



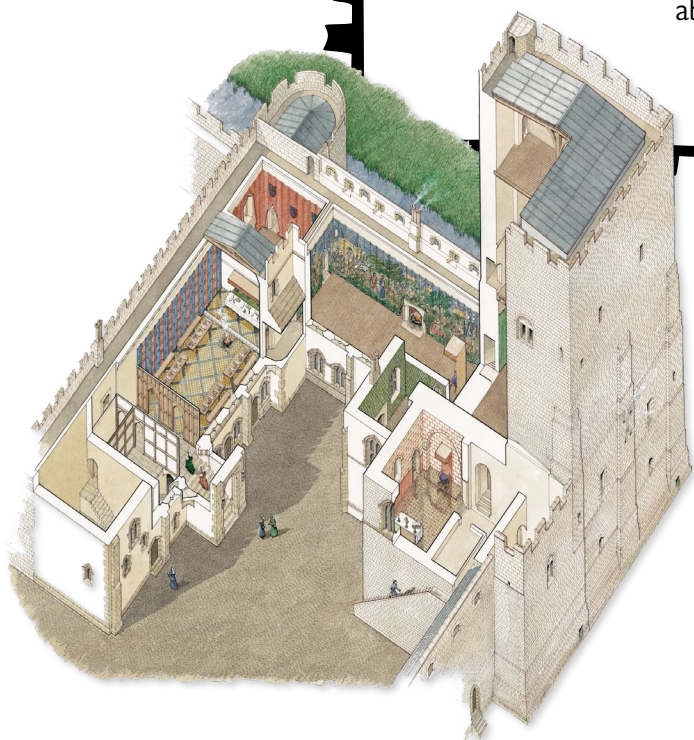
ENGLISH HERITAGE
EDUCATION

KS1 – KS4

TEACHERS' ACTIVITY IDEAS

Portchester Castle

This resource has been designed to help teachers plan a visit to 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. Use these activity ideas in the classroom and on site to help students discover more about 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

TOP 5 ACTIVITIES

OBJECT HUNT

AT THE CASTLE

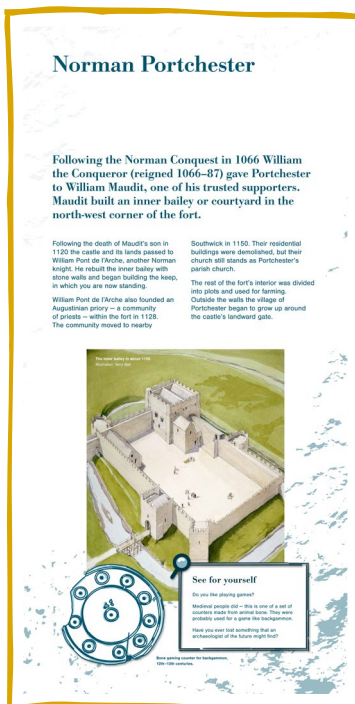
ACTIVITY 1

Recommended For

KS1 and KS2
(History, Art)

Learning Objectives

- Engage with the stories of some of the objects on display in the ground-floor exhibition.
- Develop knowledge about a selection of objects on display, including what they are and how they were used.



Summary

Before your visit, introduce students to the term 'archaeology', which is the study of things people made, used and left behind at historical sites. Many objects were dug up at Portchester and studied closely to find out about the people who lived and worked there.

Ask students to think of one object that is important to them. Discuss: if this object could talk, what story would it tell about you?

During your visit, take students to the exhibition on the ground floor of the keep. Ask them to look around the room and notice the special objects that have been highlighted at the bottom of the information panels (see example). They should use the 'See for yourself' boxes to read about the object, find the real thing in the glass showcases, and discuss the thinking point.

To help students look closely at the objects, you could ask them to pick one and draw it as accurately as they can. They could also order the objects in a timeline from oldest to newest. We have provided information on six key objects on the next two pages, to help with this.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, ask students to reflect on the objects they have seen by discussing these questions: do you own anything with a symbol that represents a place or a company? Have you ever lost something that an archaeologist of the future might find?

ACTIVITY 1 continued

PREHISTORIC HANDAXE

Handaxe, flint, Palaeolithic (or Old Stone Age), c.500,000 years ago.

This is the oldest man-made object ever found at Portchester, made between 10,000 and 500,000 years ago. It was probably used for cutting down trees and butchering animals.



ROMAN STYLI

Styli, iron, fourth century.

These styli were used to write on wax tablets. The flat end was used to smooth the wax so that it could be written on again.



MEDIEVAL GAMING COUNTER

Gaming counter, animal bone, 12th to 13th centuries.

