

STONE!

A LEEDS CASTLE ACTIVITY BOOK



This Guide & Activity Book Belongs

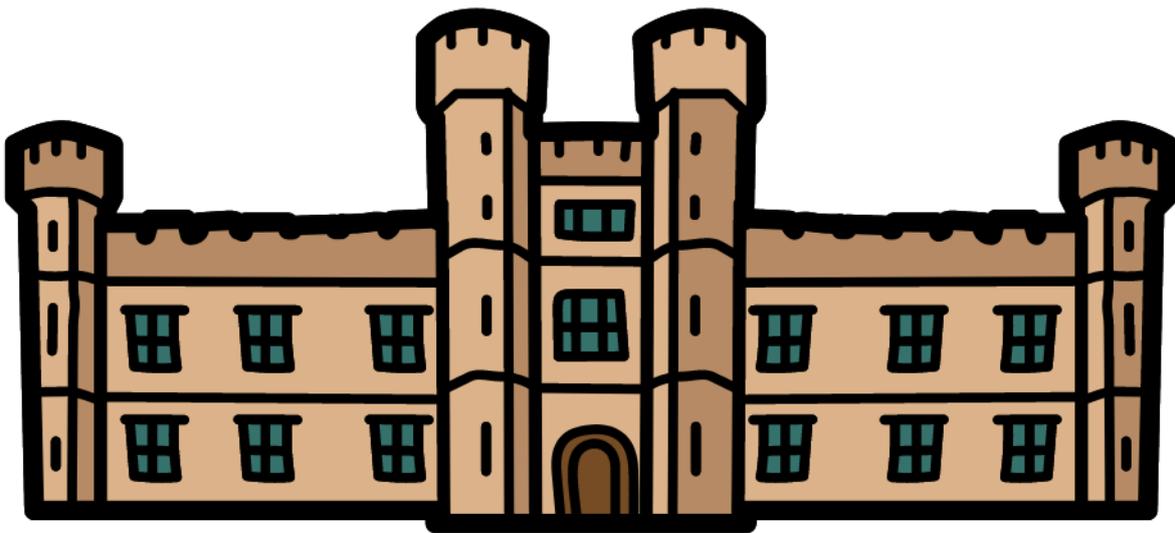
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LEEDS CASTLE
KENT, ENGLAND

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First Castles

Why and How Were They Built?

A long time ago, after the Norman conquest of England in 1066, castles began to appear all over the country. But why build a castle?

Most castles were built for protection. They were strong places where kings and queens, lords, ladies and knights could defend themselves from enemies. Castles were a show of power and showed everyone who was in charge of the land. They were also used as homes. People lived inside castles, they weren't just for battles!

The first castles were made from wood and earth. These were called motte and bailey castles. They had:

- A motte – a big hill with a wooden tower on top.
- A bailey – a fenced area where people lived and worked.

Later, castles were made from stone, which was stronger and lasted longer.

