

12. Why might Elizabeth Redmayn have been proud of Harewood castle?

*'Our veranda will command a view of meadows green,
The sort of view that seems to want to be seen.'*

'The Folks Who Live On The Hill', Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II.

Elizabeth disappeared from view in the previous chapter while I concentrated on Sir Richard's career so, out of a sense of fairness and despite the lack of evidence, Elizabeth will be at the heart of the next two chapters. In the next chapter (chapter 13), I want to explore how she spent her days in the early 1400s – she had a household to run and the wealth to spend time on activities she enjoyed so what exactly did that entail, what did she do all day? But, before I tackle that question, this chapter sets the scene for those daily activities by exploring Elizabeth's home, Harewood castle, so I can visualise the rooms and outdoor spaces where she spent her time. I also want to explore how Elizabeth may have felt about the castle. In her day it was a 'state of the art' castle, a very comfortable, high-status home so what were the features she showed off to her friends and visitors, that may have made her proud of Harewood castle?

Visualising Harewood castle as a place where people lived is not, however, easy. I've visited Harewood castle twice (on tours led by staff at Harewood House, the castle's modern-day successor) and both visits were sad experiences. The framework of the castle still stands tall but otherwise it's a desolate ruin, overgrown by woodland, its floors and ceilings fallen in. It's very hard to imagine this woebegone shell as a comfortable home. A second problem is that there's very little documentary evidence about the contents of the castle in Elizabeth's time, no inventories of the furnishings and comforts that she may have delighted in. For both these reasons, bridging the gulf between the modern ruin and its medieval heyday is a huge imaginative leap.

That said, we can attempt that leap or I wouldn't be writing this chapter at all. We do have evidence of the layout of the castle's rooms and grounds from archaeological surveys. We do have a soupcon of documentary evidence, plus our knowledge of the contents of similar castles and, thirdly, we have the fruits of several decades of research which have created a far more multi-faceted and interesting picture of life in castles. They're no longer seen simply as fortresses dominated by soldiers and the brutalities of 'grim-visaged war'. Yes, they had defensive features – after all, the owners belonged to the military elite and wanted their homes to reflect their military prowess but castles had many other roles. They were the administrative centres of estates and of royal government. They were highly visible symbols of status. They were homes – so don't be surprised that there's far more in this chapter about richly embroidered bed-linen than about armour – and were often set in designed landscapes. Elizabeth really did enjoy *'a view of meadows green, the sort of view that seems to want to be seen'*.

A final introductory note – exploring Elizabeth’s relationship with Harewood castle is necessarily speculative so please treat this chapter as the equivalent of an introductory pencil sketch – and a sketch in very light pencil at that – rather than as a sharply-defined and detailed colour photograph! And, on that spuriously artistic note, I’ll begin by going back to the 1360s when, by happy coincidence, both Elizabeth and the castle were born.

Elizabeth and Harewood castle grew up together – which may (speculating freely!) help explain why Elizabeth was proud of her home. The foundations of the castle were laid around 1364 when Elizabeth was born and as she grew taller so did the castle walls, though hopefully they grew at a faster rate. The castle was therefore part of Elizabeth’s life from her earliest days though we don’t know where she and her family were living during this period. It may have been at Rougemont, the family’s timber castle on the floor of the Wharfe valley or in 13th century manorial buildings on the hillside (though that site had to be cleared for the new castle) or somewhere else. Wherever they were, it’s likely that Elizabeth, her brother, William, and sister, Sybil, were well aware of progress on the new castle – the continual arrival of stone, timber and other supplies, the sight of scores of craftsmen and non-skilled workmen high on the scaffolding and the never-ending noise from stone being worked, timber being sawn and tools sharpened.

