibition, as it featured a portrait of Catherine Parr, Henry's 6th wife. This is now the third public room and has a large wooden door, taken from a monastery, attached to the wall.

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Bessie Surtees House

Images of the interior of the house taken in the 1930s during the tenure of Lord Gort who exhibited the house to the public in 1934.

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An alternative view of the Henry VIII room, now the third public room. The livery cupboard is now in the Gort furniture collection at Bunratty Castle, Ireland.



This room is above what is now public room one, and is currently used as an office. In 1934 it was known as the Queen Anne room. Instead of cherubs topping the pilasters, there are heads of women wearing Native American headdresses.

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A photograph of the window from which Bessie Surtees escaped.
The exact window is marked by a blue pane.

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Bessie Surtees House

A 19th century engraving of the Sandhill area, including the Guildhall and The Surtees' House.

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Bessie Surtees House

An image of the site circa 1870. In the 1881 census two seamen were boarding at the house along with a servant. The head of the household was an Innkeeper, who lived with his wife and brother.

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Bessie Surtees House

A photograph of Sandhill taken in 1894. Bessie Surtees House is in the middle, housing the business J.W Newton & Co. The brick fronted building to the left is Milbank House, which is now attached to Bessie Surtees House.

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Bessie Surtees House

A photograph of the site taken in 1910. The original Surtees house is shown, housing a Cafe and Cocoa Rooms or Hosie's Cafe.

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Bessie Surtees House

The Sandhill area photographed in 1920.

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A photograph of the site taken in 1940.

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Bessie Surtees House

The Sandhill area photographed in 1954.

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Bessie Surtees House

A breakdown of the architectural styles visible at Bessie Surtees House today.

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