

DEAL

Origins

Deal was recorded in the Domesday book as a small village called Addelam. This was situated in Upper Deal, where St Leonard's Church is now, on higher ground 1.6km (1 mile) from the shore. The only buildings on the shoreline at that time were some fishermen's huts, until Henry VIII built defensive castles at Walmer, Deal and Sandown in 1539-40.



Credit: © Historic England Archive

This painting, dated to before 1732, shows the three 'Castles in the Downs' of Deal, Sandown and Walmer with a fleet of ships at anchor off Deal.

Development

Until the 15th century, many ships used the Wantsum Channel at Sandwich as a shortcut to the London estuary. By the 17th century, however, the river was badly silted up. New sailing ships were also too big to use the channel. They would weigh anchor in The Downs, the area of water between Deal and the Goodwin Sands. Here, they would shelter and wait for the wind to change direction in order to continue their journey.

This provided a great opportunity for Deal and dwellings appeared along the shoreline for



Credit: Colin Verrall

Crowds on the beach for Deal Regatta, possibly watching one of the boat races. For many years, this was held on a weekend in September, rather than during the last week of July as it is today.

the Deal boatmen, who serviced the ships. By 1650, there were many brick-built houses both on the shingle bank and behind. A road structure developed, from South Street to North Street. These streets were connected by Beach Street (Upper Street), Middle Street and Lower Street (now the High Street). The Archbishop of Canterbury owned the land and rents were collected until the 1850s.

For centuries, Deal was managed as a 'limb' of the Cinque Port of Sandwich, but on 13 December 1699, the King granted Deal its independence and gave the town its charter. This meant that the town could now hold its own market.



Credit: Colin Verrall

An engraving of the Spanish-Dutch war, 1640, by Wenceslas Holler. It shows some of the ships in The Downs, Walmer Castle, Deal Castle and the buildings in Deal town.

The Royal Naval Yard

The Royal Naval Yard was established in 1702-3 and then mostly destroyed in the Great Storm of 1703 and then rebuilt. Deal was one of the four great naval ports in England (as listed in Queen Anne's Calendar of Treasury Papers in the early 18th century), and up to 400 ships anchored in The Downs at any one time. Deal was the last port of call for ships going to the East Indies and West Indies, and the first port of call on the way back. Their arrivals and departures were logged and appeared in newspapers across England in the early 18th century. The town was a busy, cosmopolitan place and gave rise to its motto *Adjuvate Advenas* - 'Befriend the Stranger'.

The Goodwin Sands

The Goodwin Sands have been a constant danger. It is believed that 2000 wrecks of ships from all eras are present, as well as aircraft from the Second World War. The constantly shifting sands swallow whole ships and then uncover them.

Seafaring trades

Many seafaring trades were present in Deal. People worked as boat builders, pilots, sail makers and rope makers. When import and export duties were introduced to raise taxes, Deal boatmen turned to smuggling. Deal also had many pubs and inns to cater for travellers.



Credit: Colin Verrall

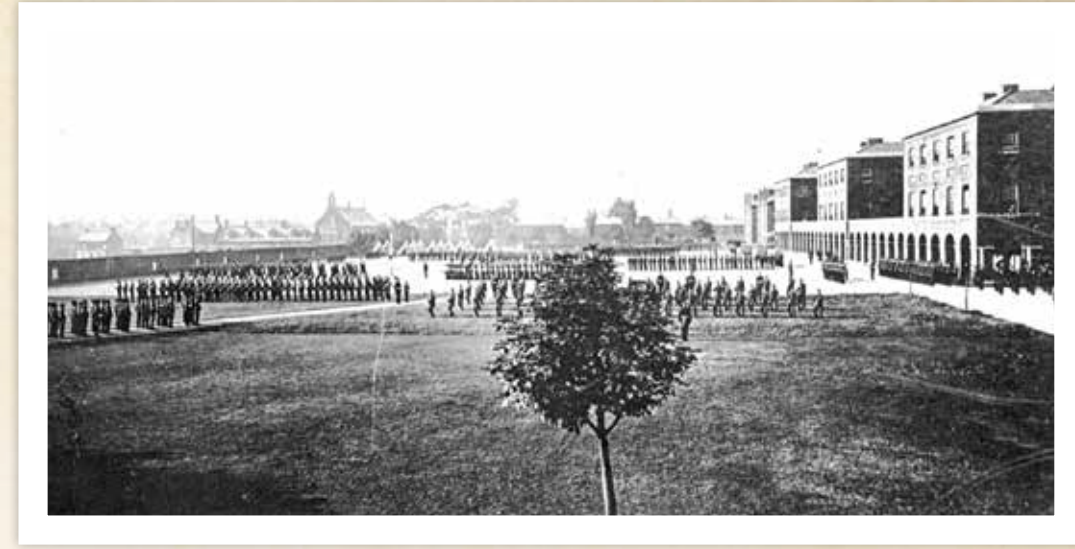
Boats on Deal beach after a gale in November 1897. The boatmen clustered their boats together as far up the beach as they could, so they wouldn't get destroyed by the heavy seas or pulled out to sea and lost.

Changing fortunes

The wars against the French leading up to the Battle of Waterloo saw a huge influx of people to Deal and the building of the military barracks, the Naval Hospital, seven windmills and houses in the lower Walmer and Duke Street areas.

When peace came in 1815, Deal started to decline and the town's inhabitants had to find new ways to make a living. The problem was made worse by the new steam ships, which did not need to wait in The Downs for the wind to change. There was an exodus of Deal boatmen, including a group in 1851 who left for New Zealand.

The Royal Marines School of Music was the last group of military personnel to be stationed here. They left in 1996 and the fine buildings were converted into housing.



Credit: Dover Museum. d03197

The Royal Marines North Barracks. An extensive complex of military barracks and hospital buildings was established at Deal during the late 18th and 19th centuries.

The 19th century

In the 1830s, a holiday resort was seen as the way forward for the town. Some of the houses on the seafront were pulled down to make way for grand hotels and the first Royal Regatta was held in 1826 which attracted people from as far afield as the Isle of Wight.

Fishing led to the growth of industry in North Deal with several canning factories. There were also two breweries, one located on the High Street which lasted until 1901.

In 1847, the railway arrived from Minster, with connections to London. Charles Dickens was here to record the event. The route to Dover was opened in 1881 and Deal was firmly on the holiday map.

The mining community

The 20th century Kent coalfield extended locally to Betteshanger Colliery which sunk its first shaft in 1924. It took three years to reach the coal. Thousands of miners moved in from other coalfield areas and huge estates were built to house them in the Mill Hill area of the town.

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