

Learn English With Photos 14 – Plymouth Barbican

Hello and welcome to episode fourteen of Learn English With Photos. My name is Jeffrey Hill and this lesson is based on photos I took in and around the Barbican, which is the old harbour area of my home town Plymouth. In the first part of the lesson I'll talk about the history of the Barbican and what there is to see and do there. Then I'll look at some of the vocabulary in more detail. Finally, I'll ask you to describe some pictures.

Plymouth is a city shaped by the fortunes of sea, trade and war, nowhere more so than in the historic Barbican, Plymouth's delightful old port, full of narrow cobbled streets, Elizabethan houses, specialist shops, art galleries, cafés and restaurants.

Barbican is an old name for a fortified gate, and here the name probably derives from the 'Castle Barbican' which was an entrance to the late medieval fortress that guarded access to the harbour.

The Barbican was one of the few parts of Plymouth to escape most of the destruction of The Blitz during the Second World War, and some of the streets still retain the architecture of the old fishing port.

For centuries the Barbican was home to Plymouth's fish market (now relocated to the other side of the harbour), and is still home to many fishermen. There is much activity around the market quay as trawlers and small fishing boats arrive to offload their catches.

Although a large number of old and significant buildings were demolished during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, many of the oldest surviving buildings, such as the Custom House, have been restored.

There are many places of interest on the Barbican. The oldest street in Plymouth, running along the south of the Barbican, is called New Street — I suppose it was new when it was built! That's where you can find the Tudor and Elizabethan Houses. The sixteenth-century Elizabethan House has been turned into a museum, where you can see how people lived in those days and dress up in Elizabethan clothes. The Barbican is also home to Plymouth's oldest pub.

A little further up the road is this very well-hidden Elizabethan garden, a haven of peace and tranquility amidst the hustle and bustle of the nearby streets.

A historic building tucked away down one of the city's oldest streets - the Merchant's House, now a museum, is Plymouth's finest surviving example of a 16th/17th century residence. During the 17th century it was home to three Plymouth mayors including privateer William Parker. Parker was a friend of Sir Francis Drake, the famous English sea captain who set sail from the Barbican in 1577 on the first ever circumnavigation of the globe.

The Mayflower Steps are close to the site from which the Pilgrim Fathers are believed to have finally left England aboard the Mayflower on the sixth of September 1620, before crossing the Atlantic Ocean to settle in North America. Visitors can stand on a metal balcony and experience before them the same vista that the Pilgrim Fathers saw all those years ago as they embarked upon their great

adventure. A discreet metal plaque commemorates their departure, and their story is told in an exhibition at the nearby visitors' centre.

The Plymouth Gin Distillery in Southside Street has been producing Plymouth Gin since 1793. Plymouth Gin was exported around the globe by the Royal Navy and now has Protected Geographical Indication status. The Distillery buildings were formerly a monastery inhabited by the Black Friars, and it was here that the Pilgrim Fathers spent their last night in England in 1620. The Mayflower ship forms Plymouth Gin's trademark label today. The Distillery Tour provides a fascinating overview of the history of the distillery as well as an introduction to how Plymouth Gin is made.

The National Marine Aquarium is one of the largest aquariums in Britain and has one of the deepest tanks in Europe.

The Barbican is also the departure point for a range of boat trips and cruises, which provide an enjoyable way to discover the sights of Plymouth from a new perspective — as long as the sea's not too rough!

During the last two decades accelerating developments have taken place around most of the Barbican area. This has mostly involved the building of distinctive modern-style waterside blocks of flats.

Whenever I return to Plymouth to see family and friends, I usually make a point of visiting the Barbican since there's always something going on there, and there's no shortage of pubs and restaurants where you can eat indoors or out depending on the weather.

On this particular trip there was a Pirate Weekend with all sorts of fun activities and events relating to ships and pirates, including a fancy-dress competition, pirate games — no that's not Johnny Depp!) — and traditional crafts such as candle making or yarn dyeing.

