Framlingham Castle

What was the primary function of Framlingham Castle in the ‘Middle Ages’?
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Background

Framlingham Castle is located in the market town of Framlingham in Suffolk. It was built by Roger Bigod, earl of Norfolk after the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. At this time the Normans sought to assert their control over the Anglo-Saxons, and Framlingham was probably fortified with a castle to intimidate the local population. Initially, the castle was built out of wood, with the building work taking place sometime between 1066 and 1107. Stone buildings were constructed later at the castle after 1150.

In 1157, Framlingham castle was confiscated from the powerful Bigod family by King Henry II. The castle remained in his possession until 1165 when Hugh Bigod, a descendent of Roger Bigod, paid a huge sum of money to regain the castle.

In order to understand why Henry II seized Framlingham castle, we first need to recognise how castles were used during the reign of Henry II’s uncle, King Stephen. During the reign of King Stephen, England was torn apart by a long and gruelling civil war. Barons rebelled against the king and used castles as their headquarters, ruling the surrounding villages as if they were kings themselves. This meant that many barons got used to running things their own way. When Henry II succeeded Stephen to the throne, he felt that the barons were far too powerful and unwilling to submit to his authority. Therefore Henry II took over their castles.

The king dared them to oppose him. The barons knew that if they attempted to resist, Henry would raise an army and take their castles by force. So, the barons backed down and then tried to buy their castles back at a later date. This happened to Hugh Bigod, who lost Framlingham Castle to the king in 1157, and bought it back eight years later in 1165.

Bigod later rebelled against Henry II in 1173. As punishment, he was exiled and in 1175, Henry II ordered Hugh Bigod’s castle at Framlingham to be dismantled by an expert team of masons and carpenters, which is revealed in our first document below.

When the Bigod family regained possession of their castle in 1189 under King Richard I, they had to rebuild it. The stone curtain wall that survives today was the result of this reconstruction. It is thought that the work was completed by 1213, as Roger Bigod II entertained King John at Framlingham castle that year.

Roger Bigod II was one of the leading barons who forced King John to grant Magna Carta. During the civil war which followed, King John successfully besieged and took control of Framlingham castle, but it was returned to the Bigod family when the civil war ended. Framlingham remained in the hands of the Bigod family until the fourteenth century when it passed to the Brotherton family, who were cousins of the king. The Howard family inherited the castle in 1483 and set to work on a large-scale refurbishment project. By the end of the sixteenth century the castle had fallen into ruin.
The introduction has outlined some of the key events in the history of Framlingham castle, but the medieval documents held at The National Archives can reveal much more about the appearance of the castle, the people who lived and worked there, and the various functions it performed. Therefore, based on these documents, the key enquiry question for students to discover is: what was the primary function of Framlingham Castle in the ‘Middle Ages’?

It is important that students read each document, and decide if it supports the case for one of the following functions:

- military
- local government
- leisure
- other

For example, ‘source 1 supports the case that the primary function of Framlingham is... because it says that...’

The questions provided with each source, therefore act as prompts for the overarching question: What was the primary function of Framlingham Castle in the ‘Middle Ages’?

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.

All the documents included in this lesson relate to Framlingham Castle which features in the specification for ‘OCR History GCSE module: Castles Form and Function c1000-1750 as specified site’ in conjunction with English Heritage. Framlingham Castle is the first named site for OCR in 2018.

External links

Images of historic sites
(https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/educational-images)

An overview of the ‘Middle Ages’
(http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages)
Tasks

Source 1: Question

Castles were an important part of the medieval world, but represented different things to different people. Do you think this order would have changed Aloth's opinion of castles?

Source 2: Question

Who ordered the repair and provisioning of Framlingham castle? Who was responsible for carrying out the order? Where did the money come from? And who ultimately paid for the work?

Source 3: Question

Where was the original 'writing' of Thomas, Earl of Norfolk, produced? Does this tell us anything about the role of Framlingham Castle in Medieval England? Can you find the word 'Framelyngham' in the original document?

Source 4: Question

What does this tell us about the function of Framlingham Castle in the Middle Ages?

Source 5: Question

Hunting was big part of medieval life for rich lords and ladies. They would have based themselves at their castle, and gone hunting in nearby parks. What does the evidence presented in the source reveal about the function of castles in Medieval England?