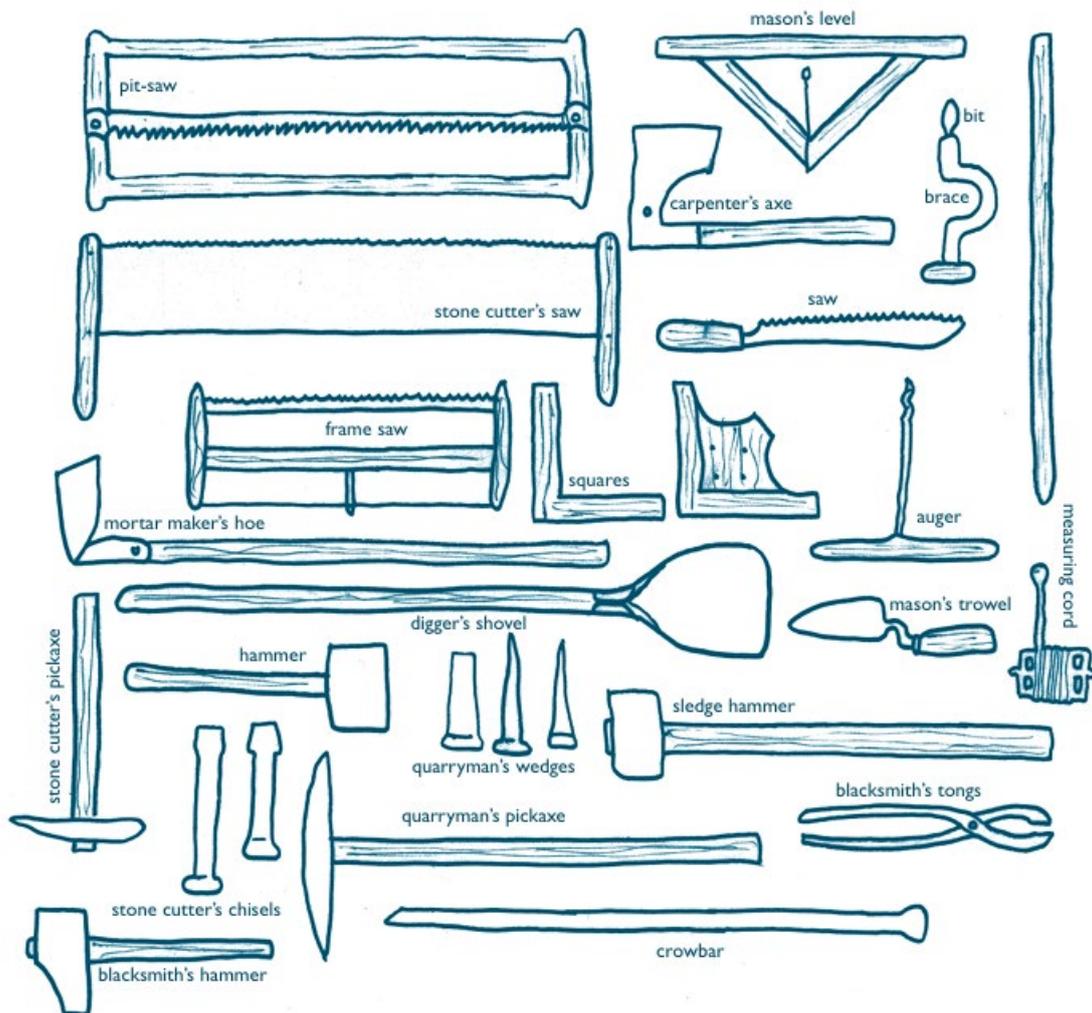


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Tools to Build a Castle

Then and Now

The way stone castles were built hundreds of years ago is clearly very different from how we construct buildings now. Have a look below at some of the medieval tools that were used:



Medieval tools include a hammer and chisel for shaping stone blocks and pickaxes to break rocks and dig the ground. In medieval times there would also be a pulley system to lift heavy stones as well as trowels and wooden scaffolding to place the stone and hold it steady.

Today, our stonemasons use more modern tools such as electric saws and drills for cutting and shaping the stone, metal scaffolding (which is safer and stronger than wood!) and laser measuring tools for greater accuracy. They also wear protective gear to keep them safe, like helmets and gloves.



Who Built Castles?

Then and Now

A range of skilled workers have always been needed to build a strong castle. Some of the medieval castle builders included:

- **Stonemasons:** Experts who shaped and laid stone.
- **Carpenters:** Built wooden parts like floors and roofs.
- **Blacksmiths:** Made tools, nails, and metal parts.
- **Labourers:** Did the hard work – digging, carrying, and building.
- **Engineers and Master Builders:** Planned the castle and led the workers.



Today, skilled specialist teams help to repair castles and look after the stonework. These can include:

- **Conservation stonemasons:** Carefully repair old stone using traditional methods.
- **Architects and engineers:** Plan repairs and check the building is safe.
- **Historians and archaeologists:** Help understand how the castle was built and what materials were used.
- **Site managers and scaffolders:** Organise work and make sure the site is safe.



What Happens to Castle Buildings Over Time?

Stone might seem strong, but it can change and break down over time. There are many things that can damage the stone of a castle, such as:

- **Weathering:** Rain, wind, and frost wear away the stone slowly.
- **Pollution:** Gases in the air from cars and factories can damage stone.
- **Plants:** Moss and ivy can grow into cracks and break the stone apart.
- **Humans:** People climbing or touching stones can cause small bits to break off.



