

## Carisbrooke Castle Medieval Time line notes.

Around 950 years ago the first castle was built by **William Fitz Osborne** after **William the Conqueror** gave him the Isle of Wight to look after because he fought well in the **Battle of Hastings**.

Unfortunately he fell out the William the Conqueror and the Island was given to **Baldwin de Redvers** instead. Baldwin improved on William's original castle by changing the battlements and the keep from wood to stone – this took about 30 years!



Later a very rich widow named **Isabella de Fortibus** ran the Isle of Wight from Carisbrooke Castle after her brother was poisoned to death. She showed how rich she was by wearing purple clothes – purple dyes for the cloth were very expensive. On her head she would have worn a white 'Barbette' with a 'Veil' over it and a 'Torque' or hat on top of that.

Isabella made improvements to the castle. She had a lead lined fish pond built and fitted a new well, but she is most famous for her window seat. Glass was very expensive however, Isabella had it fitted in a huge window so she could sit in it and read in comfort and light.



In 1377, which was in the middle of the 'Hundred Years War' with France, they made an impressive attack on the Isle of Wight. The French first burnt down Yarmouth, then Newtown and finally Newport! After that they laid siege to Carisbrooke Castle by surrounding it.

The French tried hard to get into the castle: They may have used trebuchets to throw giant stones over and into the walls, battering rams in wetted leather covered houses on wheels to bash down walls or doors, siege towers covered in wetted leather to climb up and over walls, undermining to make the walls fall down when the wooden props were burnt or just ladders to climb over the top and get inside.



However, the castle had good defences. It had massive walls built on top of a steep mound, a draw bridge over a sheer sided ditch or moat, loop holes for arrows to be fired through, battlements for soldiers to fire down from, huge, strong wooden doors which were barred shut then protected by a portcullis, a narrow entrance tunnel with murder holes in the ceiling



The knights and soldiers in the castle fought back. Archers in padded jackets and specially shaped helmets used cross bows to shoot arrows through the loop holes at the men in charge. Eventually **Peter de Heynoe** noticed that the French commander walked past the castle every day so one day he was ready and when the commander took his daily walk Peter managed to kill him. Although the siege ended, the Isle of Wight still had to pay the French to leave!



In the 1580s **George Carey**, a cousin of Queen Elizabeth I, began strengthening the castle's fortifications yet again – this time to keep out the Spanish. First he thickened the walls in the corners and mounted cannons to cover all angles of attack, then he built a mile long wall, with earth behind it, outside the existing castle walls. George also built a manor house inside the castle, wore expensive velvet fabrics and had banquets to show he was rich.