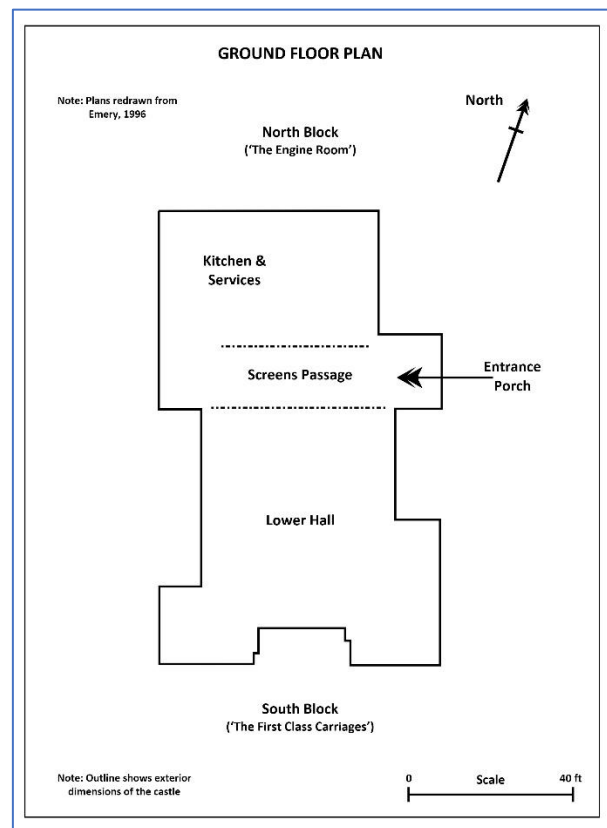
Elizabeth and her siblings would have known much less of the detailed planning undertaken by their father and mother (the latter likely to have had a significant input, ensuring that the layout of her home worked efficiently), their household officials and the master-mason and master-carpenter employed to lead the work. We don’t know who these master-craftsmen were, but they must have come highly-recommended and been deeply knowledgeable about architectural styles and the design, comfort and costs of other castles from their previous experience. All that planning led to a contract being drawn up, including costs and schedule. The site was then cleared, craftsmen (glaziers, painters, tilers etc) and labourers employed, lodges built for the workmen to live in, stone quarried and transported, timber, ropes, scaffolding and much else stock-piled – and work began.

We don’t know how long the building took but the masons’ marks on the stonework (nearly 500 of them), together with the consistency in construction techniques and architectural styles, suggest that it was built in one sequence. The surviving structure also reveals that the initial plan was expanded early in the work, almost certainly because William had more money to spend after receiving a substantial gift (as explained in Chapter 4) from his former lord, Edward Balliol, King of Scotland, who died in 1364.

The resulting castle was a complex, carefully designed building. Building into the steeply-sloping hillside had not been, as we might expect, a major problem for the master-mason but created the opportunity for creative design and to show off, in the words of historian Anthony Emery, *‘the late medieval enthusiasm for intricate floor levels’*.

Now for what we can learn from the major rooms in the castle. We need to follow the tightly-controlled circulation route around the castle until we reach the innermost chambers used by Elizabeth and her family, important guests and most trusted servants. The controlled route was an essential part of the castle's design, ensuring that only family and invited guests could reach the domestic heart of the castle. There are many uncertainties about the uses of individual rooms but we know enough to suggest how these rooms may have contributed to Elizabeth's pride in her home.

Visiting the castle in the early 1400s, we'd cross a wooden bridge over a ditch or dry moat on our way to the only entrance, which is on the eastern side of the castle. You can't miss the coat of arms of the Aldburgh family carved above the doorway, alongside the family motto *val sal be sal* – *what shall be, shall* – and the coat of arms of Edward Balliol. We walk through this doorway, under a raised portcullis and then through another doorway until we're standing in the screens passage, the "sorting area" where visitors were filtered in the correct directions by household staff.



*Ground Floor Plan of Harewood castle
(showing the north and south blocks)*

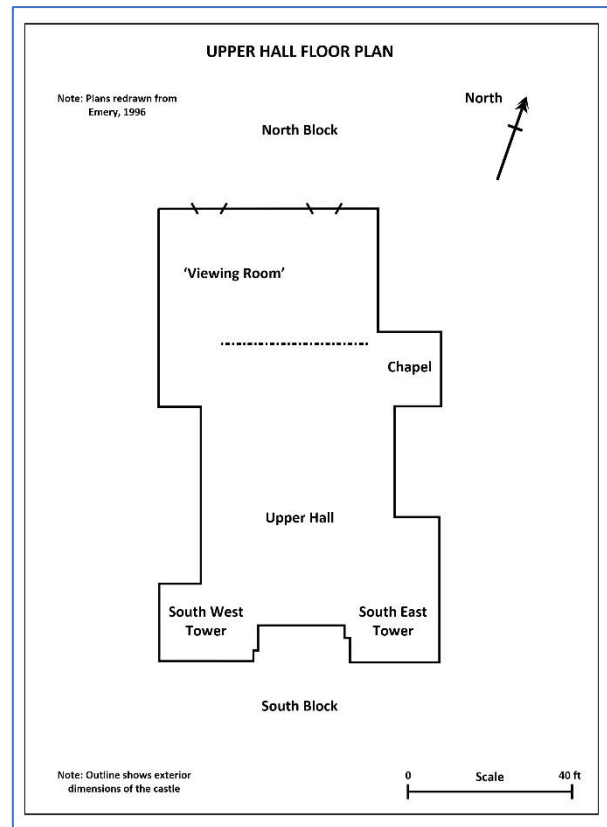
To our left is the lower hall, the first of the grander, more comfortable rooms and the direction taken by family and guests but, before going in that direction, we'll explore the rooms on our right and on the floors immediately above and below them. These rooms are in the northern block, the castle's engine room, bringing together the people and facilities which made the household function effectively. Elizabeth may well have been proud of how well these rooms were designed for maximum efficiency.

