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The key to the kingdom

A self-guided walk around Dover



Discover how Dover became 'the Lock and Key of England'
Explore how a Roman dock became the world's busiest port
Find out how Dover survived world wars and set world records
Enjoy spectacular views of the famous White Cliffs

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the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks





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The key to the Kingdom

Discover Dover at the gateway between Britain and Europe

Dover has been called the 'Lock and Key of England'. Located just 21 miles from France, for centuries it has been the literal and symbolic gateway between Britain and Europe.

Dover was a Roman dock and remains a busy port two thousand years later. As a frontier town, its history is entwined with military stories of defence and attack.

This ancient coastal town is home to Britain's biggest castle, the world's only underground barracks and has faced invasion by Julius Caesar, William the Conqueror, Napoleon and Hitler.



Ferry leaving Eastern Dock
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



Crawling past the Castle
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

But Dover has played many international roles over time. It has welcomed trade and tourism, inspired writers and artists, and helped inventors and record-breakers worldwide. This walk explores Dover's international history to unlock the Key of England.

Route overview



Practical information

Location

Dover, Kent

Getting there

Train - The nearest mainline station is Dover Priory

Bus - Dover is served by a variety of local bus routes and national coaches

Car - The town is accessed via the A2, A20 and A258. There is limited seafront parking (charges apply).

Bicycle

Start point & Postcode

Dover Town Hall, Biggin Street CT16 1DL

Directions from railway station to start

Exit the station by walking up Priory Station Approach Road, which leads to Folkestone Road (the B2011). Take a left turn here, walk on for around 100 metres and take the first left onto Effingham Street.

Walk up this street, which then veers to the right taking you to Priory Road. Turn left onto this road and walk on until you reach a large stone building, the Town Hall, on the right.

Finish point

Prince of Wales Pier lighthouse

Onward journey

To return to Dover Priory station, see Directions 20 at the end of the commentary.

Distance

2 miles

Level

Gentle - A mostly flat route through the town and on the seafront

Terrain

The walk is on urban pavements and seafront footpaths

Conditions

There are some busy roads to cross on the way through the town, so be careful of traffic. The pier at the end of the route can be very blustery at any time of year!

Suitable for

Families - Plenty of sights for all ages, particularly at the seafront. Children will enjoy the beach

Wheelchairs - An entirely step-free route

Dogs - Must be kept on a lead

Refreshments

There are plenty of shops and cafés along the route, including a café on Prince of Wales Pier.

Facilities

Public toilets are available on the seafront and behind the Prince of Wales Pier café

Things to do

Dover Museum and Bronze Age Boat Gallery is open on Mondays to Saturdays from 9.30am to 5pm (all year round) and on Sundays from 10am to 3pm (April to September only). Nominal entrance fees. Tel: 01304 201066 Email: museumenquiries@dover.gov.uk

The Grand Shaft is a 43 metre staircase cut into the White Cliffs. It is open in July and August, Tuesdays to Sundays from 2pm to 5pm. You are advised to contact the tourist information office before planning a visit as the Shaft doesn't open every year.

Tourist information

Located at Dover Museum in the Market Square (near to Stop 4) at the bottom of Cannon Street, CT16 1PH. (Tel: 01304 205108).

