



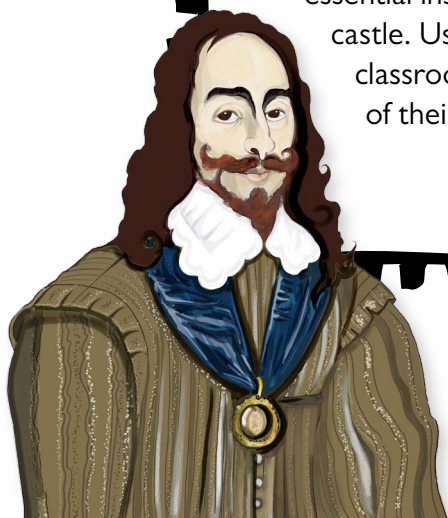
ENGLISH HERITAGE
EDUCATION

KS2 & KS3

TEACHERS' ACTIVITY IDEAS

Carisbrooke Castle

This resource pack has been designed to help teachers plan a visit to Carisbrooke Castle, which provides essential insight into defences and life in a medieval castle. Use these activities on-site or in the classroom to help students get the most out of their learning.



Get in touch with our Education Booking Team

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📄 <https://bookings.english-heritage.org.uk/education/>

Don't forget to download our **Hazard Information Sheets** and **Discovery Visit Risk Assessments** to help with planning:

- **A Carisbrooke Carry On: How to Survive and Stay Alive**
- **Who Lives in a House Like This: Castle Life From the Anglo Saxons to the Victorians**

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Step into England's story

TOP 5 ACTIVITIES

HUMAN TABLEAUX TIMELINE

ON-SITE
ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY 1

Recommended For

KS2 and KS3
(History, Drama)

Learning Objectives

- To understand the chronology of Carisbrooke Castle's history.
- To use role play and tableaux to interact with architectural features and understand how they represent different time periods.



De Heynoe's loop at Carisbrooke Castle is thought to be the arrow loop through which bowman Peter de Heynoe shot the arrow which killed the French commander during the siege of 1377.

Summary

There are key locations at Carisbrooke Castle that have architectural details that together tell a narrative of its history. Students can identify these spots as they discover the castle grounds:

- the Motte and Bailey
- the 12th-century keep
- Isabella's medieval window
- Heynoe's loophole from the 14th-century French siege
- fireplaces from Sir George Carey's 17th century mansion
- the window from which Charles I tried to escape
- Beatrice's garden

At each feature, or somewhere nearby if there isn't enough space, ask the students to pose in a tableau that illustrates the period in the castle's history e.g. a group of archers shooting through the loopholes around the keep wall walk or the Saxons wearily digging an earthwork bank. Take a photo of each tableau.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Use the photographs back in the classroom to create a human tableaux timeline. The students could focus on their audience as being a younger age group. The students should use printed copies to arrange in order along a timeline of the castle's history, or create one using a programme online, such as www.tiki-toki.com.

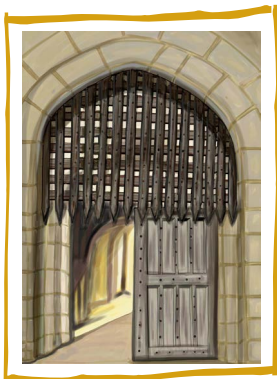
ACTIVITY 2

Recommended For

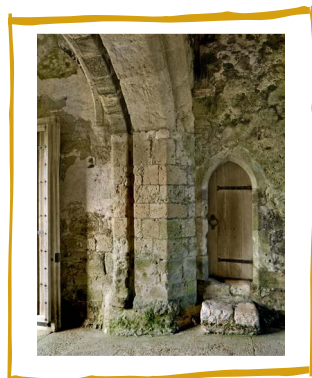
KS2 and KS3 (History, English, Design & Technology)

Learning Objectives

- To identify Carisbrooke Castle's defensive features.
- To understand how castle structures and defences were designed to combat medieval siege weaponry.
- To recognise key principles of medieval weapons technology.