Counters like this were used for the game of backgammon which was popular at the time.



MEDIEVAL IRON SPUR

Spur, iron, 14th century.

In medieval times, high-status people owned horses and rode everywhere. Riders wore metal spurs like this one on their heels, to prod the horse when they wanted it to move or go faster.



ACTIVITY 1 continued

19TH-CENTURY SHAKO PLATE

Shako plate, bronze, c.1814.

Shakos were tall, cylindrical hats worn by French soldiers in the 18th and 19th centuries, some of whom were prisoners of war at Portchester. This metal eagle was a French soldier's badge and tells us which regiment he belonged to.



19TH-CENTURY PIPE

Clay pipe, ceramic, late 19th century.

In the 19th century, people smoked tobacco in disposable clay pipes. This one shows a hand holding a heart, symbolising love. The 'Heart in Hand' was the name of a pub in nearby Portsmouth, so maybe the pipe was sold there.



ACTIVITY 2

Recommended For

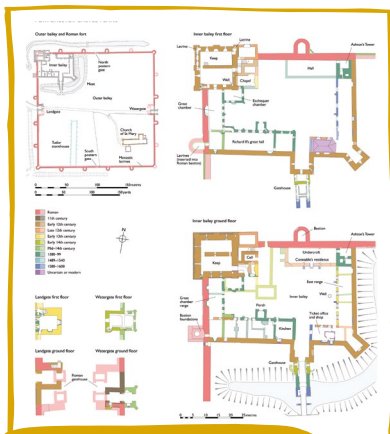
KS1 and KS2
(History, Geography, English)

Learning Objectives

- Understand Portchester Castle in its local context and develop orientation skills.
- Explore the geography of Portchester Castle and learn important geographical vocabulary.



An aerial view of Portchester Castle.



A preview of the site plan, available for download.

Summary

Before your visit, display Google Maps on a projector screen and use the 'map view' to locate Portchester Castle with your class. Ask students to notice the geographical relationship between Portchester Castle, Portsmouth Harbour and the Isle of Wight. You can use 'street view' to explore the grounds of the castle and the surrounding area.

For KS1 students, you could print a version of the map and give it to them to label with basic vocabulary such as: north, south, east, west, beach, coast, sea, town, port, harbour.

For KS2 students, you could ask them to be more specific about the location of: the English Channel, the Solent, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, Spinnaker Tower and Fort Nelson.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

During your visit, stand inside the Roman walls, as close to the centre as you can, and discuss compass directions. You might like to bring some compasses with you to help. Ask students:

- Where can I find the north postern gate? (students should point to the centre of the north wall)
- Where can I find the south postern gate? (centre of the south wall)
- In which direction is the watergate? (east)
- In which direction is the landgate? (west)
- What is in the north-west corner? (the keep)
- What is in the south-east corner? (St Mary's Church)

To help with this activity, download the Site Plan in the Teachers' Resource Pack: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/portchester-castle/school-visits>

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, you could use an Ordnance Survey map to develop students' understanding of OS symbols. You can also use this opportunity to discuss the significance of latitude, longitude and co-ordinates.

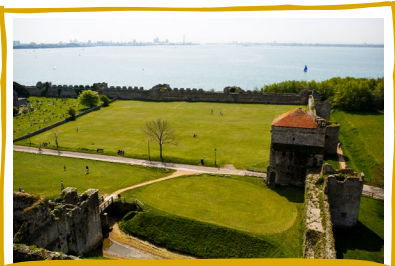
ACTIVITY 3

Recommended For

KS2 and KS3
(History, Geography)

Learning Objectives

- To identify some of the geographical features of the area surrounding Portchester Castle.
- To consider the historical significance of Portchester Castle's location.



A view to the south from the keep.



A view to the south-east from the keep.

Summary

During your visit, take students up the spiral staircase to the roof of the keep, where they will get an incredible view of the surrounding area. Once you are at the top, ask students to identify north, south, east and west; you might like to bring some compasses with you to help.

Explain to students that the castle was built on a low-lying spit of land that sticks out into the natural harbour of Portsmouth. It was the perfect place to build a fortress to defend this stretch of water.

