

History



Find out about West Blockhouse's past...



Here's a picture of me in my uniform – don't I look smart?

One of my many jobs here is to fire warning shots across the **bow** of any ships who weren't following rules laid down to protect the port and dockyard.

My bunkmate Billy has the job of guiding the RAF flying boats back into the dock – he uses a big searchlight to help them back safely. What an important job, keeping them away from all the jagged rocks around here! Would you like that kind of responsibility?

Hello! Welcome to the West Blockhouse. My name is Peter and I have been stationed here since 1940. When World War II broke out in 1939 me and some others from my **squadron** were sent to join the 'Heavy **Regiment** Royal Artillery' here for a year or so, to help protect the port at Milford Haven from German attack. I was just 17 years old when I was sent here and I remember feeling quite frightened walking down the path through the darkness to the drawbridge! The drop off the edge is so deep and it looks endless in the dark!

It's really busy here at the fort, we're up at the crack of dawn every day. Usually the seagulls wake us up which is lucky because if we're not out of bed on time Lieutenant Jones comes and gives us a real telling off!

Facts:

A **regiment** is a permanent unit of an army. It's usually commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel (say *Loo-ten-ant Cur-nall*) and divided into different sections, such as companies, **squadrons** or batteries (not the kind you put in your torch, silly! It means a unit in charge of some guns.)

The **bow** of a ship is the part which faces forward when the ship is sailing. The back of the ship is called the **stern**.



A WWII RAF flying boat stationed at Pembroke Dock

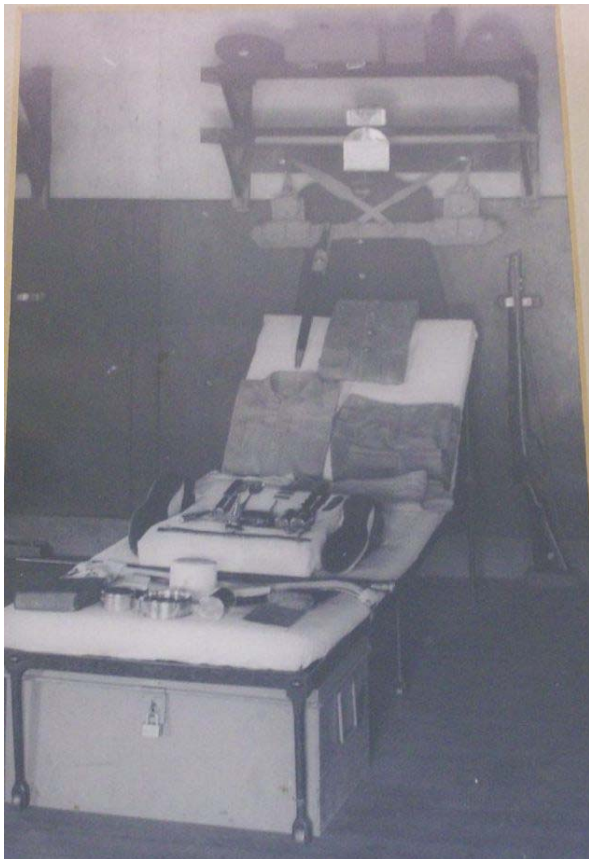


As well as carrying out our day jobs defending against enemy planes, Lieutenant Jones also surprises us with inspections to see whether we're keeping our uniforms and guns in good condition. He always calls these inspections on a Sunday, which is supposed to be our day of rest, how mean!

We all line up and he walks along checking our boots, jackets and belts. If your uniform isn't in tiptop condition you are punished, usually some nasty job like cleaning gull poo off of the parapet – yuk!

It's not just our uniforms that get checked either – we have to keep our sleeping areas really tidy too. When I arrived, I was handed a diagram showing exactly how my room should appear on inspection day, with all my kit laid out neatly.

Don't tell your parents about this though or they might get ideas when you aren't keeping your room tidy at home!

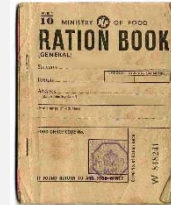


A soldier's bed laid out ready for inspection. Everything had to be in an exact location according to a chart given out on arrival.

Fact:

To make the British weak, the Germans tried to cut off supplies of food and other goods. German submarines attacked many of the ships that brought food to Britain.

Rationing was introduced so that everyone was given the same amount of food. Ration tokens were handed out which you had to exchange at the local shop for things like Butter, eggs, meat, flour and sugar. People were encouraged to grow their own vegetables to help feed their families.



Mealtimes are tough at the fort too. The government bought in something called **rationing** during the Second World War because food supplies were so low.

Most of our meals are made up of tinned meats, like corned beef served with potatoes and some veg.

I hear that the soldiers out in the field in Europe have to eat most of their foods cold. At least we're lucky enough to be able to eat ours warm from the cook-house outside!

I've got a sweet-tooth so I really miss eating chocolate. What foods would you miss the most if rationing was introduced in your day?



West Blockhouse Timeline...

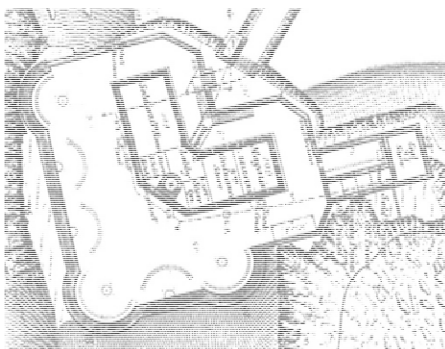
Although the West Blockhouse was used as a defensive base in the Second World War, it hasn't always been so.

Look at the timeline below to give you an idea as to what it's been used for over the years.

1866 – Soldiers occupying the fort

Plans show that soldiers were sleeping in barrack rooms on the ground and first floors. They ate and had their leisure time in those rooms too – imagine living your life in one room?!

There were six 68-pounder guns in place at the fort. Advances in technology at this time though meant that the fort would have been unlikely to withstand attack from cannon fire.



