

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

TOP THINGS TO SEE



Recommended for

KSI–KS2, KS3 (History)

Learning objectives

- Spot some of the key features of Portland Castle.
- Understand how the castle changed over time.
- Build up a picture of life in Portland Castle in the Tudor period.

Time to complete

Approx. 60 minutes



A view of Portland Castle from above
© Skyscan Balloon Photography
Historic England Photo Library.

SUMMARY

This activity takes students around Portland Castle, spotting key features that help them to interpret the architecture and understand how the castle has changed over time. Exploring the castle will help them to understand what life was like for soldiers stationed here, especially in the Tudor period.

PREPARATION VISIT

When you book a school visit to Portland Castle you will be issued with a permit, which allows you a free preparation visit. Use this to work out what is most appropriate for your group. This trail focuses on the ground floor of the castle, where most of the Tudor features can be spotted. It may not be possible for all groups to go to the upper floor, so we have not included it in this trail. However, some groups may wish to explore upstairs and have a go at some of the interactivities such as a board game that soldiers may have played at Portland Castle. Going to the beach also provides a good view of the curved outer wall of the building.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

KSI students may prefer to use the tick sheet on page 7. KS2 and KS3 students may like to direct their own learning in small groups, supported by an adult. Alternatively, teachers can lead students round, reading the information to them before they attempt each challenge.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Students could plot the arc of fire from the guns at Portland Castle on a map using compasses and a maximum firing range of 1,000 metres. Each gun covered 60 degrees, which overlapped with the guns on either side to create a total coverage of 160 degrees. Add the arc of fire from Sandsfoot Castle at Weymouth to assess how well protected the area was from invasion or attack.

TOP THINGS TO SEE

EXPLORE PORTLAND
CASTLE

Find all of these things and complete each challenge. They are all on the ground floor of Portland Castle, which was first built by Henry VIII as a gun (artillery) fort. Explore Portland Castle to find out how it changed over time and what it might have been like to be a soldier stationed here.

Can't find your way?
Follow the map on page 8.



1 COAT OF ARMS

The outer wall of Portland Castle was built from Portland stone, just as the main castle was. It has a curved surface, an arched gateway, crenellations and fake loopholes. Although it looks Tudor, the outer wall was built much later than the castle, in about 1623. The coat of arms above the gateway was added during the reign of Charles II. It probably replaced an earlier and bigger coat of arms.



Charles II's coat of arms,
which is on the outer wall.

DID YOU KNOW?



The moat surrounding Portland Castle never contained any water. A small part of it survives on the east side of the outer wall.

CHALLENGE TIME!



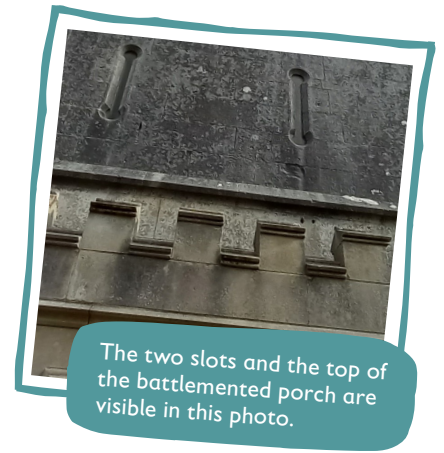
What shape is the castle and why?

Use these to help you:

- the plan on page 8
- what the castle looks like from the outside
- the castle's location

2 BATTLEMENTED PORCH

The porch was added to the entrance of Portland Castle in 1839. It was designed to look like the captain's house behind you. The battlements on the top of the porch are decorative rather than defensive. Above the porch are two slots that were probably gun loops for soldiers to fire through.



The two slots and the top of the battlemented porch are visible in this photo.

DID YOU KNOW?



