



ENGLISH HERITAGE  
EDUCATION

KS1–KS3

## TEACHERS' ACTIVITY IDEAS

### Deal Castle

This resource has been designed to help teachers plan a visit to Deal Castle, one of King Henry VIII's impressive Tudor artillery forts, built to protect the south coast from European invasion. Use these activity ideas on site and in the classroom to help students discover more about Deal Castle.



Get in touch with our Education Booking Team:

- ☎ 0370 333 0606
- ✉ [bookeducation@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:bookeducation@english-heritage.org.uk)
- 📍 <https://bookings.english-heritage.org.uk/education>

Don't forget to download our **Hazard Information Sheets** to help with planning.

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Step into England's story

# TOP 5 ACTIVITIES

## DESIGNING DEAL

### AT THE CASTLE

#### Recommended For

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

#### Learning Objectives

- Investigate the design, shapes and patterns at Deal Castle.
- Explore some details of Deal Castle's defensive structure.



An aerial view of Deal Castle showing 12 bastions arranged around the central tower.

## ACTIVITY 1

### Summary

**Before your visit**, show students some photos of Deal Castle, which you can find on our website. Ask them to think of some words to describe the shape, size and appearance of the castle.

Deal Castle's design was very different from traditional medieval castles, which generally had high outer walls to protect the people and buildings inside. However, these walls were found to be too weak to resist gunfire after the development of heavy guns (cannon) in the mid 1300s. Military engineers were therefore forced to design a new type of fort that had very thick, squat walls, making them less of a target and able to withstand gunfire.

**During your visit**, take students inside the keep and find the interactive model in the 'Building the Castle' area. Ask students to carefully piece the model together, paying close attention to the patterns and shapes used to build the castle.

You could ask them some of these questions:

1. Which bit is the central circular tower known as the 'keep'?
2. How many semi-circular bastions are arranged around the keep?
3. How did the shape and height of Deal Castle help to defend it?
4. The castle could mount about 45 heavy guns over four tiers—where would you put the guns to ensure all-round, top-to-bottom, defence?

Once they have finished building, please ask students to carefully take the model apart and put the pieces back in the box, for others to enjoy.

### ACTIVITY 1 continued



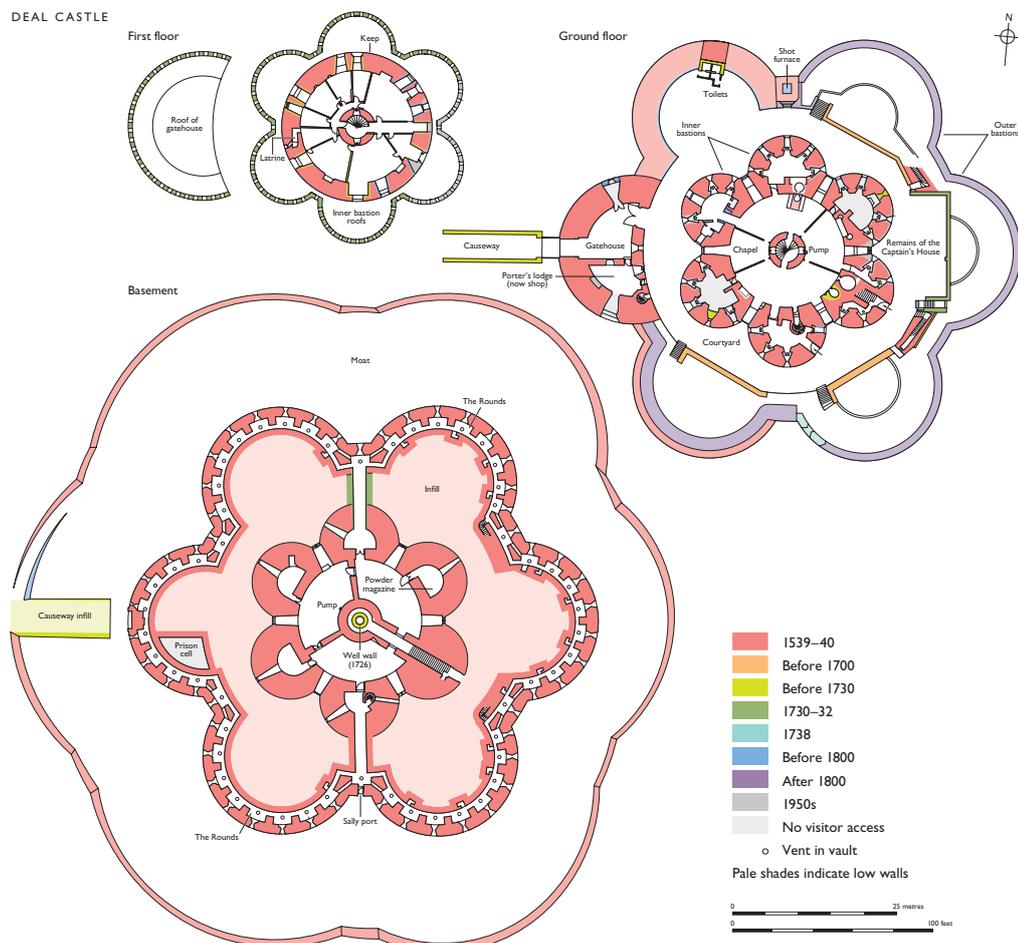
A cannon on the outer bastion at Deal Castle.

