

Travel feature – taking the family to The Isle of Wight

Not a suit of armour but a harness of armour. My family and I learn this, amongst other things, during a day trip to Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight.

Here, we immerse ourselves in events featuring archers, a very talented juggling jester, medieval music, how to dress a knight and sword fights. We have no idea that armour weighs as much as five stone and if it isn't fitted properly the poor knight is rigid and can't move. It's imperative that his arms and legs can work properly otherwise he's a dead man just about walking. It takes time to fit and in fact these days the armour on the arms is stitched together and fitted in one go, whereas originally it would be done separately. Imagine fighting with such a weight bearing down on you and a very cumbersome helmet. Not just physically exhausting but hot, too. Then there are the heavy weapons; swords, shields and war hammers. Apparently, archers were at the front of the army causing problems early on for the enemy, making life easier for the knights.

Henry (8) has been learning about medieval history at school and during the term visited Arundel Castle so this reinforces what he has learnt and more besides.

This is what I love about a day trip, you never know what to expect. When we wake at 6am in order to get to the Red Funnel ferry port in Southampton for 8.30am for our 9am sailing, we have no idea what the day has in store.

After parking our car on the car deck of the Red Falcon ferry we venture out to the outside passenger deck to soak up the weather. It's a typical changeable early August day and at the moment it's fine but clouds above are threatening rain. That's not going to dampen our spirits though. After we wave goodbye to Southampton we go inside and sit on some comfy seats to appreciate the view. An hour later we arrive at East Cowes on the island. It's a comfortable carefree way to travel.

Carisbrooke Castle at Newport is about half an hour away. It's where Charles I (1600 to 1649) was imprisoned in the months prior to his trial and execution. English Heritage does a great job of bringing history to life and making it fun. We are all entertained for some considerable time. We go from the bowling green where the archery takes place to a tent where GreenMatthews treat us to medieval music played with instruments from that period including a lute, shawm and a bagpipe.

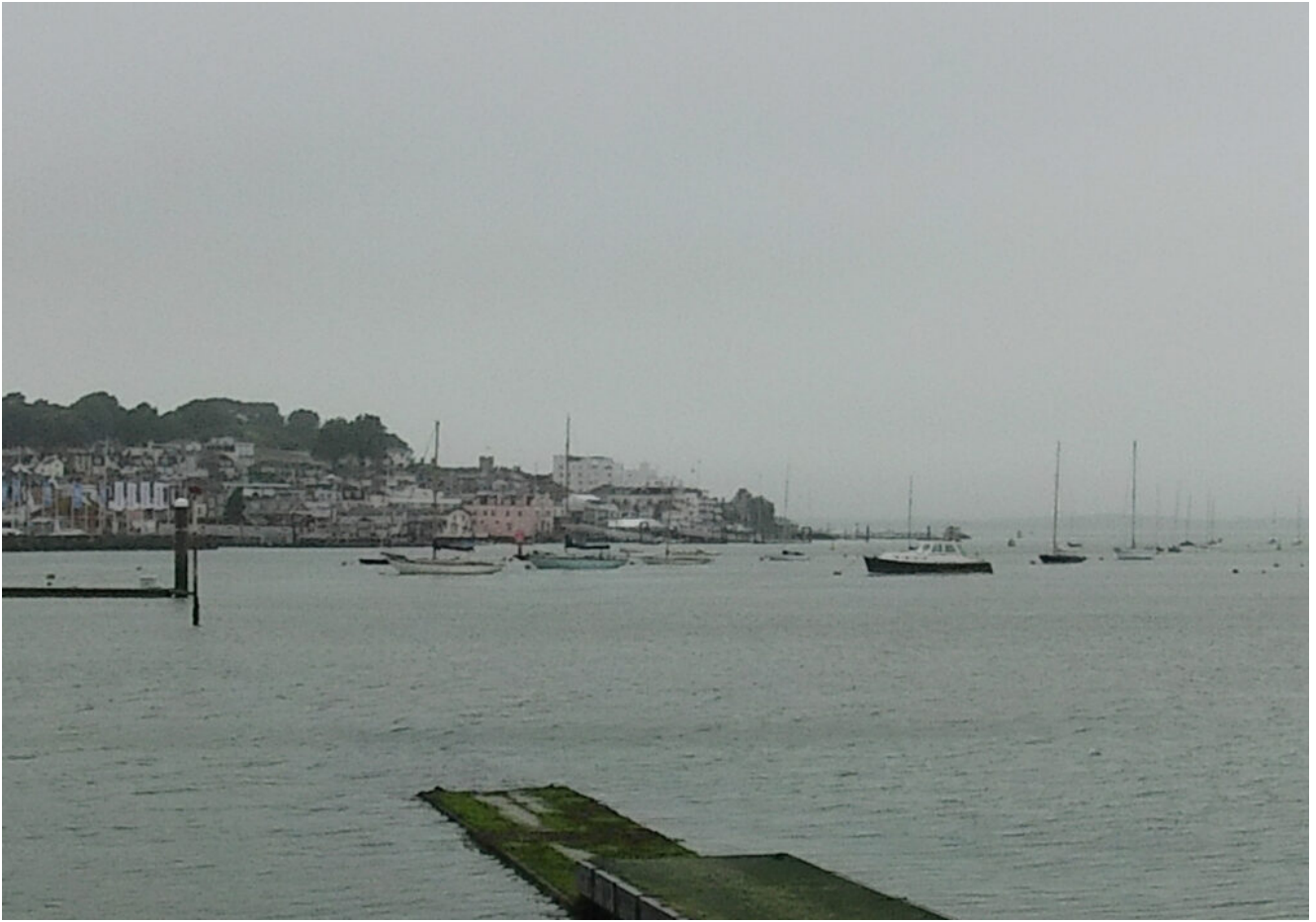
Apparently the first recorded song back in the 1200s was complaining about the British weather, so very appropriate for today as it just so happens to bucket it down as they play it complete with actions to engage the audience. Another song is about Robin Hood, which the duo says is how Robin Hood first came about, by song. It's very entertaining and lovely to see that the children are so interested. We could stay the entire day here but we sense that we have stayed long enough and head back to the car for a picnic.

Watch the videos at www.travelwriter.biz

- www.redfunnel.co.uk
- www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/carisbrooke-castle/
- www.greenmatthews.co.uk



Henry Heidi and Harriett on Red Funnel ferry



The Isle of Wight



The juggler



Henry and a knight