

Teachers' Kit

Dover Castle in the 20th Century

This kit helps teachers plan a visit to Dover Castle, a key defensive and strategic location during the 20th century. Use these resources before, during and after your visit to help students get the most out of their learning.

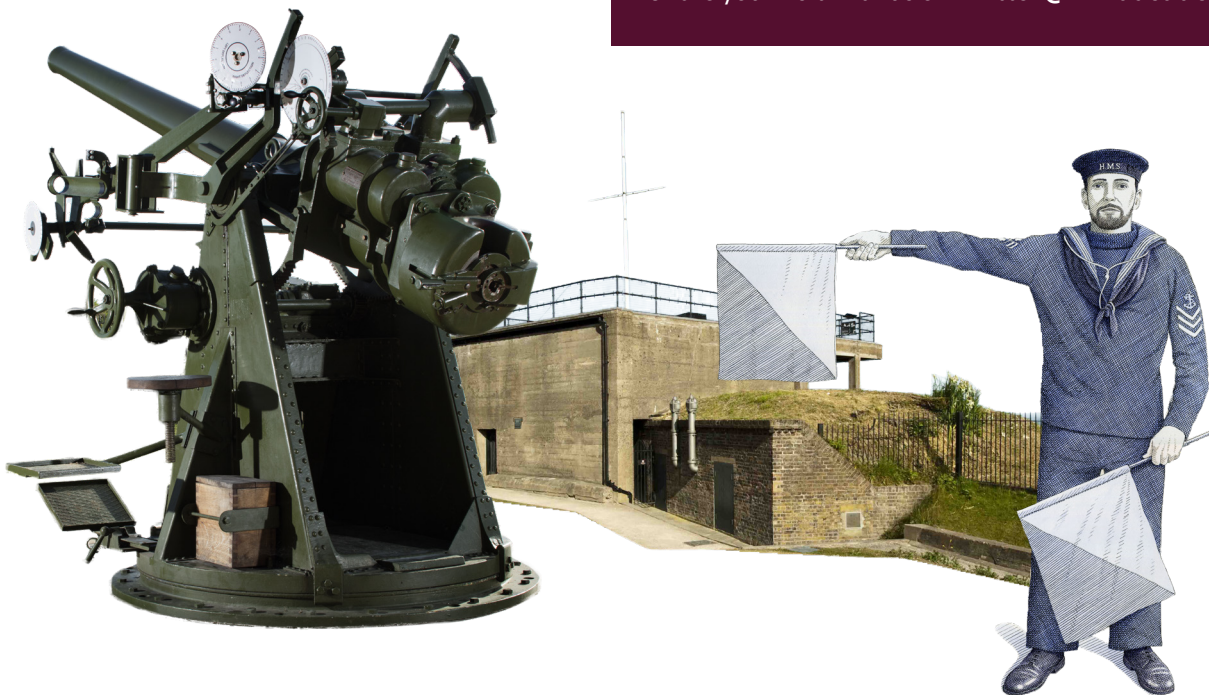
Get in touch with our
Education Bookings Team:

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Share your visit with us on Twitter [@EHEducation](https://twitter.com/EHEducation)



Welcome

This Teachers' Kit for Dover Castle has been designed for teachers and group leaders to support a free self-led 20th-century visit to the site. It includes a variety of materials suited to teaching a wide range of subjects and key stages, with practical information, activities for use on site and ideas to support follow-up learning.

We know that each class and study group is different, so we have collated our resources into one kit allowing you to decide which materials are best suited to your needs. Please use the contents page, which has been colour-coded to help you easily locate what you need and view individual sections. All our activities have clear guidance on the intended use for study so you can adapt them for your desired learning outcomes.

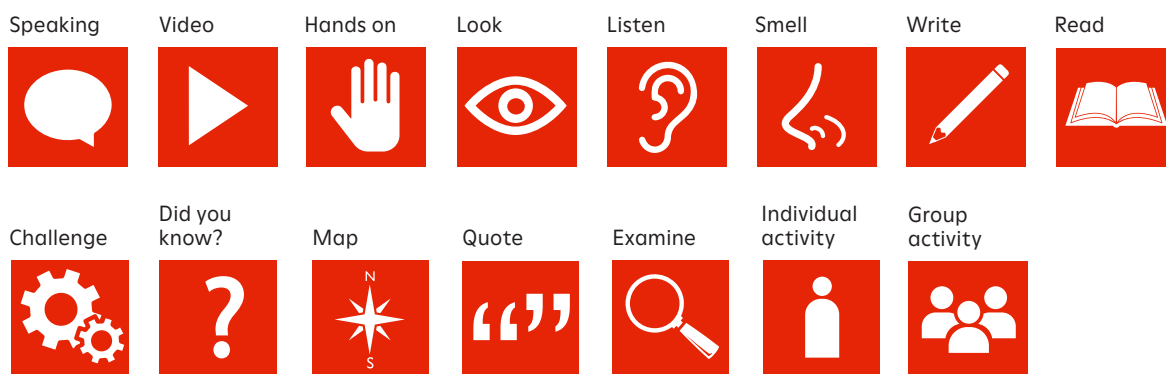
To further aid your planning, we have created Hazard Information, which you can download from the Dover Castle [School Visits](#) page. Here you can also find information on our expert-led Discovery Visits and an overview of what your class can experience. You can find more practical information about your booked visit to Dover Castle on your Education Visit Permit and in our What You Need to Know document.

We hope you enjoy your visit and find this Teachers' Kit useful. If you have any queries please don't hesitate to get in touch with a member of our team either via bookeducation@english-heritage.org.uk or on 0370 333 0606.

English Heritage Learning Team

Icon Key

The icons below will help you quickly identify the types of activities and information presented.



More to Explore

We've developed resources covering the history of Dover Castle from the Romans to the present day for students of all ages and to suit a range of curriculum-focused themes and topics. You can find links to the following resources and more on the Dover Castle [School Visits](#) page on the English Heritage website.

Dover Castle Through History (KS1–KS5)

An online guide to the castle's top ten stories drawn from 2,000 years of history. This guide features historical information, key resources and suggested activities for students to use before, during and after their visit to Dover Castle.

Dover Castle: Medieval and Early Modern (1066–1603) Teachers' Kit (KS1–KS4, SEND)

A comprehensive cross-curricular resource focused on the medieval history of Dover Castle from the Norman Conquest to the Tudors. This kit features historical information and pre-visit, on-site and post-visit activity suggestions.

Attack and Defence Handling Collection (KS2, SEND)

A bookable on-site resource providing an opportunity for students to compare attack and defence in the medieval and Georgian periods at Dover Castle. This collection features replica objects and supporting resources to help students develop their observation and evidence-gathering skills.

Dover Castle in the 20th Century Teachers' Kit (KS1–KS4, SEND)

A cross-curricular kit focused on the 20th-century history of Dover Castle, including the First and Second World Wars. This resource features historical information and pre-visit, on-site and post-visit activity suggestions.

First World War Handling Box (KS2)

A bookable on-site resource encouraging students to consider what life was like at Dover Castle during the First World War. This handling box contains replica objects for students to handle and suggested activities to further their learning.

Dover Castle OCR Spec B: History Around Us (GCSE)

Use our site proposal form to support your planning in conjunction with OCR. It contains information and source suggestions for students to explore during their studies.

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Pre-visit

Activities and information you can use in the classroom before your visit.

Fire Command Post and Port War Signal Station

Site Plan



Dover Castle's Wartime Tunnels

Site Plan



Dover Castle

Orientation Photos



If you arrive by coach, you will be dropped off outside Constable's Gate. You will come up the slope to enter the castle.



Toilets in the 20th-century parts of the castle can be found near the NAAFI restaurant, at the visitor centre in the main car park and at the Secret Wartime Tunnels shop. There is a Changing Places accessible toilet in the NAAFI restaurant, which includes a height adjustable changing bench, a hoist system, and space for one person with a disability and up to two personal assistants.



This is the entrance to the Fire Command Post. There are text panels and some interactive displays inside this building. Some of the rooms are quite small.



The uniform you will often see around the castle worn by all English Heritage volunteers.



You can visit the roof of the Port War Signal Station and look out over Dover town and the harbour. The wind can make it very noisy up here and on a sunny day it can be very bright.



This is the entrance to the Secret Wartime Tunnels. You can only access the tunnels if you have booked a tour. Rooms are small in the tunnels and there is low lighting throughout. The tour usually includes video projections and some recorded sounds.

Historical Information

Discover the story of Dover Castle in the 20th century

Below is a short history of Dover Castle during the 20th century. Use this information to learn how the site has changed over time. You will find the definitions of the key words in the Glossary.

The First World War at Dover Castle

A few years before the First World War, Dover was designated as a Defended Port, with an army garrison to defend it from land and sea attacks. This, and a busy port meant that soldiers and sailors were part of everyday life at Dover.

The scientific and technological developments in **artillery** during the second half of the 19th century had produced much more powerful guns, mounted in steam-powered warships, so new batteries were built facing out to sea and more new **barracks** for soldiers were added.

When the First World War was declared on 4 August 1914, the huge Admiralty Harbour was crucial. It supported the naval forces (famously known as the Dover Patrol) that could control the **Strait of Dover** and safeguard troops and supplies. It also provided safety for ships that brought the resources of Empire to Britain.