1939 and World War Two

The threat of attack by the Germans was very real and so the fort filled with soldiers once again. Defence was mainly by machine gun. The Germans attacked Pembroke Docks in July 1940.

When the war ended, the fort was used for military training exercise by the army, but it was formally closed in 1956.

1850's Prime Minister Palmerston

In the 1850's the UK's relationship with France was becoming very tense. Palmerston was worried about an attack and ordered many forts be constructed along our coastline. West Blockhouse was one of these and was built in 1854-7.

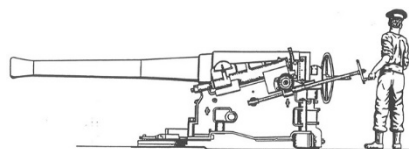
The French never invaded though.

1900's and World War One

The fort was named a Counter Bombardment Battery and given new Breech Loading guns in 1901. A new battery was built outside the blockhouse to house more soldiers.

The fort didn't actually see any action in WWI though!

When the war ended, most of the soldiers left and a caretaker along with a few men to maintain the guns looked after the fort.



The Landmark Trust – 1969

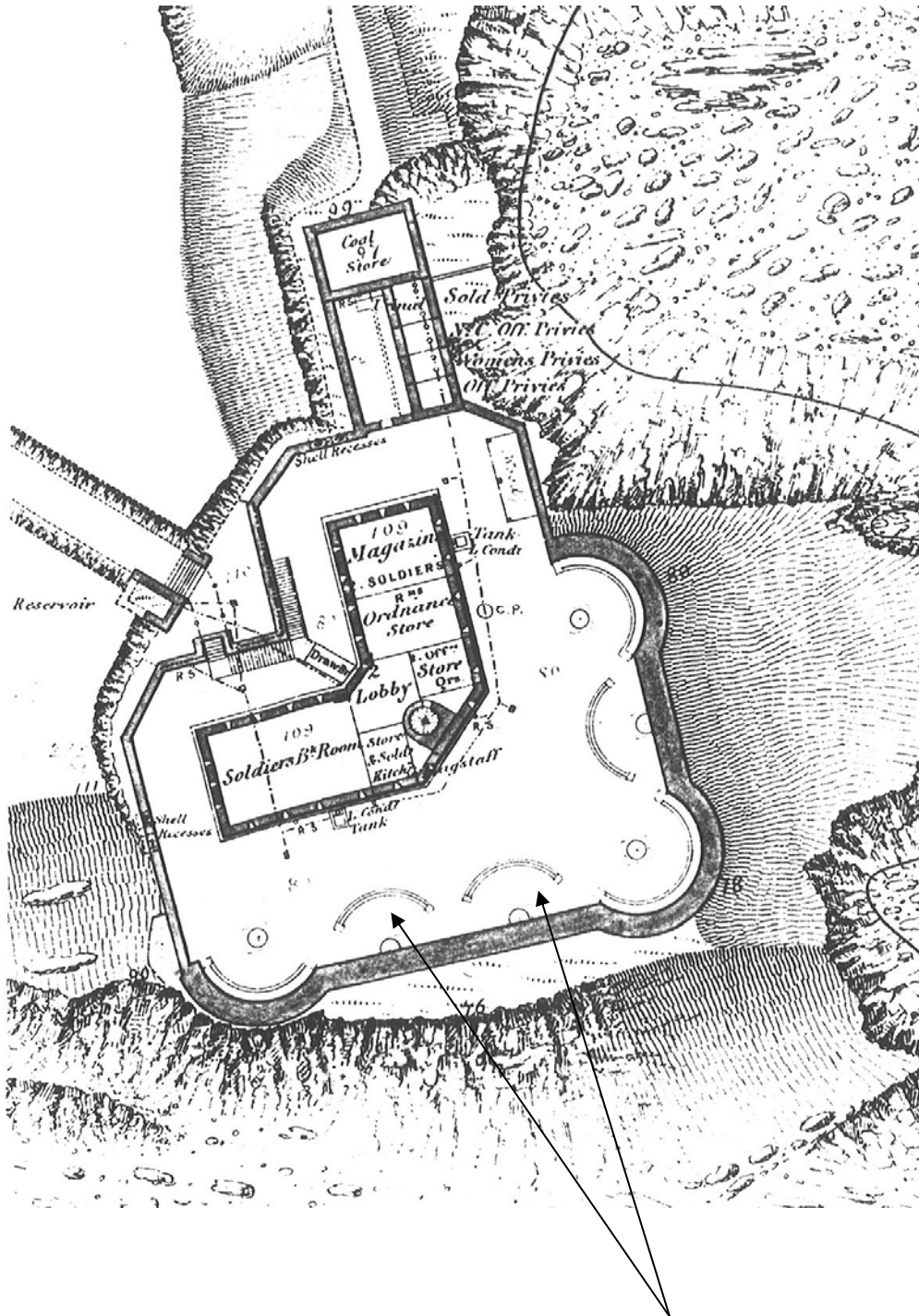
Landmark bought the fort and the land surrounding it.

Work didn't start on making it in to a holiday home until 1986.

Now you, and many others are able to enjoy the fort and it's amazing views out to sea!



Take a Closer Look...



How many round turrets can you see?

Where do you think the guns were placed? Draw them on if you like.

Can you draw an arrow to where the soldiers barrack rooms were?

Can you find the privies? A privy is an outdoor toilet. Imagine having to walk outside to the toilet on a cold, stormy night! Brrr!

There are separate privies for men, women and officers.