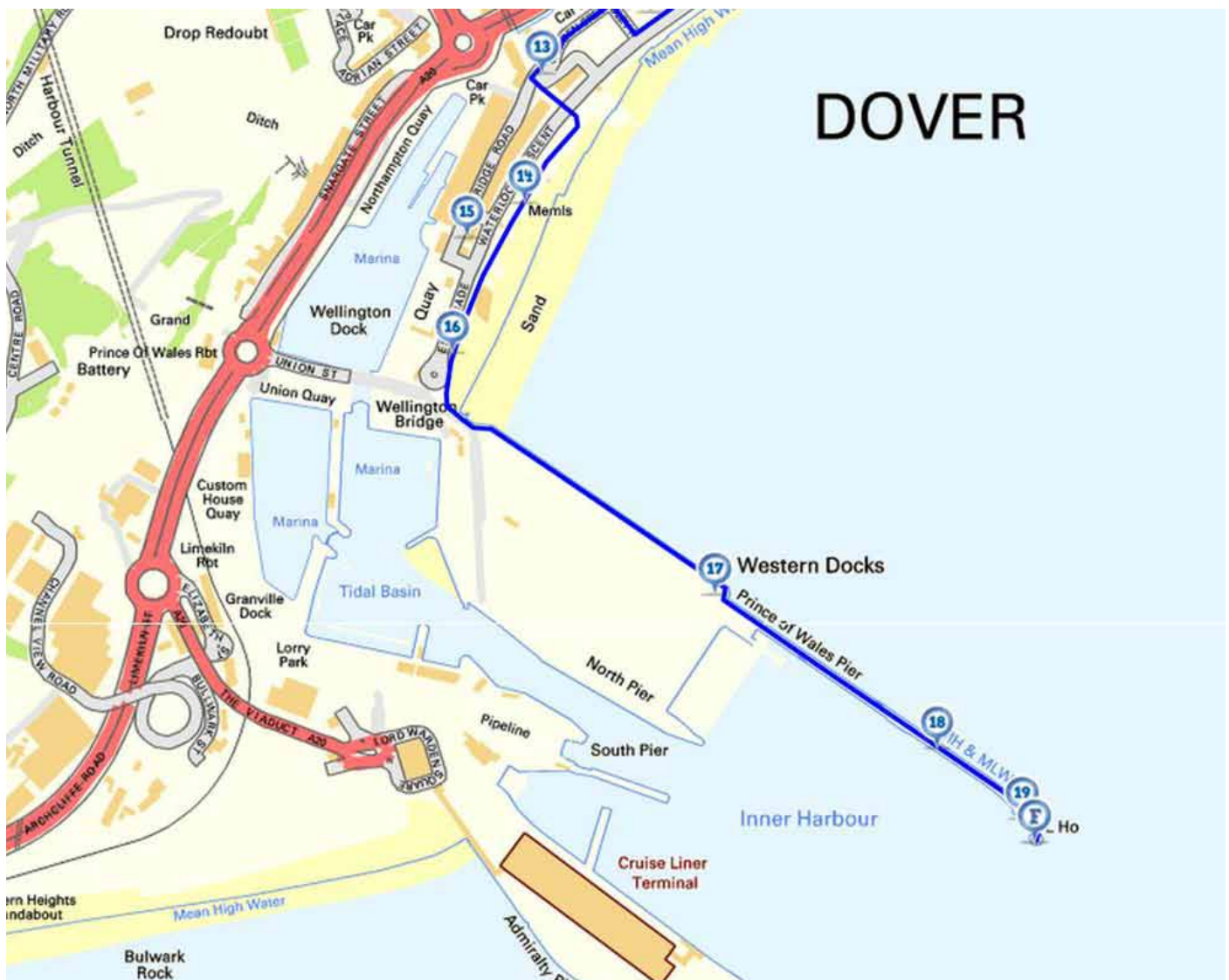
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Stopping points

1. Dover Town Hall (Maison Dieu), Biggin Street
2. Zeebrugge Bell, Dover Town Hall
3. Dover War Memorial, Biggin Street
4. St Mary the Virgin Church, Cannon Street
5. View of Dover Castle
6. Timeline Pathway, Pencester Gardens
7. River Dour Island
8. Old St James Church
9. View of Dover Straits and the Eastern Docks
10. Captain Matthew Webb statue
11. Merchant Navy Memorial
12. Charles Stewart Rolls statue

Second half of the route



Stopping points

- 13.** Indian War Memorial, Camden Crescent
- 14.** German armour plate and Frontline Britain Memorial
- 15.** Dover Harbour Board offices, Waterloo Crescent
- 16.** Charles II Restoration memorial
- 17.** Prince of Wales Pier marker
- 18.** View of Shakespeare Cliff and Lord Warden House
- 19.** View of the White Cliffs from Prince of Wales Pier
- 20.** View of Dover from Prince of Wales Pier lighthouse

1. Welcome to Dover

Dover Town Hall, Biggin Street



Dover beach, with the Castle on top of the White Cliffs
© Rory Walsh

For centuries the ancient town of Dover on the Kent coast has been the literal and symbolic gateway between Britain and Europe. As a result Dover has been called the 'Lock and Key of England', welcoming travellers and battling invaders throughout British history.

Dover's history is entwined with the defence and protection of Britain. Dover is just 21 miles from France, a location that has made it an important trade and tourism site with one of the busiest ports in the world. The town, and especially its sea views, have also inspired generations of artists, writers and musicians. The short Channel crossing has seen a variety of record attempts.

This walk looks outward from Dover to explore the town's various international connections. From people who tried to invade the town to those who helped to defend it. We will see an ancient castle, a lost river and the famous White Cliffs. We will discover how international people including a Hungarian saint, an Italian inventor and a French aviator helped to shape the town. We will also follow in the footsteps of William Shakespeare, Henry V, Charles II, the Duke of Wellington and Charles Dickens on a journey that links to over 40 different countries around the world.

Directions 1

To begin the walk make your way to Dover Town Hall on Biggin Street. For the best view use the pedestrian crossing by the letterbox to cross the road. Stop when you can see a bell on the side of the building

2. Ringing the changes

Zeebrugge Bell, Dover Town Hall (Maison Dieu)

We begin our walk in this historic port with an ancient building, the Hospital of St Mary or the Maison Dieu. Since 1834 it has served as Dover's Town Hall. It was founded by Hubert de Burgh, the Constable of Dover Castle, and the oldest parts date from 1203.

The Maison Dieu was originally a hostel for European pilgrims. They would break their journey here on their pilgrimages to the shrine of Thomas Becket in Canterbury. The name 'Maison Dieu' is the Norman French for 'House of God'.

The building was added to over the centuries including a chapel in 1227. King Henry III is thought to have attended a service here. When Henry VIII founded the Church of England in the 1530s the Maison Dieu was given to him and it became a military hospital and supply base.