This image shows some of the stone from the front building of Leeds Castle that has been damaged by weathering over time. You can see that not only has it broken, but it also has lichen growing on it and the metal pin has eroded as well.

So how do we repair our castles when they show signs of wear and tear?

- **Stone Replacement:** Damaged stones are replaced using special stone that matches the old one.
- **Lime Mortar:** A traditional, softer mix used between stones which lets the wall "breathe".
- **Modern materials:** Sometimes metal or concrete is used but this can cause problems if it doesn't work well with the old stone.

Using the wrong materials can damage the castle more in the future. That's why experts study and choose the best way to make repairs.

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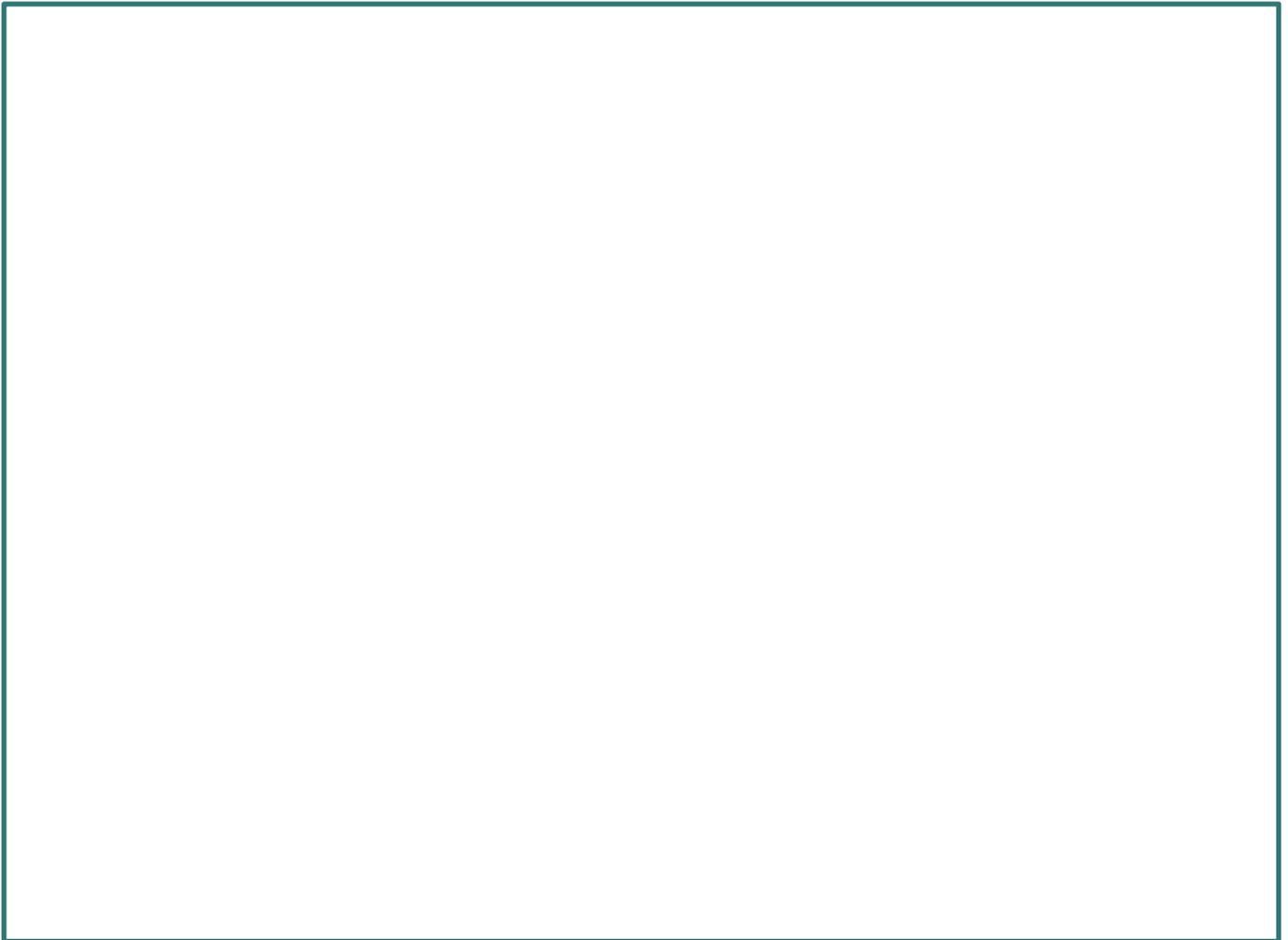
Spot the Skills!

