



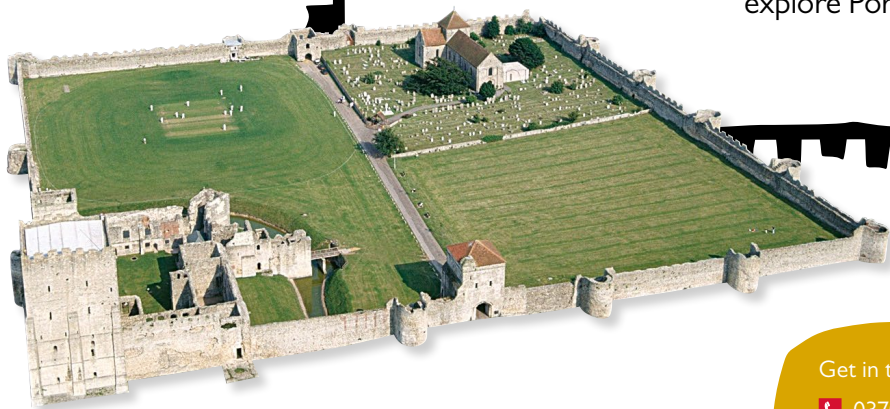
ENGLISH HERITAGE
EDUCATION

KS2 & KS3

STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEETS

Portchester Castle

This resource has been designed to help students step into the story of Portchester Castle, which provides essential insight into over 1,700 years of history. It was a Roman fort, a Saxon stronghold, a royal castle and eventually a prison. Give these activity sheets to students on site to help them explore Portchester Castle.



Get in touch with our Education Booking Team:

- ☎ 0370 333 0606
- ✉ bookeducation@english-heritage.org.uk
- 📄 <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:

- **In the Footsteps of Kings**
- **Big History: From Dominant Castle to Hidden Fort**

Share your visit with us **@EHEducation**

Step into England's story

EXPLORE THE CASTLE

DISCOVER OUR TOP 10
THINGS TO SEE

Portchester Castle is over 1,700 years old! It was a Roman fort, a Saxon stronghold, a royal palace and eventually a prison. Its commanding location means it has played a major part in defending Portsmouth Harbour and the Solent for hundreds of years.

Explore the castle in small groups. Complete the challenges to find out about Portchester's exciting past.



1 ROMAN WALLS

These walls were built between AD 285 and 290 by a Roman naval commander called Carausius. He was in charge of protecting this bit of the coast from pirate attacks. The walls' core is made from layers of flint, bonded together with mortar.

 **WHERE ARE THEY?**
Surrounding the site

DID YOU FIND THEM?



DID YOU KNOW?



The walls still stand to what is probably their original height (6.1 metres) – this makes Portchester the most well-preserved Roman fort in northern Europe.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Touch a section of the wall where the flint layers are visible (like in the photo). Why do you think the walls needed to be so thick?



2 D-SHAPED TOWERS

The Roman walls form a square-shaped border, with 20 evenly spaced D-shaped towers, of which 16 still stand to this day. Defenders could fire arrows at enemies from inside these semi-circular towers.

 **WHERE ARE THEY?**
Around the outer bailey

DID YOU FIND THEM?

DID YOU KNOW?



In Roman times, these towers would have been hollow, with open backs. They were filled in and platforms were added during the medieval period.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Measure the distance between two of the semi-circular towers. Try to use strides that are about a metre long and count as you walk.

3 LANDGATE

There were four entrances to the Roman fort, one in the middle of each Roman wall. There are two 'postern' (side) gates, a landgate and a watergate. The landgate was rebuilt in medieval times (1390s).

 **WHERE IS IT?**
In the west wall

DID YOU FIND IT?



DID YOU KNOW?



In the 18th and 19th centuries, a room at the top of the landgate was used to isolate misbehaving prisoners from the rest of the prisoners of war.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Look along each of the Roman walls and spot the four gates. Can you see the sea through the watergate and the trees through the landgate?