The portcullis would have been lowered over the thick wooden gates in the gatehouse at Carisbrooke Castle. You can see the grooves where it would have been lowered at the gatehouse today.



Summary

In the 14th century, England was at war with France. In fear of an attack by the French, improvements were made to the castle's defences, such as adding the drum towers to the gatehouse.

Students can pretend that they are French spies infiltrating the medieval Carisbrooke Castle, in order to examine the ability of its defences to withstand a siege.

Features you might like to focus on:

- curtain wall (wall walk, crenellations, towers)
- gatehouse (drawbridge, drum towers, portcullis and gun ports - for early handguns)
- keep (motte and bailey, keep gatehouse, wall walk)
- ditches and earth banks
- arrow loops
- thick walls

Students should make sketches and notes about each defensive feature, thinking about how they might protect a castle during an attack.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Before the visit, students should gain a good understanding of siege weapons such as scaling ladders, siege towers, battering rams, cats and mantelets, mangonels, trebuchets and guns. Alternatively the class could also focus on simpler tactics such as cavalry, foot soldiers and archers. It may be that you split your class into groups each looking at the effectiveness of one of these weapons – this could introduce an element of competition.

It would also be helpful to look at generic medieval castle features so the students have an idea of what to identify when they explore the castle and less generic features e.g. gun loops.

Following your visit, the students could prepare a report for the French king to explain how well Carisbrooke is defended. They could identify which siege weapon would be the most effective on its defences. This report could be prepared as a medieval parchment, perhaps with tea-stained paper and a red wax seal.

ACTIVITY 3

Recommended For

KS2 and KS3
(History, English)

Learning Objectives

- To understand the significance of Carisbrooke Castle as the site of an event of national history – the imprisonment of a usurped English king.
- To engage with the story of Charles I's experience as a prisoner in order to understand different perspectives of history.



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

Summary

Students can try to put themselves in the position of Charles I and his point of view that he was king in the eyes of God. They might contrast this with the feelings of the constable of the castle who was under orders to keep him a prisoner. Students should consider why the king was allowed special privileges such as playing on the bowling green and could roam the castle grounds freely.

Using Henry Firebrace's account (on the next page), students in small groups can retrace the experience of Charles's imprisonment at Carisbrooke from different perspectives. They should collect words and phrases about how they would feel as each/one of the characters below and record these to use back at school.

- The King: you could not move beyond the castle walls; you walked around the walls every day for exercise; you could use the bowling green
- Firebrace, the Page: you exchange letters with the King in secret; you have to search the castle for an escape route and record your plan – how will he get out? How will you transport him away from the Isle of Wight? You must not raise the suspicions of the Governor.
- The Governor: look around the castle and try to think how the castle could be both comfortable and secure for the king – he must not escape, otherwise you will be severely punished.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Before visiting the castle, 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 source below to share the narrative with the students.

Following your visit, the different groups can use their words and phrases to:

- write a poem as the king and his feelings about his imprisonment
- write an escape plan – because this is top secret students could try to write part of it in code. In reality, Firebrace's code name was 'D' and Charles codename was 'J'
- write a report to Cromwell's Parliament on how securely the king is imprisoned and on his welfare
- create a cartoon strip of the story of the planned escape and its failure

ACTIVITY 3 Continued

'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 sticing 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.

ACTIVITY 4

Recommended For

KS2 and KS3 (History, Science, Maths, English)

Upper Key Stage 2
Lower Key Stage 3

Learning Objectives

- To compare life in a medieval castle to modern life i.e. the convenience of modern piped, filtered water supply in contrast to human/animal powered mechanisms that lift water from underground.
- Use measuring skills to understand how the well supplies water.
- To develop skills of creativity and invention.

Equipment Needed

- 50 m length of string
- Measuring tape or trundle wheel



The opening of the well in the keep. A castle keep needed its own water supply as it was the last place of refuge during an attack.