The ground-floor room on our right was most likely a porter's lodge for staff who checked visitors in to the castle but may have doubled as a store-room, buttery or pantry. Next to this room is the kitchen, 20 feet square with a baking oven, two large fireplaces and an internal well to supply water. Below us is the basement containing three rooms. One has a fireplace and garderobe so may have been an office, the other two perhaps a wine cellar and storage space for the kitchen and hall above. Another possibility is that this may have been the castle's armoury – Sir Richard's own armour and weapons, together with other military equipment, must have had a home in the castle. Upstairs above the kitchen is a large room with a fireplace and garderobe, most likely the office of the household steward and therefore containing the household's records and ledgers which were up-dated daily to track expenditure and purchases.

Now back to the screens passage, where we're offered a basin of water and clean towels to wash and dry our hands before we turn left into the hall, the principal reception chamber, a large room measuring 55 feet by 30. It's worth measuring it out to get a sense of its scale – helped by neighbours' children, I discovered that it's more spacious than the large turning-circle in our cul-de-sac. There's much to admire in the hall – historian Anthony Emery describes it as having 'considerable style' – stone benches set in the walls at the side, large windows 'in the forefront of contemporary design' in the west and east walls, each with its own window seat and, at the far end, a dais running the width of the room and set in front of a wide fireplace. On the far side of the dais is an open stone cupboard or buffet, a very fine example of delicately carved stonework though Elizabeth would have been just as proud of the silver and/or gold plate displayed there. This hall must have impressed guests but was also a functional space where the members of the household ate communal meals and meetings of household and estate staff took place.

From the lower hall we next – if invited – take the staircase to the even grander upper hall, the gateway to the suite of rooms reserved for Elizabeth, her family and their most honoured guests. If the northern tower-block is the castle's engine room, we're now entering the first-class carriages, the heart of Elizabeth's domain. Again, courtesy demands that we wash our hands on the landing before entering the upper hall.

Emerging from the stairwell, we're at the southern end of the upper hall, standing beneath a timber balcony or gallery, probably used by musicians (see the plan overleaf). The hall ahead of us is 56 feet long (17m), warmed by at least two fireplaces and probably divided into smaller chambers though evidence of these sub-divisions has disappeared. Built into the east wall is the family chapel, large enough for the family to worship there while others stood in the hall as if they were in the nave of a church and the family in the chancel. The altar is illuminated by windows and there's evidence of a piscina (a stone basin for draining water used in the mass), an aumbrey (a cupboard for vestments and sacred vessels used in services) and a display of coats of arms of families connected to the Aldburghs. Above the entrance to the chapel are the arms of the Aldburghs themselves and, again, Edward Balliol.



Floor Plan of the Upper Hall

At the northern end of the hall is a second large area measuring 36 x 19 feet (11x6 m), extending as far as the northern wall of the castle. Historians have called this room 'the audience chamber' or 'the viewing room', the latter because its windows provide the best views over the Wharfe valley. This chamber may have been where Elizabeth relaxed with friends or entertained important guests, played games (chess, word-games, dice, cards), listened to music or read or listened to books being read. It may have had painted walls or wooden panelling and there's evidence of a large fireplace and cupboards. There's also a drain in the floor which suggests that this room may have, at one time, been a bedroom with washing facilities.

Linked to the hall and 'viewing chamber' is a suite of half a dozen rooms that could only be reached through the hall, suggesting they were used by Elizabeth's children, visiting relatives (perhaps her children by her first marriage) and important guests. These chambers all had garderobes and fireplaces. Another chamber in this part of the castle may have been important in a different way – it has neither garderobe nor fireplace so may have been the treasury and/or muniments room where family records were kept.

