

St Robert of Knaresborough



Knareborough Schools Project 2019

History and Geography

St Robert of Knaresborough: HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

BACKGROUND

Robert of Knaresborough was born in 1160 and died in 1218. He was born in the 12th century and died in the 13th century.

At that time, England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland were all separate countries. Today, England is a part of the United Kingdom but when Robert was alive, England had its own rulers and laws just like Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

England looked very different then to how it looks today. One of the biggest differences was that the population of England in 1200 was only about 3.5 million people. Today, the population is about 65 million.

The population was growing, though, because the climate was a little warmer between the years 850 and 1300 than it was just before or after. This helped farmers to grow more food and more animals could be fed, too.

Very few people lived in towns in those days. Over 90% of people lived in the countryside and worked farming the land around their villages.

There were a few most important towns in England, including London, Winchester, Norwich, Lincoln and York.

In 1086, we know London was the largest city with about 12 000 people. This is smaller than the population of Knaresborough in 2011. Knaresborough's population in the census was 15 441 people.

In 1086, a special census of England was made by King William the Conqueror. It was called Domesday Book. The census was done so that William knew how many people there were in each part of the country, how much land they owned, how much money they had and how much tax they should pay.

'Domesday Book' is an incredible document and means we know more about England at that time that we know about any other country at that time.

LINK - A BBC Teach video on what Domesday Book was and why it was produced: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=om_BIzXaVwU

When Robert (c. 1160-1218) was alive, many well-known places today were either very small villages or they did not exist. Some of the places Robert would never have heard of were Leeds, Bradford, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham, Plymouth, Glasgow, Belfast and Cardiff – and Harrogate.

The Ten Biggest Towns in England in 1086

TASK: Find out the populations of these places today and fill in the table

Rank	Town	Population (1086)	Population (Today)
1	London	12,000	
2	Winchester	6,000	
3	York	5,000	
4	Norwich	5,000	
5	Lincoln	5,000	
6	Thetford (Norfolk)	4,000	
7	Oxford	3,000	
8	Ipswich	3,000	
9	Bristol	3,000	
10	Dunwich (Suffolk)	3,000	

The Ten Biggest Cities in the United Kingdom Today

TASK: Research and complete the table by putting in the names of the ten biggest cities in the UK today and the size of their population

Rank	City	Population
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

NOTE: Some websites give figures for the cities alone, but some give them for the surrounding area, too. The lower figures for the cities themselves should be used.

Map of the British Isles



TASKS: Use maps and atlases (or the internet) for research

1. Draw in the border between England and Scotland
2. Draw in the border between England and Wales
3. Draw in the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland
4. Label the different regions that are England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
5. Mark the following places on the map: London, York, Morpeth (Newminster Abbey) and Knaresborough. And then choose some of the places that were the biggest towns in 1086 and mark them on the map.

Around Knaresborough

One of the reasons the Cistercian monks came to live in Yorkshire and the north of England was that it was very wild and deserted as almost no one lived there. William the Conqueror attacked large parts of this area in 1068-1070 and lots of villages and farms had been destroyed. This was called the 'Harrying of the North'.

Domesday Book says that in 1066, there was a Lord of Knaresborough manor. The land was worth £6 in taxes and there was enough farmland to need 26 ploughs.

Places around Knaresborough where people were living in 1086

Name of village	Number of houses
Wetherby	9
Goldsborough	7
Plompton	18
Flaxby	7
Hammerton	6
Ouseburn	3
Bilton	8
Staveley	1
Marston	4
Deighton	2

What happened to Knaresborough?

In 1086, Domesday Book said there was no one living in Knaresborough, Ripley, Scriven or Ribston. At that time, all the land around Knaresborough was worth just £1 in taxes to the king.

This had changed by the time that Robert came to live in Knaresborough because the castle and the church had been built. This made Knaresborough a safer and more important place so people moved into the area. They started farming again, growing crops and raising sheep because wool was England's most important product at that time. This was a big reason for why people started to come to Knaresborough market in the 13th century (the 1200s).

