Sandgate Castle

Sandgate Castle is an artillery fort originally constructed by Henry VIII in Sandgate in Kent , between 1539 and 1540 . It formed part of the King 's Device programme to protect against invasion from France and the Holy Roman Empire , and defended vulnerable point along the coast . It comprised a central stone keep , with three towers and a gatehouse . It could hold four tiers of artillery , and was fitted with a total of 142 firing points for cannon and handguns .

Sandgate was taken by Parliament in 1642 at the start of the first English Civil War , and was seized by Royalist rebels in the second civil war of 1648 . The castle was extensively redesigned between 1805 and 1808 during the Napoleonic Wars . The height of the castle was significantly reduced and the keep was turned into a Martello tower ; when the work was completed , it was armed with ten 24 @-@ pounder (11 kg) guns and could hold a garrison of 40 men .

The castle had begun to suffer damage from the sea by the early 17th century , and by the middle of the 19th century , the receding coastline had reached the edge of the castle walls . The high costs of repair contributed to the government 's decision to sell the site off in 1888 . It was initially bought by a railway company and then passed into private ownership . Coastal erosion continued and by the 1950s , the southern part of the castle had been destroyed by the sea . The remaining castle was restored between 1975 and 1979 by Peter and Barbara McGregor , who turned the keep into a private residence . In the 21st century , Sandgate remains in private ownership , and is protected under UK law as a grade I listed building .

History

16th century

Sandgate Castle was built as a consequence of international tensions between England , France and the Holy Roman Empire in the final years of the reign of King Henry VIII . Traditionally the Crown had left coastal defences to the local lords and communities , only taking a modest role in building and maintaining fortifications , and while France and the Empire remained in conflict with one another , maritime raids were common but an actual invasion of England seemed unlikely . Modest defences , based around simple blockhouses and towers , existed in the south @-@ west and along the Sussex coast , with a few more impressive works in the north of England , but in general the fortifications were very limited in scale .

In 1533 , Henry broke with Pope Paul III in order to annul the long @-@ standing marriage to his wife , Catherine of Aragon and remarry . Catherine was the aunt of Charles V , the Holy Roman Emperor , and he took the annulment as a personal insult . This resulted in France and the Empire declaring an alliance against Henry in 1538 , and the Pope encouraging the two countries to attack England . An invasion of England appeared certain . In response , Henry issued an order , called a " device " , in 1539 , giving instructions for the " defence of the realm in time of invasion " and the construction of forts along the English coastline .

Sandgate was intended to defend a vulnerable point along the Kent cliffs , just west of Folkestone , where an enemy force could potentially land and make their way easily further inland . Sandgate 's construction was supervised by the Moravian engineer Stefan von Haschenperg , and Thomas Cockys and Richard Keys acted as commissioners for the project . In the initial stages of the work in 1539 , a team of 237 men were employed , with masons , quarrymen , limeburners and wood fellers preparing the site ; the masons were drawn from as far away as Somerset and Gloucestershire . By the summer , over 500 were at work , including labourers , bricklayers , carpenters and sawyers . After a pause during the winter months , work picked up again in the summer of the next year , with 630 working on the castle that July .

The castle 's foundations rested on the underlying shingle of the beach . The walls were made from Kentish ragstone , mostly roughly laid , with some work using finer ashlar , with Caen stone used in the detailing . Most of the ragstone was collected from the local beaches , where there were suitable

outcrops to the west and east of the site . 459 tons of Caen stone was recycled from the priories of Christ Church and Horton , which had recently been dissolved by Henry . In total , 147 @,@ 000 bricks were used , produced at 13 different brickyards , and 44 @,@ 000 tiles , mostly manufactured in Wye , along with 1 @,@ 829 loads of lime , 110 tons of coal and 979 tons of timber . The total cost of the project came to £ 5 @,@ 584 .

At the centre of the new castle was a circular keep , with three ovoid towers and bastions around it on the north @-@ west , north @-@ east and south sides , and a gatehouse to the north . These were surrounded by two curtain walls , forming a triangular inner and outer ward . Covered stone passageways , three storeys high , linked the towers , the keep and the gatehouse . The outer ward was grassed over , with a stone cesspool by the side of the north @-@ east tower , linked by sewers to the inside of the castle . The castle was entered through a doorway in the rear of the gatehouse , originally called the " Half Moon " , linked by a stairway in the covered passageway to the keep . There were four tiers of guns in the finished castle , from the ground level up to the roof of the keep , and a total of 142 firing points for cannon and handguns ; their design closely resembling those at nearby Walmer and Deal castles .