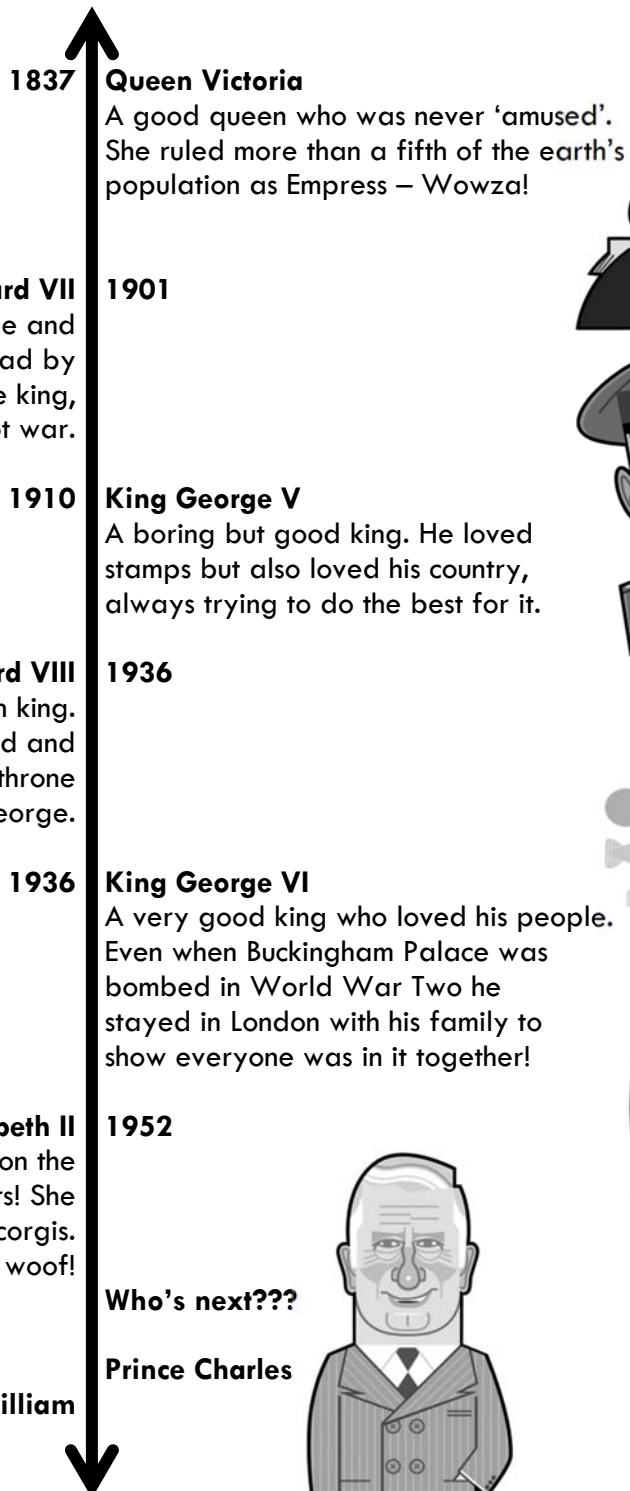
What do you think the semi-circle shapes are?

That's right – they are gun-rails. If you go to the east side of the Blockhouse, you'll see them. The guns were mounted on carriages that had wheels. These wheels fit on to the rails and meant that you could move the gun around to aim it. How clever!

Unruly Rulers

Who were the Saxe-Coburgs and Windsors?

Saxe-Coburg was the surname of German Prince Albert who was Queen Victoria's husband. When Victoria died **Saxe-Coburg** continued as the royal family surname. It changed to **Windsor** in 1917 because England was fighting against Germany in World War One and the King was worried British people wouldn't like a German royal family anymore - so he changed them to **Windsors**, after the castle.





Meet Queen Victoria **– who ruled when West Blockhouse** **was built.**



Hi Vicky!

So when did you become queen?

I became queen on the 20 June 1837 when I was 18.

What's your nickname?

Some people call me The Grandmother of Europe. I had 9 children who married different European princes and princesses. I had 42 grandchildren in total!

What is your favourite thing to do?

I loved visiting Scotland. I even built a castle so that I could go all the time!

What is the naughtiest thing you've ever done?

How dare you, I am never naughty. Everyone must be well behaved at all times.



What does West Blockhouse look like?

Can you walk all the way around it?

Can you use any of these words to describe the building? Draw a circle around the ones that do.

Does West Blockhouse look like other buildings in the area? What's different?