War triggered a pre-prepared defence plan, causing the number of soldiers to grow from about 3,000 to between 10,000 and 16,000, while increased naval activity brought more sailors. The pre-war population of Dover was around 43,000 and this sometimes increased to over 60,000 as men came and went. Barracks filled up, buildings were converted and hut camps were built to cope with the numbers.



Warships in Admiralty Harbour at the end of the First World War. © Dover Museum and Bronze Age Boat Gallery

The soldiers of the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA) defended Dover town from landward and seaward attack with big coast defence guns. Other regiments of the garrison built and defended a string of earthworks, trenches, barbed-wire barriers and strongpoints on the high ground around the town, with checkpoints to monitor comings and goings. Camps of temporary huts, rifle ranges and training facilities enabled thousands of recruits to prepare for active service in the war.

The Dover Command, Royal Navy (RN), was very important in the First World War. The main roles of the Dover Command were guarding the Strait from German **U-boat** attack, escorting friendly ships, laying anti-submarine nets and **minefields**, clearing German mines, and bombarding German troops in France, from ships and aircraft.



Men of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, training with a Maxim machine gun at Dover Castle in 1913. © The Rifles Berkshire and Wiltshire Museum

The Army and the Fire Command Post

In wartime, the Dover Fire Command Post (FCP) protected the Fortress and Admiralty Harbour against attack from the sea, 24 hours a day.

During the First World War, 13 men of the Royal Garrison Artillery worked here in 'watches' of 4 or 6 men, on duty for 8 or 12 hours. Their responsibility covered the sea and coast from Folkestone (6 miles west) to St Margaret's Bay (4 miles east) and the activities of almost 500 men who manned guns and searchlights.

The Fire Commander was responsible for 16 coast guns and 14 searchlights. The decision to open fire was his, in conjunction with the Fortress Commander, and in action he was in charge. The Fire Commander relied on naval intelligence from the Port War Sign Station (PWSS) on the floor above, and regularly cooperated with the Chief Officer in charge of the PWSS.



A rare British 3-inch anti-aircraft gun used in the First World War, restored by English Heritage thanks to a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The Navy and the Port War Signal Station

At this time, the Royal Navy was developing a worldwide network of War Signal Stations. Those within a Defended Port, like Dover, were called a Port War Signal Station (PWSS). The PWSS at Dover was built above the Army's Fire Command Post. It was completed on 3 September 1914, a month after the start of the First World War. It helped to control the movement of all Royal Navy ships into and out of Dover harbour.



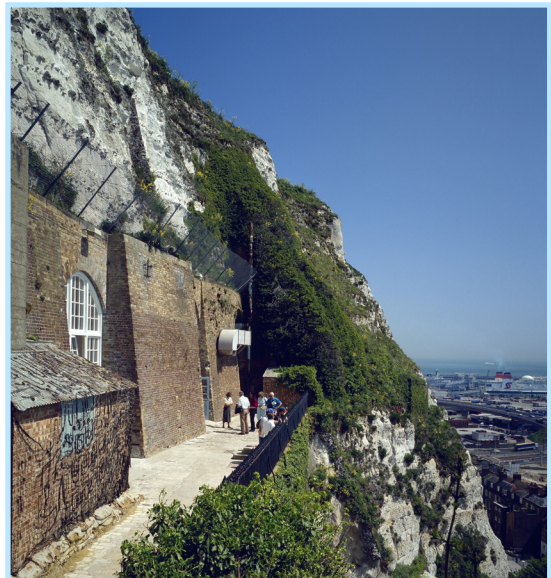
Signalling practice in the Royal Navy during the First World War. © IWM (Q 18859)

In wartime, naval staff carried out round-the-clock observation of the approaches to Dover harbour from the Straits. Staff in the PWSS identified Royal Navy warships visually or by exchanging signals, while the ships waited outside the harbour; only then were they permitted to enter port. The wide window was for watching, with binoculars, for approaching Royal Navy ships and potentially hostile ships and aircraft. The roof above was used for visual signalling like **semaphore** and **Morse code**.

Preparing the tunnels for the Second World War

In the 1930s, the threat of war with Germany was growing. In 1938, **Bertram Ramsay** (a Rear Admiral, then promoted to Vice Admiral) was brought out of retirement to set up the **naval sub-command** at Dover Castle. Better lighting and ventilation, radios and telephones were installed in previously deserted late 18th-century tunnels ready for the outbreak of war.

The tunnels became the hub of defence operations at Dover Castle. One tunnel became the **Admiralty Casemate** and others were used for the **coastal artillery operations room** and a gun operations room for **anti-aircraft** defences.



The old tunnels were the perfect location for naval headquarters – they were safe from bombing, had a view of the harbour and were close to the Port War Signal Station.

From the tunnel headquarters, Ramsay organised the naval defence of the Strait of Dover and the eastern end of the English Channel, including laying minefields to stop German submarines, safe transportation of the **British Expeditionary Force** (BEF) to France and cross-Channel communications and supply lines.



The Port War Signal Station controlled the movement of Royal Navy ships in and out of Dover harbour, using flag signals and wireless.

Learn more about the Secret Wartime Tunnels

Search for our **short video** (2 mins 9 secs) 'Dover Castle: Rescue from Dunkirk', on the English Heritage YouTube channel.



Dover and the Dunkirk evacuation

By 25 May 1940, the German Army had advanced so far through Holland, France and Belgium that the British Expeditionary Force, some French and some Belgian forces were trapped in the area around **Dunkirk**, with no way to escape except by sea. That evening, the British government, led by the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, ordered the evacuation of as many men as possible. It would be called **Operation Dynamo**.



The coastal artillery operations room was used for monitoring ships' movements – it coordinated the response of the coast defence guns to any enemy threat.

26 May: Operation Dynamo begins

At Dover Castle, Vice Admiral Ramsay had begun preparations for an evacuation by sea. By 26 May, 15 passenger ferries were ready at Dover harbour (and another 20 at Southampton) to sail to Dunkirk to collect the **Allied Forces** from the quays, along with smaller **merchant** and **civilian vessels** from Britain, Holland, France and Belgium, all escorted by Royal Navy ships.



The telephone exchange in the tunnels was constantly receiving calls for equipment for the operation.

At 6.57pm on 26 May 1940, Ramsay received the signal to begin Operation Dynamo. His staff inside the cliff tunnels worked non-stop to organise the evacuation. The telephones were constantly ringing with calls to request more ships, for special trains to transport troops, for weapons, **ammunition**, medical supplies, fuel, rations, water and more trained staff. Plans were often changed and decisions had to be made very quickly under intense pressure. Ramsay's staff, including members of the **Women's Royal Naval Service** (WRNS), worked around the clock and even slept in the tunnels to remain near their stations.

When the first **convoy** of ships arrived at the port of Dunkirk, they found the inner harbour heavily bombed and on fire. Only two of the boats were able to get to dock. It was clear that another way of rescuing the soldiers needed to be found.

27-30 May: Dangerous crossings

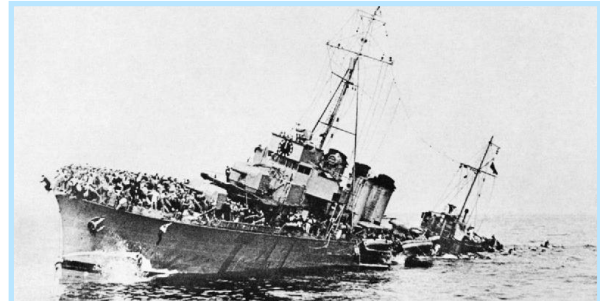
Shallow water at Dunkirk meant that it was difficult for the large boats to get close to the shore, so soldiers had to be taken out to them in smaller boats. However, there were very few of these available and the **swell** often meant that they were hard to land. It was decided to try using a concrete **mole** (a **breakwater**) that ran 1,300m out to sea as part of the outer harbour. It was not designed to cope with large ships, but it allowed troops to get close enough to board.



Vice Admiral Bertram Ramsay in 1943. © IWM (A 23440)

Meanwhile, Ramsay was arranging for more **destroyers** and warships to come and help with the effort and Dover harbour was crowded with vessels. The wounded were helped ashore and new supplies were loaded for the next journey across the Channel. Many of the troops had not eaten for several days.

The **Admiralty** was also bringing together all available small boats in eastern and southern England. More than 200 small boats were checked and sailed to Dunkirk, crewed by Royal Naval staff and some civilian boat owners. They mostly helped to carry soldiers from the beaches out to larger ships waiting in deeper water. In total, 78 small boats were lost during the evacuation.



A French destroyer sinking off Dunkirk loaded with troops, 30 May 1940. © IWM HU 2280

Ships returning to Dover with soldiers still faced challenges from German bomber aircraft, minefields and enemy submarines. Several boats were sunk. Ramsay was forced to order any ship carrying troops not to stop to help sinking ships, as they became an easy target for enemy **torpedoes**.

On 29 May, so many destroyers were sunk or damaged that the Admiralty withdrew the eight newest and largest to keep them safe for future battles. However, these were necessary for Operation Dynamo to transport as many troops as quickly as possible. On 30 May, Ramsay contacted the Admiralty and successfully won six of the eight destroyers back to keep working on the evacuation.