We advise you to climb the stairs in small groups and please be aware that the roof is sometimes shut during bad weather.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

From the roof, ask students to spot these landmarks:

- St Mary's Church in the south-east corner of the outer bailey. It was built within the Roman walls in the early 12th century.
- Fort Nelson to the north of the castle, the red building on top of Portsdown Hill. It was built in the 1860s as part of a chain of Victorian coastal forts.
- The Isle of Wight to the south-west of the castle.
- The stretch of sea known as the Solent, between the mainland and the Isle of Wight.
- Portsmouth Harbour to the south-east of the castle. It is naturally defended by the Isle of Wight and the bit of land on which Portchester Castle sits.
- Spinnaker Tower which overlooks Portsmouth Harbour. It is shaped like a sail to reflect Portsmouth's maritime history.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, ask students to list the reasons why this was such a good spot to build and develop Portchester Castle, e.g. close to a harbour, easy access to mainland Europe, good natural defences, intimidating sight for approaching enemy ships.

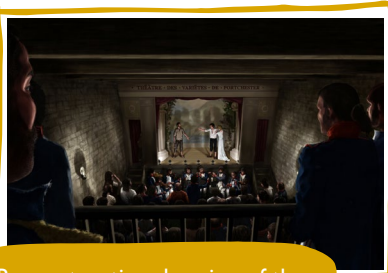
ACTIVITY 4

Recommended For

KS3
(History, English, Drama)

Learning Objectives

- To understand the role of theatre in the lives of the prisoners of war at Portchester Castle.
- To explore the type of plays that were performed in the prisoners' theatre at Portchester Castle.



Reconstruction drawing of the prisoners' theatre c.1811.



Photo of the reconstructed prisoners' theatre at Portchester.

Summary

In the early 19th century, prisoners of war were kept at Portchester. In 1811, a large group of prisoners arrived, some of whom had teamed up to create a theatrical troupe while in captivity. The troupe was led by a M. Carré, who had worked behind the scenes at the famous Théâtre Feydeau in Paris. They created a theatre on the ground floor of the keep at Portchester (see reconstruction drawing). English Heritage has rebuilt the theatre to show how it may have looked in the 19th century, for you and your students to enjoy (see photo).

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Before your visit, introduce students to the genre of theatre known as 'melodrama' which was popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. It's known for its exaggerated character types and sensational plots. To explore melodrama further, put students in groups of three and ask them to prepare a scene, using the character details and short script on the following pages.

During your visit, select one or two groups to perform their scenes on the stage in the prisoners' theatre.

While we encourage you to use the stage for performances, please be aware that the room will be open to the public during your visit.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, students can write their own melodrama scene, using the example on the next page as a model. Their scripts should explore themes of love, jealousy, and good overcoming evil. The storyline should include a villain with a nasty plan, a damsel in distress and a hero who saves the day.

ACTIVITY 4 continued

This script is based on a 19th century, melodrama play called 'Roseliska' written and performed by French prisoners of war at Portchester's theatre. For each of the characters, the acting style should be 'melodramatic' (exaggerated).

Characters

Polowitz – the villain. He is jealous and manipulative. His voice is deep, sinister and low pitched. He moves quickly, with shifty footsteps and hunched shoulders. His body language is tense and suspicious.

Roseliska – the damsel. She is beautiful and kind, and often finds herself in distressing situations. Her voice is soft, feminine and high pitched. She has an upright posture and is very light on her feet. Her gestures are dainty and graceful, unless she is panicked when they become frantic.

Stanislas – the hero. He has a strong sense of justice and gets angry when he sees good people suffering. His voice is calm, strong and low pitched. He moves confidently, with wide strides and his chest puffed out. His gestures are powerful and composed.

Scene

Polowitz: Are you trying to get away from me, madame?

Roseliska: I'm sorry, sir, but my husband arrives today and I must use all of my time getting ready for his return.

Polowitz: I am also looking forward to his arrival for Stanislas is a good friend of mine. [aside – speaking to the audience, the damsel doesn't hear] If only it were in my power to delay his arrival.

Roseliska: This is without doubt the best day of my life. May heaven prevent it being ruined!

Polowitz: Madame, your husband has been away fighting a war. Are you sure he still loves you as much as he did when he left? I know my friend; he loses interest in things very quickly.

Roseliska: Please stop, sir. I won't have this discussion with you. I am certain of my husband's love for me. I would never expect a friend to say such a thing! Those are the words of an enemy.



ACTIVITY 4 continued

Scene (continued)

Polowitz: Forgive me those words. I am not your enemy. The truth is... I love you.

Roseliska: [shocked] You love me? How dare you say you love me?

Polowitz: My beautiful Roseliska, I have been keeping it a secret my whole life, but now my passion for you is tearing me apart.

Roseliska: Sir...

Polowitz: You are trembling, I see, but the strength of my love for you is my only excuse. [he falls to his knees] I beg you, do not reject the words of a man who is on his knees. I cannot live without you!

Roseliska: I cannot remain here any longer. I must leave. I urge you to forget your love for me. [She goes to leave. The villain holds her back.]