It would be entirely understandable if Elizabeth was proud of the comfort and modernity of this upper hall, the linked private chambers and especially her bedchamber. Historians describe them as 'elaborate', of 'superior character', and possessing a 'lavish interior'. It's frustrating that we don't know which chamber was actually her bed-chamber – was it in the south-east turret, the 'viewing room' or one of the sections of the upper hall? Whichever it was, it had a deeply personal significance for Elizabeth. As Dr Hollie Morgan explains in her book *Beds and Chambers in Late*

Medieval England, her bedchamber and the bed at its heart were places where women like Elizabeth:

Prayed in bed on waking at morning and before sleeping at night, meditated upon her relationship with God and read devotional literature, perhaps aloud to her servants. Her bed and bedchamber, as well as the chapel, were central to Elizabeth's piety and to the passage of her soul to heaven.

Gave birth to her children, having withdrawn to her chamber for 4 to 6 weeks before the birth and for some time afterwards, theoretically until her 'churching', her ritual return to membership of the church forty days after giving birth. For this period, the bedchamber became a women-only environment where Elizabeth was tended by female relatives and friends. The chamber was warm, dark and enclosed, perhaps augmented by new wall-hangings, furniture and bed-clothes. The textiles were sometimes decorated with family coats of arms, demonstrating the significance of the new baby for the lineage of the family.

Made love with her husband and had honest, open and equal conversations in the intimacy of their bed, adopting 'a different kind of speech' to that which was possible in public. Talking as equals was central to maintaining an effective relationship with her husband and the bed and bedchamber were accepted as the natural places for such conversations.

Honoured her closest friends and most significant guests by welcoming them to sit in the bed-chamber for conversation and entertainment – something that was very different from today.

Elizabeth's bedchamber was therefore of great personal and emotional significance to her, the space where she experienced intimacy with God, with her children and with her husband, relatives and friends. For her, it was the heart of the castle and, I suspect, a source of great pride, along with the two spacious halls, the suite of private chambers surrounding the upper hall, the delicacy of the carving of the stonework and the efficiency of the layout of the castle that she had watched being built as she herself grew up.

Walking through the rooms of the castle in my imagination has given me a much better sense of Elizabeth's home but what was in those rooms? What was Elizabeth proud to see, touch and treasure each day? Unfortunately, we don't know the answer to that question because there are no surviving inventories or descriptions of the contents of the castle but two sources do suggest the kinds of items that Elizabeth owned, even if they don't tell us directly what those items were.

I've been saving up the first source to use in this chapter for months. It's a section of text I came across while reading about Elizabeth's grandfather, John, Lord Lisle and his part in Edward III's

French campaigns. It was written by Thomas Walsingham of St Albans Abbey in the late 1300s and describes what happened to property looted from French towns by English armies:

'the [English] woman was of no account who did not possess something from the spoils of Caen and Calais and other cities overseas in the form of clothing, furs, quilts and utensils. Scattered throughout England in every house were to be seen tablecloths and jewels, bowls made from murra [a mineral or stone used for making vases] and silver, linen and linen cloths.'

John Lisle, as one of the leaders of King Edward's armies, may well have brought home such looted 'acquisitions' and some may have found their way to Harewood. If so, Elizabeth might well have been proud of these objects, for their value and beauty and as a reminder of her grandfather's service to Edward III.

More specific evidence of objects at Harewood castle comes from the will of Elizabeth's sister-in-law, Marjorie, wife of Elizabeth's brother, William. William died in August 1391, Marjorie two months later in October. As Marjorie made her will at Harewood it seems she continued to live there after William's death and therefore that the items in her will were in the castle in 1391. Here's a summary of the types of objects in her will:

Bedding – nine sets of embroidered and colourful bedding, including coverlets, linen sheets, blankets and curtains plus other miscellaneous items.

Clothing – gowns, cloaks and gloves

Silver cups decorated with coats of arms

Furniture – a chest with a coat of arms, a tapestry, cushions, napkins

Jewellery – pearls and filets of pearl, the latter a decorative item of headwear

Armour including breast-plates, a leather jack, a helmet and gauntlets

Marjorie's will gives us a sense of the objects that Elizabeth herself owned but, as I looked more closely at the bequests, two things puzzled me. Thankfully my puzzlement was short-lived, thanks to Dr Hollie Morgan's book mentioned above. It's always wonderful to find the right book at the right time!

My first puzzle revolved around items that clearly belonged to the Aldburghs (Marjorie's husband's family), because they celebrated the link between William Aldburgh (senior) and Edward Balliol, King of Scotland. One was a tapestry with the coats of arms of Aldburgh and Balliol. There was also armour and a pillow bearing the arms of Scotland and bedding embroidered with the Aldburgh arms. If Marjorie had left these to Elizabeth and Sybil, I'd have thought no more about it – they were Aldburghs by birth – but Marjorie bequeathed them to her children by her first marriage who had no personal link to the Aldburgh-Balliol connection. To be honest, I felt affronted on Elizabeth and

Sybil's behalf! What right did Marjorie have to do this? The phrase 'she's got a nerve' pinged round my head. Marjorie's children didn't seem to have any right to these items.

