

Corfe Castle

in

Purbeck

Corfe Castle

Corfe Castle is now a majestic and stunning ruin, but was once known as the strongest fortress in Europe, and the place chosen to hold the crown jewels during the 12th Century. The name 'Corfe' is derived from an Old English word meaning 'gap', which highlights the excellent positioning of the castle on a hill between two chalk ridges. The position of the castle makes it an exceptional lookout point, with a clear view of the lands to both the north and the south. The castle has been the residence of many Royals since it was built in 1086 and also the setting of many remarkable, deceitful and gruesome acts in history.

Outer Gatehouse

The Outer Gatehouse would be one of the first lines of defence of the castle. When under attack the drawbridge would be raised and the attacking army would have to tackle the steep slopes of the dry moat, which would be particularly hard due to their extremely heavy armour. If they managed to cross the drawbridge, they were faced with several obstacles before being inside the castle walls. A portcullis, a large iron gate with sharp points, would be dropped (large grooves can be seen on either side of the doorway) and a thick oak door would be held shut using a tree trunk that would slide into the large square holes on either side, acting as a giant lock. The space in between was not a very good place to be trapped as you would most likely be murdered by having boiling oil poured over you, through the holes so suitably named 'murder holes'.

The Keep

The Keep was the last line of defence, and was where the Royals would eat, sleep and entertain when staying at Corfe. All the jewels, treasures and finery would be stored up high on the top floor, with the king's chamber on the floor below. The main floor contained the Great Hall, where the King would eat surrounded by his royal court.

North Tower

Corfe Castle was one of the last strong holds for the Royalists during the Civil War which began in 1642. Unlike many of the other castles that had been captured by the Parliamentarians, Corfe was not taken by force, but was captured due to the deceitful decisions of a traitor, by the name of Colonel Pitman. The Bankes' family owned the castle during the Civil War, and Dame Mary Bankes' defended the castle against the Parliamentarians, undergoing several long sieges. Once the castle was captured, Mary and her family were allowed to leave unharmed. However, Parliament under the order of Oliver Cromwell ordered the complete destruction of the castle due to it being an embarrassment to their army and campaign. It is said that after the civil war Alfred Bankes (Dame Mary's son) returned to the castle and built a wooden house in the North tower to live in.

Horseshoe Tower

This is probably where the stables and blacksmith of the castle would have been located. This is a good place to look at the narrow cross shaped windows, which are called 'arrow slits' due to their use by archers to launch arrows through.

Gloriette

The Gloriette was built by King John during his reign between 1199 and 1216. Even though the Royal treasury was left empty after Richard the Lionheart's crusade campaign, King John raised the taxes and extravagantly built this part of the castle. It was mainly used for banquets and entertaining Royal guests.

South-West Gatehouse

The South-West Gatehouse provided another layer of protection against an attacking army, and is constructed in a very similar way to the Outer Gatehouse.

Butavant Tower (Surgeon's Tower)

This is where the Torture Chamber of the castle was located. Many gruesome and brutal acts of torture would be carried out on enemy soldiers, servants and peasants. A stone hook is visible at the top of one of the walls, and it is said that it was used to hang people over the castle walls.

Questions

1. What does the word 'corfe' mean?

2. In what year was Corfe Castle built?

3. In the Outer Gatehouse what are the round holes called and what were they used for?

4. Who lived in the Keep?

5. What was kept on the top floor of the Keep?

6. During the Civil War the castle was defended by a lady, what was her name?

7. Was she a Royalist or a Parliamentarian?

8. What are the thin slit windows called and what were they used for?

9. Who built the Gloriette?

10. What happened in the Butavant Tower and what was the hook said to be used for?

Corfe Castle Word Search

c	j	o	h	n	b	e	b	p	a
h	o	a	f	w	o	d	l	e	t
a	a	r	r	o	w	w	o	a	t
l	t	c	f	b	m	a	w	c	a
k	o	h	e	e	s	r	u	h	c
e	w	e	a	a	t	d	p	e	k
s	e	r	t	k	h	m	n	s	e
c	r	k	h	b	a	i	l	e	Y
a	s	i	e	g	e	f	a	d	t
p	b	l	r	a	q	z	r	u	n
e	s	l	q	p	l	o	o	p	m
g	n	i	k	v	w	p	e	e	k
i	n	v	a	s	i	o	n	t	a

Corfe

Attack

Edward

Escape

King

Arrow

Sword

Feather

Siege

Bow

Archer

Keep

John

Blow up

Tower

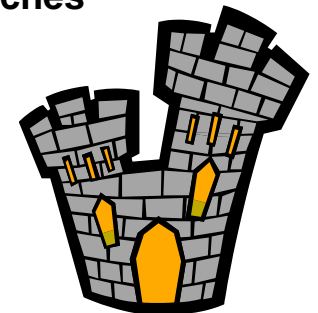
Chalk

Gap

Kill

Bailey

Peaches



Corfe Castle

Label the following places onto the map of the castle:

Outer Gatehouse

Keep

North Tower

Horseshoe Tower

Gloriette

South-West Gatehouse

Butavant Tower
(surgeons tower)