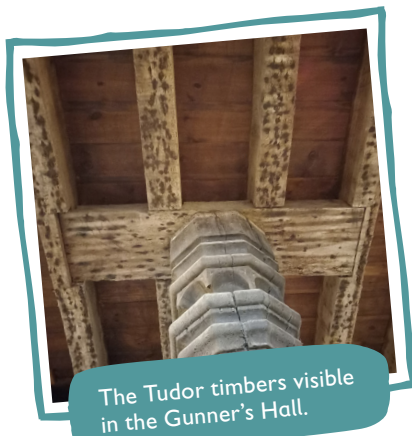
The interior stonework is covered in 19th-century chisel marks. They were added so it was easier to apply plaster and decorate the walls.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Go into the castle. The passageway has what is known as dog leg turns. Why were these useful for the soldiers defending the castle?

3 TUDOR TIMBERS



The Tudor timbers visible in the Gunner's Hall.

This was the main social space for the ordinary soldiers, whereas the room directly above this was for the captain. Today, you can see the wooden beams of the floor upstairs, but in the Tudor period this was not visible as there was a ceiling that covered them. The wooden post supports the beams going across the upstairs floor.

DID YOU KNOW?



Ordinary soldiers only went upstairs if they were invited to do so by the captain. The stairs are between the fireplace and the kitchen passageway.

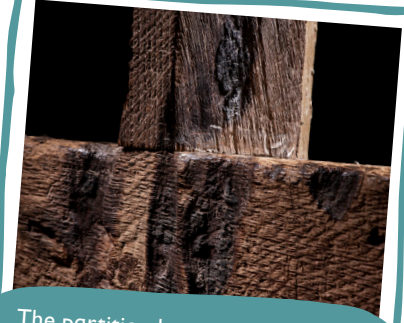
CHALLENGE TIME!



Soldiers played games, chatted, ate and drank in here. Use your senses to imagine what it might have smelt, sounded, felt, tasted and looked like.

4 SCORCH MARKS

The Gunner's Hall has a timber partition, behind which are two storerooms. On the window frames in the partition there are burn marks, perhaps made accidentally by candles. Although, marks like these in other buildings are sometimes thought to be made deliberately to ward off bad luck.



The partition between the Gunner's Hall and the storerooms. The scorch marks look like black spots on the vertical mullions.

DID YOU KNOW?



This room originally had gun loops rather than windows. They were expanded in the 19th century, making the room much lighter than it was before.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Look carefully at the windows in the timber partition. Can you **spot** the burn marks on the mullions (the vertical parts) and the windowsills?



The kind of clothes soldiers at Portland Castle might have worn in 1545, 1646 and 1793.

5 GUNNERS' COSTUMES

This room probably started out as accommodation for the soldiers. However, its use changed over time; for example, in 1716 it was the 'governor's cellar' and today it is where you can spend some time trying on costumes and testing your gunnery skills using the LOAD, AIM, FIRE! display.

DID YOU KNOW?

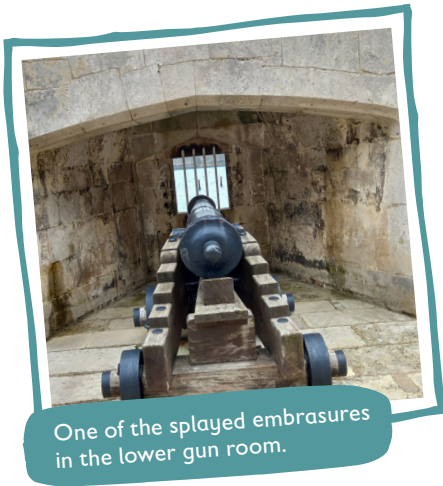


A tool called a worm was used to scrape out the barrel after firing. This removed unburnt gunpowder and anything left of the cartridge.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Spot the differences between the soldiers' costumes. How do they change over time? **Describe** how they feel to wear. For example, are they heavy?