1-3 June: Final evacuations

1 June was a clear day, making it easier for German bomb planes to target the ships and soldiers. Ramsay was forced to carry on the evacuation only under the cover of darkness – the ships were sent out at night and banned from using their navigation lights, making the journey even more dangerous.

On 2 June, Ramsay tried to rescue the soldiers who were bound on stretchers but the hospital



British troops line up on the beach at Dunkirk to await evacuation. © IWM (NYP 68075)

ships, despite being clearly marked with a red cross, were damaged so badly by bombers that the mission had to be abandoned. Ramsay would not give up and sent a larger force during the night, with 13 passenger ships, 14 **minesweepers** and 11 destroyers.

By 3 June, the German Army was getting close to Dunkirk. That night would be the last chance to evacuate any troops. British, French, Belgian and Dutch ships were sent and brought back over 26,000 men. In total, 338,226 Allied soldiers were rescued from Dunkirk and around 90,000 were taken prisoner by the German Army.

The withdrawal of Allied troops from France was a victory for Germany. The British Army had lost huge amounts of equipment that they were forced to abandon on their retreat through France and in and around Dunkirk. However, Operation Dynamo had rescued most of the army's key strength – trained men. The successful evacuation was a boost to the morale of the British people, and the 'Dunkirk spirit' of fighting on in the face of terrible odds would be felt through the rest of the war in Britain.

Find out more about the Dunkirk evacuation

Search 'Dunkirk evacuation' on the English Heritage website.

Operation Fortitude South and D-Day landings

After the United States joined the war in 1941, a strategy was agreed between Britain and America. This concentrated on defeating Germany in Europe before defeating Japan. A build up of US troops in Europe and a series of tactical decisions between 1941 and 1944 led up to the **D-Day landings**. This marked the start of the campaign to liberate north-western Europe from German **occupation**. The D-Day landings on 6 June 1944 aimed to land almost 156,000 Allied troops in northern France and some preparations for the invasion involved staff in Dover Castle.

From July 1943, a secret operation was planned to mislead German forces about where and when the Allied invasion would happen. British codebreakers had cracked the Germans' **Enigma code** so they could check how successful the misinformation



This photograph shows British forces during the invasion of Normandy, 6 June 1944. © IWM (BU 1184)

campaign was becoming. The Allies also had double agents who could give the Germans false information about invasion plans.

Operation Fortitude South sought to convince the Germans that an Allied invasion would happen via the Pas-de-Calais, an area of northern France further to the east than the actual landing locations in Normandy. The Allies even invented a fictional army, the First United States Army Group (FUSAG). To keep up the pretence, fake landing craft, tanks and other vehicles were placed around the south-east of England. In spring 1944, Allied units based at Dover Castle and across south east England sent fake coded messages all over Britain to make it sound like FUSAG was preparing an invasion.

The operation was so successful that the Germans still believed FUSAG existed two months after the D-Day landings. They kept vital German forces away from Normandy because they still believed an invasion was due to take place in the Pas-de-Calais.

Dover Castle and the Cold War

The Cold War (1947–89) was a period of tension and rivalry between the United States and the **Soviet Union** and their respective allies. During this time, nuclear attack was considered a serious threat to Britain.

Dover Castle was chosen as a Regional Seat of Government (RSG) in the early 1960s. In the event of a nuclear attack, this was one of 12 places across the UK where a senior minister would take charge with a military and civilian staff. It would be their job to organise some kind of administration system after a nuclear attack.

The centre of this RSG was on Dumpy level in the underground tunnels. Annexe level was refitted as a **dormitory** and the western tunnels on Casemate level were repurposed as dormitories, dining and catering areas, and rest rooms. An air filtration system was installed, and the levels were sealed against contamination. They had communications equipment, including a small TV broadcasting studio, which could be used after an attack to send important messages out to the public.

The RSG at Dover Castle was never used for its intended purpose and was decommissioned in the early 1980s.



The Civil Defence Corps was a voluntary organisation set up in 1949. They were trained to take control of local areas in the event of a national emergency, like a nuclear attack during the Cold War.

Glossary

Tricky terms and what they mean

Below is a list of words you might come across while exploring Dover Castle. Use this Glossary to find out what they mean.

Admiralty – the government department that led the Royal Navy

Admiralty Casemate – one of the wartime tunnels, used by Vice Admiral Ramsay for his naval headquarters



The coastal artillery operations room in Admiralty Casemate was part of Dover Combined Headquarters from 1943.

Allied Forces – the group of countries fighting against Germany and Japan during the Second World War, led by Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and China

ammunition – a supply or amount of bullets and shells



This rare 3-inch anti-aircraft gun is of a type used in the Dover defences during the First World War.

anti-aircraft – a weapon (often a gun) used to attack enemy aircraft

artillery – large guns used in war

barracks – a large building or group of buildings used to house soldiers

Bertram Ramsay (Vice Admiral and later full Admiral) – the high-ranking Royal Navy officer in charge of the Dover Command, who directed the evacuation of British and French troops from Dunkirk during Operation Dynamo in May and June 1940, from inside the tunnels at Dover Castle



This statue at Dover Castle commemorates Bertram Ramsay, Commander-in-Chief Dover, who oversaw Operation Dynamo.

breakwater – a wall built out into the sea to create a barrier against the prevailing tidal current of the sea, creating calm water on its other side, where ships could safely navigate and anchor

British Expeditionary Force (BEF) – in the Second World War, this was the initial force sent to France following Britain's declaration of war on Germany in 1939

civilian – a person not in the armed forces or the police force

coastal artillery operations room – a centre for controlling the fire of coast defence guns against enemy ships

convoy – a group of ships or vehicles travelling together, often with armed troops, warships or other vehicles for protection

D-Day landings (also known as the Normandy Landings or Operation Neptune) – the largest amphibious invasion in history, which saw more than 150,000 Allied troops land on five beaches in Normandy on 6 June 1944. This marked the beginning of a long campaign to liberate Europe from German occupation.



British, American and Canadian soldiers landed on Normandy beaches in June 1944 alongside troops from many other European countries, Australia and New Zealand. © IWM (BU 1184)

destroyer – a small, fast warship

dormitory – a large bedroom for a number of people

Dunkirk – a city and province (county) in northern France

Enigma code – a secret code made using a German encryption machine during the Second World War. The machine is capable of devising billions of ways to encode messages. This made it very difficult for the Allies to decipher German messages.

merchant – a person or company involved in trade

minefield – an area planted with explosive mines

minesweeper – a ship or aircraft that detects and removes or destroys explosive mines

mole – a large structure leading out from the shore into the sea



The remains of the East Mole at Dunkirk, 2009.
By Paul Reed, battlefieldsww2.com

Morse code – a way of sending messages via a mixture of short and long sound or light signals (also called dots and dashes), with each combination representing a different letter of the alphabet

naval sub-command – the Royal Navy had different regional seats of command, usually led by an admiral with a dedicated staff who controlled the activities of ships and sailors. Sometimes, these commands were divided into sub-commands. Dover Castle was initially a sub-command, but it was quickly granted full command status.

occupation – when an army or group of people moves into an area and takes control of it

Operation Dynamo – the evacuation of Allied soldiers during the Second World War from the beaches at and north of Dunkirk, and from its outer harbour, between 26 May and 4 June 1940



Operation Dynamo was the largest military rescue operation in British history.

semaphore – a way of sending messages by holding two flags in certain positions, to represent different letters of the alphabet



Students practising semaphore at the Port War Signal Station.

Soviet Union (also known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or USSR) – a communist country in eastern Europe and northern Asia from 1922 until it was dissolved in 1991. The Soviet Union included Russia and 14 other socialist republics.

Strait of Dover – a narrow sea passage between south-east England and northern France between the English Channel and the North Sea. It provides the shortest sea crossing between England and the European mainland.

swell – a slow, regular movement of the sea; waves that roll without breaking

torpedo – an underwater self-propelled missile fired from a ship or submarine or dropped into the water from an aircraft, which explodes when it reaches its target

U-boat – a German submarine, shortened from the German word *Unterseeboot* ‘under sea boat’

vessels – ships or large boats

Women’s Royal Naval Service

(WRNS) – also known as the ‘Wrens’, members of the WRNS supported naval operations, including Operation Dynamo from the tunnels at Dover Castle. They operated communications equipment and intercepted and translated coded messages.



Wrens like Daphne Baker worked in the Secret Wartime Tunnels at Dover Castle.