Safe

Military

Stone

Symmetrical

Square

Friendly

Tall

Industrial

Brick

Home

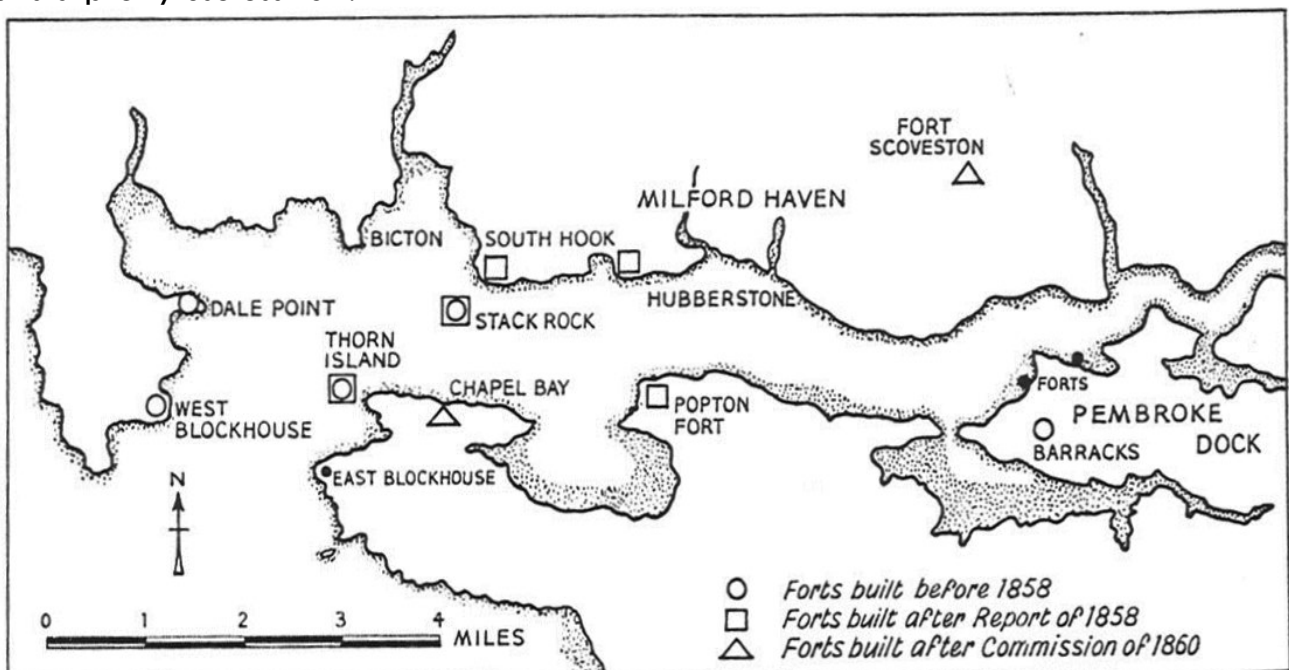
Elegant

Foreboding

In the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s, Prime Minister Palmerston ordered the building of many coastal defences and forts along our coastline. Palmerston was worried about attacks from the French and their new warships. He wanted to protect our important ports and harbours.

The map below shows the number of forts built in the Pembroke area alone, to help defend the natural deep-water anchorage leading into the dock.

The West Blockhouse was built from finely dressed limestone quarried locally in Pembrokeshire. Although it looks really strong, by the time it was completed, weapons had advanced so much that it would not have survived an attack by canon. Some might say that's a pretty useless fort!



A map showing the fortifications at Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire and Pembroke Dock in the 19th century

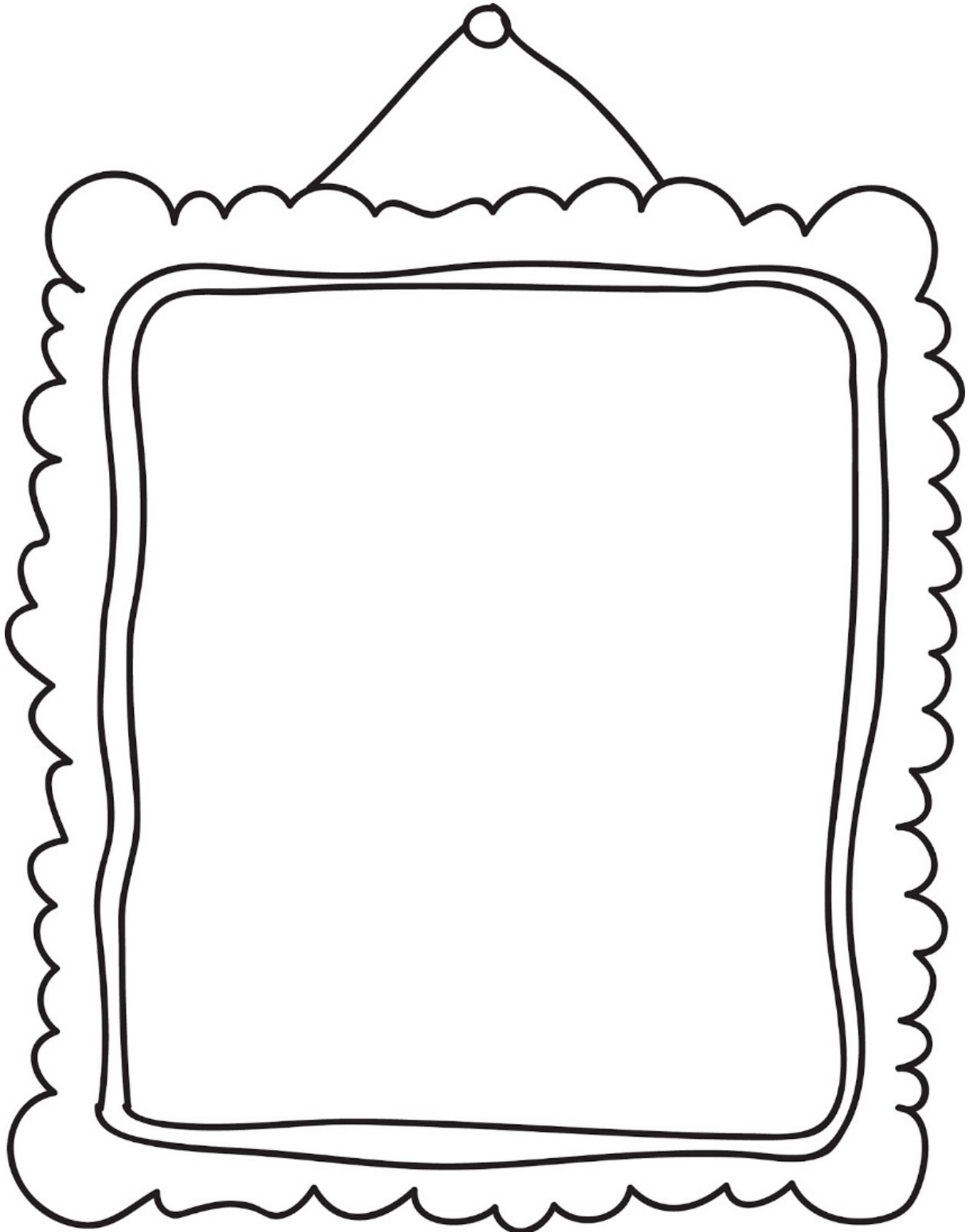
Colour in the shapes – red for before 1858, blue for after 1858 and green for after 1860



Buildings are quite easy to draw. They are usually made up of lots of geometric shapes, like squares, triangles and circles.

Have a go at drawing some the main fort at West Blockhouse.

Please tell an adult where you are going so they don't worry about where you are!





What is West Blockhouse built from?

Fact:

Some buildings were built from stone that was dug out of the ground when farmers ploughed the fields, other buildings were made from stone that was quarried and cut into neat shapes and sizes. There are still many stone quarries around the country today, where people get stone out of the ground.