Why did Marjorie do this? Dr Morgan explains that the goods in a widow's bedchamber were regarded as her property and so she could bequeath them as she chose – so Marjorie presumably felt that she was following custom by regarding these items as hers and leaving them to her children by her first husband.

That said, I still feel I'm typing this through gritted teeth! I still feel more than a little aggrieved on behalf of Elizabeth and Sybil, especially as they hardly appear in their sister-in-law's will. Elizabeth was left a gold ring but Sybil received nothing. Just what had been the relationship between them and Marjorie? It doesn't sound as if they were close, to put it politely.

The second thing that puzzled me was the prominence of bedding in the will and the detail in which it's described. There's a bed 'of crimson and black with white and red roses', another 'of crimson and grey with vine leaves', a third of 'of green and grey with birds and rabbits', a set of bedding embroidered with foxes, one of green bedding embroidered with the Aldburgh arms and gryffons, another set with a tree and a unicorn, another decorated with a tree and a lion lying down and a coverlet of green and gold with lions. It all sounds very colourful, attractive – positively sumptuous.

Here again, Dr Morgan came to my rescue. Her research shows that beds and bedding were far more important than I'd realised – they were expensive items and therefore clear signs of status and wealth, which is why bedding appears frequently in wills. Beds themselves appear less often, probably for the practical reason that wooden bed-frames take a great deal of moving and because the highly-embroidered and expensive cloth were the really valuable items, more so than the bed-frames. Even where a will refers to a bed it may be referring to the set of bedding on that bed-frame. Hence, Marjorie was leaving her children valuable items when she left them this bedding – but did she really need to leave them so much? It sounds as if most of the chambers around the upper hall had been stripped of bedding.

That said, I can't really feel aggrieved on behalf of Elizabeth and Sybil because they can never have gone short of comforts. The items in Marjorie's will must have been replaced by other high-quality purchases, particularly after Elizabeth's marriage to Richard Redmayn when the quantity and quality of her possessions may well have increased. It's still tempting to interpret Marjorie's actions as greed and selfishness though!

What can I say in conclusion to this section? My two sources overlap to an extent in identifying the kinds of objects to be found in a home such as Harewood castle – clothing, bedding, jewels, silver cups and plate and much else. There's plenty here to support the historian Anthony Emery's description of Harewood castle as '*stylish, richly decorated and well-furnished*' and also much that Elizabeth may well have been proud of. Now, what about those views?

It won't surprise anyone who knows the area around Harewood that Elizabeth had a wide range of views from the castle. As historian Shaun Richardson writes, *'the setting, form and circulation plan of Harewood castle all suggest that the provision of a view was an important consideration in its original design'*, so where could Elizabeth look out from and what did she see?

The obvious answer to 'where could she look out from?' is from the castle's windows – there were 87 of them. However, most didn't offer a view. Many were very narrow and barred for security (as in other Yorkshire castles), and others required you to squeeze right up to them to see out. However one set of windows did provide views that Elizabeth could enjoy – the windows in the chamber sometimes called the 'viewing room' at the northern end of the upper hall. And there were two other good opportunities for views. One was from the wall walks on the castle roof (though they were probably only used in dry, calm weather) and the other was from the castle grounds.

Now for the question of what Elizabeth could see. I'll begin with the natural landscape, a view we can still share, and then move onto what historians and archaeologists call the 'designed landscape', a term which sounds as if it belongs in the age of Capability Brown but is just as appropriate for the landscapes created around many medieval castles.

Standing outside the castle or on the wall walk atop the castle, Elizabeth had a choice of natural views. To the east, the views stretched over five miles across the landscape. To the west, she could glimpse Otley Chevin, where the valley rises steeply to rocky outcrops and, on clear days, the moorland beyond. To the north, leading down into the valley, was a deer park (as there is today) between the castle and the river, a bridge (very probably of stone) across the river, her family's old home at Rougement castle (perhaps a happy reminder of how much grander their new home was), a scatter of villages which were part of her estates and, three miles away on the opposite side of the valley, the rock formation known as Great Almscliff Crag stood out against the sky-line. Much of the lower land in the valley must have consisted of farmland, with crops, animals and, by the river, those 'meadows green' – and even if the fields were not specifically meadows there was certainly lots of 'green' to be seen in the valley. And at night the stars could be seen more clearly, given the much greater degree of darkness without light pollution – no glow of light from major towns or criss-crossing of car headlights.

