

SANDOWN CASTLE

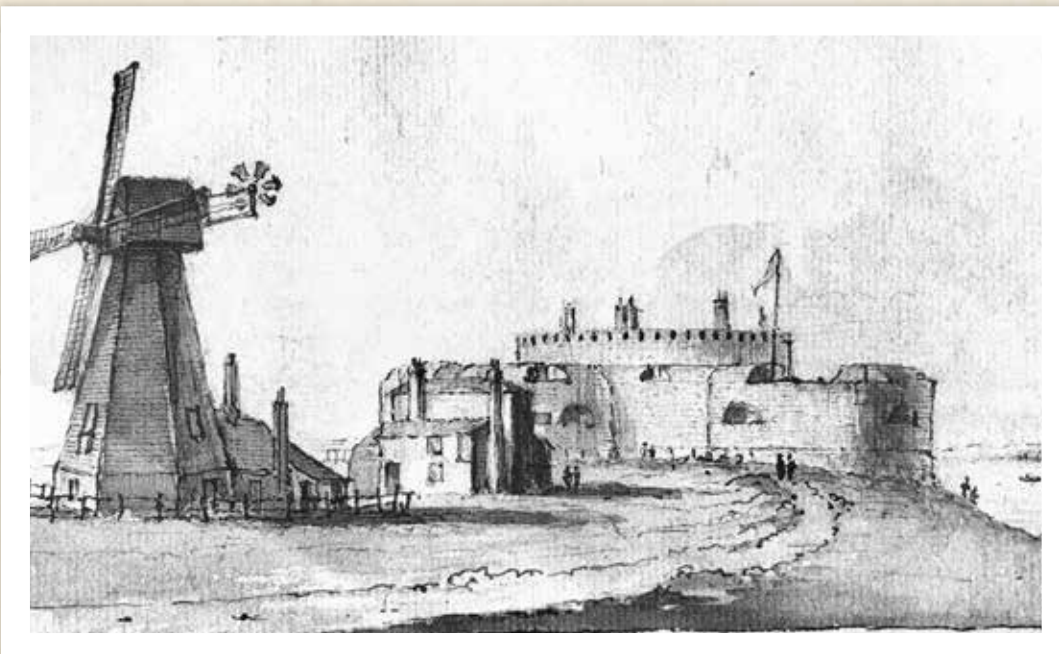
Castles of The Downs

Before the 1500s, Sandown was a wild and little frequented place to the north of Deal. In 1539-40, it was the site chosen for the most northerly of King Henry VIII's 'Castles of the Downs'. These three castles were designed to protect the vulnerable coastline of the Deal area and the strategically vital anchorage of The Downs, situated between Deal beach and the Goodwin Sands.

