

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

DISCOVER THE STORY OF WALMER CASTLE AND GARDENS

Below is a short history of Walmer Castle and Gardens. Use this information to learn how the site has changed over time. You'll find the definitions of the key words in the Glossary.

THE TUDOR FORT IS BUILT

In the 1530s, King Henry VIII (r.1509–47) took England out of the Roman Catholic Church, making enemies of some very powerful Catholic rulers in Europe, including Charles V (**Holy Roman Emperor** and King of Spain), Francis I (King of France) and the **Pope**. Henry's enemies were threatening to invade England, so he quickly identified weak spots along the coast and built a chain of gun **forts** to guard England's shores.

Courtiers, experienced soldiers and local gentry were appointed as **commissioners** and overseers by the king to ensure his wishes were included in the final castle designs and that the forts were built in the same style: squat, round **bastions** with thick walls and lots of open-air and enclosed gun positions, all arranged around a central tower.



Deal, Walmer and Sandown castles were in the first wave of Tudor forts built for Henry VIII between 1539 and 1540.

THE CASTLE BECOMES A RESIDENCE

Since about 1730, the castle has been the official residence of the **Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports**. Inside the castle, the rooms were transformed to make them more comfortable and fashionable for the many important Lords Warden, including **Prime Minister** William Pitt ('the Younger'), **Winston Churchill** and **Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother**. Until the 1790s it also remained in use as a coastal gun fort.

The **Duke of Wellington**, who won the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, was made Lord Warden in 1829. The Wellington Museum at the castle tells the story of the duke's private life, and includes a pair of the famous 'Wellington' boots. Visit our website to see highlights from the collection: www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/walmer-castle-and-gardens/history-and-stories/collection

THE GARDENS ARE CREATED AND DEVELOPED

From the castle, you can cross the moat to the lovely pleasure grounds. These gardens were originally created c.1802–1806 by Prime Minister William Pitt ('the Younger'), and his enterprising niece, Lady Hester Stanhope. Hester came to Walmer in August 1803 after travelling in Europe for a year. Before that, she had lived with her grandmother who died while Hester was abroad. When she arrived back in England, to avoid having to move back in with her father (who mistreated all his children), she was invited to stay with her uncle, William Pitt, at Walmer.



Lady Hester Stanhope joined her uncle, Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger, at Walmer Castle, helping him to landscape the gardens. She acted as his hostess, both at Walmer and in Downing Street, until his death.



A historic plan of Walmer Castle and Gardens from a survey done in 1859 for the War Office, under the direction of Captain R E Scott.

Pitt was the first in a long line of Lords Warden who enjoyed and adapted the gardens over the years. There are now eight acres of magnificent gardens and woodland, including the impressive **Broadwalk**, the elegant Queen Mother's Garden and the secluded, shady **Glen**. The gardens help to tell the story of how Walmer Castle shifted from being a defensive fort, to a comfortable seaside retreat.

REDISCOVERING WALMER'S LOST PLEASURE GROUNDS

In 2018, as part of a £2.3 million project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, English Heritage recovered parts of the garden that had become overgrown and inaccessible, reuniting them into the pleasure grounds, and re-presenting them for future generations to enjoy. A new Learning Centre places learning at the heart of Walmer Castle and gives education visitors a base from which to explore the grounds of the castle.



Work officially began on the project with a ceremony held at Walmer in May 2018 by Walker Construction.

TUDORS
1485–1603

STUARTS
1603–1714

1509–47

Reign of Henry VIII.



1538–41

Spain, France and the Pope threaten to team up and invade England after Henry VIII falls out with the Catholic Church.

1642–51

The English Civil War. The Parliamentarians wanted to change the way the country was run by an all-powerful monarch. The Royalists supported the king, and wanted to keep things as they were.



1649

Charles I is executed and the monarchy is abolished.

1660

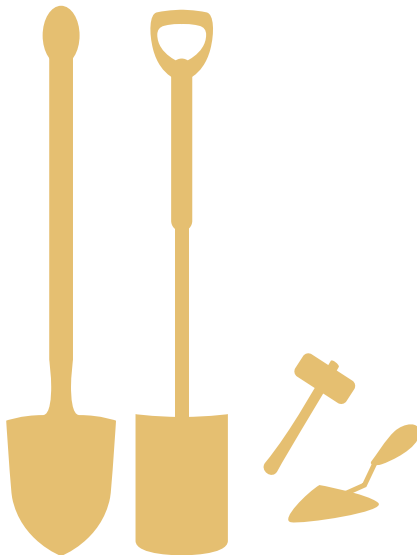
Charles II is restored to the throne.

1500

1600

1539–40

Three castles are built for Henry VIII on the Kent coast, at Sandown, Deal and Walmer. More than 1,400 workmen complete building works in 18 months.



1642

When the English Civil War breaks out, Walmer Castle comes under Parliamentary control.



1648

Royalist forces seize Walmer Castle. A Parliamentary force lays siege to the castle for about four weeks until the Royalists surrender. This was the only major attack on the castle.