These views to the north were also visible from the 'viewing room' in the upper hall but much more conjectural is what Elizabeth could see of the designed landscape immediately surrounding the castle. The problem is that over the next 250 years the castle's owners continued to change the grounds within and beyond the castle precinct (adding or removing earthworks for example) and, in the nineteenth century, the owners of Harewood House used the castle grounds as a pleasure garden. Thus the area is a palimpsest of changing layers of land-use which mask the landscape Elizabeth knew and make it impossible for us to know exactly what she saw. The best I can do, as a result, is to suggest the features that made up, in Elizabeth's lifetime, the designed landscape around the castle, using surviving physical evidence and features frequently present at other castles in the later Middle Ages. What follows is therefore necessarily impressionistic.

Water was one element that made up this landscape. There were probably two or three extensive ponds or small lakes, possibly canal-like in shape, which had the dual functions of providing fish for

meals and acted as part of the boundary of the precinct. These water ‘features’ also acted as a link to outer-layers of land around the castle which included one (possibly two) deer parks, paddocks for the range of horses needed for different tasks and a rabbit warren which provided food, skins and furs.

Another perhaps surprising feature is that gardens were an integral feature of the Harewood castle landscape, one that Elizabeth could enjoy looking at, walking around and sitting in. The idea of castles having gardens again challenges preconceptions of castles as having only military functions, but gardens have been identified at many castles. Like ponds and lakes, gardens were in the words of Professor Oliver Creighton, ‘*transformative, mediating domestic spaces between the household and the natural world beyond*’.

Elizabeth’s gardens had multiple functions, being decorative and useful and providing privacy for Elizabeth and her family. The gardens at Harewood may have been organised into separate zones, as was done elsewhere. One area may have felt very like an extension of the domestic chambers inside the castle, a space enclosed by trees, hedges and trellis with a walkway and its own furniture, thus providing a sense of seclusion and a space in which to entertain guests. Other areas were predominantly for growing fruit, vegetables and herbs, all of which were used as food or as ingredients in medicines. Flowers too had a range of uses in cooking and medicines as well as being enjoyed for their scents and colours and for the promise of new growth and greater warmth in spring. The first appearance of snowdrops must have been noted with relief, then as now, a sign that the end of winter was in sight. Other flowers that Elizabeth may have enjoyed were marigolds, irises, lilies, tansy, foxgloves, roses, violets, wallflowers and pinks. Elizabeth almost certainly employed specialist gardeners – men identified as gardeners and ‘herberers’ are recorded in the 1300s in the register of freemen in the city of York and in the Poll Tax records for the city.

Elizabeth may therefore have been proud of the views of water features and gardens from the castle but was just as proud, maybe more so, of the view of the castle from afar and as visitors approached nearer to the castle. The immediate approach to the castle would have been carefully designed to maximise its impact. The track of that approach is another ‘unknown’ but was likely from the east or north-east, providing a highly-formalised route along a terraced way that had to be followed, culminating in a bridge over a waterway or formal ditch (maybe marked by a dovecote as at other castles), leading finally to the entrance in the north-eastern tower.

This chapter has felt like a pilgrimage, the opportunity to step inside Elizabeth’s home and explore why Elizabeth was, in all likelihood, proud of Harewood castle. Thanks to the work of archaeologists, I feel that I’ve been able to walk in Elizabeth’s footsteps and visualise the rooms she stood in and the landscape that she saw. I’ve been very impressed by the comfort of the castle and especially the domestic chambers, the skilled craftsmanship of the stone and woodwork, the luxury of the bedding, the silver plate and, perhaps most of all, the precision design of the building to ensure the household worked efficiently. And then there’s the exterior – the gardens, the water features and the extended views over the landscape, including those ‘*meadows-green*’, must have made living at Harewood all the more enjoyable and privileged.

It's time, however, to move on in my quest to explore Elizabeth's life. I could read more about castles and then maybe add nuances or new details to this chapter but, probably like anyone who reads this, a change of topic will refresh my mind! I've achieved what I set out to do – I know far more about where Elizabeth lived. In fact, Harewood castle in Elizabeth's day appears to have had far more in common with the comforts and approach to design of the eighteenth century Harewood House than it did with my previous image of a medieval castle. So, having set the scene for my next chapter, it's time to ask – just what did Elizabeth do all day?

How do I know?