4 MOAT

The moat is fed by water from the sea. In medieval times, it wrapped around the whole of the inner bailey and was deeper than it is today, creating an extra layer of defence.

 WHERE IS IT?
Around the keep

DID YOU FIND IT?

DID YOU KNOW?



In the 18th century, the moat was turned into a swimming pool for prisoners of war!

CHALLENGE TIME!



Imagine you are trying to attack the castle. With your team, come up with a plan to get over the moat, past the gatehouse, and into the inner bailey.

5 WELL

In medieval times, there were no pipes or taps, so this well was a vital water supply. During a siege, attackers would surround the castle and wait for the defenders to run out of supplies, so having fresh water was really important.

 WHERE IS IT?
Inner bailey

DID YOU FIND IT?



DID YOU KNOW?



There were several wells in the inner bailey, including one inside the keep, on the second floor.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Discuss how you would dig this well down through the hard ground. Remember – there was no electricity or heavy machinery to help.



6 GUN PLATFORM

Cannons were first used by English troops at the Battle of Crécy in 1346. The gun platforms at Portchester date to the late 1300s, making them a very early example of the use of cannon in England.



WHERE IS IT?

In the wall, between Ashton's Tower and the keep



DID YOU FIND IT?

DID YOU KNOW?



The invention of guns and gunpowder transformed the way battles were fought around the world.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Imagine the booming sound you might hear if you stood on the gun platform and fired a cannon through one of the gun ports.

7 RICHARD II'S PALACE

This palace was built by Richard II (r.1377–99) between 1396 and 1399. On the top floor, there was a great hall where members of the royal household were served their meals, in order of importance.



WHERE IS IT?
Inner bailey



DID YOU FIND IT?



DID YOU KNOW?



Either side of the entrance to Richard II's palace, you can still see two little platforms used to hold lamps that lit the doorway.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Go through the kitchen and turn right into the great hall. **Imagine** how it may have looked with high ceilings, painted glass windows and brightly coloured wall hangings.



8 PRISONERS' THEATRE

In the early 19th century, prisoners of war were kept at Portchester. Some of them were from France and had teamed up to create a theatrical troupe while in captivity. They created a theatre in the keep where they performed plays to lift people's spirits.

 **WHERE IS IT?**
Ground floor of the keep

DID YOU FIND IT?

DID YOU KNOW?



When the theatre was in use between 1794 and 1814, an audience of 300 could fit in this room. It would've been a tight squeeze!

CHALLENGE TIME!



Put your face in one of the holes to see what you would've looked like in 19th-century costume!

9 BEAMS FOR HAMMOCKS

Portchester was one of the 12 main prisoner-of-war camps in Britain during wars between England and France in 1793–1815. The beams were used to hang hammocks so that more prisoners could sleep in this room.

 **WHERE ARE THEY?**
Second floor of the keep

DID YOU FIND THEM?



DID YOU KNOW?



Around 500 prisoners of war could be kept in the keep at one time. It could get very cold and was always cramped.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Imagine how it would feel to be a prisoner, far from home, sleeping in a hammock in the keep on a cold winter's night.

10 SCULPTURES

The 'Flock of Dreams' sculpture on the second floor represents the letters sent to and from prisoners of war, flying over the English Channel like birds. The sculpture on the third floor expresses the emotions that the African-Caribbean prisoners may have felt when they were captured, transported and imprisoned here.



 **WHERE ARE THEY?**
Second and third floors of the keep

DID YOU FIND THEM?

DID YOU KNOW?



In October 1796, 2,080 black and mixed-race soldiers, 333 European soldiers, and their families of 99 women and children arrived at Portchester. They had been captured on the island of St Lucia in the Caribbean.

CHALLENGE TIME!



Look at the sculpture of a boat on the third floor. **Discuss** what it makes you think about and how it makes you feel.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

We think the best thing to see at Portchester Castle is:

.....
.....

The most interesting thing we have learnt:

.....
.....
.....
.....

We want to know more about:

.....
.....
.....

Draw a picture inspired by your visit to Portchester Castle.

