

# THE TOWN HALL AND ST GEORGE'S CHURCH

## 17th-century Deal

Until the late 17th century, Deal was governed by the Cinque Port of Sandwich. However, the town grew rapidly and in 1699, when the population reached 3000, the town petitioned King William III for its own Royal Charter. This was granted, and it allowed the town to hold its own market and raise taxes.

The new Town Council rented a house in Whetstone Street (now King Street) until a town hall was built in 1701-2. This was on the east side of the High Street, between Market Street and King Street. It had a Court Hall on the first floor, a gaol on the ground floor and a market under cover at street level. It was sold for commercial use in 1859.

## The town hall

The old town hall became too small for the growing town and work began on the existing town hall in 1803. This building is on the west side of the High Street where it turns into St George's



Credit: Colin Vorrall

*Deal's original town hall, when it had become a milliner's (hat) shop. The building is still there today.*

Road. Designed in the neoclassical style, it was completed by autumn 1804. The ground floor was arcaded in the Tuscan style, so that covered markets could be held there. This space was later used to house the town's first fire engine. The principal rooms formed the council chamber on the first floor and they were accessed by an oak-panelled spiral staircase. The mayor's parlour and gaol were on the ground floor.



Credit: Colin Vorrall

*Fire engines underneath Deal Town Hall.*

In 1875, a drinking fountain was inserted on the corner of the building by Earl Grenville, then Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.

The town hall was the administrative centre for Deal during the 19th century. Many important decisions were taken here, including decisions about sewerage and installing pavements when house fronts were made more uniform.



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*Deal Town Hall and the public drinking fountain, installed by Earl Grenville in 1875. During the second half of the 19th century, many wealthy Victorians paid for fountains to provide clean drinking water for the urban poor.*

In the First World War, the Deal and Walmer Refugees Committee was formed at the town hall and local people opened their homes to 1500 Belgian refugees.

In 1974, the Borough of Deal merged with Dover District Council. It was run by Charter Trustees until 1996, when Deal Town Council was formed and it has been based in the town hall since then.



Credit: Colin Vorrall

*Deal High Street and Town Hall, undated.*

## St George's Church

St George's was Deal's second church and was built to cater for the growing population of Lower Deal. It was known as the Corporation Church because of the role that the council played in building it. A public subscription fund was set up and construction work started in 1707. However, money ran out and work stopped in 1711. In 1712, the council raised a tax on all coal unloaded at Deal and the church was completed in 1716, to the designs of a local man, Samuel Simmons.

St George's Church was built as a chapel of ease for St Leonard's Church, which meant that burial services still had to take place at St Leonard's. Bodies then had to be carried down to St George's for burial, along the road that is today known as Church Path. In 1852, St George's

became a parish church in its own right which meant that burials could take place there. St Andrew's Church had been built two years earlier in northern Deal, to cater for the Deal boatmen.

St George's is built in the colonial style and is remarkable for the span of its roof, which is much wider than most buildings of the time. It was built in red brick with a pedimented east end and a small timber cupola (a small dome-like structure) on top. Similar to the town hall, the building incorporates Tuscan columns. Some of the original congregation were high-ranking seafaring officers. They had their own galleries, reached by



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*St George's Church, Deal, around 1840.*

outside stairs (now removed), so they would not disturb the rest of the congregation if they entered late or were called away.



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*A large crowd gathers outside St George's Church to hear the proclamation of Queen Victoria's death, January 1901.*

## Memorials

The church graveyard, now a Garden of Rest, contains many interesting memorials. Captain Edward T Parker (1779-1801), a close friend of Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson, was fatally wounded in the Napoleonic Wars and is buried here. His tomb is marked by a squat, square column which Nelson paid for. During the wars, naval men and officers including Nelson himself, frequently worshipped in the church. Burials stopped in the churchyard in 1856.

A memorial at the front of the churchyard honours the men from the parish who died in the First World War. This includes Arthur Tisdall, son of the vicar at St George's. Arthur was killed at Gallipoli in 1915 and was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery in rescuing wounded soldiers under fire.

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UK Government



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