KNARESBOROUGH FOREST

We know that King John and several other kings visited Knaresborough. King John came to the area several times and gave out Maundy Money here in 1210. He also met with St Robert in 1216.

One of the main reasons why King John and the other kings came to this area was to go hunting in Knaresborough Forest. Hunting was one of the most popular activities for rich and powerful people. It was dangerous, though, and King William II actually died while he was hunting in the south of England.

King John and his barons loved hunting. He appointed people to guard the forests and anyone living there, especially if they hunted or killed any animals faced serious punishments. This could be a fine, imprisonment, having a finger or hand cut off, or execution. Hunting was a very serious matter and Knaresborough forest was a great place for it.

Knaresborough Forest covered a large area to the west of the town. It began at the River Nidd and went across to the River Wharfe.

To the north, it included Ripley.

It went west to include Bolton Abbey and the village of Beamsley.

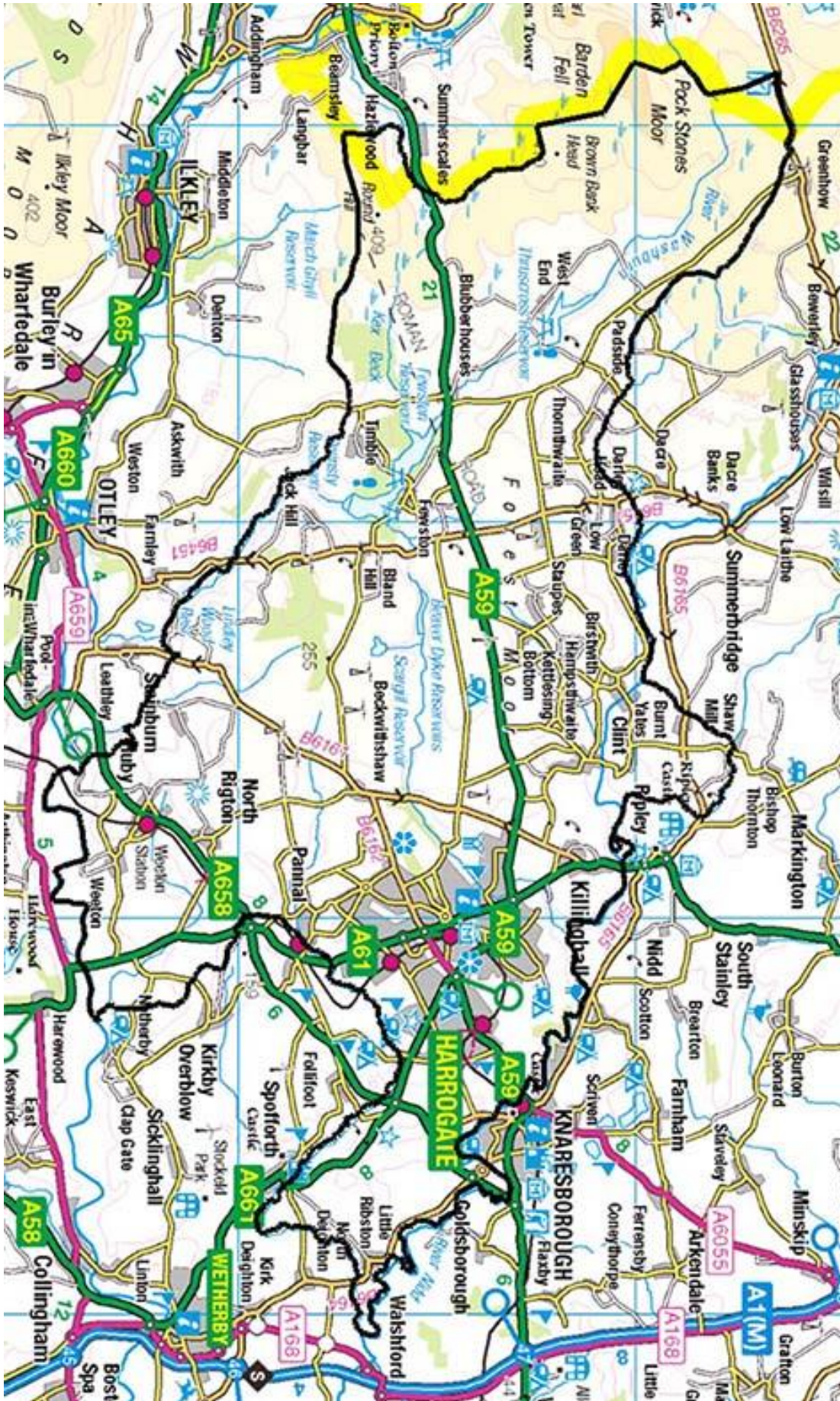
In the south, it included Goldsborough, Plompton, Pannal and Rudfarlington.