Stone houses were once cheaper to build than brick ones. Once we could transport bricks up and down the country on the canals and railways, brick buildings become cheaper and more popular.

Stone is the solid foundation of the earth. It exists as huge mountains, rocks, stones or small pebbles washed smooth by water. There are lots of different types of stone, with different colours and textures. Some are better to build with than others.



In the 1800's, stone was still taken out of the ground by hand. It was exhausting and backbreaking work! Today, a quarry is a place where stone is blasted out of the ground with explosives! The one in the picture shows what quarries look like now.



People who work with stone are called stonemasons. They build walls, carve the stone into shapes or add patterns to its surface. They use a mallet and special tools called chisels to shape the stone. The picture on the left shows a stonemason hard at work.

Mallet



Chisels





What other building materials can you find outside and inside West Blockhouse?

Stone

Glass

Circle what you can see and note down where you found them.

Wood

Plastic

Metal

Clay

Flint

Concrete

Brick

Ceramic

When you have found some of the building materials above, why not try making a crayon rubbing in the box below to see the different textures and shapes they make.

Place a piece of paper over the surface you wish to take a rubbing of and then rub a wax crayon or coloured pencil across it. Look at the pattern it's made!



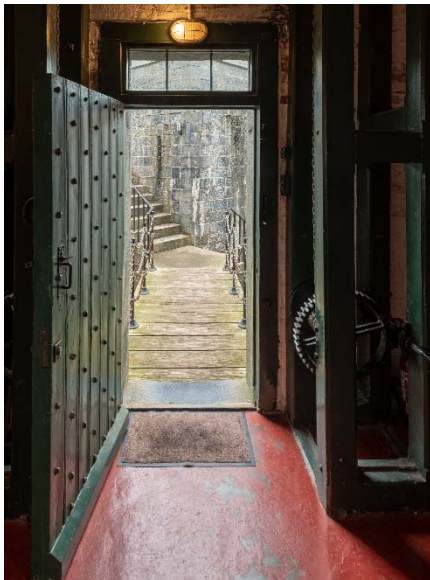
Discover more about West Blockhouse...

West Blockhouse has been standing on this site for over 165 years! In that time, many things have changed both inside and outside the building. Follow this Quest to discover more about it.



Go outside to the path where this photo was taken, remember to take an adult with you.

How did you feel when you first arrived at the fort? Did you arrive in the dark or in daylight?



Can you find the large cog and handle shown in the picture on the left?

What do you think it was used for?

That's right, it was used to raise and lower the drawbridge!
Cool, eh?

How long do you think it would have taken to raise the drawbridge?

Spiral Staircase

These stairs lead up to the roof. They are made from metal and have what we call 'open risers'. This means that there is no vertical part of the step so do take care!

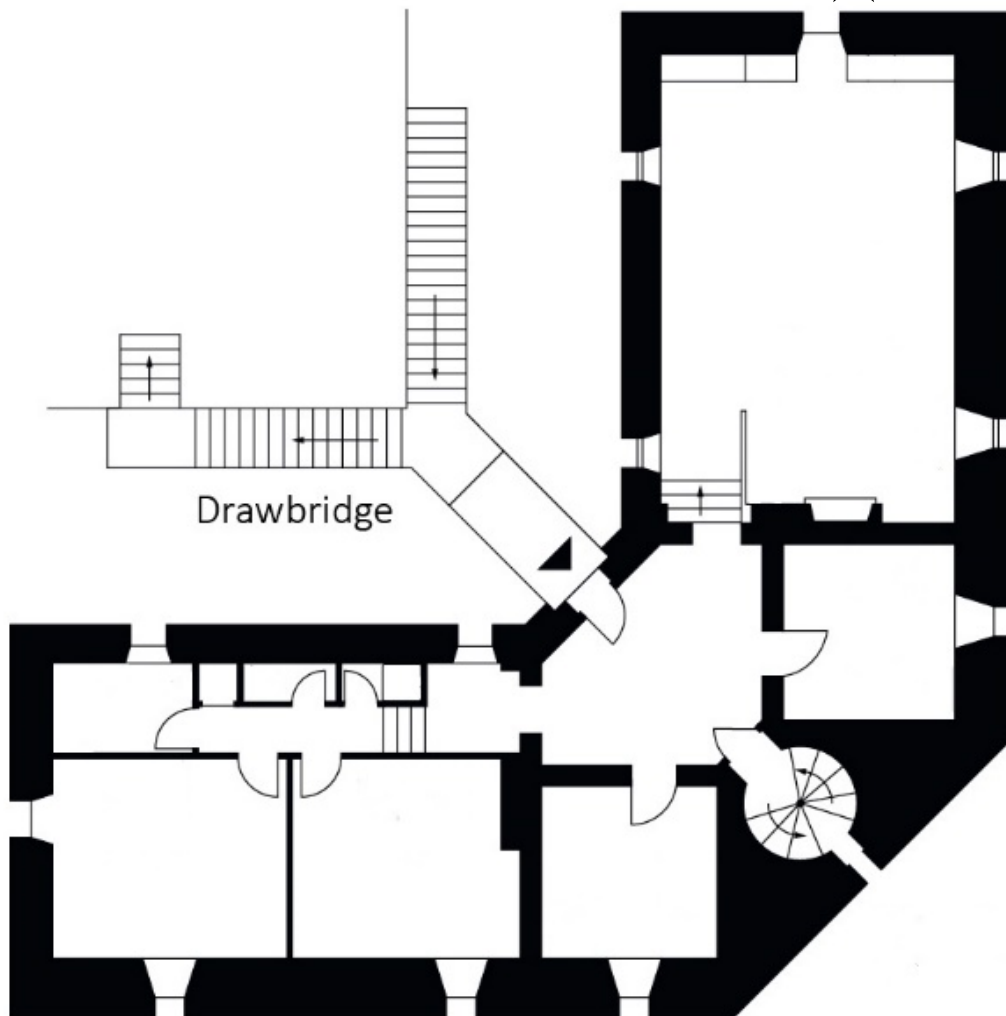
Have you gone on to the roof yet? The views are amazing!