Key Dates

Secret Wartime Tunnels

- **1792–1809** Lieutenant-Colonel William Twiss designs and supervises massive new defences at Dover Castle. A system of tunnels is excavated behind the cliff face to house more soldiers.
- **1815** The tunnels are no longer used as barracks. Some are adapted as gunpowder magazines.
- **1818–27** Officers from the Coast Blockade Service use part of the tunnels as their base for capturing illegal smugglers.
- **1870** The last ammunition is removed and the tunnels are abandoned.
- **1938** Bertram Ramsay is brought out of retirement, made a Vice Admiral and put in charge of a sub-command at Dover Castle.
- **1939** Planning is under way to equip the tunnels – safe from enemy bombardment – as the Royal Navy’s headquarters for controlling the Strait of Dover.
- **1940 (20–26 May)** Ramsay and the staff in the tunnels organise military and merchant ships to begin the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from France.
- **(26 May)** Operation Dynamo begins.
- **(29 May)** The first convoy of civilian ‘little ships’ from the Admiralty’s ‘Small Vessels Pool’ sail to Dover.
- **(2 June)** Evacuation of the BEF is complete.
- **(4 June)** Evacuation ends with the recovery of French and Belgian troops.
- **1940–45** The tunnels continue to be used as the Royal Navy’s headquarters for the Dover Command, monitoring the movement of enemy ships in the Channel.
- **1941–43** The tunnels are extended for use as a hospital, stores, more offices and accommodation.
- **1943–44** Operation Fortitude South convinces the German Army that the D-Day landings will take place in the Pas-de-Calais rather than Normandy. Staff in the tunnels send fake coded messages around Britain to help create the deception.
- **1962** The tunnels are secretly equipped as one of the 12 Regional Seats of Government if London is destroyed in a nuclear attack.

Key Dates

Fire Command Post and Port War Signal Station

- **1847** The building of Admiralty Harbour begins.
- **1874** Hospital Battery is built for three 10-inch guns: one of four new gun batteries built to defend Dover harbour from seaward attacks.
- **1887–88** The guns at Hospital Battery are withdrawn.
- **1890s** Dover is designated a Defended Port.
- **1891** Position-finding cells are built in former gun positions.
- **1905** The Dover Fire Command is established and the Fire Command Post (FCP) is built in the central gun position.
- **1909** Admiralty Harbour is completed and Louis Blériot is the first person to fly a powered aircraft across the Channel, crash-landing in a meadow north-east of the castle.
- **1914** In response to war being declared, the Dover Patrol and Fortress Dover are established.
The Port War Signal Station (PWSS) is built above the FCP.
- **1915** The FCP is extended to provide offices for the Fire Commander and Officer Commanding Electric Light.
- **1918** A concrete cover is built over the FCP to protect it against aircraft.
- **1919** The FCP and PWSS are closed.
- **1939** The FCP and PWSS are reopened as Britain declares war on Germany.
- **1940** A concrete blast wall is built behind the FCP and PWSS.
- **1941** A concrete building is erected to cover the FCP and PWSS.
- **1945** The FCP and PWSS are closed down when the Second World War ends.
Dover remains a garrison town.

First World War: Junior Geographers



Recommended for

History, Geography

Learning objectives

- Understand the geography of Dover Castle and the surrounding area.
- Develop basic map-reading and orientation skills and learn important vocabulary.

Time to complete

15–20 minutes



A screenshot of Dover Castle, as viewed on Google Maps. The Fire Command Post is marked with a red pin.

Summary

On a class projector screen, use the 'map view' on Google Maps (previewed left) to locate Dover Castle on the south-east coastline. Switch the view to 'satellite' to give your class a more detailed picture of the cliffs and landscape. This would be a good opportunity to discuss topography and learn key terminology relating to cliffs and coasts.

Differentiation ideas

KS1 – Print the map and ask students to add labels such as: north, south, east, west, beach, cliff, town, harbour.

KS2 – Discuss the significance of latitude, longitude and coordinates. Use an Ordnance Survey map to compare.

Use 'street view' to find the First World War Fire Command Post (FCP) and Port War Signal Station. You can place the yellow figure on the roof of the PWSS for a 360-degree view.

Ask students to list what they can see on the eight points of a compass. Why is this a good place to build a Fire Command Post and a Port War Signal Station? (Overlooks the shortest crossing to France; gives good views over the port and town of Dover.)



The Fire Command Post and Port War Signal Station looking out to sea; a good spot for helping students understand the geography of Dover Castle.

More learning ideas

When you visit Dover Castle, take your class to the roof of the PWSS and repeat the activity. Bring compasses with you to help students orientate themselves. Standing on the signal platform, get students to spin around and list the things they can see on the different compass points. Then recap: why is this a good position to place a Fire Command Post and a Port War Signal Station?

Local History Researchers



Recommended for

History, Geography

Learning objectives

- Develop research and historical enquiry skills.
- Consider Dover Castle in its local context, through a depth study or thematic study.

Time to complete

Varies, depending on scope of research



Dover Castle has sat above the town of Dover and the busy port for nearly a thousand years.



Students can explore the buildings at Dover Castle and use them as historical sources.

Summary

Ask students to research the history of the local area as a pre-visit research project. We recommend doing this in groups of about three students.

Select one of the following studies for students to focus on:

- a local depth study, focusing on a specific time period, e.g. Dover during the First World War
- a thematic study, focusing on how one particular aspect or theme has changed over time at Dover, e.g. local industries, landscape and warfare.

Setting up the research project

Each group should decide on an enquiry question to guide their research. Provide students with Historical Information (on pages 10–17) and Sources (on pages 48–54) to kick-start their research.

Teachers may find the 'Dover Castle Histories and Stories' page on the English Heritage website and the *English Heritage Dover Castle guidebook* helpful in providing background information.

We have also suggested some Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 thematic and depth study questions for Dover Castle in the Teachers' Notes on page 26.

Extending this activity

Use this project to discuss primary and secondary sources, issues of reliability and bias and scrutinising historical evidence. Work as a class to create a list of research skills and techniques before beginning the project. Each group can use this as success criteria to help them interrogate historical sources.

More learning ideas

Encourage students to use buildings and objects at Dover Castle as valuable historical sources. Ask them to work in their groups to take notes and make sketches as they explore.

Back in the classroom, each group can present their findings.

Local History Researchers

Dover Castle's 20th-century history offers a range of possible enquiry topics for Key Stage 2 and 3 to explore. This includes both thematic and depth study opportunities.

We've put together some suggestions for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 enquiry questions below:

Key Stage 2 ■

Thematic

- Who lived and worked at Dover Castle during the 20th century?
- How did the buildings at Dover Castle change?

Depth study

- What was it like to work at Dover Castle during the Second World War?
- How was Dover Castle used during the Second World War?

Key Stage 3 ■

Thematic

- How did the use of Dover Castle change during the 20th century and why?
- What do the wartime features at Dover Castle reveal about how technology developed during the 20th century?

Depth study

- What can the Secret Wartime Tunnels tell us about what working at Dover during the Second World War was like?
- What impact did the First and Second World Wars have on Dover Castle and the surrounding area?

Second World War: Operation Dynamo's Key Players



Recommended for

History

Learning objectives

- Understand the context and significance of Operation Dynamo to the history of Dover Castle and the Second World War.
- Discover the roles of key decision-makers and individuals working at Dover Castle to plan and run Operation Dynamo.

Time to complete

45–50 minutes



Secret Wartime Tunnels at Dover Castle as they looked during the Second World War.

Summary

Operation Dynamo was planned and run in the Secret Wartime Tunnels at Dover Castle. In this activity, students will discover and research some of the key players involved in planning the evacuation of Dunkirk.

Suggested approach

Divide the class into small groups of three or four. Each group will discover and research a different key player who planned and helped run Operation Dynamo.

These are: Winston Churchill, Vice Admiral Ramsay, Captain Tennant, General Gort, the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), small boat owners, British Expeditionary Force (BEF), French and Belgian troops.

We recommend searching the English Heritage website for more information about these individuals and their role in Operation Dynamo as a starting point. Other organisations, such as the Imperial War Museum, have also published information about the evacuation online.

Come together as a class to share what students have found out about their individual or group. They can use this information as context for their visit to Dover Castle.

More learning ideas

Extend your students' understanding of Dover Castle during the Second World War by taking part in our Secret Codes and Ciphers Discovery Visit. In this expert-led session, students take on the roles of Royal Navy staff as they break codes and help complete a secret mission.



© IWM (HU 90973)

Winston Churchill

Prime Minister of Great Britain
(1940–45 and 1951–55)

- A career politician who led Britain during the Second World War.
- Simplified and improved government planning and decision-making processes.
- A very effective orator becoming famous for his wartime speeches.



© IWM (A 23440)

Vice Admiral Bertram Ramsay

Commander-in-Chief Dover

- Oversaw the defence of Dover, protecting cross-Channel military traffic, preventing submarine passage through the Strait of Dover.
- In overall charge of Operation Dynamo, working from the tunnels under Dover Castle.



© IWM (A 29072)

Captain William Tennant

Senior Naval Officer Dunkirk

- Joined the Royal Navy aged 15 in 1905.
- Oversaw the evacuation of Dunkirk on the ground. 'The beachmaster' who identified where troops could be extracted from along the coast.



Painting by Reginald Grenville Eves. © IWM
Art.IWM ART LD 616

General John Gort

Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF)

- Disregarded orders to join French forces in a counterattack on German troops in the south of France.
- Decided to withdraw his forces towards the coast on 25 May 1940, making an evacuation possible.



© IWM A (9751)

Agnes Jean 'Nan' Currie, WRNS Chief Officer

Nan was the Commanding Officer of the Women's Royal Naval Service (nicknamed 'Wrens') at Dover Castle.

- Oversaw Wrens working at Dover Castle.

- During Operation Dynamo, the Wrens pitched in wherever they were needed: encoding and decoding ciphers, driving returning soldiers up to the hospital, preparing hospital equipment and much more.



Painting by Norman Wilkinson. © IWM Art. IWM ART LD 6007

Small boat owners

The Admiralty requisitioned (demanded to use) all motor yachts of 30ft and larger, plus their crews, to help with the evacuation.

