

THE HIGH STREET

Low-lying land

The land here is the lowest in the area. Originally it was marshland behind a shingle bank between here and the sea, known as the Sea Valley. The marshes gradually dried out from the 12th century and the ground became solid enough to build on.

Middle Street and Beach Street were the heart of the town from the first half of the 17th century. Lower Street, now known as the High Street, developed in the second half of the 17th century. As the town's population grew, existing businesses needed more space and many moved into Lower Street during the 19th century.

Lower Street continued to be damp, and in 1791, the Pavement Commissioners decided to raise the level of the road by about 1.2 metres (4 feet). This is why, even today, you step down into some premises.

Deal continued to expand and grow in importance, though it was always vulnerable to severe flooding until the modern sea wall was built.



Credit: Colin Vorrall

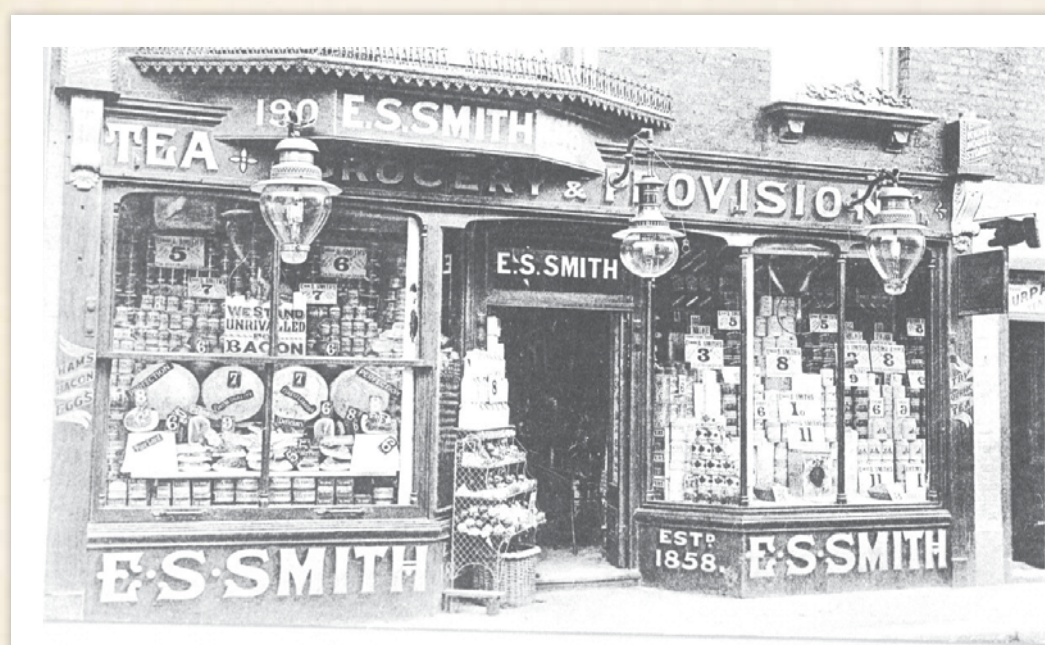
Severe flooding of the High Street and surrounding streets. Flooding often happened in the town before the sea wall was built. Lower Street, which later became the High Street, was particularly vulnerable because of its low elevation.

Businesses

The former Black Horse is a large, three-storey Georgian building with an early 18th-century core. It is now a shop but used to be the Coaching Inn and the point of departure for coaches to Dover and Ramsgate. Post coaches left for Dover at 10.30am every morning and 6pm every evening. These coaches, carrying mail, had an armed escort. There were five passenger coaches to Sandwich, Ramsgate and Margate every day.

The large building on the corner of the High Street and Queen Street was the first bank in Deal, opening in 1804. At that time, banks issued their own currency and Deal Museum has a collection of the notes issued on display. It went bankrupt in the 1850s and was bought by the then National Provincial Bank, now Natwest. It remained a bank until 2025.

A major part of Lower Street used to be taken up with a brewery in the area that is now Stanhope Road. It extended across to West Street and up to St George's Church and included the building that is now the Rose Hotel. From the 18th century until 1851, this was Iggulden's Brewery. It then became Hills Brewery until Daniel Hill died, and in 1898 it was sold to Thompson's Brewery in Walmer.



