

ALFRED SQUARE AND MIDDLE STREET

A site of industry

In the 18th century, the built-up area of Lower Deal ended at the area that is now the south side of Alfred Square. In 1782, land was released to the north and the rest of Alfred Square was laid out.

A section of Middle Street, now known as Sandown Road, was extended to continue beyond the square. It was a busy area with timber yards, grain stores and boat-building yards. Sailmaking and ropemaking took place here and by the end of the 19th century, there were two canning factories as well. A number of products were canned here, including sprats caught off the Deal coast and Machonacie's stew, which was supplied to troops during the First World War.

Hights Brewery occupied a large area to the north of North Street. A wharf was close to the brewery, on the beach at the start of the Marina. This was used to land goods at high tide. There were public lavatories and more than 20 capstans along the road in this area.



Credit: Colin Verrall

More than 20 capstans were along this part of Beach Street and it became known as Capstan Row. This view is looking north towards the Marina.

Alfred Square

The large white building at the west end (now Lloyd Court) was originally called Alfred House and was a boys' school. It later became known as the Deal College for Boys, from which College Road took its name. One of its Principals, James Lush, was Mayor of the town five times. Every Sunday, the boys marched in procession to St George's Church, wearing their uniform jackets and mortar boards, and sat in seats reserved for them in the south gallery. In 1905, the school transferred to Thanet.



Credit: Colin Verrall

The Lloyd Memorial Caxton Seaside Home.

The building was converted into a convalescent home, the Lloyd Memorial Caxton Seaside Home, for members of the printing profession and allied trades. The family of Edward Lloyd, from Sittingbourne Paper Mills, supported the home with money and donations. During the Second World War, the fire brigade used the home as a training college. It was converted into flats in 1969.

On the corner of Alfred Square and Middle Street is the Prince Albert pub. Although listed as a mid-19th century building, its deeds date back to



Credit: Colin Verrall

Guests enjoying the back garden of the Clifton Hotel, at 102 Middle Street, sometime around the turn of the 20th century. The property was extensively renovated in 2017. Parts of the present building date to the 18th century. It was formerly known as the 'Redan', but its name was changed to the 'Clifton Hotel' in 1896.

1717. Its gardens once stretched all the way down to Lower Street (now the High Street) before more buildings were constructed in Alfred Square. It became the Prince Albert pub after a visit to Deal by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

At the eastern end of Alfred Square, at the junction with Middle Street, is Cavendish House, which was a bakery from the 1820s until the 1950s. This building dates from the late 18th to early 19th century, making it the oldest property in the Alfred Square area that has kept its original form.

Number one Alfred Square, at the junction with College Road, used to be a pub called the Saracen's Head. It has a postbox dating from the reign of Queen Victoria, one of only two in Deal.

Middle Street

The number of well-preserved 17th-century buildings on Middle Street is impressive for an English town but originally there must have been many more. An earthquake in 1692 was responsible for the collapse of many chimneys, and perhaps the buildings too; many of the earlier houses were rebuilt or modernised at the end of the 17th century.

In 1968, Middle Street became the first designated Conservation Area in Kent. Since then, the Conservation Area boundary has been extended three times.

The street was not always so beautiful. Crossed by a maze of little streets, courts, hidden passageways and hideaways, in the 18th

century it became the centre of Deal's extensive smuggling activities. Crowded with pubs, sailors, smugglers, press gangs and prostitutes, it had a terrible reputation. Murders and assaults were common. In 1857, the landlord of The Ship Inn, a few yards from the Prince Albert, murdered a sailor for being cheeky to his wife. The pub's name was changed to the Seagull sometime between 1857 and 1865, in order to dissociate its original name from the murder.

In 1882, the town council considered whether to resurface the old cobbled road. A report, written by the Health Officer, Dr Mason, pointed out the danger to public health: 'In that street it was well known practice of the inhabitants to open their doors and cast all their slops and refuse in the roadway, instead of taking the trouble to go to the back with it. To do this in a macadamised street would be to seriously endanger health.' Despite his warnings, the road was resurfaced.

Today, Middle Street is a highly sought-after residential area.



Credit: Colin Verrall

College Road in the 1930s.

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