- These boats were known as the 'little ships'.
- Hundreds of private boats sailed from Ramsgate to Dunkirk. About 78 were lost during the evacuation.



© IWM (O 117)

British Expeditionary Force (BEF)

The part of the British Army sent to Europe in 1939 on the outbreak of war with Germany.

- BEF troops were trained professional soldiers.
- The period between September 1939 and May 1940 was known as 'the Phoney War' because little fighting took place.



© IWM HU 104615

French and Belgian troops

The German Army advanced through Belgium and France in May 1940, forcing French and Belgian troops towards Dunkirk with British forces.

- The British War Cabinet ordered that French troops should be embarked in equal numbers to British troops on British vessels from 30 May.
- Around 140,000 French and Belgian soldiers were evacuated from Dunkirk.

At the Castle

Activities for students to do at Dover Castle to help them get the most out of their learning.

Sensory Trail: Exploring 20th-Century Dover Castle



Recommended for

History

Learning objectives

- Explore key areas of the castle and identify what they were used for.
- Develop sensory observation skills.

Time to complete

45–60 minutes



Use our sensory trail to explore areas of the castle dating to the 20th century.



Encourage students to consider what life was like at Dover Castle in wartime.

Summary

Use this trail to help your students explore the 20th-century history of Dover Castle using their senses.

Print the Teachers' Notes and map (on pages 32–34) to help students explore six key parts of the castle through sensory activities. As you explore the castle, use the questions and suggestions in the Teachers' Notes to help connect the different parts of the castle to what they were used for during the 20th century. Although this is a sensory trail, please remind the group not to touch anything unless invited to.

The trail can be followed at the pace of the group and the stops can be visited in the order that best suits your group's needs. If any member of your group feels overwhelmed or overstimulated by the sensory input, Dover Castle has plenty of calm spaces that you can use. Please see the Access Map on the Dover Castle webpage for information about sensory considerations around the site.

More learning ideas

You may wish to create a sensory bingo sheet for students to use as they go around the castle. This could feature particular sights, smells and sounds they can look out for as they explore. After your visit, you could compare and contrast things students experienced at the castle and those they encounter regularly at school.

Teacher's Notes

Sensory Trail: Exploring 20th-Century Dover Castle

Stop 1: Royal Garrison Artillery Barracks

Imagine that you've just arrived to begin work at Dover Castle during wartime. You're holding a heavy bag and have just walked up to the castle from the train station – how are you feeling? This building is where you will all be sleeping while you're stationed here. Do you think you can all get on living in such close quarters?



Stop 2: NAAFI

During the working day, you might want some extra food or a drink to add to your army rations. The NAAFI is where military staff working at Dover during the war could buy drinks like tea and food like cakes and sandwiches. Can you smell any food cooking today? What do you think it is? Do you have any favourite snacks you wish the NAAFI would stock?



Stop 3: Admiral Ramsay statue

Stand with your back to the statue. Across the sea in front of you is Dunkirk in France. Close your eyes and listen – what can you hear? What can you feel? Use your senses to identify today's weather conditions. Can you see clouds on the horizon? Can you feel dampness in the air? These conditions will impact your visibility of enemy ships and aircraft throughout the day. Think about the kind of information that your Commander-in-Chief will want to know about the conditions around Dover.



Teacher's Notes

Sensory Trail: Exploring 20th-Century Dover Castle *continued*

Stop 4: Port War Signal Station

Head upstairs to the signal station inside the building. You'll need to brush up on your signalling skills to work in here. Explore the interactive displays to find out more about how this room was used.



Stop 5: Fire Command Post

Head downstairs to the Fire Command Post. If you're on duty in here then you're in charge of the guns pointing out over the harbour. On a clear day you might be able to see the French coast. It's only 26 miles away. Look out for enemy ships and aircraft and listen out for a message from naval command. They might send a message in Morse code or telephone to give you your next instructions. Brrring-brrring – there's the call you've been waiting for. Enemy planes have been sighted trying to race through the Strait of Dover – it's time to get to your stations!



Stop 6: Anti-aircraft gun

Go outside and move towards the anti-aircraft gun. You can hear enemy shelling and bombs over the town below. You've got to defend Dover Castle and the harbour. Work as a team to spot the enemy and fire!



Dover Castle

Exploring 20th-Century Dover Castle Sensory Trail Map



Key

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Royal Garrison
Artillery Barracks | 4 | Port War Signal Station |
| 2 | NAAFI | 5 | Fire Command Post |
| 3 | Admiral Ramsay statue | 6 | Anti-aircraft gun |

Top Things to See

Find these places and **complete** each challenge. Teachers can guide their groups, reading the information before students complete the challenges. Or, students may like to lead their own learning in small groups with support.

Can't find your way?
Use the map at the back to help.




1 Royal Garrison Artillery Barracks

These barracks were built in 1912 to house gunners from the Royal Garrison Artillery. These soldiers were stationed at Dover Castle, ready to defend the coast from attack.



The Royal Garrison Artillery Barracks

 **Where is it?**
Opposite the NAAFI restaurant

Did you find it?

Did you know?



This building was also known as Stone Hut 1. It had dormitories and washing facilities for 85 men. In the early 20th century, only men could serve in the British Army.

Challenge time!



Estimate how long the barracks building is by **counting** your long strides as you walk from one end to the other.

Hint: Each of your long strides is about a metre.

2 NAAFI

NAAFI stands for Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes. It was established in 1920 to run entertainment and places where members of the armed forces could buy goods like snacks and cigarettes. It had branches at British Army bases in the UK and abroad.



Where is it?

At the NAAFI restaurant



Did you find it?



The NAAFI building.

Did you know?



The NAAFI organisation still exists today, providing services and goods to the armed forces and their families all over the world.

Challenge time!



In a pair, **decide** on a luxury item that you would want to buy from the NAAFI if you were a soldier during the Second World War. **Remember** that lots of foods like meat, dairy products and sugar are rationed. Some fruits like bananas are completely unavailable.

3 Underground hospital entrance

A main dressing station in the underground tunnels at Dover Castle treated military casualties during the Second World War. It also treated people injured during the bombing and shelling of Dover. Patients were then transferred to hospitals further inland.



Where is it?

Knight's Road, towards Shot Yard Battery



Did you find it?



The entrance to the underground hospital.

Did you know?



The underground hospital had reception areas, wards, an operating theatre, kitchens and stores. These areas were bombproof and safe from air attacks and shelling.

Challenge time!



Think of two things that would make an underground hospital a difficult place to work.

Hint: Consider how big the tunnels might be and what conditions are like underground.

4 Secret Wartime Tunnels entrance

This is an entrance to a network of tunnels used as a barracks during the Napoleonic Wars (1803–15) and a military headquarters during the Second World War (1939–45). In the 1960s during the Cold War the tunnels were equipped to be a Regional Seat of Government (a shelter from where a senior minister would try to organise the area after a nuclear attack).



Secret Wartime Tunnels entrance.



Where is it?

Right of the underground hospital entrance



Did you find it?

Did you know?



Members of the Royal Navy, including those of the Women's Royal Naval Service (known as WRNS or 'Wrens'), deciphered and enciphered messages in the tunnels. During Operation Dynamo they worked around the clock, sleeping on mattresses on the floor.

Challenge time!



Close your eyes and **take** a deep breath of fresh air, just like the Royal Navy staff did after working down in the tunnels. How would you feel exiting the tunnel after a long shift?

5 Anti-aircraft gun

This is a 3-inch anti-aircraft gun built in 1917–18. Guns of this type were used to defend Dover Castle during the First World War (1914–18).



Anti-aircraft gun.



Where is it?

Near the FCP and PWSS



Did you find it?

Did you know?



This gun is one of only six surviving examples. It is the only working example of its kind in the world and is used in gun-firing demonstrations regularly during the summer.

Challenge time!



Look at the gun and **discuss** the different materials it is made of. What characteristics do these types of material have that make them suitable for building weapons like this?

6 Fire Command Post (FCP)

The lower floor of this building is the Fire Command Post. It controlled coastal artillery (guns) protecting Dover harbour and the Strait of Dover and beyond during the First World War (1914–18) and Second World War (1939–45).



Where is it?

Past Admiral Ramsay statue



Did you find it?



Re-enactors in the Fire Command Post.

Did you know?



The Navy used flags and Morse code to communicate with ships and other signal stations, providing early warnings of incoming attacks by ships and aircraft.

Challenge time!



Explore the FCP and **find out** more about how soldiers in the 20th century used technology to keep control of the harbour and the Strait of Dover.

7 Port War Signal Station (PWSS)

The upper floor of this building was added in 1914. The Royal Navy controlled the movements of all its ships in and out of Dover harbour from here.



Where is it?

Above Fire Command Post



Did you find it?



The roof of the Port War Signal Station.

Did you know?



The signal station was originally at Western Heights, a fortification on a hill to the west of Dover Castle. It was moved to the castle in 1914 during the First World War.

Challenge time!



Climb the stairs to the top of the building and **look out** over Dover harbour.

Find the outer harbour walls and (on a clear day) the French coastline.

8 View of Dover harbour and town

From the FCP and PWSS, it was possible to watch vessels and people moving around Dover harbour and within Dover town.