Back in the classroom, students could design their own Tudor castle, using Deal as inspiration. They should try to include the following features in their design:

- A central circular tower
- Semi-circular bastions arranged symmetrically around the central tower
- A gatehouse in one of the outer bastions
- Thick, squat walls, making the castle less of a target

### MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Compare Deal Castle with some of the other Tudor artillery forts Henry VIII built along the south coast, including Walmer, Calshot, Pendennis and St Mawes. You can find photos of these on the English Heritage website.



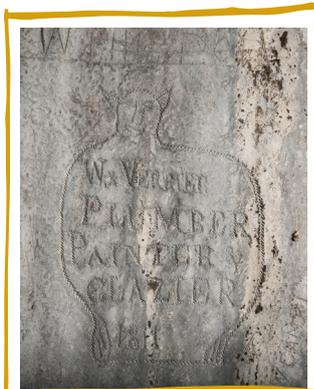
## ACTIVITY 2

## Recommended For

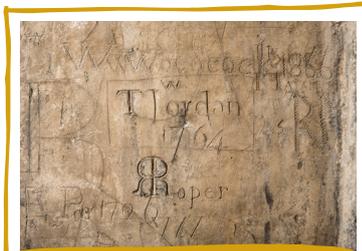
KS1 & KS2  
(History, Art)

## Learning Objectives

- Explore the story of the graffiti on the roof at Deal Castle.
- Use the graffiti table to leave your mark at Deal Castle.



Graffiti reading 'William Verrier, plumber painter and glazier, 1811'. He was probably employed to carry out repairs to windows or leadwork on the roof.



A mix of dates and names including 'W Woodcock 1866', probably William Woodcock who was a blacksmith working in Deal.

## Summary

**Before your visit**, discuss with your class: why is it important to look after a building like Deal Castle?

**During your visit**, take students to the graffiti room on the first floor. Explain that the roof of Deal Castle, right above their heads, is covered in graffiti from the 17th century to the 20th century. The marks left tell of the many people who stepped on this roof over the course of time. There are:

- pictures of ships and houses
- details of people's names and jobs
- traced shoe and hand prints
- portraits of people.

You and your students can find photos and descriptions of the roof graffiti in the book provided in the graffiti room.

You could remind students that Deal Castle is now a scheduled monument, which means English Heritage is required by law to protect it from damage. The graffiti table has been added to this room to allow visitors to leave their mark while still looking after the building.

Encourage students to use the graffiti table to draw their own graffiti. Ask them to draw something that is personal to them and could be used to identify them if anyone found it in the future, e.g. name and school, hand print, self-portrait.

## MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, use the online image gallery accessed via the Deal Castle website to find out more about the roof graffiti with your class: [www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/deal-castle](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/deal-castle)

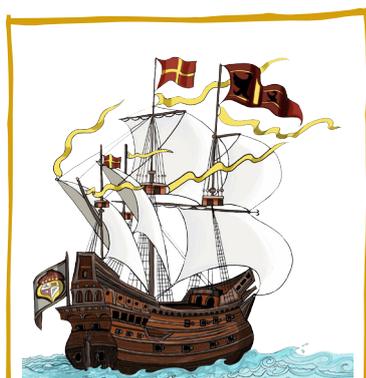
## ACTIVITY 3

## Recommended For

KS2 & KS3  
(History, Geography, English)

## Learning Objectives

- Understand Deal Castle's relationship with the local area, including Walmer and Sandown Castles.
- Consider the geography of this part of the South-east coast, its relationship with Europe, and why Henry VIII chose to build castles here.



Drawing of a 16th-century Spanish galleon.

