

The Goodwin Sands Education Project

A Famous Anchorage

The area of calm water between the Goodwin Sands and the shore from Deal to Kingsdown is called The Downs. When Sandwich harbour silted up in the 16th century, ships moved their anchorage here. At the height of the Age of Sail, (the name for the period when Britain had the biggest Merchant and Royal Navy in the world), several hundred ships could be seen safely moored there. Could you imagine seeing hundreds of sailing ships moored just off the coast of Deal?

In the mid 1500's King Henry VIII built three castles on the coast opposite the Goodwins. They protected the Royal Navy ships anchored in The Downs and guarded against invasion by France. These castles were Walmer, Deal and Sandown and were joined together by a long wall. The wall ran along the promenade where you might go for walks in the summer. Deal and Walmer Castles still exist today and are open to visitors.



Walmer, Deal and Sandown Castles, Brian Delf



The Timeball Tower on Deal seafront was built in 1855. At 1pm every day a signal was sent from the Greenwich Observatory in London that made the time ball on the roof of the tower descend quite quickly. This enabled the crews of the ships waiting in The Downs to adjust their clocks or chronometers, as they were called in those days, so they knew what time it was on the ship.

The presence of so much shipping in The Downs was very important for Deal as it provided much needed work for the people of the town. The Deal boatmen used to row out supplies of food, water, ropes and boat bits and on Sundays even vicars were sent out to the waiting ships to deliver church services.

After national hero Admiral Lord Nelson was killed at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, his body was pickled in French brandy. The cask lay aboard his ship *HMS Victory* while she was moored in The Downs waiting to go to London for his state funeral. Funnily enough - the news of his death was sent back to England on another navy ship - *HMS Pickle!*



In 1776 Captain James Cook was moored in The Downs on his ship *HMS Resolution* before the start of his final voyage to the Pacific.

The Downs anchorage and the town of Deal went into rapid decline with the invention of steam ships in the 1850s because they no longer had to wait in The Downs for the right wind. Deal went through very hard times with many people emigrating abroad to find work.



Activity: Find the answers to the following questions in the wordsearch

1. What is the name of the stretch of water between the Goodwin Sands and the Deal shoreline? (2 words)
2. What is the name for the period when Britain had the biggest Merchant and Royal Navy in the world? (3 words: of)
3. How many castles were built by Henry VIII? on the coast opposite the Goodwin Sands (1 word)
4. Which country did Henry VIII think would invade England? (1 word)
5. What were clocks on ships called? (1 word)
6. Who went to ships on Sundays to deliver church services? (1 word)
7. In which battle did Lord Nelson die? (1 word)
8. In which French liquid was Lord Nelson's body pickled? (1 word)
9. What is the name of the signal tower on Deal seafront? (2 words)
10. What was Captain Cook's ship called? (1 word)