Leeds Castle has changed and grown over hundreds of years. Many different people have helped to build, repair and look after it, both in the past and today! Look closely as you walk around. Can you find clues showing the hard work of these amazing craftspeople?

Here are some you can look out for. Tick the ones you spot:

- Carpenters' work, like doors, floors and beams.
- Metal nails or hinges made by a blacksmith.
- Older stone, shaped by a stonemason long ago.
- Newer stone that has been added in and conserved by modern stonemasons.

Draw a picture of an interesting piece of craftsmanship you found. This could be from the floors, walls, ceilings, doors or even the windows!



Leeds Castle

The Building

The history of Leeds Castle goes back to the year 857 when there was a wooden Saxon Manor here.

Robert De Crèvecoeur, a descendant of William I laid the first stone of the castle in 1119.

The castle came into the possession of Queen Eleanor of Castile, first wife of King Edward I in 1278 and it remained in royal hands for the next 274 years. In Tudor times, Henry VIII transformed it into a magnificent royal castle.

Following Henry's death, his son, King Edward VI, granted it to Sir Anthony St Ledger of Ulcombe for his services to the crown, thereby ending Leeds Castle's royal ownership.

From 1663, Leeds Castle passed into the hands of three famous families: the Culpepers, the Fairfaxes, and the Wykeham Martins.

During the mid-1660s, Lord Culpeper leased the castle to the government as a place of detention for French and Dutch prisoners of war. It was during this time that a fire broke out in the Gloriette leaving it badly damaged and uninhabitable.

In 1822, Leeds Castle belonged to the Wykeham-Martin family. Charles Wykeham-Martin wanted to make the castle look better and fix all the damage. Parts of it were old and falling apart.

Charles decided to knock down the front of the castle and rebuild it, so it matched the style of the Gloriette. He wanted the whole castle to look like it was from Tudor times. The 'old castle' was taken down, and the 'new castle' was built in just five months!

Workers put up big scaffolding to help with the building work, and the final part was lifting the roof onto the new castle. The workers used wooden scaffolding, which would have been tricky and dangerous compared to today's metal scaffolding!



Questions to think about:

? Why do you think Charles wanted it to look like a Tudor castle instead of a modern building?

? If you were in charge of rebuilding a castle, what would you add to make it special?



2025 Stonework

What Are We Doing and Why?

As you have learned, stone can be damaged over time. Wind, rain, frost, and even plants can slowly wear it away.

Whoever owns a castle, or even a house, has a responsibility to maintain it. At Leeds Castle, the stonework needs to be repaired every 50 years and that is what is happening now. Although lead used for roofs and guttering can last for up to 100 years, sometimes it needs patching up and repairing.

Some of the pointing (that's the cement or mortar between the stones that holds them together) has failed. This means water can seep in, which weakens the stone. In some places little plants are even growing in the cracks!

To fix the stonework, we use a type of stone called Kentish Ragstone, which is the same kind used when the castle was first built. We also need to hire special workers called stonemasons, who are experts at repairing and shaping stone.

The repairs will take place between October 2025 and April 2026.



Look carefully at the pictures above and you will see yellow chalk marks around the windows, indicating where the stone needs repairing or replacing.

Questions to Think About:

? Why do you think it's important to use the same kind of stone that was used originally?

? How do you think stonemasons learned to do their special job?

? What could happen if we didn't repair the stonework?



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Wordsearch

Can you find all of the words in the grid that relate to castle building and stonework?

