

LOWER WALMER - SOUTH

WELCOME TO WALMER - THE FORTRESS AGAINST THE SEA

Welcome to Walmer - a little place with a big and colourful history of invasions, smuggling, fishing, trading with visiting ships, guarding England's most vulnerable shoreline and home to England's most famous soldier, The Duke of Wellington. Walmer's name is said to be derived from 'Vallum Mare' a corruption of the Latin 'Quasi Vallum Maris' or Fortress against the sea.

The original village of Walmer, situated at the top of Drum Hill, grew up around an estate established after the Norman Invasion of 1066. Old St. Mary's Church and cottages for workers and tradesmen soon followed. By Victorian times this small agricultural community had become a thriving village.

The sea off Walmer is known as 'The Downs' a safe anchorage between the shore and the treacherous Goodwin Sands. This 10 mile long sandbank in the English Channel has claimed many lives including over 1000 during the great storm in November 1703 when many warships were lost. There are many wrecks, some visible at low tide.

Boats called Luggers, measuring between 40 and 50 feet long and made from British Elm were the traditional boats used along this coast as they could be launched from a steep shingle beach.



A Lugger used on Walmer's steep shingle beaches

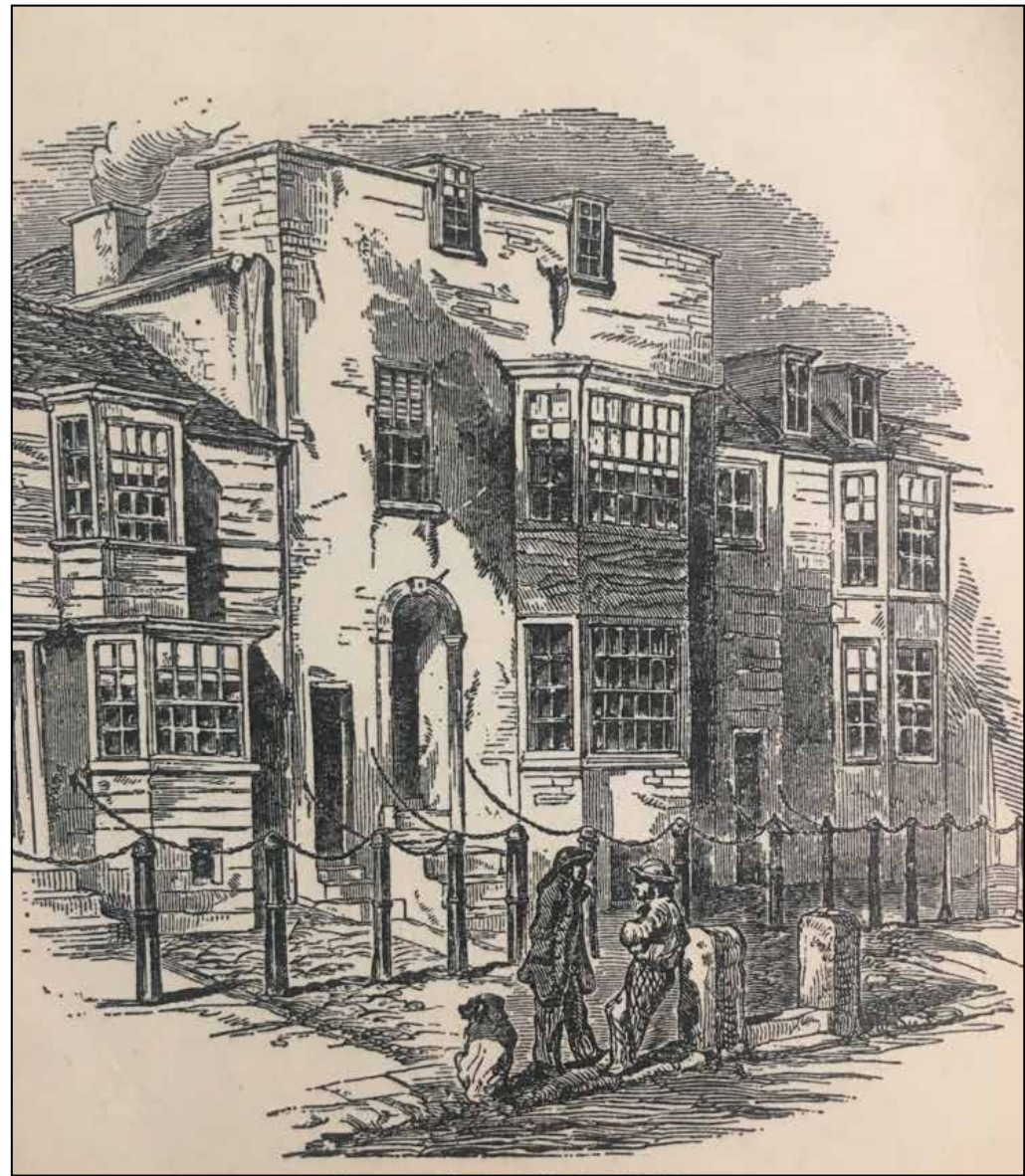
Julius Caesar first landed in Britain just north of here in August 55 BC. He encountered strong resistance from the native Britons and stayed only a few weeks. Bad weather had prevented reinforcements and resupply. Despite one more abortive landing one year later further north, it was nearly 100 years before Emperor Claudius managed to make Britain a part of the Roman Empire.

