

WALMER CASTLE AND GARDEN KENT

Walmer is now more of a stately home than a castle. It was built (1539-40) as one of Henry VIII's forts to protect the coast from possible invasion. In the eighteenth century it was remodelled into the official residence of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.

Historical Description

To protect the narrow Channel crossing and the safe waters inside the Goodwin Sands, Henry VIII built three castles in 1539-40, Sandown (now washed away), Deal and Walmer. They were made to a similar pattern and linked by earthworks, since destroyed.

The basic plan, in which Henry VIII took a keen interest, resembled some of Albrecht Durer's earlier designs. It has semi-circular bastions at each of the corners of the curtain wall which encircled a central keep. The cannon were arranged in three main tiers, two in the bastions and one on the top of the keep. The external moat and the courtyard inside the curtain could be raked by hand-gun fire. The garrison, which included a captain, his deputy, a porter and eleven gunners was augmented by local men in a crisis. The entrance was well protected by a drawbridge, murder holes, a portcullis, and a stout door. The defences were untried until the seventeenth century when the castle, held by Parliament since 1642, surrendered in 1648. It was retaken after a three week siege and attacks by land and sea.

Walmer was transformed by its eighteenth and nineteenth century alterations into a suitable residence for the Lord Wardens who included William Pitt and Lord Wellington. Pitt lived here during the Napoleonic Wars and one room is a small Pitt museum. Wellington's memory is paramount, his possessions and furniture remain, including his camp bed and a pair of the famous boots. Other rooms, with furniture, heirlooms and paintings include those created for the royal family visit in 1842. The formal gardens (and the Dell) give a good view of the castle.

Learning Opportunities

If the purpose of the visit is to study a Tudor castle then Walmer's layout and defences must be explained first and the castle looked at closely with these in mind, both

inside and out. If possible, also visit Deal where the Henrician elements are most immediately explicit and it is easier to study the defensive function of the castle.

Contrasting Deal with Walmer, pupils should notice a great similarity in design and structure, but the change of use at Walmer could be a focus for work in **History and Geography**. The value of each as a tourist attraction could be studied, developing into ideas for conservation and interpretation at each site.

For Key Stage 2 pupils it would probably be better to concentrate on the castle as a home, and the site would be suitable as a link with the Victorian way of life. One such focus in **History** could be the three week stay in 1842 of Queen Victoria, when the Duke of Wellington vacated his home for them. Pupils could be asked to plan for the royal family holiday visit by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, determining the necessary accommodation and domestic routine. As part of the **preparation**, pupils could find out about Victoria and Albert and their young family at the time, their homes and way of life and how they would have travelled to Walmer.

Whilst **on-site** they would have plenty of opportunity to study the settings of the rooms and to describe and sketch details of furniture. Other pupils could use **Art** skills with sketching or photography outside the castle and around the gardens to record some of the views that may have been enjoyed by Victoria and her family whilst there.

On return to school, **follow-up** may include letters or conversations in role to describe the royal holiday. Whilst they were enjoying themselves, the household of servants would be working very hard, and role play or drama could help pupils understand the size of such a household and the jobs required of them in order to entertain royalty.

Older pupils could extend their work by researching Wellington's life and using the many artefacts and documents to find out about his life. Ideas for biographical or journalistic writing in **English** can be found in the Teachers Handbook for Deal and Walmer Castles. Such an approach could be followed by making further visits to Stratfield Saye (Hants) or Apsley House (London W1), Wellington's other houses.

Location

OS map 179 ref TR378501

On coast, S. Of Walmer 8m from Dover.

How to get there

Road: Follow A258 from Dover to Deal. The castle is on the coast South of the town.

Bus: East Kent Buses service 90C Dover – Deal and 84 Kingsdown – Deal. Tel: 01227 766151.

Rail: Walmer Station is 15 mins walk. Deal station is nearer. Enquiries Tel: 08457 484950 with an easier walk along the seafront.

Opening Hours

For detailed information on current opening hours, please contact the regional office or visit www.English-Heritage.org.uk

Facilities

Access for disabled visitors: Wheelchair access via small ramps to view three ground floor furnished rooms. Access to shop and Tea Rooms via garden gate.

Exhibition: The Duke of Wellington's furniture and possessions.

Refreshments: Lord Warden Tea Rooms. Open daily April to October.

Parking: On site for cars and mini buses. Coach parking in Kingsdown Road (pay and display).

Toilets: Facilities for disabled visitors available.

Free Educational Visits

Please remember you are responsible for carrying out your own risk assessment.

Educational visits to English Heritage Historic Properties are free if prebooked at least fourteen days in advance via the Booking Office at Dover Castle.

Limit on party number: Large parties will be asked to divide into small groups to enter the castle.

Required staff-pupil ratio: at least 1 to 15

Contacts

Booking and site information: (for Dover, Deal and Walmer castles only) Education Bookings, English Heritage, The Keep, Dover Castle, Kent. CT16 1HH Tel: 01304 225229

Education Officer: Jennie Fordham, English Heritage, Eastgate Court, 195-205 High Street, Guildford, GU1 3EH. Tel: 01483 252013

Nearby and Related Sites

Deal Castle, the largest and most complete of Henry VIII's coastal forts, also has a site exhibition.

Dover Castle is a multi-period fortress and one of the largest castles in England. It includes exhibitions and displays.

A Guide to Resources

Coad J and Hughes G. Walmer Castle and Gardens, colour handbook, English Heritage, 1992, ISBN 1-85074-369-X

Barnes J, Deal and Walmer Castles, a handbook for teachers, English Heritage 1991 ISBN 1 85074-360-6

Collins F and Hollinshead L, English and the Historic Environment, English Heritage 2000, ISBN 1-85074-330-4.

All English Heritage resources are available from English Heritage c/o Gillards, Trident Works, Temple Cloud, Bristol, BS39 5AZ

Tel: 01761 452966 Fax: 01761 453408

This site is on the *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens*. A copy of the detailed site description is available, free of charge, from the Designed Landscapes Team, 23 Saville Row, W1X 1AB. Tel: 020 7973 3000

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