The latest design

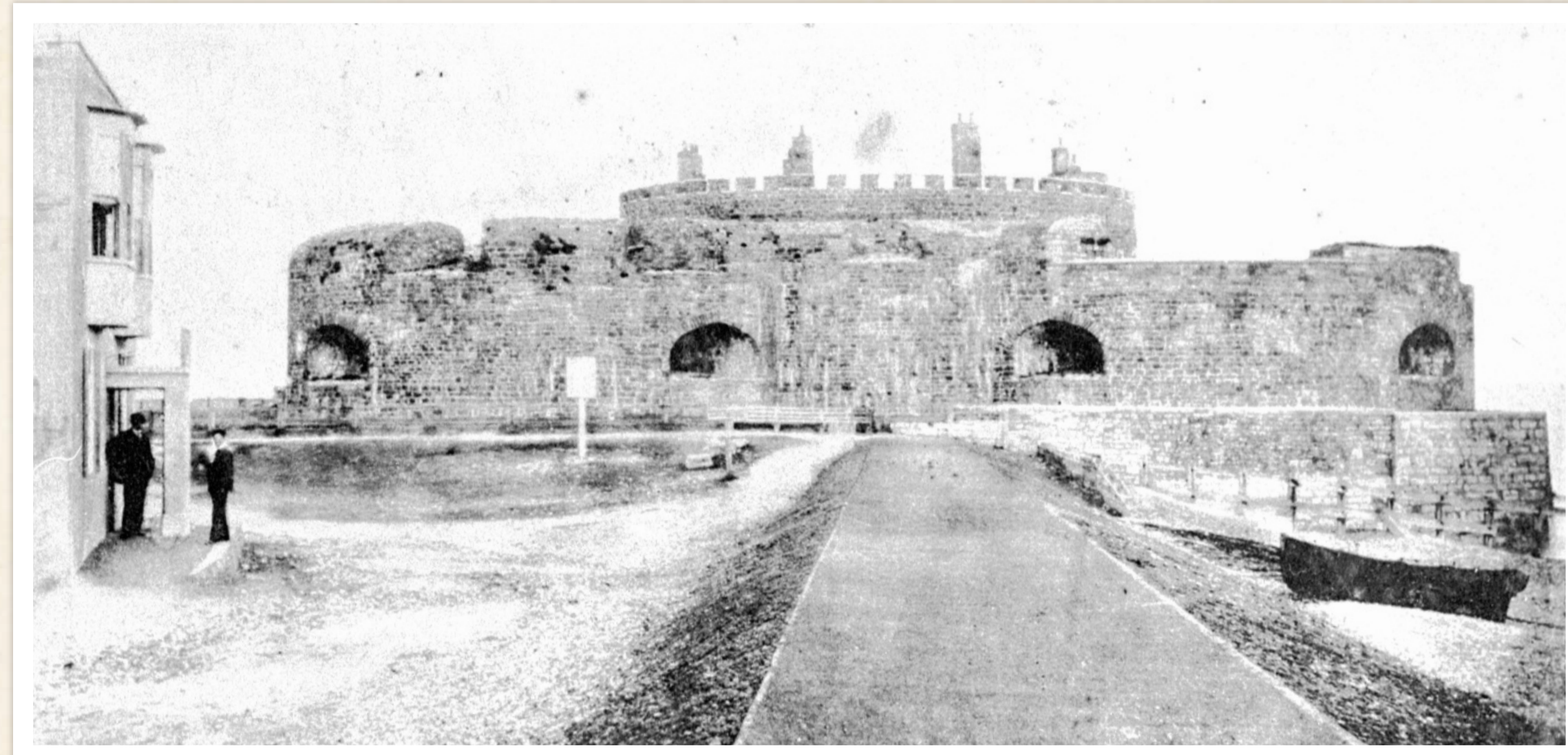
The castles were built low to provide the minimum target for ships' guns while offering a clear view for their own guns. They had no flat or angular surfaces as rounded walls would deflect most cannon balls without damage. The three castles were armed with artillery intended to be used against enemy ships before they could land forces or attack ships anchored in The Downs.

Sandown was built to a similar plan as Walmer Castle but had only four semi-circular lunettes or buttresses around its central keep, as opposed to Deal's six, with an encircling dry moat surrounded by an outer wall.



Credit: Colin Verrall

The most northerly windmill in Deal, built in 1787, and the Good Intent pub, next to Sandown Castle. This was sketched by Moses in 1840.



dc3029

This is a postcard labelled 'Sandown Castle as it was', and is a view from the south. The photograph was taken by WH Franklin in 1863..

Usage

Both the captains of Sandown and Walmer came under the control of the captain of Deal Castle, who in turn reported to the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. All three castles were captured by Royalist troops for about three months during the Second English Civil War of 1648-9. Sandown Castle played a key role at times of conflict in protecting The Downs anchorage and was used as a hospital, a coastguard station, a prison and for control of smuggling during its long history.

When King Charles II (1630-1685) was restored to the throne, he used the castle to imprison the former Parliamentarian Colonel John Hutchinson (1615-1664), one of the men who had signed the death warrant of his father, Charles I. The castle was reputedly in a ruinous state and after several months of imprisonment Hutchinson died of pneumonia. His wife Lucy and his doctor blamed Hutchinson's decline on the conditions in which he had been kept.

During the Anglo-Dutch Wars, which mainly took place during the mid-17th century, the castles protected shipping in The Downs. Sandown is reported as once firing on a man-of-war that was attacking small craft.