Well, that ends our visit to the Barbican. Now let's go over some of the vocabulary we've seen. I'll say each word twice and you can repeat it after me if you like. I'll also give a definition and make some additional comments where appropriate.

The first word is ...

Vocabulary

- ❑ **aquarium** — a building, often in a zoo, where fish and underwater animals are kept.
- ❑ **art gallery** — a place that has permanent exhibitions of works of art in it.
- ❑ **café** — a place where you can buy drinks, simple meals, and snacks,
- ❑ **candle** — a stick of hard wax with a piece of string called a wick through the middle. You light the wick in order to give a steady flame that provides light.
- ❑ **catch** — the total amount of things that are caught. Often used with reference to fish.
- ❑ **circumnavigation** — the action of sailing all the way around something, especially all the way around the world
- ❑ **cobbled** — having a surface that is made of cobbles, or small stones.
- ❑ **commemorate** — to remind people of an important person or event from the past with a special action or object
- ❑ **craft** — an activity such as weaving, carving, or pottery that involves making things skilfully with your hands.
- ❑ **cruise** — a journey by boat, visiting different places
- ❑ **decade** — a period of ten years
- ❑ **demolish** — to demolish something such as a building means to destroy it completely.
- ❑ **distillery** — a place where whisky or a similar strong alcoholic drink is made by a process of distilling.
- ❑ **dress up** — to put on special clothes, especially to pretend to be somebody different.
- ❑ **dye** — If you dye something such as hair or cloth, you change its colour by soaking it in a special liquid.
- ❑ **Elizabethan** — belonging to or connected with England in the second half of the sixteenth century, when Elizabeth the First was Queen.
- ❑ **exhibition** — public event at which pictures, sculptures, or other objects of interest are displayed, for example at a museum or art gallery.
- ❑ **fancy dress** — clothes that you wear, especially at parties, to make you appear to be a different character.
- ❑ **fisherman** — a person who catches fish as a job or for sport.
- ❑ **fortress** — a building or place that has been made stronger and protected against attack.
- ❑ **gate** — a barrier like a door that is used to close an opening in a fence or a wall outside a building
- ❑ **gin** — an alcoholic drink made from grain and flavoured with juniper berries.
- ❑ **harbour** — an area of water on the coast, protected from the open sea by strong walls, where ships can shelter
- ❑ **haven** — a place that is safe and peaceful.
- ❑ **hustle and bustle** — busy noisy activity of a lot of people in one place.
- ❑ **mayor** — the person who has been elected to represent a town or city for a fixed period of time.
- ❑ **medieval** — connected with the Middle Ages (about AD 1000 to AD 1450).
- ❑ **monastery** — a building in which monks (= members of a male religious community) live together.
- ❑ **offload** — remove goods from a container or vehicle and put them somewhere else.

- ❑ **Pilgrim Fathers** — the 102 English people who sailed to America on the Mayflower in 1620. Their group included 35 Puritans whose aim was to create a safe religious community in the New World. The Pilgrims probably landed at Plymouth Rock, and they established Plymouth Colony.
- ❑ **pirate** — a person on a ship who attacks other ships at sea in order to steal from them.
- ❑ **plaque** — a flat piece of stone, metal, etc, usually with a name and dates on, attached to a wall in memory of a person or an event.
- ❑ **port** — a place where ships load and unload goods or shelter from storms.
- ❑ **privateer** — commander of a ship used in the past for attacking and stealing from other ships.
- ❑ **quay** — a long platform beside the sea or a river where boats can be tied up and loaded or unloaded.
- ❑ **residence** — a house where people live.
- ❑ **settle** — to make your permanent home in a country or an area as colonists.
- ❑ **the Blitz** — the German air attacks on the United Kingdom in 1940–41
- ❑ **trawler** — a fishing boat that uses large nets that it drags through the sea behind it.
- ❑ **Tudor** — connected with the time when kings and queens from the Tudor family ruled England (1485-1603)
- ❑ **yarn** — thread used for knitting or making cloth