

THE ROYAL HOTEL

Origins

The Royal Hotel stands to the north of the pier. An earlier pub, The Three Kings, which dated from the 1720s stood here. This, and a number of the surrounding houses, were adapted in 1836 into the building that we see today.



Credit: Colin Vorrall

The Royal Hotel, with the Fountain Hotel to the south. This was demolished in the mid-1920s and the area is now the car park just to the south of the Royal Hotel.

Famous guests

The Royal Hotel has been associated with many illustrious visitors to the town and was at one time possibly the most important hostelry in the naval town of Deal.

The hotel has hosted numerous dignitaries, particularly during times of war. The Royal was frequently visited by Prince Frederick (1763-1827), Duke of York and Albany (George III's second son) who was in command of military forces during the War of the First Coalition and later, the Napoleonic Wars. When in residence, he would stand on the hotel balcony each morning to view The Downs and inspect the shipping from afar.

It was also from the hotel balcony that in 1799 the Duke, William Pitt the Prime Minister and many other titled men watched the embarkation of 40,000 men for a disastrous campaign in the Batavian Republic in north Holland, which later became part of the French Empire of Napoleon. It has been suggested that this ineffective campaign led to the Duke being mocked in the nursery rhyme 'The Grand Old Duke of York'. However, there are other Duke of York candidates who could be attributed to this nursery rhyme.

Lord Nelson

A surprising sufferer of seasickness, Lord Horatio Nelson (1758-1805) was a regular resident at the hotel. He used to meet his mistress, Lady Emma Hamilton (1765-1815) here, when his fleet was anchored off The Downs. Two rooms in the hotel are known as the 'Nelson' and 'Lady Hamilton' suites.

In August 1801, Nelson led elements of the Royal Navy from The Downs to destroy a flotilla of French vessels anchored at Boulogne Harbour, a fleet which was thought to be part of the planned invasion of England. The raid at Boulogne was a disaster and the wounded were brought back to Deal. One of the wounded was Nelson's closest friend, Captain Edward Parker, who later died and was buried at St George's Church. Records indicate Nelson took lodgings at the hotel on 31 August, where he was joined by Sir William and Lady Hamilton and Mrs Nelson, his sister-in-law. They remained in Deal until 30 September.

Nelson died on HMS Victory during the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Soon after his death, his body was sent back to England from Gibraltar in a barrel of brandy which acted as a preservative and embalming fluid. Lady Emma Hamilton



Credit: Colin Vorrall

A view from the pier, looking at the buildings around the Royal Hotel and Fountain Inn.



Credit: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HoratioNelson.jpg>

Vice-Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson (1758-1805) visited the Royal Hotel on several occasions and reputedly stayed here in 1801 while the Navy fleet were moored off the Goodwin Sands.

died 10 years later in 1815. According to library archives from 1974, a former night porter at the Royal Hotel reputedly witnessed the ghost of Lady Hamilton sitting in a corner of the hotel lounge.



Credit: Colin Vorrall

Crowds watching Deal Regatta. The three gables of the Royal Hotel can be seen in the row of buildings along the beach.

Other buildings

In 1834, Deal Borough Council tried to revive the fortunes of Deal by promoting tourism. New boarding houses began to be built on Beach Street and some properties on the seaward side were demolished to allow access to the sea. The Royal Hotel is the only building to remain of the many that once stood on the seaward side of Beach Street. Former buildings included the Fountain Hotel, which is believed to have been established in 1661 and was reputedly the centre of Deal's smuggling activity.

The India Arms (now an amusement arcade) was also a prominent meeting place for sailors, agents and businessmen. It is believed that the India Arms was named after the East India Company, which had been sending ships to India since the early 17th century.

The Royal Hotel is depicted in one of Turner's watercolour paintings, dated to about 1825, which shows a stormy sea in Deal. Turner lived for a time in Margate and later in Deal where he bought a property in Beach Street.



A view of Deal seafront looking north, in JMW Turner's watercolour painting dated around 1825. A group of Deal luggers are getting ready to cast off to save lives and salvage goods from ships in trouble on the Goodwins.


Funded by
UK Government



Text copyright Dover District Council.

Every effort has been made to ascertain who owns the images on this panel but please contact DDC if you are aware of any further information.

Find this and more heritage panels at www.towntrail.uk