The Zeebrugge Bell, Dover Town Hall
© Rory Walsh

The building's military connections are still visible from the street. Look up for a bell set in the wall. This is the Zeebrugge Bell which was presented to Dover in 1918 by the King of Belgium as a token of gratitude to soldiers from Dover who carried out a daring raid to liberate the Belgian port of Zeebrugge from the Germans during the First World War.

Also look above the door for an image of a man on horseback. This is St Martin of Tours, the patron saint of soldiers. He is also Dover's patron saint. Born in Hungary, legend has it St Martin met a beggar in a snowstorm in France. St Martin cut his cloak in half and shared it with the beggar. St Martin's Day is celebrated across Europe each November.

In just one stop we have already seen how Dover has been shaped by international travel and conflict. We will see many other examples throughout the walk.

Directions 2

Cross the road at the traffic lights and turn right. Stop past the Maison Dieu outside the war memorial on the square of grass.

3. Conflict and co-operation

Dover War Memorial, Biggin Street

The Dover War Memorial shows a figure of Youth grasping a flaming cross. It commemorates the victims of the First World War. The sculptor, Richard Gouldon, had fought in the trenches in France during 1914 and 1915. The memorial was unveiled in 1924 and has been updated with new names ever since. The people recorded here lost their lives throughout the world including in France, Belgium, Ireland, India, Palestine, Libya and Myanmar.

Behind the memorial is Maison Dieu House which dates from 1665. Today it is the home of Dover Council. As the civic authority of Dover, the council are responsible for maintaining the memorial.



The statue of Youth, Dover War Memorial
© Rory Walsh

The council also runs Dover's town twinning agreements. Dover is twinned with Huber Heights in Ohio, USA and Split in Croatia. Since 1973 Dover has also been twinned with Calais in northern France.

Dover has especially strong ties with France. Dover beach is only 21 miles from the French coast, making it the nearest point in Britain to France. Dover is also one of the few British towns with a corresponding French name, 'Douvres'. Throughout Britain's history, France has been both an ally and an enemy and Dover has often been on the front line of both conflict and co-operation.

Directions 3

Pass the war memorial and continue along Biggin Street. Cross over Pencester Road and continue on to Cannon Street. Walk down the left hand side and look above the shop fronts of the buildings opposite. Can you spot a figure of the Greek god Mercury? Also look out for a bear further down the street! Stop when you reach St Mary the Virgin Church.

4. Windows on the world

St Mary the Virgin Church, Cannon Street

This is Dover's parish church, the Church of St Mary the Virgin. There has been a church on this site for centuries. It is thought a Roman church once stood on this site though the oldest parts of this building date from the Norman invasion.

In 1843 the church was rebuilt because the number of burials under the floor meant that the foundations were unsafe. The Norman arches were replaced in new positions but the tower was mostly untouched.

Do go inside if the church is open to explore fascinating links with many Olympic and Paralympic nations. Look out for an impressive Dutch wall painting of the Nativity and a stone plaque from the Protestant Churches of the Netherlands. There are also many war memorials, including to those who fell in Belgium, France, India and South Africa.



St Mary the Virgin Church's Norman tower
© Rory Walsh

Another notable feature of St Mary's is the stained glass windows. One depicts Invicta, a British troop ship. The Air Sea Rescue Window is dedicated to the marine sections of the RAF who served in the Second World War. There is also a memorial window to the victims of the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster, which occurred when a ferry capsized at Zeebrugge in 1987.

Many of the windows in St Mary's are replacements as the originals were destroyed when Dover was bombed during the Second World War. Dover sustained heavy damage during German attempts to invade Britain. The effects are still visible today in the high proportion of modern buildings in the town.

Directions 4

When you are ready, leave the church and return to Cannon Street. Facing the tower, take the path to the left of the church. Turn right at the end and stop on the path before the car park. Look at Dover Castle on the hill.

5. Under lock and key

View of Dover Castle

Towering above you is the largest castle in Britain. Dover Castle has been described as 'the Key to England' for the major role it has played in Britain's history. For over 2,000 years Dover Castle has seen off waves of invaders and protected countless people. This view of the Castle shows the excellent defensive site of the cliffs, ideal for spotting trouble from land or sea.

The Saxons and the Romans first took advantage of this natural defence site. A castle was long established by 1066 when William the Conqueror arrived in Britain; he travelled to London via Dover especially to capture the Castle. Much of the Castle we can see was built 200 years later in the twelfth century. Dover became the first concentric fortress in Western Europe with two lines of defence walls.



Dover Castle keep
© Rory Walsh

In the 1800s during the Napoleonic Wars with France, Dover was braced for invasion. So a network of secret tunnels was built in the cliff under the Castle. These were used as a barracks for soldiers drafted to the coast. At the height of the Wars the tunnels housed over 2,000 men. In the Second World War these tunnels were converted into a military command centre and hospital. In May 1940 the evacuation of Allied soldiers from Dunkirk was masterminded from these same tunnels.

Today the Castle is a visitor attraction. The site is Grade I listed and owned by English Heritage. You have to pay to go inside the grounds but if you do visit, you can unlock 'the Key' of Britain's international history.