## Summary

During your visit, take students to the outer bastion, overlooking the English Channel, where you will find a panel showing Deal and Walmer castles, which were in the first wave of castles constructed between 1539 and 1540. They were built to protect the vulnerable Kent coast and the Downs anchorage from European invasion.

On a clear day, you should be able to see France, where Henry VIII feared his European enemies would set sail from on a mission to invade England.

Ask students to vote on whether the following statements are true or false.

Henry VIII built a castle here because:

1. He wanted to live in it to keep an eye on the English Channel. (False)
2. He had upset the Catholic leaders of Europe and was worried they'd invade. (True)
3. Deal beach was an easy landing spot for enemy ships. (True)
4. Kent was one of his favourite places to visit when he was a child so he wanted to keep it safe. (False)
5. He thought his enemies would be able to see the castle from Europe and get scared off. (False)
6. It would protect the Downs anchorage, just up the coast, which was an important base for English warships and merchant ships. (True)
7. The Kent coast is easy to sail to from France, via the English Channel. (True)

**ACTIVITY 3 continued**

Students on the beach at Deal Castle.

Now take students down onto the beach and ask them to imagine the following:

The year is 1588 and you are a Tudor soldier stationed at the castle. Elizabeth I, Henry VIII's daughter, is now Queen of England. 130 Spanish ships are sailing up the English Channel, on a mission to invade England. The Royal Navy has gone to fight them out at sea. As the sun sets, you can hear the distant sound of cannon fire and see the glow of ships on fire.

Discuss with a partner: how do you feel?

**MORE LEARNING IDEAS**

Back in the classroom, students could create a piece of artwork or diary entry in response to the scene described above.

They could also research the Spanish Armada and find out how the English fleet managed to destroy half of the Spanish ships in 1588.

## ACTIVITY 4

## Recommended for

KS2 & KS3  
(History)

## Learning Objectives

- Understand the role of the captain at Deal and how this has changed over time.
- Explore different characters to find out about their role at Deal Castle.



The captain was in charge of the Tudor garrison at Deal Castle.



The porter worked for the captain and was responsible for castle security.

## Summary

During your visit, take students to the first floor of the keep, where the captain's apartments used to be. Notice the diagram on the wall at the top of the stairs, which shows the structure of the Tudor garrison at Deal Castle. You can use this and the version provided on the next page to explain the castle hierarchy to students.

You could divide students into six groups and ask them to use the portraits and information on the walls to become 'experts' on one particular captain.

Give each group a different captain to focus on:

**Thomas Boys (Captain 1550–5)**

Thomas Boys, a soldier and Crown servant, served in Calais when it was a fortified English possession. He was probably part of the expedition of Henry VIII to take Boulogne from the French in 1544.

**Sir William Batten (Captain 1643–8) and Thomas Rainsborough (Captain 1648)**

The English Civil Wars (1642–51) were about who would govern England: King or Parliament. Sir William Batten and Thomas Rainsborough both fought for Parliament. In 1648, Rainsborough held the more extreme opinion of removing the king from government. Batten did not agree, changed sides and lost the captaincy.

**Sir John Norris (Captain 1720s)**

Sir John Norris was a fighting sailor for 64 years, beginning as a boy of ten and eventually becoming Admiral of the Fleet.

**Robert Smith, Lord Carrington (Captain 1803–38)**

Lord Carrington was a banker who spent time at Deal in the Napoleonic Wars and was nominally in charge of volunteer soldiers in that conflict.

**John French, Lord Ypres (Captain 1923–5)**

John French, Lord Ypres, also knew France – when it was no longer English and in danger of becoming German. He fought there in the First World War, in a conflict of enormous scale, when he commanded the British Expeditionary Force 1914–16.

### ACTIVITY 4 continued



The master gunner was responsible for all of the big guns at Deal Castle.

Now ask students to pair up with someone from a different group. They could get in role as the captain they studied and pretend they are meeting the other captain for the first time. During the conversation, each person should find out their partner's name, when they were captain of Deal and one other fact.