Polowitz: Stop struggling, madame. Your resistance only makes my love stronger.

Roseliska: Cease this, sir. I will listen no longer. [She goes to leave and he holds her back.] Stop this, cruel villain. Be gone, get away from me, every moment near you makes me die a thousand times over.

Polowitz: Oh, I'll leave, but not without locking you up first! I will enjoy the bitter tears you cry. Guards, remove this woman, and take her to the dungeons of my castle at...

Stanislas: Stop there, villain, give me back my wife, and fear for your life!

Roseliska: Good heavens, it's Stanislas!

Polowitz: [he laughs] Ha! Now I can lock your husband in the dungeon and keep you all to myself.

Stanislas: Traitor! You can take our lives, but at least let us die together.

Polowitz: No, I'll hear none of this. You will pay for your arrogance with your life. [Tableau (frozen image) showing Stanislas winning a fight with Polowitz while Roseliska watches.]

Stanislas: Oh, Roseliska, I can finally press you to my heart once more. I am so sorry you had to suffer at the hands of the vile Polowitz.

Roseliska: My husband! We are finally back together.



ACTIVITY 5

Recommended For

KS3 and KS4
(History, English, Citizenship)

Learning Objectives

- Understand Portchester Castle's role as a prisoner-of-war camp during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.
- Explore Portchester Castle's international prisoner-of-war story, including facts about the African-Caribbean prisoners kept here.



The second floor of the keep.



The third floor of the keep.

Summary

Before your visit, read the sections called 'Prisoners at Portchester' and 'Black Prisoners of War' in the Teachers' Resource Pack, which you can download at: www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/portchester-castle/school-visits

To find out more, read our online history articles:

www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/portchester-castle/history-and-stories

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

During your visit, gather students on the second floor of the keep (the one with a map in the centre, as seen in the photo on the left). Explain to students that they are going to find out more about the prisoners of war kept here and ask them to look at the 'Flock of Dreams' sculpture above their heads. This represents the letters to and from prisoners of war, flying over the English Channel like birds.

Split students into two groups and ask group 1 to stay on the second floor while group 2 go up the stairs to the third floor (see photo). Please ensure that both groups are accompanied by school staff. Students can explore the rooms to find answers to the questions on the next page.

Once they have completed the first set of questions, ask groups 1 and 2 to swap over and complete the three questions they haven't yet done.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, students could apply their knowledge by writing a diary entry in the role of a prisoner of war, sharing their experience of being captured, transported and imprisoned at Portchester. They could choose one of these scenarios to help them get started:

- You have just been captured; it's your first day on the ship.
- You have been on the ship for two months.
- You have just arrived at Portchester prisoner-of-war camp.
- You have been at Portchester as a prisoner for six months.

ACTIVITY 5 continued

Second-Floor Questions

- 1) Look for the picture of a prison 'hulk' (a naval ship with masts removed), painted by Captain Durrant, RN in about 1810. Around 850 prisoners would be kept on one hulk. What did the Transport Office do to their clothing and bedding? Why?
A: Their clothing and bedding were dyed yellow and stamped 'TO' (for Transport Office) to stop them from being stolen.
- 2) Find the panel called 'Portchester as a Prisoner-of-War Depot'. Between 1793 and 1815, how many prisoners of war could be kept at Portchester Castle at any one time?
A: 8,000.
- 3) Look for the panel called 'Prisoners at Portchester' and read about the prisoners' daily routine. What two things happened at 12 noon?
A: French prisoners opened their stalls in the market to sell their craft objects. Food (soup and beef) was handed out.

Third-Floor Questions

- 1) Look for the panel called 'Black Soldiers at Portchester'. What happened in May 1796 on the island of St Lucia?
A: The French army at Fort Charlotte on St Lucia surrendered to the British, which led to many soldiers of African and European descent being captured and transported to Britain as prisoners of war.
- 2) Read the panel called 'Life at Portchester Castle'. What three things did the prison staff do to help the African-Caribbean prisoners?
A: Gave them extra clothing, arranged a special diet, and eventually separated them from the European prisoners to protect them from robbery.
- 3) Find the panel called 'What Happened to the Black Prisoners?' Captain Louis Delgrés was a mixed-race soldier captured in the Caribbean and brought to Portchester. What happened to him when he eventually returned to the Caribbean?
A: He fought against Napoleon's attempts to bring back slavery and led an important anti-slavery campaign, taking up arms against France. He and his followers were eventually surrounded at Matouba in Guadeloupe. On the 28 May 1802, Louis Delgrés and his followers blew themselves up rather than be captured and enslaved.

ACTIVITY 5 continued

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