Living in West Blockhouse

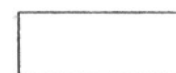
The floorplan of a building is a map of the rooms. West Blockhouse is all on one level. The plans below show you the shape of each room. Take a walk around. Write on the plan what each room is used for. Mark the room you are sleeping in with a star



We use these symbols to show where beds, tables and bathrooms are. Draw the symbols on to the floorplans to show where the furniture is.



Bed



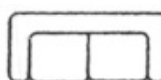
Rectangular (or a round) table



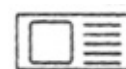
Bathroom



Cooker



Sofa



Kitchen sink



Can you find an example of each of these things inside West Blockhouse?
Describe, or draw the object when you find it.

Your favourite piece of furniture

A large empty rectangular box for drawing or describing a favourite piece of furniture.

The fireplace (is it an open fire or does it have a stove?)

A large empty rectangular box for drawing or describing a fireplace.

Draw the pattern of a rug on the floor

A large empty rectangular box for drawing the pattern of a rug on the floor.

In the box below, draw your favourite view.
Can you see any boats on the sea?
Or any seabirds?

A large empty rectangular box for drawing a favourite view, including boats or seabirds.



West Blockhouse Word Search

Now have a go at the word search. Think about different parts of the building and what might have been here in the Victorian times. The words to find are at the bottom of the page.

P	T	X	A	R	T	I	L	L	E	R	Y
W	I	N	D	O	W	S	Z	N	A	G	D
T	E	P	A	R	A	P	H	W	N	R	Q
T	R	O	O	P	S	M	I	A	W	A	E
Y	R	E	T	T	A	B	F	V	N	N	G
L	I	M	E	S	T	O	N	E	A	I	D
R	A	L	A	R	I	P	S	S	I	T	I
S	S	E	R	T	R	O	F	O	R	E	R
E	C	E	A	N	L	S	T	N	O	H	B
L	I	F	E	D	M	I	P	G	T	F	W
A	E	V	I	F	D	O	U	G	C	O	A
W	A	E	L	E	N	N	U	T	I	R	R
H	R	H	A	R	B	O	U	R	V	T	D

SOLDIER
GUN
TUNNEL
FORT
BATTERY

TIDE
HARBOUR
GRANITE
PARAPET
WALES

TROOPS
CANNON
LIMESTONE
FORTRESS
HAVEN

DRAWBRIDGE
VICTORIAN
ARTILLERY
SPIRAL
WINDOWS

How many of these words did you find? Put your score in the box.

20



Can you answer these questions correctly?

1. When was West Blockhouse built?

1854-1857

1632-1635

1954-1957

2002-2005

2. When was the fort closed?

1901

1987

1956

1899

3. Prime Minister Palmerston was worried about attacks from which country?

France

Austria

Russia

America

4. What was 'Rationing'?

Wireless radio

Sharing food equally

A popular dance

A war cry

5. What county in Wales is West Blockhouse in?

Powys

Pembrokeshire

Gwynedd

Denbighshire

6. Who was on the throne when West Blockhouse was constructed?

(Psst... check unruly rulers!)

Henry VIII

Victoria

George VI

Elizabeth I

7. Which stone was used to build West Blockhouse?

Limestone

Sandstone

Quartz

Slate

8. In what year did The Landmark Trust take over West Blockhouse?

1965

1974

1986

1969

9. Who used the fort after World War Two?

The Beefeaters

The Queen's Soldiers

The Marines

The Territorial Army

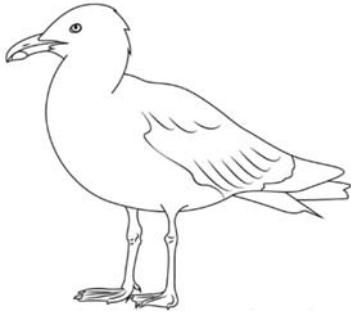
To find the answers skip one page...



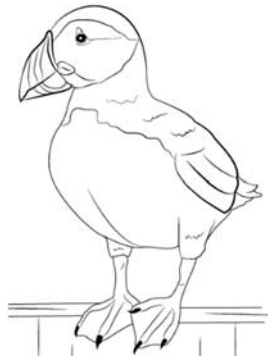
Whose nest is whose?

Can you match these seabirds to the nests?

Have you seen any of these birds during your time at West Blockhouse?