Source 6: Questions

What does the existence of a cottage and a messuage inside the walls of Framlingham Castle suggest about how the castle would have looked like? Does it change your perception of what it would have been like to live in the castle?

What does the document reveal about the function of Framlingham Castle in Medieval England?

Source 7: Questions

Do you think it reveals anything about the function of Framlingham Castle in Medieval England? If not, do you think the record is valuable for any other reason?

If you were writing a history of Framlingham castle, how might you use this source? If this document didn’t exist, would it really matter for our understanding of Framlingham Castle, and the people who lived there?
In 1175 a group of carpenters and masons, led by Alnoth the engineer, travelled Suffolk to dismantle Framlingham Castle on royal orders. King Henry II ordered the castle to be knocked down because Earl Hugh Bigod had rebelled against the Crown.

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

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**Source 1: Transcript**

Et in custamento prosternendi castri Waleton’ .XXXj. l. et .vij. s. et. iiij. d. per breve regis et per visum Roberti de Willauesham et Ailno dei ingeniatoris. Et pro prosternendo castro de Framingeham .vij. l. et .x. s. et. vij. d. per idem breve et per visum predictorum.

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**Source 1: 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.
Here, the king ordered the exchequer to pay two petitioners owed money by Walter de Mouncy, Constable of Framlingham Castle. Walter had borrowed money from them to repair and provision [stock with food and equipment] Framlingham castle. He died before he could pay the money back. The document is valuable as it tells us how castles were managed and maintained.


**Source 2: Translation**

To the treasurer and barons of the exchequer. Order to allow to Oliver de Redham and William Godewyn, in their accounts of the debts that William de Mouncy, lately deceased, owed to the exchequer, the sums that the said William de Mouncy expended by the king’s order in the time when he was constable of Framlingham castle, both in repairing the buildings of the same and in the provisioning of the same, for which he has not yet been allowed.

**Source 2: Simplified translation**

The treasurer and barons of the exchequer are ordered to pay Oliver de Redham and William Godewyn what is owed to them by William de Mouncy. William Godewyn borrowed money from Oliver de Redham and William Godewyn when he was constable of Framlingham castle to repair castle buildings and provision the castle, which he did by order of the king.
In this document, King Edward III confirmed or gave official royal recognition to, a legal document issued by the Earl of Norfolk during the reign of Edward II. The clerks responsible for such documents often varied in their spelling of place-names note the spelling of Framlingham castle in this source.


Source 3: Translation

Confirmation of a writing, dated at Framelyngham Castle, 22 February, 15 Edward II of Thomas, earl of Norfolk, and marshal of England, to Ambrose de Novo Burgo, his clerk, being a grant to him for life of the office of Marshalsea in the Exchequer, to supply the place of the earl there. April 20. Westminster. 1338
What was the primary function of Framlingham Castle in the ‘Middle Ages’?

Source 4

In this document, we find rare evidence that a castle, such as Framlingham, was owned by a woman, the Countess of Norfolk, during the reign of Richard II. She granted land to one of her yeomen (wealthy farmers). The grant was recorded in a letter patent (a type of legal document) at Framlingham Castle.

Framlingham Castle owned by the Countess of Norfolk, 1384 – Patent Rolls, Richard II 1381-1385, Volume 2, p. 450-451; 8 Richard II, part 1, Membrane 29, August 24 1384 Westminster (catalogue reference: C 66/318, m. 29)

Source 4: Translation

Inspeximus and confirmation in favour of Richard de la Chambre, of letters patent (in French) of Margaret Mareschall, countess of Norfolk, dated at her castle of Framlingham, 10 May, 5 Richard II (in the fifth year of the reign of King Richard II) being a grant, for life, at the yearly rent of 1d. to the said Richard, her yeomen, for service to her and her son, the earl of Pembroke, of a place called ‘Crowes’, within Framelyngham in the street opposite the east end of Framelyngham church, between the tenements of William Gerveyse and Amias Hook, together with six acres of land in a close called ‘Petitys’, one end abutting on Framelyngham park, four acres of land in another close next to the place called ‘Morial’, three acres of land at Smythisbrok, two acres of Giuloteswall, four acres at Alputeswill, another piece of land at Denyesesdich in the open field (campe) of Framelyngham aforesaid and two acres of meadow in Perham by Framelyngham, all which lately escheated to the said countess after the death of John Crowe of Framelyngham. For ½ mark paid in the hanaper. Aug. 26. Westminster. 1384.