Where is it?

View from PWSS



Did you find it?



A view over Dover town.

Did you know?



People stationed here were looking out for enemy planes and ships moving across the Strait of Dover. This was especially important during operations like the evacuation from Dunkirk.

Challenge time!



Identify features within the harbour and the town that could have been targets for attack during the Second World War.

Hint: Consider transport links, military features and disruption to everyday life.

9 Admiral Ramsay statue

Vice Admiral Bertram Ramsay (later full Admiral) coordinated Operation Dynamo from Dover Castle in 1940, rescuing more than 338,000 troops. He is considered one of Britain's greatest naval leaders.



Where is it?

Near FCP and PWSS



Did you find it?



A statue of Admiral Ramsay.

Did you know?



This statue was placed here in 2000. It faces towards Dunkirk in France and has scenes from Operation Dynamo and the D-Day landings around the base.

Challenge time!



Discuss three things that you think make a good leader with a partner. Do you both agree?

Explore 20th-Century Dover Castle

Top Things to See

See if you can find all these things.
Tick each one off as you find it.



1. Royal Garrison Artillery Barracks



Number of windows



2. NAAFI



Non-rectangular windows



3. Underground hospital entrance



Red Cross



4. Secret Wartime Tunnels Entrance



Entrance sign



5. Anti-aircraft gun



Materials



6. Fire Command Post (FCF)



Telephone exchange



7. Port War Signal Station (PWSS)



Morse code equipment



8. View of Dover harbour and town



Harbour traffic



9. Admiral Ramsay statue



Dunkirk carvings



Dover Castle

20th-Century Top Things to See Map



Key

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 1 Royal Garrison Artillery Barracks | 4 Secret Wartime Tunnels entrance | 7 Port War Signal Station |
| 2 NAAFI | 5 Anti-aircraft gun | 8 View of Dover harbour and town |
| 3 Underground hospital entrance | 6 Fire Command Post | 9 Admiral Ramsay Statue |

First World War Handling Box



Recommended for

History

Learning objectives

- Understand what life was like for people during the First World War, including members of the Army and the Navy and civilians.
- Explore objects, develop enquiry skills and discover the stories these objects can tell us about the First World War.

Time to complete

45–60 minutes



Students using the semaphore flags provided in the First World War handling box.



Find out more about the First World War Handling Box by searching the English Heritage YouTube channel for our **short video**.

Summary

To ensure that everything is available on the day of your visit, please book this handling box with our Education Bookings Team. Each item in the First World War Handling Box is clearly labelled with a brief description of the object and some related questions, to help you discuss the object in more detail.

Recommended activities

Semaphore – Split your class into two groups. With one team standing on top of the Port War Signal Station and the other on the grass below, use the semaphore flags and alphabet sheets provided to send messages and crack the code.

Money, money, money – Use the wallet containing replica money. Inside, you'll find some questions for students to answer, which focus on maths and problem solving.

War poetry – Look through the poems and choose one to read out loud. Discuss the mood, emotions and meaning communicated by the language. Then use the Post-it notes to write down some nouns and adjectives, which students can use in their own poetry.

Postcards – In 1916, the *Daily Mail* newspaper wanted to boost morale by producing hundreds of colour postcards from images taken by official photographers on the Western Front. Replicas of these postcards have been provided, along with some questions to spark enquiry.

Life at home – Consider what life was like for people at home in England during the First World War. These objects explore themes such as rationing and entertainment.

Look across the water – Using binoculars and replicas of the identification sheets used by the Royal Navy, identify ships and aircraft, and discover some of the challenges faced by Royal Navy personnel.

First World War: Explore the Period



Recommended for

History

Learning objectives

- Explore the FCP and PWSS and develop observation skills.
- Interact meaningfully with the displays in the FCP and PWSS to better understand what it was like to work at Dover Castle during the First World War.

Time to complete

20–30 minutes



Education visitors using the interactive Morse code display in the FCP.

Summary

Encourage your students to explore the Fire Command Post (FCP) and Port War Signal Station (PWSS) to discover more about working at Dover Castle during the First World War.

Recommended activities

Divide your group into pairs. In each pair, one person will go to the FCP and the other to the PWSS first before swapping over. They will come together to share what they have discovered using the following prompts:

- their favourite parts of the FCP or PWSS and why
- something new they have learned
- a question they still have about the FCP or PWSS.

For younger students, you could adopt a more structured approach:

- Use the Site Plan resource (on page 7) to introduce your half of the class to the rooms on the floor you are supervising.
- Now split the students into smaller groups and tell each group which room to start in.
- After a few minutes, instruct the groups to rotate to the next room.
- Repeat until you are happy that the students have engaged properly with the rooms on the floor they are on.
- Switch and repeat this exercise on the other floor.

More learning ideas

Back in the classroom, ask students to create job adverts for roles at Dover Castle during the First World War. They should consider the skills and training required and the duties these roles involved.

Second World War: Creating a Wartime Deception



Recommended for

History, Geography

Learning objectives

- Consider the role of deception during the Second World War.
- Use the landscape and features around Dover Castle to develop a plan to convince enemy forces that a large army is gathering on the coast.
- Compare and contrast your decisions with the events of Operation Fortitude South.

Time to complete

45–60 minutes



Fake landing craft were placed around the south coast of England to make it seem as though an army was forming to invade occupied France.

Safety note

Please be aware that the site may be busy with other visitors when your students are completing this activity. While enthusiasm is encouraged, students need to be safe and respectful, particularly when exploring small inside spaces like the Fire Command Post and Port War Signal Station. Students must be supervised at all times while taking part in this activity.

Summary

We recommend that you complete some of the following before your visit:

- Study the geography of Dover Port, the Strait of Dover and the coastline in relation to France.
- Introduce the historical context of Second World War events during 1943–44 using the historical information on pages 10–17 in this kit.
- Discuss the role of misdirection and false information during wartime. You may wish to highlight historic examples of coded messages and spying.

Supporting resources

At the castle, divide students into small groups of three and give each group a copy of the planning sheet on page 45 and the maps (page 46). These will help guide their exploration of the site. You may also find it helpful to bring a copy of the Historical Information (on pages 10–17) and Key Dates (on pages 22–23) to facilitate comparisons between students' ideas and the real plans carried out in 1943–44.

At the castle

About the activity

In this activity, students should work in groups of three to explore areas of Dover Castle and decide how they would create a wartime deception. They will plan how they would fool the German Army into believing that a large army was gathering at Dover to invade France. They can use their planning sheet to guide their thinking and record their ideas as well as annotate the map on page 46.

More learning ideas

Following your visit, students could research more examples of wartime deceptions. They may also wish to explore how wartime deceptions have been referenced and discussed in popular culture like TV and theatre.

Creating a Wartime Deception



Plan your own secret mission

You will need a pencil or pen.

3 Spies and double agents

A double agent is someone who pretends to work for your enemy while working for you. Or, they might be working for both sides at various times and you might not know!

Weigh up the pros and cons of using a double agent to help spread fake information about your operation.

Discuss a fake description of your surroundings at Dover that you could use to test your agent's loyalty.

1 Military infrastructure

Large pieces of military equipment like tanks and guns can suggest an army is gathering.

Look around and **decide** where in this area of Dover Castle would be the most visible place to display military equipment for your enemy to see.

Annotate these on the aerial image (A).

Choose whether you will use:
Real equipment or Fake structures

4 Radio traffic

Radio operators based at Dover can send out messages about your fake plans.

Create a short message. You could practise sending it using Morse code in the Port War Signal Station.

.....
.....
Hint: Include the name of your fake army and the false location it is heading for. Your message would then be encoded to make your deception seem true.

2 Location for landing

The shortest crossing between England and France is Dover to Calais (26 miles). You need to make the enemy think you are landing in one location when you are actually going to land somewhere else.

Use map (B) to **decide** where you will send your real landing force:

.....
Choose where you will make the enemy believe you will be landing:

5 Attention and protection

How will you make it seem like you're gathering an army at Dover while also protecting the area from enemy attack?

Hint: Think about people and weapons that may be useful to protect the coast.

Write or **draw** your ideas in the box below:

Creating a Wartime Deception Maps



A



B



Post-visit

Information and activities to help you extend your students' learning back in the classroom.

Sources

Peer into the past

A historical source is something that tells us about life in the past, such as a document, a picture or an object.

It may be a primary source, from the time, or a secondary source, created later. Our experts have chosen these sources to help you learn about Dover Castle's 20th-century history.

Source 1

'On 10 December 1914, South Breakwater took part in repelling a sub-marine attack, at 5.am. and 7.am. Battery Commander Major A. J. Breakey R.G.A.'

'On 12 January 1915, at 12.mn., South Breakwater beat off a sub-marine attack on western entrance to the harbour. Officer of the watch, 2nd Lieut H.Simonis R.G.A.'

'On 27 February 1915 Pier Extension opened fire at 7.55.pm. at a sub-marine which appeared in No. 3 Electric searchlight beam. Officer in charge, 2nd Lieut N.L.Borkott R.G.A.'

These extracts are from an army report, which details the achievements of different units in No. 46 Company of the Royal Garrison Artillery in the year 1914–15, while stationed at Dover Castle.