16TH CENTURY

17TH CENTURY



GEORGIANS

1714–1837

VICTORIANS

1837–1901

1714–27

Reign of King George I.

1783

William Pitt ('the Younger') becomes the youngest-ever British Prime Minister at the age of 24.



1700

1803–15

The Napoleonic Wars.

1815

The Duke of Wellington and his Allied army, together with a Prussian army, defeat Napoleon's French army at the Battle of Waterloo, ending the Napoleonic Wars.



1852

The Duke of Wellington dies at Walmer. His room is now displayed as it was on the day of his death.

1800

1729–65

Lionel Sackville, the 1st Duke of Dorset, is the first Lord Warden to use the castle as his official residence.

1792–1806

Prime Minister William Pitt is Lord Warden. Together with his niece Lady Hester Stanhope, he begins to create the pleasure grounds we see today.



18TH CENTURY

1829

The Duke of Wellington is made Lord Warden and frequently stays at the castle in the summer, with his friends and family.

1842

Queen Victoria stays at the castle for nearly a month with Prince Albert and their children.

1859

A survey shows there is a strip of mature trees sheltering the garden from the wind. The Oval Lawn, the kitchen and walled gardens and the Paddock are also in place.

1865–91

As Lord Warden, Earl Granville and his wife improve the grounds, creating the Broadwalk with its colourful flower beds and yew hedges.

19TH CENTURY

WW1
1914–18

WW2
1939–45

MODERN DAY

1914–18

First World War.



1939–45

Second World War.

1952

Elizabeth II becomes queen.

2002

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother dies.



2015

Queen Elizabeth II becomes the longest reigning British monarch to date.

1900

2000

1913–34

As Lord Warden, Earl Beauchamp enjoys Walmer with his family each summer, holding parties, putting on shows in the gardens and playing tennis in the moat. It becomes a wartime retreat in 1915 and 1916, visited by important guests such as Lord Kitchener and Winston Churchill.

1978–2002

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother is the first female Lord Warden and stays at the castle every July. She takes a close interest in the gardens and grounds.

1997

Penelope Hobhouse creates a new garden within the old walled garden to celebrate the Queen Mother's 95th birthday.

2015

Using a painting created by Thomas Shutter Boys shortly after Wellington's death, English Heritage curators recreate the duke's room as it looked on the day he died at Walmer.

2017

Walmer wins 'Best Garden or Arboretum' at the Horticulture Week Custodian Awards.

2018–19

English Heritage undertakes a £2.3 million project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to rediscover Walmer's lost pleasure grounds, restoring access to the Glen and improving the Paddock and woodland walk.

20TH CENTURY

21ST CENTURY

GLOSSARY

TRICKY TERMS AND
WHAT THEY MEAN

Below is a list of words you might come across while exploring Walmer Castle and Gardens. Use this Glossary to find out what they mean.

annual – used to describe something that happens once every year

arachnid – the name given to a group of creatures with eight legs and a body made of two parts

bark – the hard, outer covering of a tree or shrub

bastion – a low platform for heavy guns. The bastions at Walmer Castle are semi-circular and arranged like a clover leaf, around a central tower.

biannual – used to describe something that happens twice every year

branch – the parts of a tree that stick out from the trunk, on which the leaves and fruit grow

Broadwalk – an area of the garden with a long, straight path and flower beds on either side, known for its cloud-shaped hedges



Tulips grow from bulbs planted beneath the soil.

bulb – underground masses of food storage from which plants grow. Bulbs are planted under the soil, and plants grow from them at certain times of year.

chalk – a white, soft, earthy limestone (calcium carbonate) which makes up most of the ground in the Walmer Castle gardens

cocoon – a covering or case made by some creatures to protect themselves or their young as they develop into adults

commissioners – people chosen by the king to complete a specific task and represent his wishes



A gun mounted on one of the outer bastions at Walmer Castle.



A woodlouse is a crustacean because of its tough, segmented, outer shell.

crustacean – the name given to a group of creatures with a tough armour-like outer shell, a body made of segments, and limbs that have joints

deciduous – used to describe a plant that drops its leaves at a certain point in the year, usually autumn

Duke of Wellington – a very important Englishman who won the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, and was Prime Minister of England twice. The ‘Wellington boot’ is named after him.

evergreen – used to describe a plant that keeps its leaves and stays green all through the year

exoskeleton – a tough, outer shell

fort – a military building designed to defend against attack

fungi – a group of simple organisms (living things) that are not plants, animals or bacteria, e.g. mushrooms and mould. They



Fungi growing on a rotting log in the Glen at Walmer. Photo taken by Imogen Robinson, an A-level photography student from Dover Grammar School for Girls.

feed on organic matter and can be found everywhere: in soil, lakes, rivers and trees.

gastropod – the name given to a group of creatures with soft flat-based bodies and a muscly ‘foot’ which they use to move around

Glen – an area of the garden that used to be a chalk quarry and was turned into a shady, secluded garden by William Pitt and his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope

habitat – the natural home of a plant, animal or other living thing

harvest – the act of cutting and collecting crops, fruit and vegetables



The gardens team at Walmer create an autumn display each year, showing the various things that have been harvested.

hibernate – the clever way some animals survive the cold winter

weather by finding a safe place to curl up until warmer weather arrives. During hibernation, animals go into a deep sleep, barely breathe and allow their body temperatures to drop.

Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V – ruler of the Holy Roman Empire from 1519 to 1558. He was ruler of many parts of Europe and the Spanish colonies in America and Asia.

honeydew – the sugary waste secreted by aphids, which some butterflies feed on

invertebrate – a creature with no backbone. Some of these have tough skeletons on the outside of their bodies, called exoskeletons.



Leaves come in all different shapes and sizes and can be used to identify plants. Photo taken by Imogen Robinson, an A-level photography student from Dover Grammar School for Girls.

leaf – the flat part of a plant that grows from a stem or branch. Leaves help the plant absorb sunlight.

Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports – the person who, on behalf of the government, regulated the activities of the five powerful port towns on the south-east coast of England – Hastings, New Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich – and 37 other associated towns. ‘Cinque Ports’ means ‘five ports’ in Norman French. The post of Lord Warden still exists today as a ceremonial position.

metamorphosis – the process by which a young plant or animal changes into its adult form, e.g. caterpillars become butterflies

moat – a ditch that surrounds a building, either dry or filled with water, for the purpose of defending it



The moat at Walmer Castle was originally designed for defence and was eventually turned into a garden.

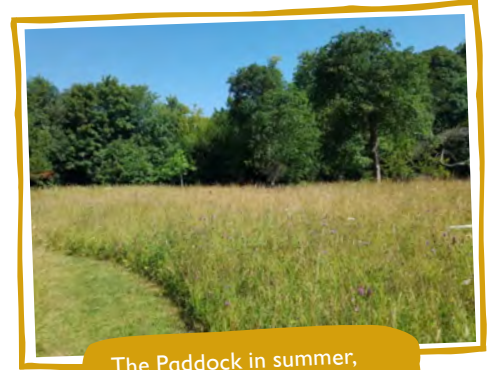
native – a plant that has always grown in England, and wasn’t brought here from somewhere else

nectar – the sweet, sugary liquid made by flowers

nutrients – ingredients that are needed for healthy growth. Plants grow better in soil that is rich in nutrients.

Paddock

– an area of the garden that turns into an insect-filled wildflower meadow in summer. The grass is mowed in August and grows back every year.



The Paddock in summer, before the grass is mowed.

perennial – a type of plant which lasts throughout the year or for many years

photosynthesis – the process by which plants turn carbon dioxide, water and sunlight into energy so that they can grow

pollen – a fine powder, often yellow, which the male part of a plant produces

pollinator – an insect that lands on plants, picking up pollen and moving it to other plants. This helps the pollen (from the male part of the plant) transfer to the female part of the plant, aiding reproduction.



Bees are very good pollinators. Photo taken by Georgia Amos, an A-level photography student from Dover Grammar School for Girls.

Pope – the head of the Roman Catholic Church, worldwide

predator – an animal that hunts, kills and eats other animals

prey – an animal that is hunted, killed and eaten by other animals

Prime Minister – the person who runs the country as head of government

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother – the mother of our current reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth II

root – the part of the plant that attaches it to the ground, travelling into the soil to find water and nutrients, helping the plant grow

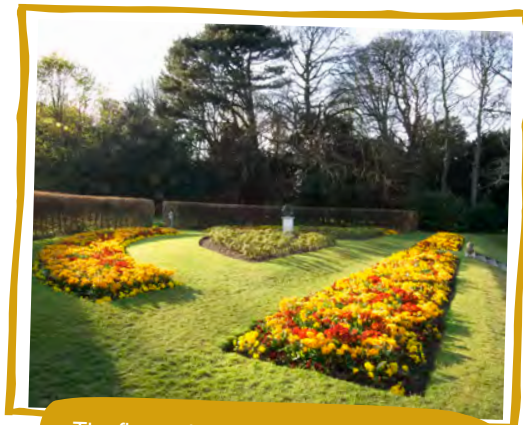
sap – the sticky fluid that circulates around a plant. You might see this sticky substance coming out of tree trunks or plant stems.



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother enjoying the garden that was gifted to her by English Heritage in 1997.

shrub – a woody plant that is smaller than a tree and has several small branches sticking out from a stem near the ground

stem – the main, central bit of a plant, from which the other parts of the plant (such as leaves and flowers) grow



The flower beds on the upper terrace.

terraces – an area of the garden that has been designed to have lawns on different levels, like very broad steps

trunk – the main, woody stem of a tree. The trunk gets wider every year so you can tell how old the tree is by the size of its trunk.

Winston Churchill – the man who was famously Prime Minister of England during the Second World War