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R | E | P | A | I | R | S | M | O | R | T | A | R | S |
| R | S | R | T | H | T | I | M | S | K | C | A | L | B |
| C | R | E | A | R | A | R | C | H | I | T | E | C | T |
| C | O | N | S | E | R | V | A | T | I | O | N | R | O |
| O | T | S | I | G | O | L | O | E | A | H | C | R | A |
| C | P | R | E | A | R | O | O | E | C | B | S | O | L |
| S | C | A | F | F | O | L | D | I | N | G | T | E | A |
| O | O | R | O | O | N | B | E | S | R | R | O | N | B |
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| E | P | Y | E | L | I | A | B | N | K | L | O | W | E |
| I | T | R | E | N | G | I | N | E | E | R | R | F | R |
| A | G | C | A | R | P | E | N | T | E | R | K | A | S |

ARCHITECT
ARCHAEOLOGIST
CONSERVATION
WEATHERING
BAILEY
ENGINEER
MOTTE
MORTAR
STONEWORK
SCAFFOLDING
LABOURER
STONEMASON
BLACKSMITH
CARPENTER
REPAIRS

Did you know?

? Pointing is like the “glue” between the stones — if it breaks, water and plants can get in.

? Kentish Ragstone has been used in buildings for over 1,000 years!

? Stonemasons use traditional tools and skills that have been passed down for generations.

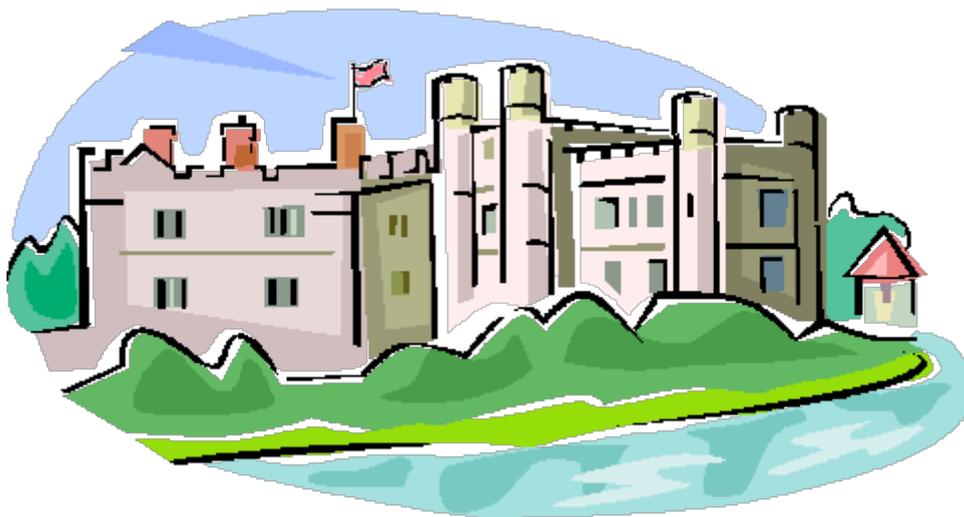


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Quiz Time!

Circle ✓ for *True* or ✗ for *False*.

1. Castles were first built to be homes for farmers. ✓ / ✗
2. The first castles in the UK were made out of wood. ✓ / ✗
3. We use some of the same tools today that stonemasons used hundreds of years ago. ✓ / ✗
4. Castles never need repairing because stone lasts forever. ✓ / ✗
5. A stonemason is someone who paints castle walls. ✓ / ✗
6. Leeds Castle had building work done in 1822. ✓ / ✗
7. In 2025, experts are repairing the castle with plastic bricks. ✓ / ✗
8. Castles were built to protect people and show power. ✓ / ✗
9. Modern tools like power drills are used in castle repairs today. ✓ / ✗
10. The repairs in 2025 are to keep the castle safe and strong. ✓ / ✗