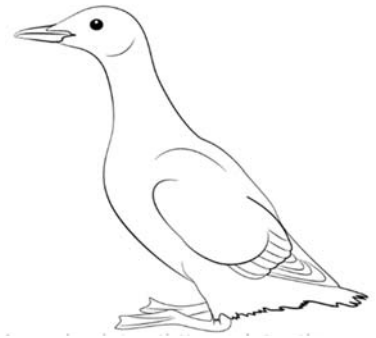
Herring Gull



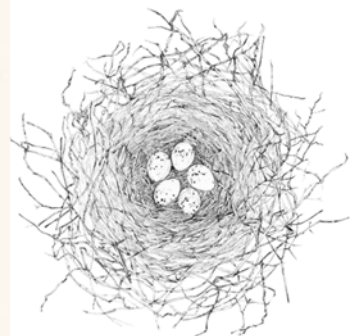
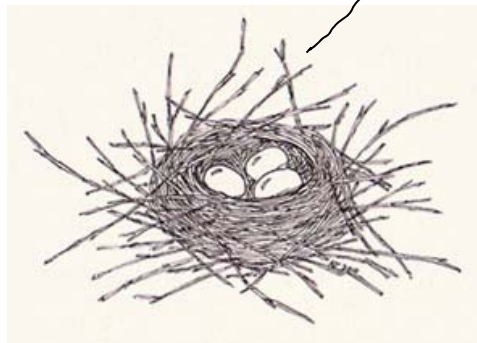
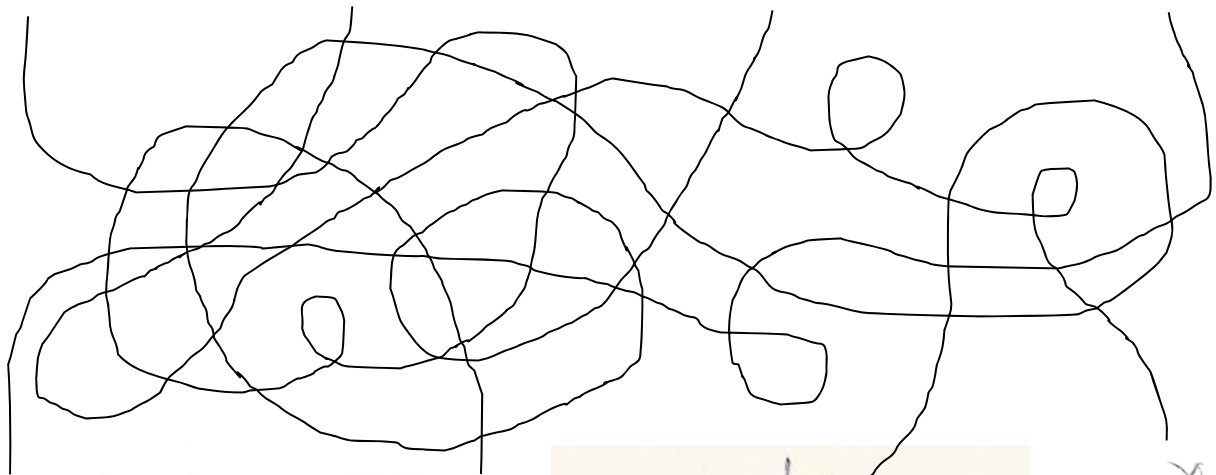
Puffin



Cormorant



Guillemot



Did you know...?

Guillemots (say *Gill-ee-mots*) actually prefer to lay their eggs on the rocks on cliff edges rather than in a protective nest!

Puffins beaks change throughout the year: in winter they are a dull grey colour, it isn't until spring that the bright colours show and this is to attract a mate.

Cormorants nest in groups and drop their poo on trees, bushes and rocks. Because so many cormorants nest in one place, their poo can stain rocks or even kill trees!



Answer sheet:

Question & Answer:

1. 1854-1857
2. 1956
3. France
4. Sharing food equally
5. Pembrokeshire
6. Victoria
7. Limestone
8. 1986
9. The Territorial Army

How many did you get right?



Write an acrostic poem about West Blockhouse.

W _____

E _____

S _____

T _____

B _____

L _____

O _____

C _____

K _____

H _____

O _____

U _____

S _____

E _____

Design your own flag

Since ancient times flags have been used to identify groups of people, countries and armies. Flags are mainly used today to represent a country. It looks like the picture below:



Each colour on a flag has its own particular meaning.

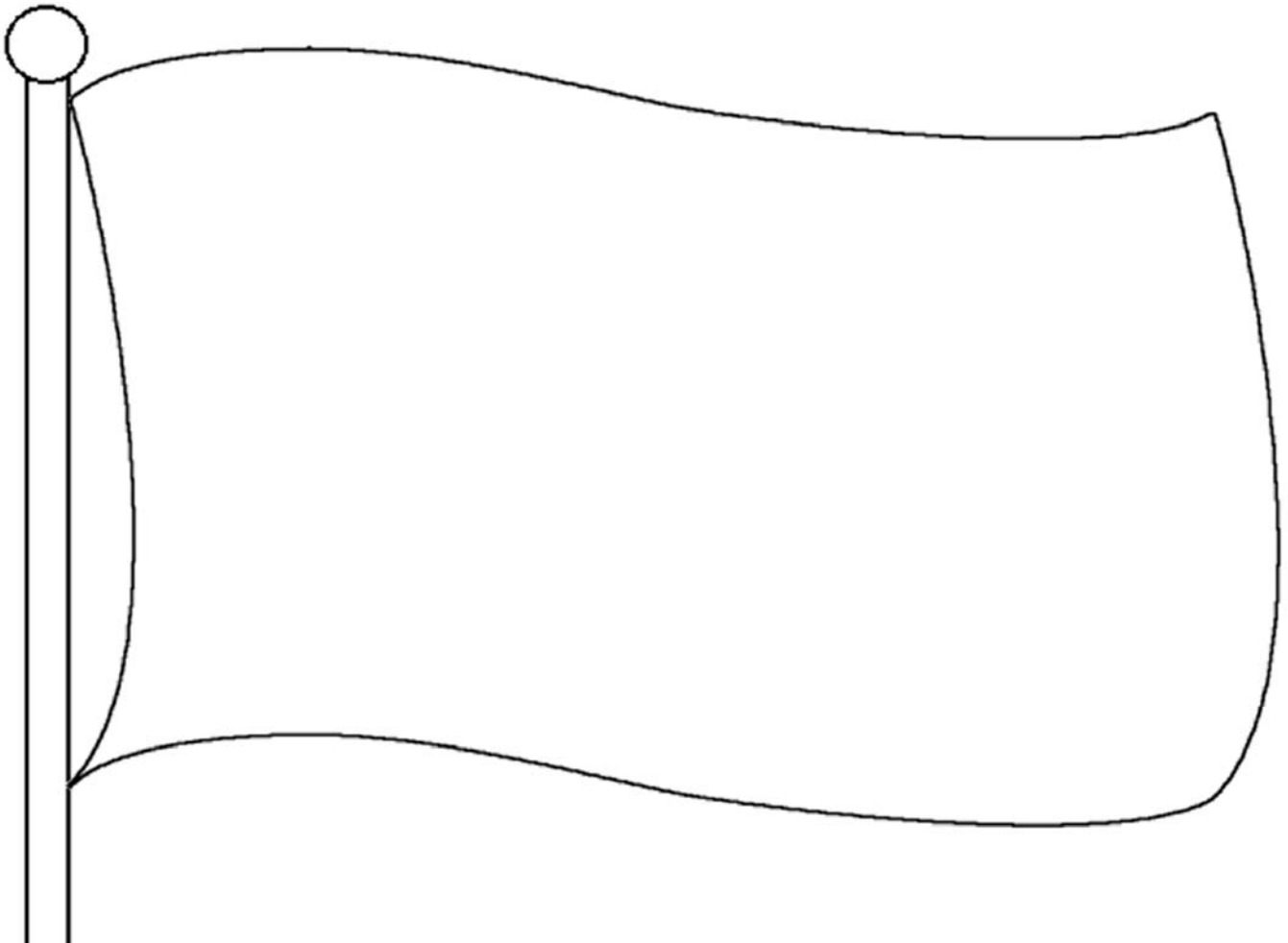
- Yellow: means truth, loyalty and justice
- White: means bravery and strength
- Red: means peace and honesty
- Blue: means generosity
- Green: means determination
- Black: means hope, joy and love

