

## History of Elizabeth Castle

By the sixteenth century, cannon and gunpowder had become so common in warfare that the King's main castle in the Channel Islands, Mont Orgueil, was now out of date. A new castle had to be built which was out of range of these new weapons and the site chosen was here on this islet in St Aubin's Bay

Elizabeth Castle is divided into three different areas - the highest and oldest part is called the Mount or the Upper Ward, and beneath this is the Lower Ward which contains many eighteenth century buildings, and finally the Outer Ward

Work began here during the reign of King Edward VI in 1550 when a gun platform was built on the highest point of the islet. It was forty years later, in the 1500s, that his sister Queen Elizabeth I sent her military engineer, Paul Ivy, to organise the construction of a new castle. Sir Walter Raleigh, who was governor here between 1600 and 1603, named it after his queen hence Elizabeth Castle.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the castle developed and grew in size. By the 1640s, when Jersey was drawn into the English Civil War, the castle had been extended twice and included what is now called the Lower Ward. An outpost, Fort Charles, was built to defend the causeway approach to the castle in 1647.

The castle is actually built on two small islands which were joined together in the 1660s when the walls were extended and the storm beach between the two was turned into a ditch.

During the first half of the eighteenth century the Lower Ward was extensively remodified with new barracks being built for both officers and men.

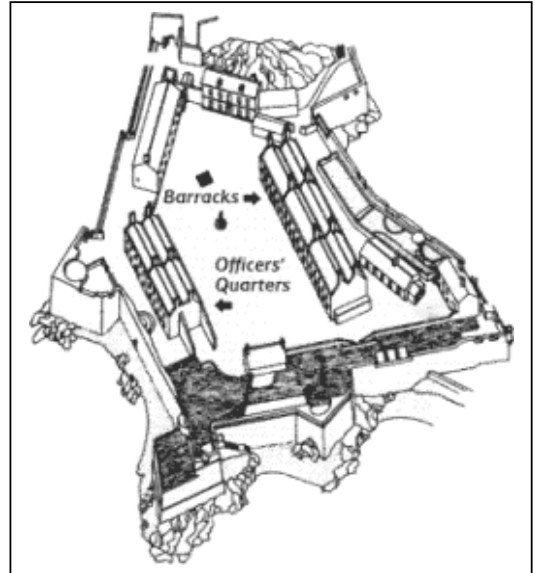
Built as an artillery fortress, the numbers of cannon sited here varied. During the siege of 1651 there was a report of over fifteen cannon in the castle; a report in 1783 gives the number as 84, the largest being 24 pounders, While in 1804 there was a reported 62 guns which included five 68 pounders.

Elizabeth Castle is surrounded by the sea for seven hours out of every twelve and while this was originally seen as a strength it also turned out to be a weakness because it meant that any troops garrisoned here were unable to be used effectively to defend St Helier when the causeway was covered by the tide. This weakness was highlighted in 1781 when the French landed at La Rocque and captured the town. As a result of this, a new fortification was built above St Helier on Mont de la Ville - Fort Regent.

Elizabeth Castle carried on as an army garrison until 1923 when it was sold to the States of Jersey for use as an historic monument. It resumed its former role briefly during the Occupation when the Germans reformed the castle.

## Suggested tours of Elizabeth Castle

### Tour 1



### Lower Ward

The Guard House was built in the earlier nineteenth century to replace the Old port guard. The Belfry housed the bell which rang when the causeway was about to be covered and the castle would be cut off. Fort Charles was originally built as an outpost in the 1640s and became part of the castle during the 1668 extension. During the Occupation a light machine gun was placed here.

The Hospital and workshops were built about 1800 on the site of the Governor's stables and the seventeenth century fortified windmill.

The Second Gateway was built in the 1690s and bears the coat of arms of King William III. During the Occupation the gateway was widened by about 20cms to allow lorries to pass through.

The West Bastion was built in the 1660s to allow guns to fire along the length of the walls. In addition to the cannon embrasures there are small musket loops set in the wall.

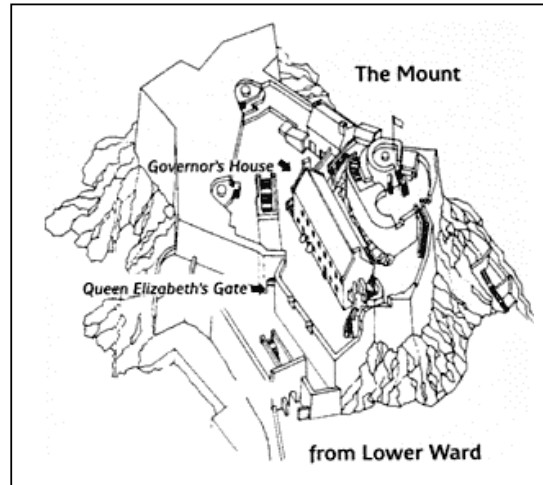
The Concealed Steps to the Ditch were built in 1781 - the same year as the Battle of Jersey. At the bottom of the stairs is one of three magazines used for storing gunpowder.

The Ditch was originally the storm beach which was separated the two islets. Sally ports at either end lead to the outside.

The Third Gateway is the entrance into the Lower Ward. The castle had been extended this far by 1636. A German 105mm casemate was built in 1942 on the site of the earlier Royal Bastion. When it was built about a third of the eighteenth century Canteen was demolished.

The buildings around the Parade ground house the museum displays the cafe and the toilets.

## Tour 2



### Upper Ward

Follow the path behind the Militia Museum from where there is an excellent view over the breakwater and towards the rock on which St Helier lived in the sixth century. The Iron Gate was built in 1600 and marks the first extension to the original castle.

Queen Elizabeth's Gate was originally the main gate to the first castle.

The Captain's House - only the kitchen remains although in the low wall to the left there are traces of five window arches. The cellar was converted into a shell store in the nineteenth century. Captain was another name for the Lieutenant Governor.

The Governor's House was built in the 1590s and it was here that Charles II lived during his short stay in the 1640s.

The Mount, the original site of the first defensive works on the island, now houses the German Fire Control Tower.