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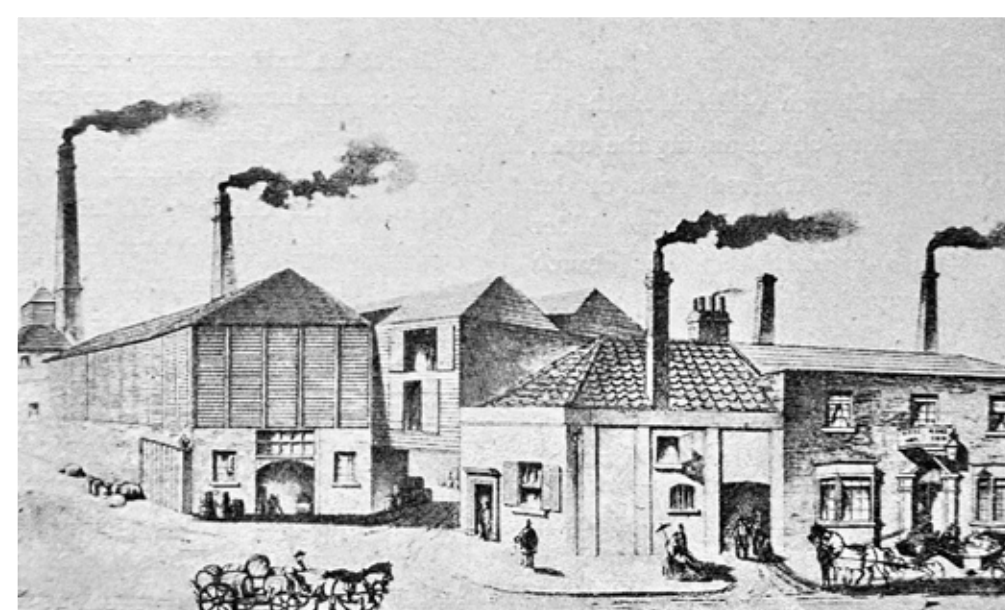
ES Smith, Grocer (established in 1858), was at 190 High Street. This photograph was taken around 1907. The building has since been converted into a house.



Credit: Colin Vorrall

Deal High Street and the Black Horse Hotel, and the New Inn next door (now the Goodwin), 1904. One of the old gas lights can be seen on the right of the photograph.

It was then sold to developers who built terraced houses along Stanhope Road, as well as the Astor Theatre and the post office buildings which are still in use today.



Credit: Colin Vorrall

This image is of a calling card for Hills Brewery. The building on the right is now the Rose Hotel.

The Custom House

Deal was designated as a port in 1660 and needed a surveyor and staff to police the import and export of goods. Sailing ships anchored in The Downs had to pay duties and taxes were imposed to regulate trade. The Customs officers inspected the boats and money was paid to the office of the Excise, which was at the New Inn on Lower Street. This is now the Goodwin pub.

The first named person in the records is Vincent Den in 1660, who was employed as Surveyor of Customs Deal Port. From at least the 17th century, there was a customs house on the corner of Customs House Lane and Middle Street, and a watch house at the top of King Street. The office moved to Lower Street in 1814, in the area that is now 38-42 High Street. It stayed there until boats

no longer anchored in The Downs. The office was closed in 1882 and rebuilt into shops when the port of Deal was downgraded to a creek. The shops were bombed in the Second World War, demolished and later replaced with the current buildings.

Growth of the High Street

The gasworks were on Lower Street and gas lights were introduced in Deal in 1838. According to historic maps of the area, Lower Street was renamed as the High Street in 1872. It was renumbered in 1892.

The 'High Street' in Britain developed in the mid-to late 19th century, to cater for people in towns who no longer had the facilities to be self-sufficient. It evolved into the main commercial or shopping thoroughfare in a town. As a consequence, some older buildings, or parts of buildings, in Deal were pulled down or reworked, to allow more space to sell an increasingly varied range of products.

Much of the High Street in Deal became a precinct in the 1990s. Although much of it is now a modern shopping centre, many of the old buildings survive behind the shop facades, and you can still see their interesting architecture in the upper storeys.



A delivery 'fly' coach belonging to Ainslie Bros, Butchers then at 210 High Street, Deal. Home delivery is not a new phenomenon!



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