Directions 5

Turn left and follow the path into the parkland. Make your way towards the bandstand. In front of the bandstand, look for a trail of flagstones with dates on them. Stop when you have found the trail.

6. A walk through time

Timeline Pathway, Pencester Gardens

We are now in Pencester Gardens where we can take a relaxing stroll through Dover's history. This set of flagstones inscribed with dates is the Timeline Pathway. The pathway and the bandstand were unveiled in 2000 to celebrate the millennium. Each stone lists significant events in Dover's development. The suggestions came from Dover residents.

To follow the trail start with the first stone on the left and continue clockwise around the bandstand. The first event listed is the building of two Roman lighthouses in 120 AD. One of them still survives: the Pharos in the grounds of Dover Castle.



The Timeline Pathway at the bandstand
© Rory Walsh

Many of the other flagstones have connections to Olympic and Paralympic nations. The Black Death (or the plague) arrived in Dover in 1348. The Black Death originated in China and was spread through Europe on trade routes. The disease probably came into Dover on a ship with infected rats. As you continue there are plenty more international links to find such as French Huguenot settlers or state visits from Belgium and Japan. See what else you can spot!



Spitfire fighter plane on the Timeline Pathway
© Rory Walsh

Directions 6

When you have finished following the trail pass the bandstand and cross the park to the line of trees behind. When you reach the path turn right and follow the stream. Stop part way along it.

7. The waters

River Dour Island

Though it seems unlikely today, this section of stream was once a large river. This is the River Dour which starts in the village of Kearsney four kilometres to the north then runs through Dover and out to the sea. Over 3,500 years ago Bronze Age settlers lived by the Dour. Up to the Victorian era people used the river domestically and to power various industries including mills, an iron foundry and a tannery.

The river really flourished under the Romans. After the Roman invasion of Britain in 43 AD the Dour estuary was developed into Dover's cross Channel port. The Roman name for Dover was Dubris or 'the Waters'. In around 85 AD Dover became the home port of the Classis Britannica or 'the British fleet'. The Classis Britannica protected Roman trade routes between Britain and France and provided supplies for the Roman forces based in Britain. The River Dour would have been lined with their ships.



The tranquil River Dour
© Rory Walsh

In about 130 AD the Classis Britannica built a large fort near where the Dover Discovery Centre is today. A later Saxon Shore Fort (built around 270 AD) can be seen nearby behind the Centre. Another Roman structure is the Painted House near the Market Square. It dates from around 200 AD and like the Maison Dieu it was a hotel for travellers. The Painted House contains the best preserved Roman plaster on any site north of the Alps. The designs feature Bacchus, the Roman God of wine and revelry. They would have made a comforting backdrop for weary visitors from France, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and beyond.

Directions 7

At the end of the riverside path cross the small bridge and turn left into Dieu Stone Lane. Pass the car park and cross over at the traffic lights. Take note of the patch of grass behind a fence on the left then turn into Ashen Tree Lane. At the end use the traffic lights to the right to cross Castle Street. Turn left and continue uphill a short way then take the first right towards The White Horse pub. Stop at the ruin next to the pub.

8. The tidy ruin

Old St James Church

These haunting ruins are the remains of St James Church. This twelfth century church was particularly important to Dover as it was the meeting place for the Barons of the Cinque Ports.

The Cinque Ports were five ports on Britain's south coast – Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Sandwich and Dover. These ports had special royal privileges, such as tax exemptions and their own law courts. In return the ports were expected to provide men and ships for the Navy during wartime. You can still see the Cinque Ports emblem – three ships on a red and blue shield – throughout Dover.



The ruins of Old St James Church beside The White Horse pub
© Rory Walsh

The Cinque Ports were founded around 1050 by Edward the Confessor, one of Britain's last Saxon kings. By the thirteenth century the original five ports struggled to fulfil their defensive role so others were allowed to join. The Cinque Ports Barons held several councils here at St James Church. The last was in 1851 and was led by the Duke of Wellington.

By the 1860s St James Church was considered too small and run down for the Barons so a New St James Church was built. Old St James was briefly used by French Huguenots but then stood empty for many years. It was destroyed by bombs during the Second World War. The romantic remains were left as a memorial to Dover's suffering during the conflict. The site is often called 'the Tidy Ruin'.

Ironically Old St James has lasted longer than its successor. Do you remember the patch of grass before Ashen Tree Lane? New St James Church stood there and survived the war intact but it was demolished afterwards as the parish declined.

Directions 8

Leave the church and walk ahead past the Leisure Centre. Continue down Woolcomber Street. Use the double traffic lights to cross over the main road. Turn left then take the path by the car park at Marine Court. Cross the seafront road, taking care for traffic and the cycle path. Stop by the railings.

9. Eastern promise

View of Dover Straits and the Eastern Docks

Ahead are the Dover Straits, known in France as 'Pas de Calais' (the Calais pass). They are the narrowest part of the English Channel ('La Manche'). From here France is only 21 miles away. If you are visiting on a clear day you might be able to see the French coast.