“”

Source 2

'Here we are struggling with the difficult problem of trying to set up a naval base and at the same time to operate as though it was already established. We have no stationery, books, typists or machines, no chairs and few tables, maddening communications. I pray ... that war, if it has to come, will be averted for yet a few days.'

This is an extract from a letter from Bertram Ramsay to his wife, in August 1939, ten days before the outbreak of the Second World War.

“”

Source 3

'[The king] enjoyed himself in the mine galleries and in the casemates, but would you believe it? The current failed just as we arrived and out went the lights and the heaters. Really it was rotten luck as he did want to warm his hands.'

This is an extract from a letter sent by then Vice Admiral Bertram Ramsay to his wife, in March 1940. He is describing a visit by King George VI to Dover Castle and the naval headquarters in the tunnels.

“”

Source 4



British troops line up on the beach at Dunkirk to await evacuation, May 1940. © IWM (NYP 68075)

Source 5

‘MESSAGE SIGNALLED TO ALL SHIPS ON 3RD JUNE, WHEN IT WAS STILL FOUND POSSIBLE TO CONTINUE THE EVACUATION AND I WAS ORDERED TO BRING OFF THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF FRENCH TROOPS REMAINING AT DUNKIRK.

TO DOVER FORCES AND AUXILIARIES

FROM V.A. DOVER

I hoped and believed that last night would see us through but the French who were covering the retirement of the British rearguard had to repel a strong German attack and so were unable to send their Troops to the pier in time to be embarked. We cannot leave our Allies in the lurch and I must call on all officers and men detailed for further evacuation tonight to let the world see that we never let down our Ally. The approach will be made later and the retirement earlier. The night protection of our fighters which stopped all bombing of the harbour last night will be repeated. 1009.’

This signal was sent from Vice Admiral Ramsay at Dover Castle during Operation Dynamo. It is from the archives housed at the Churchill Archive Centre, Cambridge (RMSY 8/5: Vol 1 Dover Command: Naval Despatches Covering Evacuation of Allied Armies from France, 26th May to 4th June 1940).

Source 6



Women's Royal Naval Service uniform

This uniform in the collection at Dover Castle was worn by a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) during the Second World War. These women, known as 'Wrens', worked in the Secret Wartime Tunnels, playing an important role in military operations like Dynamo, Fortitude South and Neptune.

The WRNS uniform was designed by fashion designer Edward Molyneux and was considered one of the most attractive British military uniforms at the time. For some women, the style of the uniform alone encouraged them to join the WRNS. The shape of the hat worn with this uniform was so popular that it was redesigned for civilian wear in a variety of colours.

The braid on the sleeve cuff shows that this was the jacket of a 3rd Officer WRNS, the most junior officer rank.

Source 7

'We used to go down to the quay and meet troops coming off the boats ...

We expected them to be overjoyed to be home, but they walked off like automatons, too tired for any emotion. They didn't know then that what looked like defeat would pass into the language as a refusal to be defeated.'

This is an extract from oral testimony given by Daphne Baker, née Humphreys, a 'Wren' (women from Women's Royal Navy Service) officer who worked in the tunnels during the Dunkirk evacuation (1940).

Source 8

‘I went on the destroyer “Esk”, and they distributed us to the beaches ... When we got near, in shore, the captain said, “Your job ... is to take the ship’s whaler and the motor boat, and bring these lads off from the beach.” ... Our first trip we picked up 18 soldiers, complete with all their kit of course, and rowed back and the surf was running. We did four trips.’

... The following morning about 4 o’clock it all became calm ... it was much easier to get them into line to wade out onto the little ships, and the little ships took the burden. They were so shattered, but all of them were saying, “We’ve got to the sea! We’ll be saved. We’ve seen the sea!” And that’s all they wanted to do. All we wanted to do was to get off the beach, onto the ships and away.’

This source is taken from the memories of Vic Viner, a seaman with the Royal Navy landing party at Bray-Dunes, Dunkirk, 1940.

Source 9

‘They did their own jobs and anything else there was to do, and then came back for the next one ... In those days few of us had time to change our clothes except for a wash. We grudged the time when we had to eat and hardly slept for more than an hour or two at a time. We helped to deal with men coming ashore. We undid the boots of those lying along the sea-front. We improvised pillows for some who were too weak to tell us their next-of-kin. We drove any car anywhere – to and from the hospitals, and back to the pierheads to fill them again with men too exhausted to walk. We took over a large hotel without formality and rigged up beds with anything we could find, and yet there was never enough. We cut sandwiches and poured cocoa. We rolled bandages, and the cypher officers spent all the time that they were off duty at the hospitals. Meanwhile, the work at the Castle and at the Base went on. Any job, every job was our job and I never once heard a Wren say that she was tired. Our Sick Bay was empty – the only spare beds in Dover. History was being made, and we were in the front line and the envy of every Wren in the Service. Some of us were in the wardroom when Churchill’s great rallying speech came through, and we laid down our forks and wiped our eyes. “We shall fight them on the beaches.” We were there. God help us all.’

Agnes Jean ‘Nan’ Currie’s memories of working in the Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRNS) during Operation Dynamo in 1940, taken from a letter she wrote to Rear Admiral WS Chalmers. He included this extract in his biography of Admiral Ramsay entitled *Full Cycle: The Biography of Admiral Sir Bertram Home Ramsay* (1959). Nan Currie was the WRNS Chief Officer at Dover Castle responsible for organising the Wrens stationed there.

Source 10



'... Dover harbour was certainly an exciting and dangerous posting, so the main naval base was situated 200 feet underground in one of the three tunnels originally excavated to house the cannons to counter Napoleon's possible invasion of 1805.

Our Admiral Pridham-Whipple had been given a shore job after being blown up in the battleship HMS Barham outside Alexandria harbour in the Med. By this time Admiral Ramsay of Operation Dynamo and the evacuation of Dunkirk had been moved on.

Being on the front line we had many distinguished visitors such as Mrs Churchill with Mrs Roosevelt, Mr Churchill with General Smuts and Princess Mary, very petite, on her way to inspect the Dover Castle ATS [Auxiliary Territorial Service].

The most exciting time of all in Dover was D-Day – a beautiful calm and sunny day. Normally in the Channel during the day there were few ships but suddenly hundreds of ships came into view through the Straits on their way to Normandy beaches. Over the 3 months up to D-Day we had had many landing craft coming into the harbour and the young officers-in-charge came to my office to sign for their bags of secret codes and ciphers.

After all the preparation and hard work the climax for Dover had come and the Germans started shelling madly, while we watched from the balconies built into the cliffs along the tunnels. One tanker suffered a direct hit but luckily did not explode and burnt out while beached on the far side of the Shakespeare Cliffs. Shells were exploding all over the harbour and in the town but I heard of no casualties. We were all exhilarated and thankful that at last the invasion had begun.'

This source is taken from the memories of Mrs S Broadbent (née Herivel), a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) stationed at Dover Castle during the Second World War. It is part of WW2 People's War, an online archive of wartime memories contributed by members of the public and gathered by the BBC. The archive can be found at bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar.



This statue was erected at Dover Castle in 2000 to commemorate Admiral Bertram Ramsay who – when Vice Admiral – was, Commander-in-Chief Dover during Operation Dynamo. Under Ramsay's leadership, the Royal Navy undertook the biggest evacuation in military history, rescuing a total of 338,226 British, French and Belgian troops. The statue faces towards Dunkirk and has carvings around its base representing the events of Operation Dynamo.

First World War: Write a Military Report



Recommended for

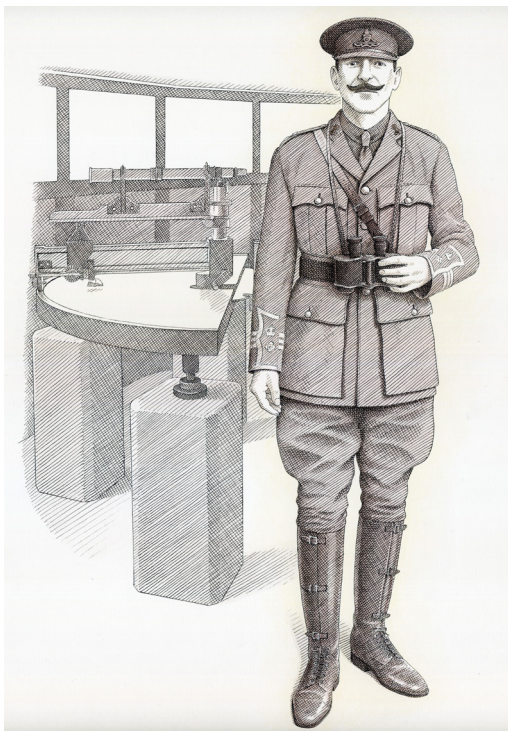
History, English

Learning objectives

- Better understand the role of the Army at the Dover Fire Command Post.
- Empathise with the troops on watch at the Dover FCP.
- Recall key subject-specific terminology.

Time to complete

Approx. 30 minutes



The Fire Commander was in charge of the coast artillery defences in the Dover Fortress area and controlled all activity in the Fire Command area.

Summary

Students could respond to their visit to Dover Castle's Fire Command Post and Port War Signal Station by creating a glossary of terms linked to their visit. This can include any new words and acronyms they have learnt (e.g. WRNS and BEF).