It covered an area of about 170 square miles.

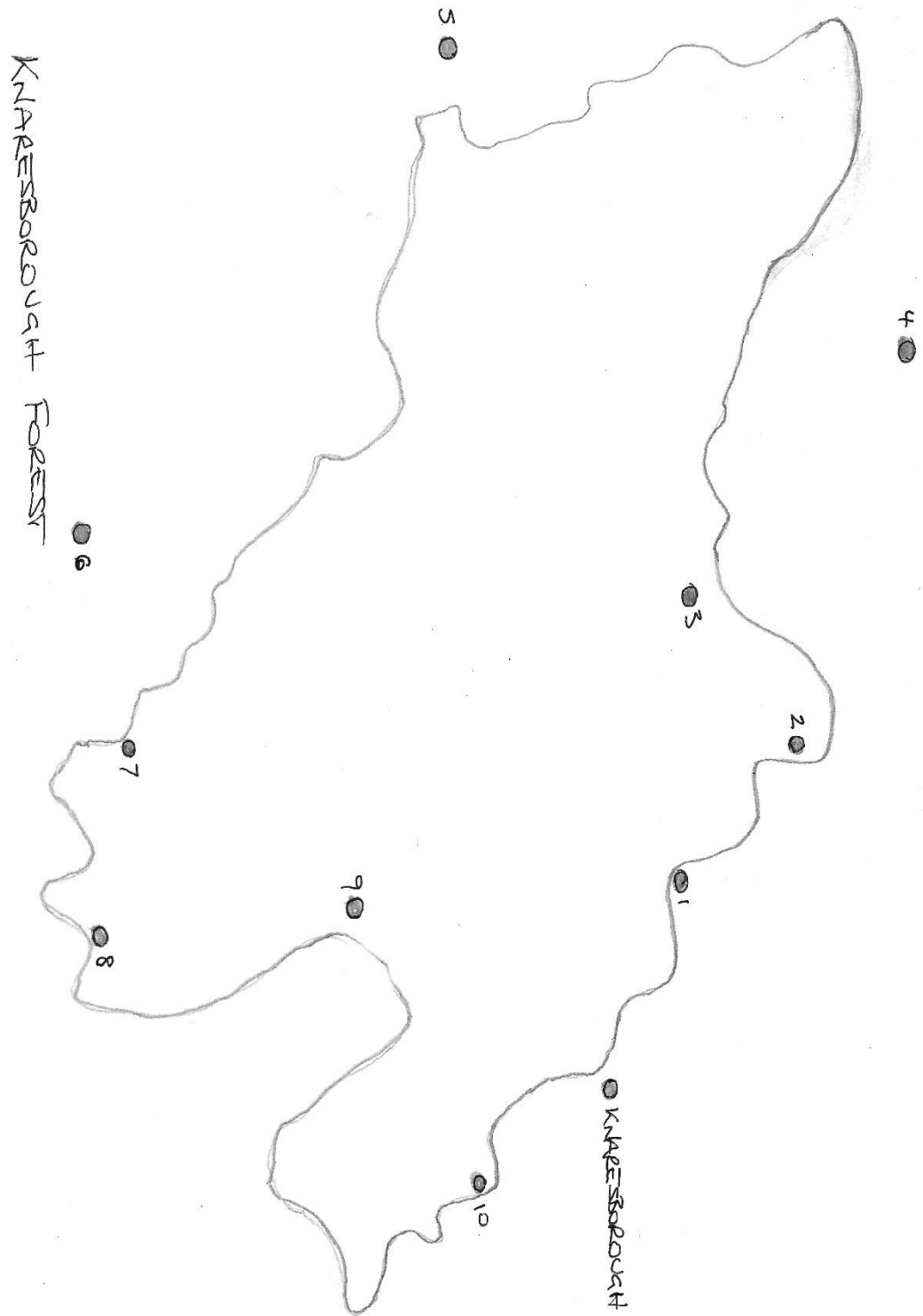
TASK: Knaresborough Forest is outlined in black on the OS map. Pupils could copy this out and make a display by marking on, say, ten villages and towns that they choose. Some pupils might add rivers and other natural landmarks.

