



## John Keats in Shanklin

John Keats visited the Isle of Wight in April 1817, intending to spend the summer in 'solitude'. Due to wars and revolutions in Europe and beyond, many people at this time did not go abroad and took solace in England's coastal towns.

However, in May he decided to leave as he 'was too much in Solitude'. He wrote: "I went to the Isle of Wight - thought so much about Poetry so long together that I could not get to sleep at night - and moreover, I know not how it was, I could not get wholesome food.."



Before you visit Shanklin, read the letter Keats wrote in 1817, describing his

*'My dear Reynolds, -*

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### Consider:

- ✓ The ways in which Keats communicates his enthusiasm and his disdain for different things he sees
- ✓ The traditions and features of letter writing on display here
- ✓ Whether you can still see the things he describes today.

### TASK CHOICES:

1. Explore Shanklin village and Shanklin Chine. Then write a letter to someone you know, describing the key features of the location and communicating your own feelings, as Keats has done in his letter to John Reynolds.
2. Write a blog for a travel website in a similar manner.
3. Draft a piece of persuasive writing promoting 4 or 5 features worth visiting in Shanklin.

*trees & bushes in the narrow parts; and as it widens becomes bare, if it were not for primroses on one side, which spread to the very verge of the Sea, and some fishermen's huts on the other, perched midway in the Ballustrades of beautiful green Hedges along their steps down to the sands. - But the sea, Jack, the sea - the little waterfall - then the white cliff - then St. Catherin's Hill - "the sheep in the meadows, the cows in the corn." - Then, why are you at Carisbrooke? say you - Because, in the first place, I should be at twice the Expense, and three times the inconvenience - next that from here I can see your continent - from a little hill close by, the whole north Angle of the Isle of Wight, with the water between us. In the 3rd place, I see Carisbrooke Castle from my window, and have found several delightful wood-alleys, and copses, and quick freshes.*

*As for Primroses - the Island ought to be called Primrose Island: that is, if the nation of Cowslips agree thereto, of which there are diverse Clans just beginning to lift up their heads and if an how the Rain holds whereby that is Birds eyes abate - Another reason of my fixing is that I am more in reach of the places around me - I intend to walk over the Island east - West - North South - I have not seen many specimens of Ruins - I dont think however I shall ever see one to surpass Carisbrooke Castle...'*



### Unseen Poem Challenge!

In pairs or small groups, discuss, analyse and annotate the poem below, looking at language, form, structure, tone and meaning; try identifying poetic techniques such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, consonance, repetition etc.

Consider the effects the poet John Keats is able to create. Can you write a similar poem based on your views of the Island, or where you live?

*Happy is England*  
by John Keats

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To feel no other world than  
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Through its tall woods with high romances blent:

Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment

For skies Italian, and an inward groan

To sit upon an Alp as on a throne,

And half forget what world or worldling meant.

Happy is England, sweet her artless daughters;

Enough their simple loveliness for me,

Enough their whitest arms in silence clinging:

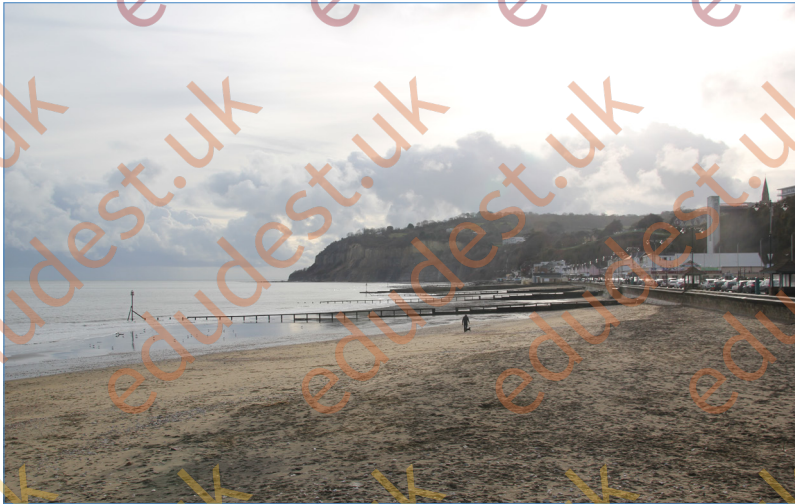
Yet do I often warmly burn to see

Beauties of deeper glance, and hear their singing,

And float with them about the summer waters.

### Poem Rewrite Challenge!

Can you rewrite the poem using synonyms to create the opposite effect?



## SHANKLIN - A SHORT HISTORY

In 1791 Shanklin had a population of about 100, and like most coastal villages locals made their living from fishing. Their thatched cottages were clustered around the top and the bottom of Shanklin Chine. Slightly higher up the hill was the medieval church of St John and Shanklin Manor, but all of this was about to change.

George III had popularised sea bathing, however the French Revolution of 1789 made

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Shanklin was always described as a place not to be missed for two reasons, firstly the Chine and secondly Shanklin was the gateway to the Undercliff. The climate of the Undercliff meant that the vegetation was lush and excitingly different: a place where people could convince themselves that they really had gone abroad.

By 1831 the population of Shanklin had risen to 255, and a whole host of holiday villas were being built. Many of these have now been converted into hotels so they still fulfil their original function. In the nineteenth century families would rent a whole house and decamp there with some of their servants for anything between three weeks and four months.

By 1851 the population of Shanklin had increased to 355 full time residents, but the population would be nearly double when all of the villas were occupied. As a consequence of this the old medieval church was not large enough and it was extensively remodelled in 1859; this is in contrast to Bonchurch and St Lawrence where they built new churches. At the same time, it was rededicated to St Blasius, whose history is more fully explained on the church's website.

The next turning point in the history of Shanklin was the arrival of the railway in 1865. Now in truth the railway did not go into the village of Shanklin, but a point nearly a mile away from it. Regent Street was built to connect the railway station with what became known as the Old Village with its collection of thatched cottages. The space bet

By 1900 Shanklin had spread and joined Lake, which in turn had spread and joined Sandown. The population is now nearing 9,000 and tourism continues to be a big part of the life of the town.

### Activity:

When travelling round Shanklin (or any other town on the trail) look for buildings that have changed their use - look closely - can you spot doors missing, windows bricked up? Why might this be?

