

SOURCE 6

‘His weekly expense in wheat-corn and pastry was constantly three-quarters, but when lords and ladies were there ... he spent treble as much, for then he would have all the gentlemen of the Island, their wives also there. He was a most free man in his house-keeping, and his meat was always served up to his table with a consort of wind and still music.’

This source describes how Sir George Carey spent his money while he was living at Carisbrooke Castle. Sir George was captain of the Isle of Wight from 1583 to 1603.

The source is part of a diary. It was written by Sir John Oglander. Sir John was Deputy Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight from 1595 to 1648.



SOURCE 7

‘I offered my Service to one of these Conservators [guards] to wait at the Dore opening into the Backstayers whilst he went to supper ... by which means I had freedom of Speaking with his Majesty ... we had opportunity to discourse often; and amongst other things of severall ways for his Majesties Escape (for his imprisonment was then intolerable). Amongst other ways, I proposed his coming out of his bedchamber window; wch he sayd he could do, there being room enough. I told him I feared it was too narrow. He sayd he had tryd it with his Head; and he was sure, where that would passe, the body would follow.’

‘... thus we were to procee: I should tosse something against the window, wch was the signe to put himself out; and to let himself down by a Cord, wch I, for the purpose had given him. Being down, and in the Night dark, I was to conduct him crosse the Court ... to the great wall of the Castle; where I was to have let him down by a long Cord; a Stick being fastened crosse at the end for him to sit on.’

‘In the middle of these hopes, I gave the Signe, at the appointed time. His Majestie put himself forward; but then, too late, found himself mistaken; he stciking fast between his Breast and Shoulders, and not able to get forwards or backwards ... Whilst he stuck, I heard him gorane, but could not come to help him ...’

Henry Firebrace’s account of the king’s attempt to escape from Carisbrooke Castle. Firebrace was Charles I’s page. This account was written nearly 30 years after the event.



SELF-LED ACTIVITY

OUR KING, OUR PRISONER



Recommended for

KS2 (History, English)

Learning objectives

- Understand the significance of Carisbrooke Castle as the site of an event of national history.
- Engage with and analyse sources to understand different perspectives of history.

Time to complete

1 hour

SUMMARY

This activity encourages students to engage with different points of view about a historical event. They will analyse a source from one point of view, and evaluate how reliable it is.

Before beginning the activity, students should be familiar with the story of Charles I's attempted escape from Carisbrooke Castle and the reasons for his imprisonment here. Use the Historical Information and source 7 in the Sources in this pack to explain the event to your students.

In a class discussion, students should consider why the king was allowed special privileges such as playing on the bowling green and could roam the castle grounds freely. Why might Charles have been treated differently to other prisoners?

Print copies of source 7 in the Sources and share these with the class. Students discuss first in pairs and then share their ideas with the class what they think it tells historians about the night of the escape and how reliable the source is.

Using the facts they have learnt and their memories from their visit to the castle, students work in small groups to imagine different points of view about Charles's imprisonment at the castle. They should discuss and record words and phrases about how they would feel as each/ one of the following characters:



Charles I got stuck in the window of his bedchamber while trying to escape from Carisbrooke Castle in 1648.



Charles I got stuck in the window of his bedchamber whilst trying to escape from Carisbrooke Castle in 1648.

- The king: could not move beyond the castle walls; he walked around the walls every day for exercise; he was allowed to use the bowling green. Charles believed he was chosen by God to be the king.
- Henry Firebrace, the page: exchanged letters with the king in secret; he planned to help the king escape from the castle, using a rope to lower him over the high castle walls.
- The governor: was responsible for the security of the castle; he had to make sure the castle was comfortable for the king but also that he could not escape. If the king did escape, the governor would be severely punished.

Each group should use their words and phrases to create an imaginative piece of writing from the perspective of one of the three characters. For example:

- write a poem as the king and his feelings about his imprisonment
- design an escape plan – because this is top secret, students could try to write part of it in code
- write a report to Cromwell's Parliament on how securely the king is imprisoned and on his welfare

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Students could create a cartoon strip or a news report of the story of the planned escape and its failure.