Source 4: Simplified translation

The inspection and confirmation shows that the legal document drawn up by Margaret Marshall, Countess of Norfolk, at her castle of Framlingham, dated 10 May in the fifth year of the reign of King Richard II is valid. The document grants Richard de la Chambre, a place called ‘Crowes’ in Framlingham with acres of land and meadow in the same village. This has been granted in return for Richard’s service to her and her son (the Earl of Pembroke), for a yearly rent of 1d (one penny).
Whilst Roger Bigod was away fighting in Wales in service of Edward I, thieves stole deer and hares from his park (a protected area for rich lords to retain deer and other animals for hunting) at Framlingham. Animals stolen from Framlingham deer park, 1283 – Patent Rolls, Edward I, 1281-1292. Volume 2, p.73, Membrane 12, 30 July 1283 Carnarvon (catalogue reference: C 66/102, m. 12)

Source 5: Translation

Commission of oyer and terminer… to R. Loveday and William de Pakenham, touching the persons who broke the parks of Roger le Bigot, earl of Norfolk and marshal of England, at Lopham, Ersham, Hanewrthe, Bungeye, Stowe, Koleshale, Cratefeud, Pesehale, Framelingham, Holesle, Waleton, Saham, and Stanham, during his absence on the king’s service and under the king’s protection in Wales, and there and in his free warrens in the said parks hunted and carried away deer and hares.

Source 5: Simplified translation

Loveday and William de Parkenham are ordered to identify and investigate the people who hunted and stole deer and hares from the parks of Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, at Lopham, Ersham, Hanewrthe, Bungeye, Stowe, Koleshale, Cratefeud, Pesehale, Framelingham, Holesle, Waleton, Saham, and Stanham, while the earl was away from England serving the king in Wales.
Henry, Sergeant of Framlingham Castle purchased a cottage inside Framlingham Castle which came with a messuage (dwelling house and the land occupied by it).


**Source 6: Translation**

Pardon, for ½ mark paid in the hanaper [a small wickerwork basket, often used to hold official papers] by Henry Serjaunt of Framlynghamcastell, to him for acquiring from Edmund le Graunt an estate in fee in a messuage and a cottage in Framlynghamcastell, held in chief, which Edmund acquired from Bartholomew Pulter, and he from his late father John Pulter, and he from Thomas de Brotherton, late earl of Norfolk, and entering into the same, as Edmund, Bartholomew and John had successively done, without the king’s licence; and licence for him to retain them. Dated 4 July 1369

**Source 6: Simplified translation**

Henry, Sergeant of Framlingham Castle is pardoned, after his payment of ½ mark for buying a cottage and messuage inside in Framlingham Castle from Edmund le Graunt.
This document pardons a woman, who had been accused of stealing cloth and jewels from a merchant. The crime didn’t take place in Framlingham castle, but it does reveal how people born in the castle might move away. The precise details of the alleged theft and the reasons that the woman was accused in the first place remain a mystery.

Evidence of a woman who lived or was born in the Framlingham Castle pardoned for theft, 1358 – Patent Rolls, Edward III 1358-1361, Volume 11, p. 58, Membrane 5, June 20, 1358 Westminster, 32 Edward III, part I (catalogue reference: C 66/254, m. 5)

**Source 7: Translation**

Pardon to Katherine Crane of Framlyngham Chastel, indicted [charged] of having stolen from the house of John Wodeward in Pulham a statute merchant of 14l– [fourteen pounds] and cloths of wool and linen and other jewels to the value of 10l– of the king’s suit for the felonies [serious crimes] and any consequent waivers; as the said John has acknowledged before trustworthy persons that the premises do not contain the truth. Dated, 20 June 1358

**Source 7: Simplified translation**

Pardon to Katherine Crane of Framlingham Castle who had previously been charged for stealing £14, cloths of wool and linen, and jewels to the value of £10 (ten pounds) from the house of John Woodward, a merchant, in Pulham. She has been pardoned because John has acknowledged before trustworthy persons that the accusations against Katherine do not contain the truth. Dated 20 June