St Mary's Church built in the Victorian Gothic style overlooking the Castle on St. Clare's Road was started in 1887 and finished in 1893 without its intended spire. Once built it became the main church in the parish replacing the smaller Norman church in Upper Walmer.

Off Liverpool Road is Marke Wood recreation ground, the land was given to the public in 1927 by a local benefactor, whose family lived at Walmer Place. The only remaining part of Walmer Place is some of the extravagant Italianate garden which can be glimpsed from the main Kingsdown Road. Marke Wood was extended in the 1950s.



Walmer Castle, early 18th Century



The Duke's House, Walmer Castle Road



Walmer Aerodrome, RAF Walmer, World War One

Walmer Castle is the most southerly of three Castles built on this stretch of coast by King Henry VIII in 1539-40 to protect against invading forces from the Continent. All three were joined by a defensive trench two and a half miles long which had four earth gun emplacements along its length. Walmer Castle along with the other two Castles guarded The Downs and guaranteed safe anchorage for English ships throughout the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

Walmer Castle saw action during the English Civil War and in 1648 it surrendered to Cromwell's Parliamentary Army after a siege lasting almost a month. Walmer Castle replaced Dover Castle as official home to the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports in the early 18th century and additions were made during this period to turn the Castle into the residence it is now. Walmer Castle has beautiful gardens first laid out during the residency of William Pitt the younger (Lord Warden 1792-1806)

Hawkshill Freedown located on the top of the hill behind the castle, has magnificent views across the English Channel and can be accessed via a footpath off the Kingsdown Road next to the Southern boundary of the Castle, or from the car park on Liverpool Road. This area of rare chalk grassland is a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), reflecting its national importance for wildlife, particularly wild flowers and butterflies.

Walmer Aerodrome opened on the Freedown in 1917. It became RAF Walmer in 1918. The last planes departed in 1919. RAF Walmer (Hawkshill Down) was reopened during WW2 as a strategic radar location for the defence of the UK. The aerodrome finally closed in 1945.

The full history of the Aerodrome is on the Commemorative Stand located on the Freedown and erected by the Parish Council in honour of all service personnel stationed there.



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This is one of a series of Historic Village information panels which can be found in most of our villages in the Dover district. There are also Historic Town panels in Dover, Deal and Sandwich. Historic Town Trail leaflets can be found online at www.whitecliffscountry.org.uk

Further information from Dover Visitor Information Centre
01304 201066 or Dover Museum 01304 201066

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