The views along the Straits, edged by the White Cliffs, have inspired many artists, writers and musicians. One of the most famous is Matthew Arnold's 1851 poem, 'Dover Beach'. It opens with a description of the view towards France:

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; —on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.



A car ferry at Eastern Docks seen from the beach
© Rory Walsh

Dover's coastline is also home to a major working port. To the left are the Eastern Docks. Dover claims to be the world's busiest passenger ferry terminal and freight port. Goods from around the world, from fresh fruit to new cars, iPods to antiques are imported through Dover on trucks and shipping containers. The Dover Straits are one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world used by over 400 commercial vessels daily.

Besides trade the port is an important tourist route. Each year over 13 million people cross the Channel via Dover. You should be able to spot some of the car ferries. Car ferry services grew here from the 1950s, when car ownership and overseas travel both became more affordable. Today there are two major operators providing services to Calais and Dunkirk. P&O is part American-owned and runs ferries across Europe, including Ireland and Spain. DFDS Seaways are a Danish company that operate passenger and freight routes across northern Europe from France to Russia.

Directions 9

Cross back over the seafront road. With the sea on your left follow the path beside the gardens. Stop at the statue of Captain Matthew Webb.

10. Webbed feat

Captain Matthew Webb statue

This statue celebrates Captain Matthew Webb. Webb was the first person to swim across the Channel unaided. On August 25th 1875 he dived into the water from Dover's Admiralty Pier beyond the promenade. Covered in porpoise oil to keep him warm he landed at Calais 21 hours and 45 minutes later.

People from many Olympic and Paralympic nations have swum the Channel since creating and breaking various records. They include swimmers from France, the United States, Italy, Australia, Argentina, Bangladesh, Egypt, Canada, Spain and Bulgaria.



Captain Webb statue detail
© Rory Walsh

The first woman to swim the Channel was Gertrude Ederle of the United States in 1926. Dubbed the 'queen of the waves', Gertrude was the daughter of German immigrants. Webb and the other early cross-Channel swimmers helped to popularise swimming as a pastime. Before the Victorian era relatively few people in Britain could swim. Those who could usually swam competitively rather than for leisure.

Swimming was a founder event at the first modern Olympics in Athens in 1896 and has featured in every Olympics since. The international swimming federation, FINA, was founded after the 1908 Olympics in London. Based in Switzerland, FINA includes 202 federations from around the world.

In recent years people have swum the Channel to raise money for a variety of charities and causes. Look out for a sculpture of swimmers further along the seafront. Since Captain Webb's swim people have used a variety of other human-powered methods to cross the Channel including rowing, sailing, kite surfing, water skiing and skydiving.

Directions 10

Continue along the seafront. Stop beside the statue of a sea captain looking out to the water.

11. Battling for survival

Merchant Navy Memorial

As we heard at the last stop, crossing the Channel has long been a sport or pastime but the Channel has also been used less peacefully. The Dover Straits have carried many warring armies to and from Britain. For example, Julius Caesar brought Roman forces to Dover by boat in 55 BC while the Spanish Armada escaped through the Straits in 1588.

This memorial is a tribute to the Merchant Navy forces that helped to protect Britain during the Second World War. As an island Britain relied on supplies shipped from abroad. For Britain to survive the war it was essential to keep sea supply lines open. So Merchant Navy ships continued to import goods into Dover despite constant attacks from enemy submarines and aircraft.



Merchant Navy memorial
© Rory Walsh

The ships, their crews and the forces that protected them across the seas came from many Allied countries. For example the Norwegian Navy were based in Dover while their homeland was under German occupation.

Dover was also where the famous Dunkirk evacuation started from. In 1940 France fell to Nazi Germany. Allied troops were forced to retreat through Europe to Dunkirk on the French coast. A fleet of 850 vessels set off from Dover to rescue them. The fleet included many civilian craft such as fishing boats, lifeboats and pleasure cruisers. The bravery of their crews meant almost 340,000 British, French and Belgian soldiers were rescued. The phrase 'Dunkirk spirit' is still used today to describe resilience and unity against the odds.

Directions 11

Continue a short distance along the seafront. Stop at the statue of Charles Stewart Rolls.

12. Fast flights

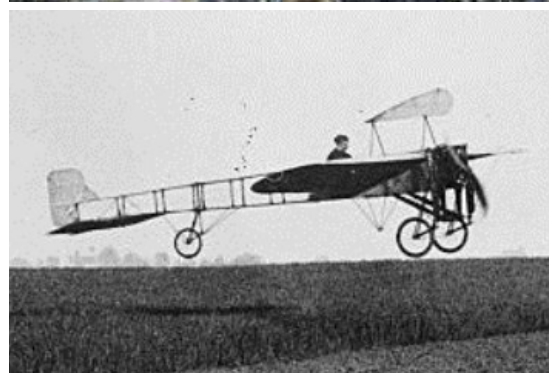
Charles Stewart Rolls statue

Charles Rolls was a co-founder of the Rolls-Royce car company. A motoring enthusiast from an early age, he travelled to Paris aged 18 to buy his first car and joined the Automobile Club of France. He established one of Britain's first car dealerships and sold French Peugeot and Belgian Minerva vehicles. In 1904 he met Frederick Henry Royce and they launched their first Rolls-Royce car in Paris later that year.