By the mid-18th century, the castle was in danger from sea damage. Sandown was more exposed than Walmer and Deal, and particularly vulnerable



Credit: Dover Museum. d33203

This photograph from the Roget collection, taken by WH Franklin, is looking south at a damaged bastion.

to coastal erosion and storms. In 1785, the sea broke into the moat and the castle was declared unfit for habitation. It was repaired several times and continued to be garrisoned at times of perceived risk such as during the Napoleonic wars. Sea walls and groynes were built to try to prevent further coastal erosion. The last Captain of the castle was Sir John Hill. When he died in 1855, the castle was abandoned.

Following severe storms, the eastern bastions started to be undermined when beach deposits were lost, and several large cracks appeared. Despite efforts to delay this, erosion continued for several years until large portions of the bastion's masonry walling and part of the keep broke away and tumbled down onto the beach.

Sale and destruction

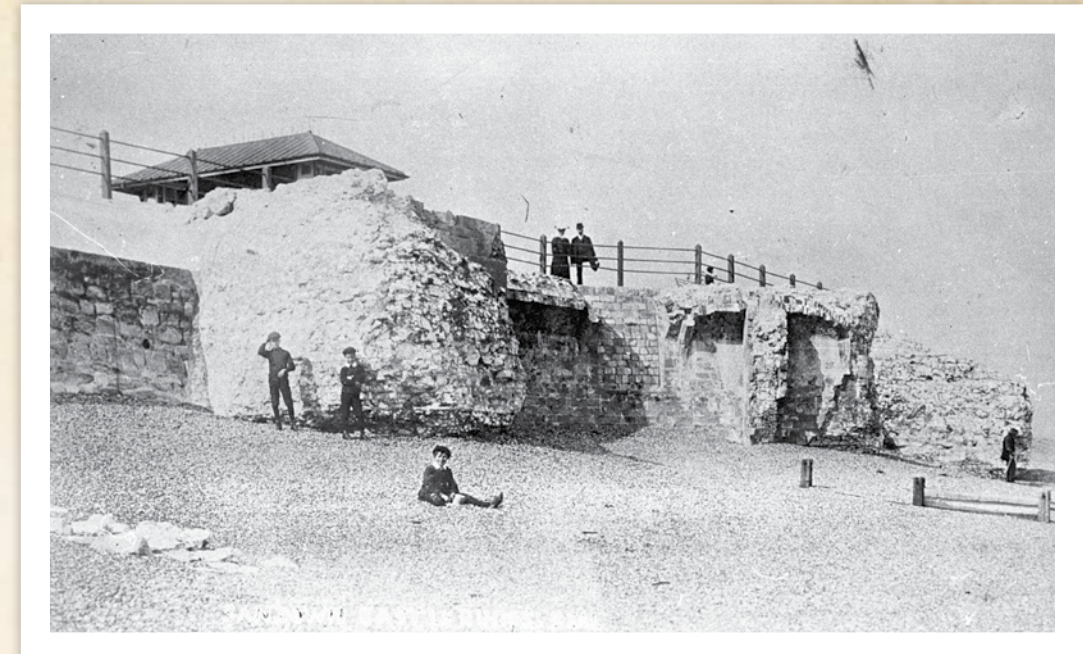


Credit: Dover Museum. d33205

Sandown Castle. This image dates from July 17th 1863 when the building was sold. The Good Intent pub is to the left of the photograph.

In 1863, the War Office sold the castle for building material as parts of the ruins were becoming increasingly dangerous. Some stone was sold to the Lord Warden Lord Granville, for work on his new residence at Walmer Castle. More masonry was sold to a local builder and for several buildings including the second Deal pier.

In 1882, the Royal Engineers used explosives to try to make the site safer. They removed around



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Ruins of Sandown Castle, early 20th century.

600 tonnes of masonry to use in the construction of officers' quarters at Dover Castle, causing further damage.

Deal Council bought the site in 1894. The extent of the castle's surviving western portion was explored in 1979 during the construction of the North Promenade. Investigations showed that the western half of the castle was still fairly well preserved. Half the central structure and the north-west and south-west semi-circular bastions were largely complete. The remains of a forebuilding and bridge spanning the encircling moat were recorded, before being largely encased in concrete as part of the modern sea wall.

The community garden

The first community garden in 1947 used granite kerb stones from Deal High Street which were being replaced. The garden later fell into disrepair until the Sandown Castle Community Garden Group formed in 2014. Today, they maintain an award-winning rockery and communal garden on the western part of the castle. No visible remains of the castle are now exposed.


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