

# Primary School Workbook

## King John's Castle

**Welcome to King John's Castle.**  
**We hope that you enjoy your visit!**

### Limerick

Viking raiders first appeared on the Shannon about AD 825. The Vikings laid the foundations of Limerick city in 922.



The Anglo-Norman Intruders arrived in 1172. In the thirteenth century one part to the north became known as English Town and was enclosed by a town wall. Irish Town appeared to the South of the Abbey River and also included a town wall.

### Activity Questions:

Where did the Vikings come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Draw a picture of a Viking in his boat

In what year was Limerick founded? \_\_\_\_\_

In what year did the Normans arrive in Ireland? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the current population of Limerick City? \_\_\_\_\_

Which cities in Ireland are bigger in population than Limerick City?

\_\_\_\_\_

Which Cities are smaller in population than Limerick.....?

\_\_\_\_\_

### King John's Castle

King John's Castle was built between 1200 and 1212 by order of King John. The castle was repaired and extended many times in the following centuries. The castle was built on the site of an early fort.

In England, the earliest castles were built in the 9<sup>th</sup>. and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Lords built castles for protection and as bases for their soldiers. Most of these castles would have been built with earth and timber. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century motte and bailey castles became popular - An

earth mound (or motte) was built next to a yard King John's Castle was a strong safe place and was as up-to-date as a castle could be in 1212. King John's Castle was a military castle where soldiers lived.

### Activity Questions:

Who do you think might have lived in this castle when it was built?

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Why were castles built.....?

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Why do you think King John's Castle was built here?

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List the names of 3 other castles in Ireland ?

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### [Audio Visual](#)

#### Activity Questions

Fill in the dates in blank spaces as you watch the audiovisual presentation

In \_\_\_\_AD Limerick was founded by the Vikings. In \_\_\_\_ King John grants a Royal Charter to Limerick. In \_\_\_\_ the building of King John's Castle is begun. In \_\_\_\_ A Royal Mint is opened in Limerick. In July \_\_\_\_ the Battle of the Boyne took place. On Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> \_\_\_\_ the Treaty of Limerick was signed. In \_\_\_\_ the visitor's centre at King John's Castle was opened to the public.

### King John

King John was born around 1167 and he was the youngest son of Henry II . His father became Lord of Ireland in 1177, but he visited the country only twice.

During his first visit in 1185 he was considered very ill-mannered, even pulling the hair of the Irish chieftains that he met.



## Activity Questions

**What type of person do you think King John was (circle the words below)...**

Kind	Friendly	Loud
Humerous	Thin	Scary
Quiet	Angry	Mean

**Draw a picture of what you think he would have looked like....**

**Who is the current President of Ireland?**

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**Who is the current Taoiseach of Ireland?**

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## Historical background to building of King John's Castle

The castle was built on a strategic point on the river Shannon. The South - East corner, the one nearest the town, was never given a tower as it faced into English town where there were peaceful relations.

Note that the towers are round and these were harder to attack than structures with corners.

The castle allowed the Normans to establish their authority and to enlarge the town. They also wanted to defend the city against the Gaelic clans from the north in the early 13<sup>th</sup> Century.

A large army barracks was built in the courtyard by 1751. The Eastern wall and South-Eastern bastion were demolished about 50 years later.

In turn, much of the castle barracks was demolished in the 1930's to make way for the construction of four terraces of local authority houses. In 1991 the visitors centre was opened at King John's Castle.

## Attacking and Defending the Castle

If an attack were expected, the occupants of the castle would store plenty of food and drink. Castles were very difficult to attack. An enemy army would have to plan an attack very carefully, trying to catch the occupants of the castle by surprise. Archers fired arrows from the battlements while boiling water; hot tar and large rocks were dropped from the roof.

Attacking armies used ladders to climb the castle walls, or tried to smash the gates and walls with battering rams. They also tunnelled beneath the walls of the castle and lit a fire to make the walls collapse. Catapults were also used to fire rocks and burning spears over the walls. The enemy also tried to lay siege to the castle, which might last many months. The attackers stopped all supplies from entering the castle and the people inside had to surrender or starve to death.

## Activity Questions

How do you think the enemy might have attacked King John's Castle .....

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What major Limerick landmarks(buildings) do you see from the viewing tower.....?

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Do you think the Castle was safe from attack.....? Why....?

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Circle the words below which describe what it would have been like to live in the castle during the sieges

Cold

Crowded

Starving

Happy

Comfortable

Clean

Scary

Starving

Boring

Disease

Smelly

Warm

### The Mint

The mint is a reconstruction of a medieval mint , similar to one that may have stood within the castle during the reign of King John in the early 13th century. Coins would have been made here by the Kings moneyer, Willem.



### Activity Questions

What did people use in order to buy goods before the invention of coins/ money....?

What currency do we use in Ireland today.....?

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Can you place the currencies below in order of value starting with the lowest value.....?

1 cent      1 euro      10 euros      100 euros      5 cents

5 Euros      2 cents      50 euros      20 euros

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### Courtyard Excavations 1993/1994

Remains of a hall and storage area were found dating back to the late 13<sup>th</sup>. century– (Archaeological evidence suggests that a chamber for the constable of the castle might also have been here). Archaeologists have also found skeletal remains of individuals from various sieges as well as pottery, jewellery, coins and metalwork.

## Archaeology - 1990

Here , under the exhibition building, are the remains of 3 sunken houses which would have been built over 800 years ago by people from Scandanavia. These houses were found in 1990 .



Archaeologists also found the foundations of the original wall which would have been where the modern exhibition building is now. There is also a reconstructed siege mine which would have been used in the siege of 1642.

Examine the **reconstructed mine which would have been used in the siege of 1642 by the confederate army**. The siege was waged above and below the ground. By setting tunnels on fire, the ground above would collapse and the castle walls would be weakened. The castle defenders would also dig mines known as countermines in order to stop the enemy.

## Activity Questions

What does an archaeologist do.....? \_\_\_\_\_

How old are the sunken houses .....? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think the stones are numbered under the Exhibition building.....?

\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think the modern Exhibition building was built ....?

\_\_\_\_\_

## General Questions

1. Limerick is home to the "Limericks" style of poetry – Can you write a "Limerick" about your visit to King John's Castle....?

2. Complete these sentences using the words in the box below

King John's Castle was built in the \_\_\_\_\_. It is a \_\_\_\_\_ castle built on the banks of the \_\_\_\_\_. The castle was occupied by \_\_\_\_\_. The Exhibition building was built in \_\_\_\_\_ to preserve the \_\_\_\_\_ finds beneath it.

Soldiers	River Shannon	1991
13th Century	Military	Archaeological