6 SPLAYED EMBRASURES

In the lower gun room there are alcoves for five guns. Rectangular openings (embrasures) in the outer wall splay outwards. This allowed the guns to have a wide arc of fire, meaning they could cover a broad area and fire simultaneously (at the same time). Five men were required to operate each gun. Originally, there was a roof, making this room dimly lit, crowded, hot and smoky. Each time a gun was fired it had to be cooled by sponging it down with cool water.

DID YOU KNOW?



Each time the guns were fired they recoiled (moved backwards) into the centre of the room. Ropes attached to the walls acted as brakes.

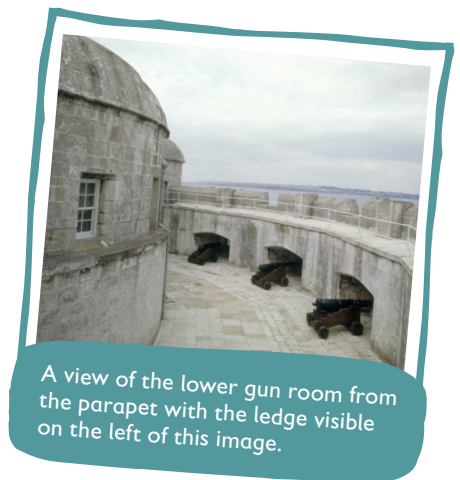
CHALLENGE TIME!



Find the square vents that went through the parapet, like chimneys. These took away the smoke that was produced each time the guns were fired.

7 A MISSING FLOOR

Originally, this room was covered by the floor of the upper gun room. It was covered in sheet lead for waterproofing as the upper gun room had no roof. The upper floor was removed in the 18th century because it kept needing costly repairs. The upper floor originally went from the parapet walk across to the ledge on the opposite wall.



DID YOU KNOW?



Soldiers may have lodged in timber cabins built against the wall. One cabin had a fireplace and its hearth is still visible on the floor.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Using your senses (sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing), **imagine** what soldiers might have experienced here. What emotions might they have felt?



8 BREAD OVEN

The kitchen was the warmest room in the Tudor castle. Meals were prepared and then cooked in the large fireplace. The bread oven is built into the wall to the left of the fireplace. This room was full of the smells, sights and sounds of cooking. As you explore, think about what the soldiers' diet was like; would you like to eat these foods? How do they compare to your diet today?

DID YOU KNOW?



You can still see the drainage system that was built into the floor so that dirty water could be disposed of easily.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Spot these things on display in the kitchen:

- wooden bowl
- green glazed jug
- wooden spice box
- wheel of cheese
- barrel of fish being salted to preserve them

9 JOIST HOLES

By 1716 the kitchen had been divided into three smaller rooms with a passageway connecting them. The cellar was in the part of the room closest to the lower gun room. This was where barrels of drinks were stored. There are holes in a horizontal line across what was once the rear cellar wall. Wooden joists were fitted into these holes. The joists supported shelving for storing heavy barrels.



DID YOU KNOW?



The kitchen also needed defending if the castle was attacked. The deep alcoves were designed for soldiers to stand in when firing longbows or handguns.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Examine the windows in this room. Can you spot an odd one out? HINT: One has been restored to look more like its old self.

TOP THINGS TO SEE

EXPLORE PORTLAND
CASTLE

See if you can find all of these things.
Tick each one off as you find it.