### MORE LEARNING IDEAS

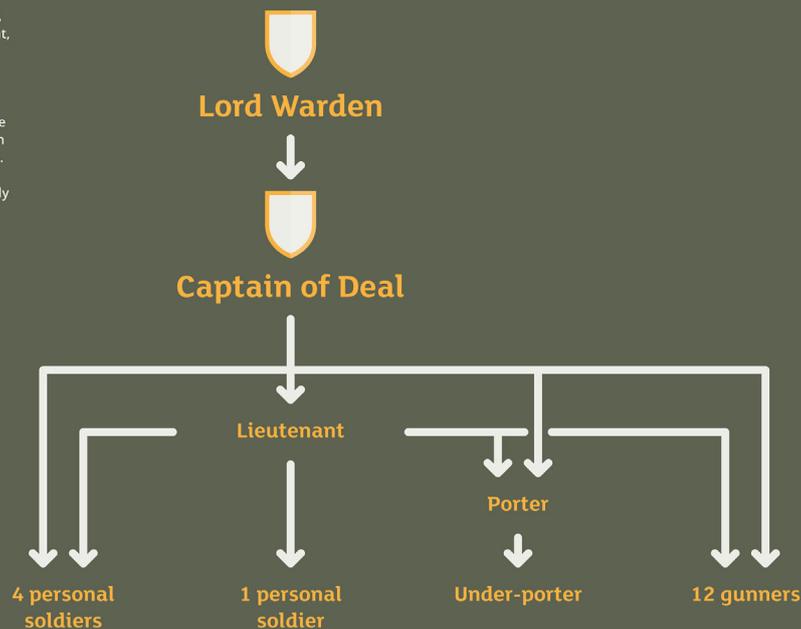
Explain to students that there is still a captain of Deal Castle but there is no longer a residence. Nowadays, the captaincy is a ceremonial position always held by the Commandant General (commanding officer) of the Royal Marines – celebrating a Royal Marine connection with Deal going back to the 1660s.

Students could research the local and national history of the Royal Marines. We recommend starting here:  
[www.royalmarinesmuseum.co.uk/research-and-collections](http://www.royalmarinesmuseum.co.uk/research-and-collections)

### Deal Castle Garrison

The Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, appointed by monarch or government, was responsible for defending the coast of east Sussex and south-east Kent, and for the garrisons of Deal, Sandown, Walmer, Dover, Sandgate and Camber castles. He appointed the captain and garrison of Deal Castle. In 1603, this was the garrison of 21 men.

The rooms on this floor were originally the quarters of the captain and probably the lieutenant.



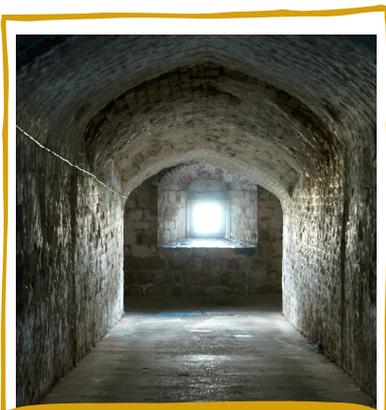
### ACTIVITY 5

#### Recommended for

KS2 & KS3  
(History, Drama, English)

#### Learning Objectives

- Experience what it might have been like to be a soldier in the Rounds of Deal Castle.
- Understand the relationship between the soldiers, their equipment and the building.



Access to the Rounds in the basement of the keep.



A Tudor soldier.

#### Summary

During your visit, take students down into the Rounds of Deal Castle, which is a narrow, vaulted passage, built within the thickness of the outer bastion walls, running the entire castle circuit.

Ask students to imagine they are soldiers in the Rounds while the castle is under attack. Split your class into four groups and give one of these discussion points to each group:

- 1) What might you hear? (e.g. shouting, soldiers' footsteps, gunfire)
- 2) What might you see? (e.g. darkness, smoke, fellow soldiers loading and firing their guns, enemy soldiers coming down the ramp)
- 3) What might you feel? (e.g. fear, excitement, adrenaline, concern, anger)
- 4) What might you smell? (e.g. smoke, gunpowder, sweat)

Now walk carefully through the narrow passageway. Please be aware that the Rounds can be dark and sometimes holds a few centimetres of water, so we advise you to bring a torch and waterproof shoes. It is recommended that one adult stays at the front and back of the group to ensure everyone feels secure. Younger students may not want to go all the way into the Rounds. On occasion, we may have to close the Rounds.

Ask students to spot these features as they explore:

- Gun embrasures (gaps) in the outer walls, through which soldiers with handguns could defend the moat. There are 53 in total.
- A circular shaft above every gun position that goes up to the bastion parapets, to vent gun smoke.
- Small rectangular recesses (cupboards), at regular intervals in the inner walls, to hold ammunition or lanterns (but not both!)

#### MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, students can develop their creative writing skills by 'writing in role', as if they are a soldier who has just experienced an attack on the castle and is stationed in the Rounds. Encourage them to use figurative language and multi-sensory description, and then discuss why these writing techniques are effective for the reader.