Notes on my sources and reading for Chapter 12

My invaluable starting points for Harewood castle were:

Anthony Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales 1300-1500, vol 1, Northern England*, 1996

Shaun Richardson, 'A Room With A View? Looking Outwards From Late Medieval Harewood', *The Archaeological Journal*, vol 167, 2010

Much more detailed is:

Ed Dennison Archaeological Services, *Harewood Castle – Archaeological and Architectural Survey and Recording*, 2012 – unpublished report available at

<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/browse/issue.xhtml?recordId=1118838&recordType=GreyLitSeries>

The most useful amongst the many books on the wider context of castles and their design were:

Matthew Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, 2002

Robert Liddiard, *Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism and Landscape, 1066 to 1500*, 2013

Robert Liddiard, *Late Medieval Castles*, 2016 (a collection of classic articles)

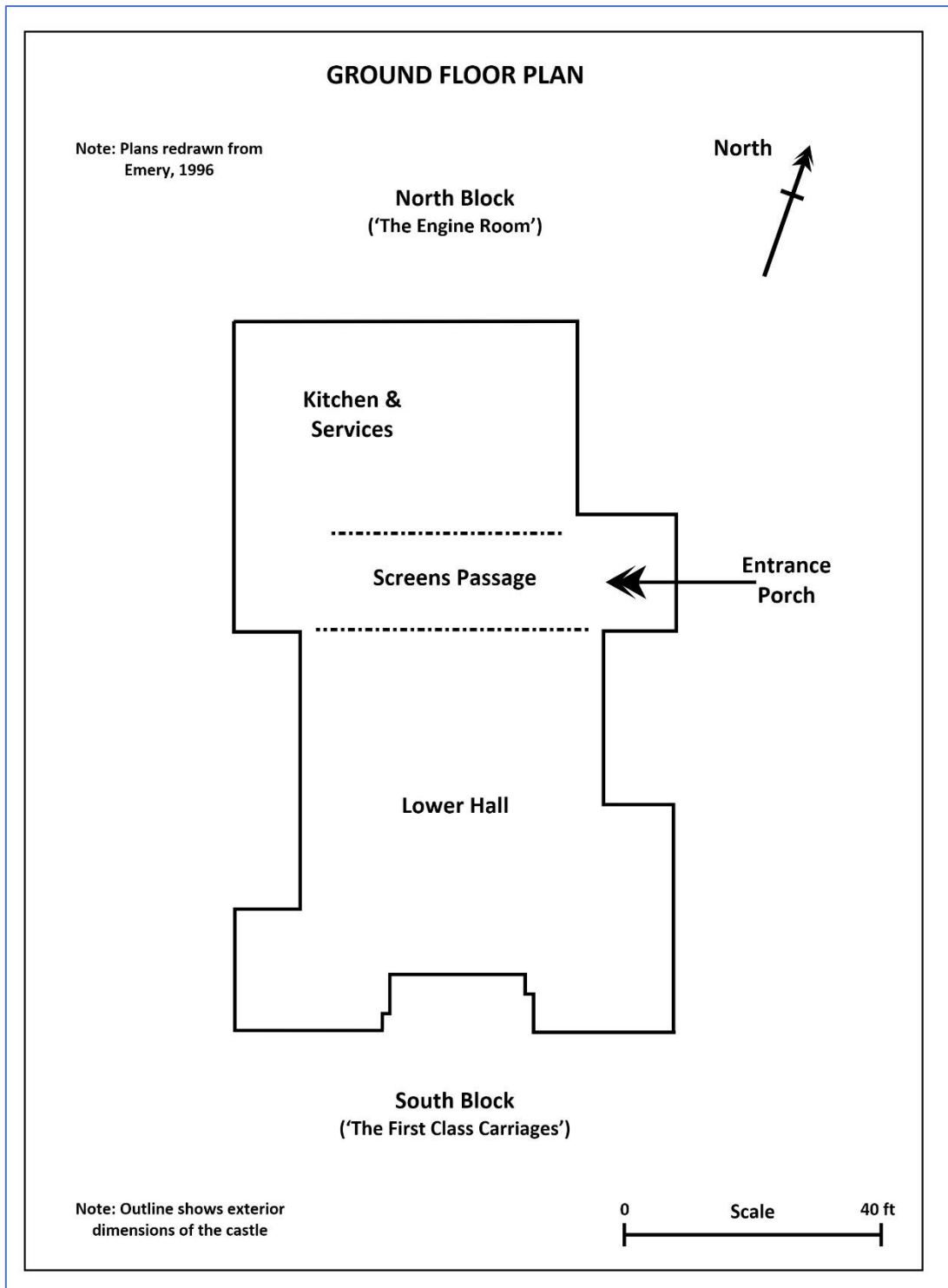
Oliver H Creighton, *Designs upon the Land: Elite Landscapes of the Middle Ages*, 2013