They can apply this understanding by writing a military report about the achievements of the troops. For inspiration, share the extracts in Source 1 (on page 48) with your class. The extracts are from a real army report, which details the achievements of different units in No. 46 Company of the Royal Garrison Artillery in the year 1914–15 while stationed at Dover Castle.

Ask students to imagine they are working as a soldier for No.46 Company at Dover Castle in the year 1915. They are on duty in the FCP and have just been involved in repelling an enemy submarine. They need to write a short report to explain what happened. The audience for this report is the Fortress Commander and time is of the essence, so it needs to be concise and informative. It should follow the same structure as the extracts in Source 1: date and time, unit involved, details of the achievement, person in charge at the time.

More learning ideas

Students could extend this activity by pretending they are a soldier of the Royal Garrison Artillery, writing a letter to a friend or relative. Because they are writing for a different, more personal audience in this task, they can explore their character's emotions further, going into more detail about how it feels to fight the enemy at Dover and protect England from attack.

Second World War: Sifting Sources



Recommended for

History, English

Learning objectives

- Gather information from a range of contemporary reports about Operation Dynamo.
- Compare and contrast sources, considering how and why their presentation of events may differ.

Time to complete

Approx. 30 minutes



Students can use contemporary newspapers to explore different interpretations of the evacuation of Dunkirk.

Summary

Historical sources provide vital information that modern-day researchers can use to understand a historical event. In this activity, students will examine contemporary British, German and French newspaper reports describing the events of Operation Dynamo, comparing and contrasting perspectives of the evacuation of Dunkirk.

Suggested approach

Give students copies of the American, British, French and German newspaper articles on pages 56–59 of this kit). These date from 30–31 May, in the middle of Operation Dynamo. You may also find it useful to provide access to maps of northern France and Belgium to help students follow the events being reported on.

Divide students into pairs or small groups of three or four. They will examine the reports for key information (successes, defeats and outcomes). They could use different colours to highlight positive and negative language and phrasing. You can extend the activity by looking for additional clues relating to each country's circumstances in 1940. For example, the United States was not yet involved in the conflict and so American newspapers weren't bound by censors and could report on events a day earlier than European publications.

Students should discuss similarities and differences between the reports before comparing them with the historical information in this kit (pages 10–17) written by English Heritage experts. You can find more detail by searching the English Heritage website for 'Operation Dynamo'.

Come together as a class to share students' findings and discuss each newspaper's national context. What influence may this have had on the way that the war was reported in the press and how could this inform how we view evidence from historical sources more generally?

More learning ideas

Students can use their source-reading skills to appraise other extracts and images in this kit.

The New York Times.

New York, Thursday, May 30, 1940

ALLIES ABANDONNING FLANDERS, FLOOD YSER AREA; A RESCUE FLEET AT DUNKERQUE; FOE POUNDS PORT; ONE FORCE CUT OFF FROM THE SEA AS LILLE FALLS

Nazis tighten trap

They drive a line across pocket, encircling foes in south

Say Ypres is taken

Zeebrugge and Ostend fall – large stores are reported seized ...

The international situation on the battle fronts

The Battle of Flanders became yesterday a wholly rear-guard action, with the Allies trying to evacuate as many as possible of the troops caught in the German pocket. The trapped men fought on “desperately but not despairingly.” Paris reported.

The port of Dunkerque was still in Allied hands (although the Germans reported its embarkation area in ruins), as was Nieuport, just above the Belgian border. Ships were said to be waiting at the coast to take off the men who could get to them, although how they stayed afloat in the torrent of German bombing seemed a mystery. The British and French fleets were furiously bombarding German forces on the Channel, hoping to cover withdrawal. The task of evacuation was made doubly difficult by a German force that, Paris reported, had straddled the Franco-Belgian

border near Cassel and Mount Kermannel. The French said that defence floodgates had been opened, inundating part of the area west of the Yser. On other fronts the French asserted that they had eliminated a German bridgehead on the Somme west of Amiens and had repulsed a German thrust near Rethel on the left flank of the invaders. The desperate situation of the Allied army of the north was made evident by Berlin dispatches telling of the success of the German effort to cut the opposing forces in two. The invaders drove a wedge between the two Allied wings to the north of Lille. Thus there are now two

pockets; the forces south of Lille are completely surrounded, in a square-shaped area whose sides measure only nine to twelve miles. The pocket above Lille was greatly reduced by German advances pressing down from the north and up from the south. Early this morning shattered remnants of the British Expeditionary Force began arriving at British ports. Most of them were wounded. To the survivors still in Flanders King George sent a message saying they had displayed “gallantry that has never been surpassed in the annals of the British Army.”

A FIGHTING RETREAT

REARGUARD ACTION CONTINUES

From Our Military Correspondent

The series of magnificent rearguard actions which will be inscribed in gold in the annals of British and French arms, continued yesterday. What so many people in this country have seen with their own eyes has now been announced – namely, that under cover of these actions troops not engaged in the fighting line have been evacuated. The perimeter around Dunkirk has narrowed, and both on and outside it *is* a number of fierce more or less isolated fights are raging.

The support given to the beleaguered B.E.F. and its French comrades in arms by naval and air forces has been stronger and more effective than ever. In particular, the action of the Defiants, the

latest and most powerful of our fighters, has been devastating to the German aircraft. Nevertheless, in spite of heavy losses, the hostile bombers, escorted by fighters, returned again to the assault and it is not to be hoped that our naval and land forces can have escaped casualties.

On the southern front the Allies are still engaged in minor “mopping-up” operations, notably on the lower Somme, where the enemy still hold a bridgehead, but no large-scale attacks have taken place on either side. There are further British troops within the main French Armies south of the Somme, and, as is well known, the original bases of the B.E.F. lie behind their front and are not threatened by the German drive to the Channel ports.

Evidence continues to come through of the courage with which French civilians have faced danger and in many cases death itself in the performance of their duty during the invasion. The telephone operators stuck to their posts as long as their services were required, whatever the consequences to themselves, and many women as well as men were killed at their switchboards. The Paris buses which drove north into the war zone to bring back refugees are now mostly back on the streets, and many of them carry honourable scars in the shape of bullet holes. The veteran drivers and conductors of these vehicles are cheered by the public and given the “thumbs up” sign which the French have borrowed from us.

THE BATTLE OF FLANDERS

Last night's press release presents us with a striking picture of the heroic struggle currently being waged by the magnificent British and French troops south of Dunkirk. It would be superfluous to add anything to it.

A glance at the map allows us to appreciate the extent to which the situation of the Northern Army Group became critical when the Belgian front suddenly collapsed, and to understand the meaning of the current fighting.

The enemy found the entire plain between the coast and the Lys free. The road to Dunkirk, via Ypres and Poperinghe, was open to them. On this side the only natural obstacles are the Yser canal, punctuated by Duixmund and Ypres localities, immortalised by the admirable resistance of the Anglo-French forces in 1914, and the very course of the Yser, which passes through Rousbrugges. This surge of water only takes on a great defensive value when their valleys are flooded, but the opening of the floodgates only allows the water to spread widely after a certain amount of time...

Facing the south, the line of the Lys, which, to the north of the vast agglomeration of Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, forms a good line of resistance, was overwhelmed to the east, in the Menin-Courtrai sector. The only position on this side for covering the direction of Dunkirk is the rectilinear line, directed from west to east, from the mountains of Flanders to Mount Cassel, to Messines ...

Dunkirk is organised as an entrenched camp. We know that the navy is doing its best, with magnificent dedication, to come to the aid of the land troops. Many small tonnage ships are cooperating in resupplying and evacuations. Although the official communiqué did not mention it, we learned from intelligence that on many occasions the warships opened fire on enemy formations advancing near the coast.

All the testimonies show us that the troops, both French and British, endured the ordeal with splendid courage. The merit of our soldiers, like those of our allies, increases as the difficulties increase ...

BRITISH AVIATORS VERSUS THE LIES ABOUT AIR COMBAT SUCCESSES

Berlin, 31. May. On the evening of May 30th Reuter London reported that more than 70 German aircraft had been destroyed and numerous others had been damaged. A bomber is said to have destroyed 35 German aircraft in two flights ...

ONLY THE RUBBLE OF FLANDERS HELL ESCAPED

Despite the destruction of the expeditionary force, London speaks of the "greatest military battle in history".

While the London intelligence service calls the fighting in Flanders the greatest military manoeuvre and while King George, who seems not to have the faintest idea of what really happened, attests to the destroyed military force's bravery, "the like of which cannot be found in the history of the British Army", the terrible extent of this tragedy becomes clear from the mouths of survivors.

An eyewitness report from a trained English soldier distributed by United Press from London provides eloquent testimony to the resilience of the German victory.

Battered wreckage of the British Expeditionary Force, the report says, began to arrive in the English harbour.

Most of the soldiers were wounded and looked pitiful. Like sleepwalkers, they made a pilgrimage to the country, bloody, covered in dirt, in torn uniforms, sometimes without shoes, shocking evidence of struggle and retreat, although the enemy had given them time to rest.

"In my worst dreams I never imagined anything like that," a soldier explained, "it was hell." During the entire battle he only saw tanks, bombs, flamethrowers and planes. "God only knows how I got back." Days after the escape, he saw that his hair had turned white.