Rolls was also a pioneer aviator. In June 1910 he became the first man to make a double crossing of the Channel by aeroplane. For his non-stop flight from Dover to Calais and back he was awarded the Royal Aero Club Gold Medal. Sadly Rolls was killed only a month later during an air display at Bournemouth.

The first Channel air crossing was in 1785 when Frenchman Jean Pierre Blanchard and American John Jeffries travelled from Dover to Calais by balloon. The first cross-Channel plane flight was completed in 1909 by Frenchman Louis Bleriot. After a 37-minute journey he landed behind Dover Castle, guided by a friend waving a large French flag. A memorial marks the exact spot. It was paid for by Bleriot's friend, Alexander Duckham, who founded Duckhams Motor Oil from wells in Trinidad.

The Dover-Calais route is still popular for air travel records. People from many countries have used helicopters, microlites and gliders. In September 2008 Swiss aviator Yves Rossy took under 10 minutes to cross the Channel by jet pack!



Channel pioneers (top to bottom)
Charles Rolls driving the first Rolls-Royce,
Blanchard's balloon crossing,
Bleriot in flight
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Directions 12

Continue along the seafront then turn right into Wellesley Road. Pass the ferry mosaic on the corner and follow the road left into Camden Crescent. Stop at a safe place across from the war memorial in the middle of the traffic island.

13. A sign of the time

Indian War Memorial

The tall obelisk in the middle of the road is another war memorial. It records the Indian Rebellion, also known as the Indian Mutiny or India's First War of Independence. The conflict took place between 1857 and 1859 when India was a British colony.

India was the 'jewel in the crown' of the British Empire and produced many valuable commodities that were exported around the world including dye, silk, cotton, tea and opium. Most of this trade was organised by the British East India Company. The Company was very powerful with military and legal powers.



Detail from the Indian War memorial
© Rory Walsh

A group of private Indian soldiers protested at the Company's trade monopoly. Their protest gathered momentum and became a wider attack against British rule in India. Battles and sieges took place in major cities including Delhi, Lucknow and Kanpur.

This memorial was unveiled in August 1861 to some of the British soldiers killed in the conflict. Notably, none of the Indian dead are listed or even acknowledged. The memorial is a sign of the time it was made. Bombastic and triumphant, it highlights some of the attitudes to the colonies during the Empire era. As we will see, later conflicts would result in more nuanced reflection.

Directions 13

With the memorial on your left, head through New Bridge towards the sea. Turn right and continue along the seafront path. Stop when you reach a rectangular panel on the seafront with an eagle and German writing on.

14. The Frontline

German armour plate & Frontline Britain memorial

As we have heard Dover is only 21 miles from the Continent and the town has seen off many potential invaders from across the Channel. This large piece of metal is a stark and chilling reminder of probably Dover's toughest test. With France under German occupation during the Second World War, Britain became a target for Nazi invasion and Dover bore the brunt of Hitler's campaign to invade.

This is a piece of armour plating from a Nazi long-distance gun. It shows an eagle riding a bullet with the words 'Es flogen gegen Engeland' or 'It flew against England'. Underneath is a tally of shells that the gun fired.



"It flew against England" - the Nazi gun armour plate
© Rory Walsh

Calais's cliffs were lined with these German guns which were designed to fire ammunition across the Channel to reach England. From July 1940 to September 1944 over 2,200 shells landed in Dover. Over 460 bombs were dropped and there were over 3,000 air raids. 216 people were killed, 344 seriously injured and over 10,000 buildings were damaged.

The guns were captured by Canadian forces in 1944 and this armour plate was presented to the people of Dover as a tribute to the onslaught the town had faced. The 'Frontline Britain' stone memorial opposite marks the 50th anniversary of the guns' capture and pays tribute to the people of East Kent. It was unveiled by Countess Mountbatten of Burma at a ceremony attended by veterans from Canada, the United States, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Directions 14

Continue along the seafront path taking time to pause at the Dunkirk Veterans Association memorial. Pass the shelter with a spike on the roof then stop by a white stone plaque in the ground. Look across the road at the building with the large coat of arms above the door.

15. Street stories

Dover Harbour Board offices, Waterloo Crescent

This elegant building is the office of the Dover Harbour Board. The Board run and maintain Dover Port, a job they have done for over 400 years since being founded by royal charter in 1606.

The building is part of a terrace built in Georgian style. Georgian architecture is known for well-proportioned symmetrical designs. The style became very fashionable throughout the British Empire, particularly in the United States, Canada and Jamaica. The Georgian period is named after Britain's four kings named George who ruled from 1714 to 1830. They came from Hanover in Germany.