1 COAT OF ARMS



2 BATTLEMENTED
PORCH



3 TUDOR TIMBERS



4 SCORCH MARKS



5 COSTUMES



6 EMBRASURES



7 MISSING FLOOR



8 BREAD OVEN



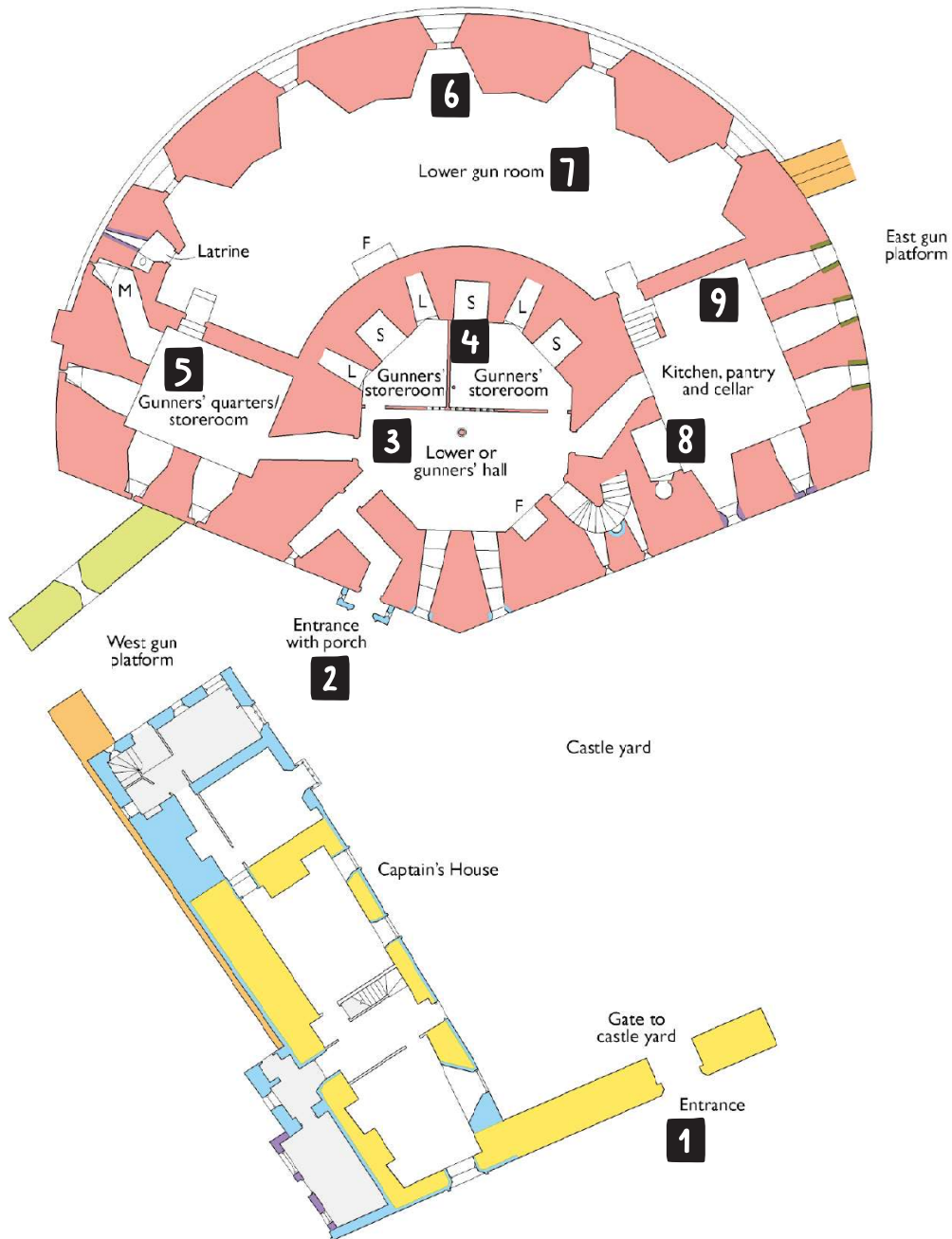
9 JOIST HOLES



PORTLAND CASTLE TOP THINGS TO SEE MAP



GROUND FLOOR



KEY

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 COAT OF ARMS | 4 SCORCH MARKS | 7 MISSING FLOOR |
| 2 BATTLEMENTED PORCH | 5 COSTUMES | 8 BREAD OVEN |
| 3 TUDOR TIMBERS | 6 EMBRASURES | 9 JOIST HOLE |