As a similar task, there is an outline of Knaresborough Forest with ten towns and villages marked on and numbered, 1-10. Knaresborough is named but pupils could use a map to work out which of the ten places corresponds to each number. The ten places are:

Birstwith	Bolton Abbey	Glasshouses
Goldsborough	Huby	Killinghall
Otley	Pannal	Ripley
Weeton		



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THE ANIMALS OF KNARESBOROUGH FOREST

Robert of Knaresborough lived next to the River Nidd which marked the edge or border of Knaresborough Forest. He was fascinated by nature, plants, trees, the fish in the river and all of the animals of the forest.

One of the reasons why Knaresborough became important was the forest. Hunting was used as a way of training for war so young knights often hunted. They developed riding skills and how to use weapons, and you had to cope with tough conditions too.

In Knaresborough Forest, the animals included:

Red deer	Fallow deer	Roe deer	Wild Boar
Ptarmigan	Pine Martens	Wild rabbits	Hares
Otters	Stoats	Weasels	Pole Cats
Pheasants	Grey Wolf	Sheep	Wild cattle
Kestrels	Goshawks	Saker	Falcons

EXTRA INFORMATION

1. The 'P' at the start of 'Ptarmigan' is a silent letter so it is pronounced as 'Tarmigan'.
2. The Grey Wolf became extinct in the 13th century so it would have been rare at the time.
3. Pole Cats are rare in Britain but they have made a comeback in recent years. They are brave and determined with very sharp teeth. LINK: A short video of a pole cat <http://viewpure.com/39T-8H6f7wA?start=0&end=0>
4. There are still wild cattle in England at a place called Chillingham, Northumberland, and people are allowed to visit them.
LINK: The One Show - <http://viewpure.com/EpUIZXOhBjg?start=0&end=0> Start at 53 seconds (avoid opening part on being trampled by cows?) and finishes at 4'20"
5. Hawks and birds of prey were incredibly important to all people, but especially rich and powerful men like the king and the lords. The poor would only have had small birds like kestrels. The most powerful birds of prey were falcons and only the most powerful men in the country were allowed to use them for hunting.
LINK: SpringWatch on kestrels -<http://viewpure.com/2Ka-GRus--c?start=0&end=0>
6. Cats were important in homes and castles as they were used to catch mice and rats.
7. Dogs were also very popular as guard dogs, pets, sheep dogs and for hunting.

TASKS

1. Choose three or more of the animals in the list. Create a display using pictures and information about them. These details can be added to a map or just be a wall display.
2. Create a display of Knaresborough Forest. This could be a drawing of a section of the forest with some of the animals and birds that lived in it. The forest would have been different from what we think of as a forest because hunters had to be able to ride their horses among the trees. There would have been fewer trees and more open ground – and low branches would have been dangerous so lots of these would have been cut off.
3. Hunting raises many issues today and this might be discussed. In the Middle Ages, hunting was incredibly important and the most popular activity of the nobility – and many ordinary people hunted so they could eat. Allowing for some of the possible issues, pupils could write a story about King John going hunting or draw pictures linked with a hunt. These might be done from the point of view of the King, one of his servants, one of the dogs, horses, hawks or the animals in the forest.
4. We know that Robert had a deep interest in nature. He would have known the forest and the animals that lived there very well. Pupils might think about the forest and the animals from his point of view, seeing him as a steward, protecting the land and the wildlife. They might draw or write something linked with this.