Waterloo Crescent sweeping toward the Castle
© Rory Walsh

Though Dover's seafront road looks like one continuous street it is actually divided into four sections. Beyond the Eastern Dock is East Cliff and you have already made your way along Marine Parade. This stretch is Waterloo Crescent, named after the Battle of Waterloo fought between England and France. The section beyond is known as the Esplanade. The word comes from the Spanish 'esplanada' and describes a wide pedestrian seafront. There are examples of Esplanades at coastal towns around the world including The Esplanade in Singapore, Esplanade at Nova Scotia in Canada, St Clair's Esplanade at Dunedin in New Zealand, and the Redondo Beach Esplanade in California.

If you look back along the seafront you can see the difference between the pre-war and post-war buildings. While the ornate terraces date from the 1830s the brown terraces you passed earlier are a complex of flats called The Gateway. They were built after the Second World War when much of Dover needed rebuilding after heavy bombing.

Directions 15

Follow the seafront up to a roundabout just before the pier. Stop beside a small porch with a memorial stone to King Charles II.

16. Order restored

Charles II Restoration Memorial

Although Dover has faced conflict many times, the town has also seen conflicts resolved. This stone records King Charles II's return to England from exile. During the 1640s and 1650s England went through a bloody Civil War. King Charles I and Parliament disagreed on various political and religious issues and Charles was also unpopular for marrying a Catholic, Henrietta Maria of France, when Britain was a Protestant nation.

Events culminated in 1649 when Charles I was executed. For over a decade England was ruled by a commonwealth rather than a monarchy. The dead king's son, Charles II, fled to France and then the Netherlands.



Charles II in 1653 during his exile in the Netherlands
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)



Detail from the Restoration Memorial
© Rory Walsh

Support for the commonwealth faded after its leader, Oliver Cromwell, died. Parliament invited Charles II back to England to resume the throne. On May 25th 1660 he arrived on Dover beach from the Netherlands, met by cheering crowds and a gun salute from the Castle.

Charles II is not the only statesman to come home to Dover. In 1415 King Henry V landed here after the Battle of Agincourt in France. Four hundred years later the Duke of Wellington landed here after another French campaign, the Battle of Waterloo.

Directions 16

With your back to the monument turn left then follow the path on the far side of the railings. Pass the Clock Tower on your right and go onto the pier. Continue along the pier until you find a stone marker on the left with the Prince of Wales written on it.

17. Sea sailings

Prince of Wales Pier

We are now on Prince of Wales Pier, named after King Edward VII and opened in 1902. It was built as a terminal for cargo ships and German liners that travelled to the United States. Later cross Channel catamaran and hovercraft services ran from here; you can see the landing stages through the portholes of the pier shelters.

Catamarans are vessels with two hulls that originated in India as small fishing boats. The first hovercraft were developed in Austria, Russia and Finland. The first commercial hovercraft was tested between Dover and Calais from 25th July 1959, the 50th anniversary of Bleriot's flight.



The Saga Ruby at Dover, July 2012. It's home port is in Malta and the ship has travelled to the United States, Norway and the Bahamas
© Rory Walsh

Catamarans and hovercraft no longer run from Dover and some ferry routes to France, Belgium and the Netherlands have also been discontinued. In recent years Dover's sea crossings have been affected by the Eurostar, the railway that runs from London to Paris and Brussels via the Channel Tunnel. On the other hand some sea crossings are thriving. Parallel to the pier is a Cruise Terminal at the Western Dock that welcomes vast liners from around the world. In 2012 ships arrived from France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Russia. In the last decade Dover has become Britain's second-busiest cruise port and welcomes over 300,000 passengers each year.

People have been crossing the Channel by sea from Dover for centuries. A Bronze Age boat discovered in Dover was carbon dated at 3,550 years old. Propelled by 18 paddlers, experts believe the boat would have carried cargo and passengers across the Channel.

Directions 17

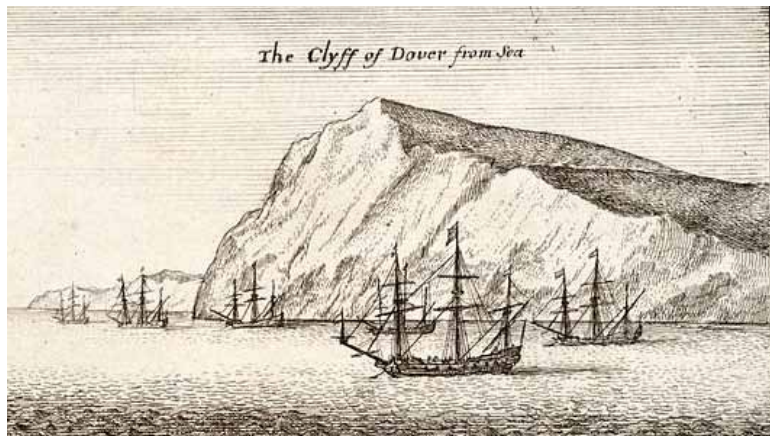
Continue along Prince of Wales Pier. Take your time to enjoy the views on both sides. Stop when you reach another stone marker, this time on the right hand side. This is the Clifford Jarrett memorial compass. Use the compass to find Shakespeare Cliff.