Summary

Before you arrive at the castle, speak to the Education Bookings Team about whether it is possible for your class to visit the well house to view a demonstration of the donkeys powering the treadwheel. It is not always possible to see the donkeys at Carisbrooke, so it is important that you check when you book. It is still possible to complete the activity without seeing the donkeys.

Next visit the keep to investigate the well there. Explain to your students that this well was built first, to supply the keep with water in case the castle inhabitants had retreated there during an attack. The buckets would have to be hauled up by people. This well failed in 1136 and the castle was forced to surrender.

Students can discover how deep the well is by measuring it with string. Simply add a weight (such as a stone) to the end of the string and lower it until the students feel it meet the bottom, or the water. When the string does not lower anymore, students can tie a knot at the top of the string. Pull the string out and when you get to a large space i.e. the bowling green, lay the string out and measure it with a trundle wheel or measuring tape.

Ask students to try to identify what type of rock the motte is made from. They should be able to identify patches of exposed white chalk. Chalk is porous and water soaks through it, so the well had to be very deep.

Discuss with the class how they would feel sharing water from the ground with other people trapped in the keep. This water would be used for washing, drinking and cooking food in. How many times do they think they would have to haul the bucket up each day to have enough for everyone?

ACTIVITY 4 Continued



The well at Carisbrooke Castle.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Before your visit, students should consider the benefits of a modern clean water supply – they could list all of its uses in their daily life, perhaps by keeping a ‘water diary’.

Following your visit, the class could examine the medieval technology used to lift weights. Students could make a model of the well house treadwheel using recycled materials such as cheese spread boxes for the wheel, a cotton reel for the spindle, a knitting needle for the axle and a small weight for the bucket – all housed in a shoebox with a hole in the base for the well.

Use the model to illustrate to students that the donkey walks much further than the length of the rope that is hoisted. They can explore this concept by trying to make larger wheels that will hoist heavier weights. They could also try to calculate the ratio between the circumference of the wheel and that of the spindle, to calculate how quickly the donkey could lift different weights over particular distances.

Recommended For

KS2 and KS3
(History, English)

Learning Objectives

- To recognise Carisbrooke Castle as a heritage tourist attraction.
- To compare the Victorian idea of tourism to what visitors enjoy today.



Tourists exploring the gatehouse in 1906. The trees and ivy were left to make the ruins look pretty.

ACTIVITY 5

Summary

In the 19th century, Carisbrooke Castle became a popular tourist destination. The Victorians loved to visit historic sites that showed off the history of their country, especially those which matched the romantic ideal.

Students can read the source below, highlighting literary devices (interesting adjectives, alliterative phrases, personification) and any words they do not understand. Go through these as a class and discuss what they mean. How does the author make Carisbrooke Castle sound romantic? How does it persuade people to visit?

On site: students write a guidebook for the 21st century about modern Carisbrooke Castle. As they walk around the site, students should think about how they would write a guidebook today:

- How would they encourage people to visit Carisbrooke?
- What did they enjoy about visiting the castle – would others enjoy this too?
- What adjectives would they use to describe what a tourist will see when they come to Carisbrooke?

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Before your visit, look at images and descriptions that explain the term 'Romantic' e.g. J.M.W. Turner's many paintings of castle ruins. It might be useful to discuss what attracts people to historic sites today and why things have changed.

'On approaching the venerable ruin, which is situated on a commanding eminence above a wooded dell, we are immediately struck with the imposing grandeur of its ancient machicolated Portal, flanked by two noble round towers, pierced with loopholes for the discharge of arrows - their grey, weather-beaten surface partially covered with ivy... In these feudal towers we observe the finest features of the fortress, and nothing can exceed them in picturesque effect, which is enhanced by the outer walls and bastions being partly clothed with luxuriant ivy, while the green slopes, descending from the Castle to the moat, are adorned with the fir, the holly, and a variety of brushwood, the whole view being greatly improved by the broad level terrace of velvet grass which surrounds the Castle.'

View of the Isle of Wight by James Briddon, 1856.