



HENRY VIII'S 'DEVICE FORTS'

What to look out for during a visit to one of the Tudor king's formidable fortresses and how to tell them apart from other castles



Tick the empty boxes as you go!



1 HENRY VIII'S COAT OF ARMS
Henry VIII wanted to show off his power by building these gun forts. His coat of arms, carved in stone, was displayed over the main entrance at many of them – so there was no doubt who built them. Pendennis and St Mawes have the best examples.



2 CIRCULAR SHAPE
The first device forts were built in a circular or part-circular shape so guns could be placed in them to fight an attack from any direction. Looking at them today, the design of each fort is slightly different, but the circular form is clear.



3 CENTRAL TOWER, WITH SURROUNDING BASTIONS
The most common design had a circular tower surrounded by between 3 and 6 bastions (low platforms for powerful guns). Deal, Walmer, Camber, Calshot, Hurst, St Mawes and Pendennis Castles all have these.



4 ROUNDED PARAPETS

Each fort was built to withstand enemy gunfire, with thick stone walls. The parapets (low protective walls) were also strongly made to protect the gunners behind them, with rounded tops to deflect incoming cannon shot over the gunners' heads. Hurst Castle is a good example.



5 SMALL, STRONG ENTRANCES

The entrance to any castle or fort is a weak point. The device forts had small, well-defended entrances. These usually had a single archway with many defensive barriers: strong wooden doors, portcullises and murder holes. The portcullis at Pendennis Castle is the original Tudor one.



6 LOOKOUT TURRETS

The main purpose of the device forts was to defend the coast from enemy ships. The tops of many forts – St Mawes Castle, for example – had a little turret containing a tiny room where a soldier on the lookout for approaching ships could take shelter during bad weather.



7 GUN POSITIONS

The central towers and some bastions had gun positions inside them. These were built in the thickness of the walls and had vents above them – like chimneys – going up through the walls to take gun smoke away from the gunners, so they didn't choke.



8 FIREPLACES

In areas away from the guns, the forts contain living quarters for the gunners. The forts were very cold in winter and most had large fireplaces with wide Tudor arches so the men could keep warm. There is also usually a kitchen with a big fireplace for cooking.