Answers: ✓ 10 - ✓ 9 - ✓ 8 - ✗ 7 - ✓ 6 - ✗ 5 - ✗ 4 - ✓ 3 - ✓ 2 - ✗ 1

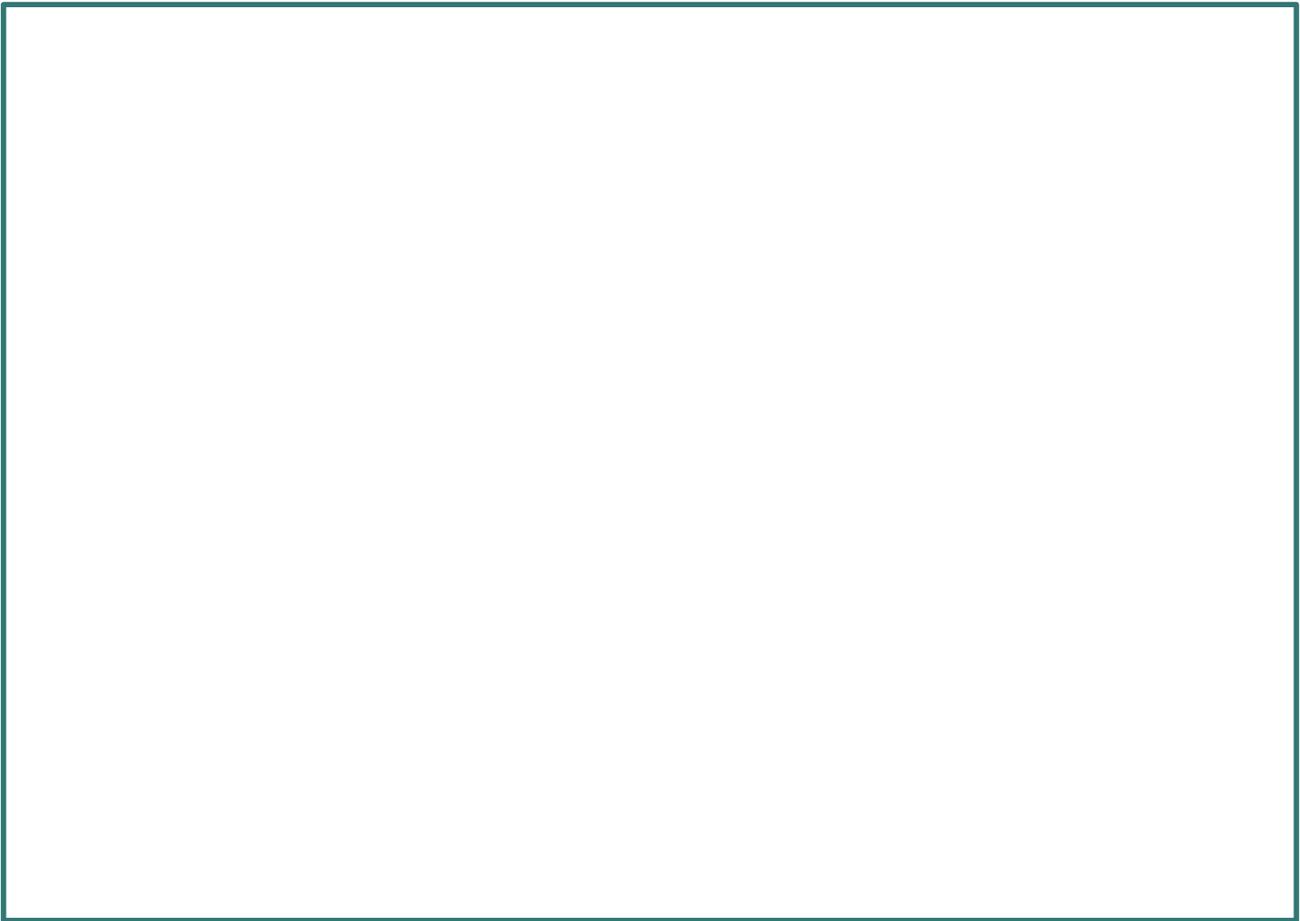
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Design a Badge

The team working to repair and protect the castle stones are real-life heroes! They use special tools, skills, and teamwork to care for the castle walls.

Imagine this team needs a new badge or logo for their uniforms, helmets, or van. Your job is to design it!

You might want to consider the tools they will use, the type of stone they are working on, symbols of teamwork, safety equipment, or even a team motto or name. Be as creative as you like!



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We are profoundly grateful to all our donors for their support of the 2025–26 Emergency Stonework Project, enabling us to preserve Leeds Castle for future generations.