On specific aspects I also used:

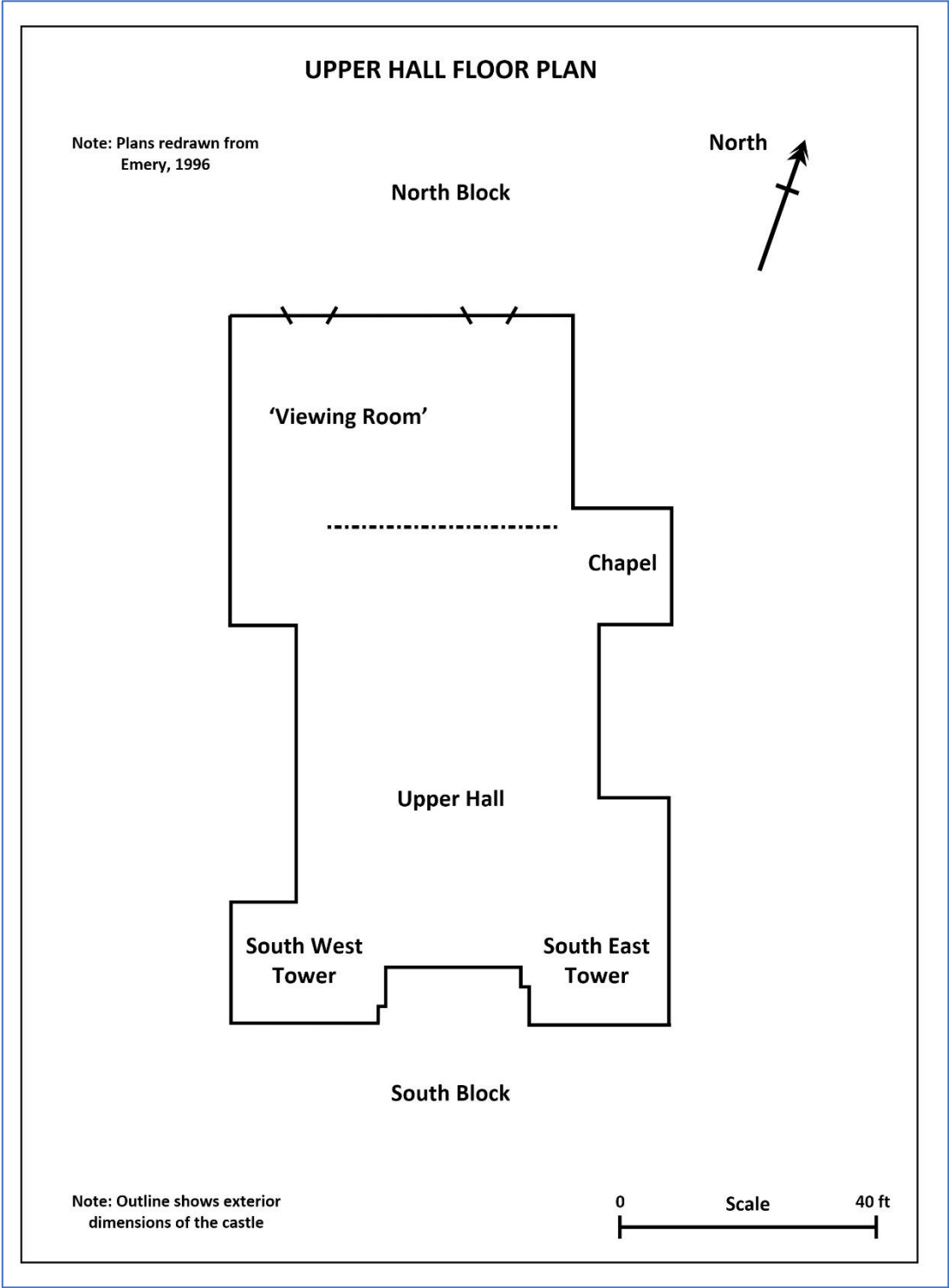
Hollie L S Morgan, *Beds and Chambers in Late Medieval England*, 2017

Teresa McLean, *Medieval English Gardens*, 1981

Full-page versions of the plans and elevations



*Ground Floor Plan of Harewood castle
(showing the north and south blocks)*



Floor Plan of the Upper Hall