The Welsh flag has a red dragon standing on a green field.

Flags also have lots of different symbols:



Have a go at designing your own flag that best describes you! It can be as colourful and have as many shapes and pictures as you like.





Design Your Own Fort...

Think about what shape it would be? Would you build it in the side of a cliff like West Blockhouse or perhaps dig it into the ground so that it is more camouflaged? Where would you place your guns? Would you have a drawbridge?

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing a fort design.



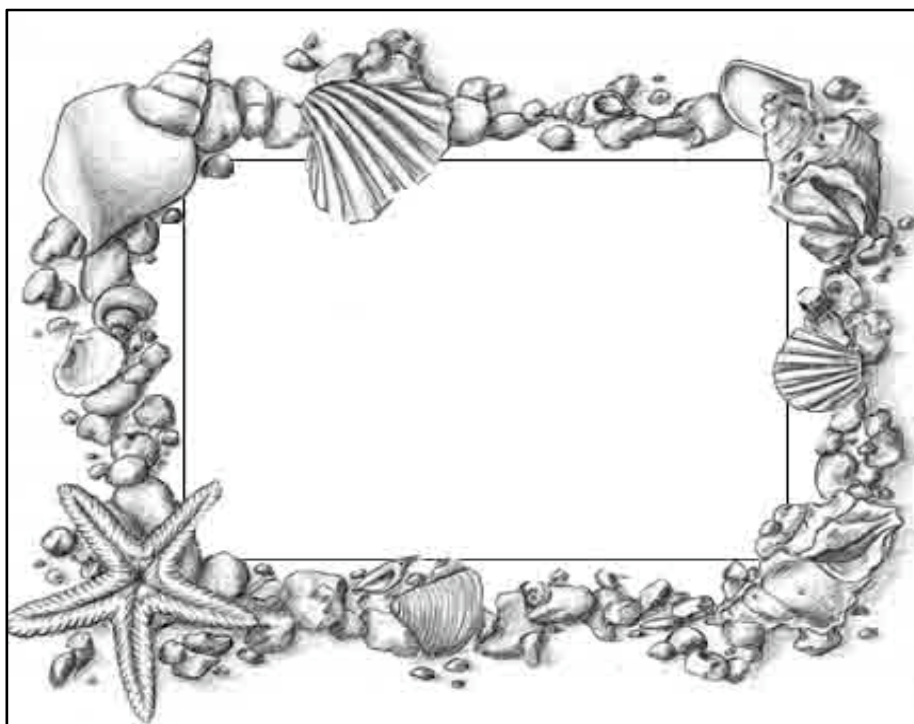
Create a shell photo frame

This is the perfect way to remember the seaside when you get home. You will need lots of different shells or little pebbles for this so if you go to the beach make sure you collect some. Get as many different shapes and sizes – it will make your photo frame more interesting!

You will need:

1 photo frame (it can be one you already have or get one from a charity shop)
Shells
PVA glue (make sure it's this sort of glue)
Spatula/ old paint brush
Glitter paint

- Make sure that all your shells are clean and dry.
- Cover the table with a tablecloth or newspaper – it may get messy!
- Now you can decorate – to stick the shells onto the photo frame put some PVA glue onto the edges of the shell using a spatula/ old paintbrush. Press the shell onto the frame - careful not to knock the shells already on the frame as you glue more shells on.
- Leave the glue to dry for at least 3 hours (it may take longer)
- Check glue has dried by gently trying to move shells
- Once dry the frame is finished - unless you want to paint the shells or put some glitter paint on the shells to make them sparkle!
- When you get home put in a photo of your holiday at West Blockhouse.





Make some Welsh cakes (Picau ar y maen)

These spiced cakes are also known as bakestones in Wales because they were traditionally cooked on a flat stone over a fire. When spices became available in the 17th century these were added for extra flavour. You can use a frying pan instead of a bakestone!

Ingredients

225 g self-raising flour

110g g unsalted Welsh butter

1 large egg, beaten

1 tbsp raisins or currants

85 g golden caster sugar

A little milk if needed

Fact:

Picau ar y maen (say 'Pikay air ee mine')

These are traditional Welsh tea cakes popular in Wales for the last 200 years.

- In a large bowl, rub the butter into the flour until it looks like fine breadcrumbs.
- Add the sugar, dried fruit and then the egg. Mix to combine, and then push together to make a dough. If the mixture feels a little dry, add a little milk.
- Lightly flour your work surface. Roll out the dough until it is about 5mm thick. Cut into rounds about 10 cm wide. If you don't have a cookie cutter, use a drinking glass instead.
- Rub a frying pan with a little unsalted butter.
- Place over a low-medium heat, and cook the Welshcakes slowly until golden underneath and slightly puffed.
- Turn them over and cook the other side until golden. They need about 2-3 minutes on each side.
- Remove from the pan and dust with caster sugar while still warm. You can eat them warm or cold, with or without butter on top. Yum!