18. Words by the water

View of Shakespeare Cliff & Lord Warden House

The pier is no longer a working berth but we can still enjoy the views. Looking back towards the land on the left you should spot the distinctive Shakespeare Cliff on the horizon. William Shakespeare is thought to have visited Dover in 1605. The Cliff got its name from lines in his play King Lear when the Earl of Gloucester accurately describes the cliff shape:

There is a cliff whose
high and bending head
Looks fearfully in the confined deep



Shakespeare Cliff by Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-77)
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Shakespeare was one of many writers inspired by Dover. Charles Dickens lived here briefly and set some of his novel David Copperfield in the town. Dickens also stayed at the square building you can see to the right of Shakespeare Cliff. This opened in 1853 as the Lord Warden Hotel. Dickens wrote parts of 'A Tale of Two Cities', his novel on the French Revolution, there. Other wealthy guests included Indian-born fellow novelist, William Thackeray, and Emperor Napoleon III of France.

A recent writer inspired by Dover is Daljit Nagra. His debut collection of poems, 'Look We Have Coming to Dover!', was published in 2007. His poems about British-Indian culture are often written in a mix of English and Punjabi.

Directions 18

Continue along Prince of Wales Pier. When you reach the gates at the café, turn around and look back at the White Cliffs.

19. A symbol of Britain

View of the White Cliffs from Prince of Wales Pier

Ahead are the White Cliffs of Dover, one of the defining landmarks of Britain. They highlight Britain's status as an island and have great symbolic value. The cliffs form an obstacle and a welcome, instil pride and fear, and have inspired generations of people from around the world.

The cliffs are about 136 million years old and reach up to 350 feet (110 metres) high. They get their distinctive colour as they are made of chalk highlighted by black flint.



The White Cliffs seen from a car ferry into the Eastern Docks
© Eirian Evans, Geograph (CCL)

There are white chalk cliffs like Dover's on the Danish islands of Møn and Langeland and the island of Rügen in Germany. These islands used to be part of the same rock formation as the White Cliffs along the south coast of England. They separated over millions of years due to sea currents and movements under the Earth's surface.

Chalk is a soft rock. This makes it easy to tunnel through to hide soldiers or run trains for instance. However chalk is also prone to erosion. In March 2012 the latest of many sections of the White Cliffs fell into the sea. See if you can spot a brighter strip on the cliff face. You might just be able to make out a white building on the cliff top. It is the South Foreland Lighthouse where in 1899 Italian inventor, Guglielmo Marconi, received the first international radio transmission from France.

The White Cliffs are perhaps most famous for the wartime song '(There'll be Bluebirds Over) the White Cliffs of Dover'. Vera Lynn recorded the song in 1942 and it became very popular in Britain and beyond. Known as The Forces' Sweetheart, Vera Lynn performed it for Allied troops around the world including in Egypt, India and Burma. The song was written by American composers who had never been to Britain - which might explain the bluebirds, a species native to the United States!

Directions 19

Remain at the pier and look at the view of the cliffs.

20. The key to the Kingdom

View of Dover from Prince of Wales Pier lighthouse

This view of the White Cliffs is a fitting place to end our walk. From here we can see one of the defining views of Britain. This is a sight that people have taken in for thousands of years: soldiers and sailors, artists and writers, tourists and travellers, migrants and monarchs.

From here we can also see Dover's history etched into the chalk. We can see the Castle towering over the coast built to protect Britain from invaders. We can see Dover town nestled between two cliffs along the River Dourthe and the seafront buildings that bear the scars of war.



Dover gets ready to celebrate the London 2012 Games
© Rory Walsh



Enjoying a day at the beach
© Rory Walsh

We can also see the docks that have processed goods from around the world and the ferry terminal that has welcomed travellers from around the world.

We can also look back to Dover and see many of the aspects that make Britain so diverse thanks to its links to other countries. We can see geographical features, built landmarks, signs, inventions and discoveries, trade links and cultural references that connect Dover with 42 different nations. Dover remains the 'Lock and Key' to the United Kingdom.

Directions 20

You may like to return to the beach or explore the town further. **To return to Dover Priory station;** retrace your way back to the Indian War Memorial (Stop 13). At the roundabout, continue into Camden Crescent and then take the first left, which leads to Townwall Street. Turn left at Townwall Street then continue until you reach a second roundabout. Turn right here onto York Street. Continue for around 300 metres until you reach a third roundabout. Turn left turn onto Folkestone Road, the railway station will appear on your right.

Further information

The Channel Swimming Association

www.channelswimmingassociation.com

Dover – Lock and Key of the Kingdom

www.dover-kent.co.uk/home.htm

Dover Museum

www.doverdc.co.uk/museum.aspx

The Dover Society

www.doversociety.org.uk

Dover War Memorial Project

www.doverwarmemorialproject.org.uk

Dover Western Heights

www.doverwesternheights.org

English Heritage - Dover Castle

www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/dover-castle

Friends of Dover Castle

www.dover-castle-friends.org

The National Trust - The White Cliffs of Dover

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/white-cliffs-dover

Port of Dover

www.doverport.co.uk

St Mary's Church

www.stmarysdover.org.uk

White Cliffs Country

www.whitecliffscountry.org.uk

Credits

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