Sandgate was completed by the autumn of 1540 ; Henry may have come to the castle when he was visiting Folkestone in May 1542 . Elizabeth I visited the fortification in 1573 , and also used it to imprison the courtier Thomas Keyes for a period , after he married Lady Mary Grey against the Queen 's wishes . In 1593 , the castle was reported to be equipped with seven artillery pieces - one culverin , two demi @-@ culverins , three sakers and one minion - along with muskets , bows and arrows .

= = = 17th ? 18th centuries = = =

In 1609 , the garrison comprised a captain and his lieutenant , five soldiers , two porters and ten gunners . The mortar used in the castle was particularly poor , and had begun to seriously decay by 1616 . A survey that year showed the castle to be substantially dilapidated , with the cost of the proposed repairs estimated at £ 260 , and noted that a 100 feet (30 m) gun platform for ten weapons had been built along the southern walls to replace the original southern battery . A 1623 report echoed the same problems , noting that the sea had caused a third of the southern wall to collapse ; the necessary repairs , including strengthening the walls , were projected at £ 560 .

Four years later , amid fears of war with France and Spain , the castle 's captain , Richard Chalcroft , reported that the fortification was in such a poor condition that " neither habitable or defensible against any assault , nor any way fit to command the roads " . An inspection team observed that it was straightforward to climb over the castle 's ruined walls and rotten timbers , and that as a result its artillery had been dismounted and placed along the beach instead . The castle was probably not repaired , however , until after 1638 .

Sandgate Castle was seized in 1642 by Parliamentary forces at the start of the first English Civil War between the supporters of King Charles I and Parliament , although its captain , Richard Hippesley , remained in post . The war ended in 1646 but , after the few years of unsteady peace , the Second Civil War broke out in 1648 . The Parliamentary navy was based in Kent , protected by the other Henrician castles of Walmer , Deal and Sandown , but by May a Royalist insurrection was under way across the county , and the fleet joined the rebellion . Sandgate and its sister castles were occupied by the Royalists . Parliament defeated the wider insurgency at the Battle of Maidstone at the start of June , however , and then sent a force under the command of Colonel Rich to deal with the Kentish castles . Sandgate was still occupied by the Royalists that August , when Rich sent forces to prevent its garrison intervening to disrupt his assault on Deal and Sandown , but was recaptured soon after .

During the interregnum , Hippesley initially continued as captain of Sandgate , until he was replaced in 1653 , resulting in complaints from him that he had been unfairly treated and that he was owed money by Parliament . During this period the garrison was increased to include a governor , two corporals , twenty soldiers and three gunners . When Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660 , Sandgate and the other Device Forts initially remained at the heart of the south coast defences , but

by now their design was antiquated . The garrison was cut back to its pre @-@ war levels , and then reduced further in 1682 to only ten men . Sandgate had fallen into a poor condition , and £ 200 was assigned in 1663 for the repair of the castle , to be met partially from the proceeds of lands around Sandgate confiscated from former supporters of Parliament .

19th century

 Sandgate Castle was still in use during the Napoleonic Wars at the start of the 19th century , but was heavily rebuilt . Brigadier @-@ General William Twiss surveyed the south coast in 1804 , and proposed building a series of 58 new defensive towers along it , as part of which he proposed converted Sandgate into a " secure sea battery " . After some opposition , and many delays within the War Office , the work on the castle finally began in 1805 .
 The project lowered the height of the castle considerably , destroying much of the fortification in the process . The upper storeys of the keep , the towers , the covered passageways and the gatehouse were all demolished , along with some of the buildings in the inner ward . The resulting rubble was used to backfill the outer ward , raising its height and effectively turning the inner ward into a dry moat . The inner curtain wall was reduced to one storey in height , and the outer curtain wall was refaced . An esplanade and wall @-@ walk were built around the remaining outer walls , which supported at least eight gun emplacements .
 The circular keep was turned into a Martello tower , a type of Napoleonic artillery fortification . It was now only two storeys tall , although remaining original interior walls and doorways largely survived untouched . It was accessed on the first floor via an unusual sliding drawbridge , which was supported on rails and could retract into the floor , and the different storeys were linked by a spiral staircase . The ground floor of the keep included a brick @-@ built magazine , and the roof , supported by a central pillar running up through the building , held a single , large gun emplacement .
 The north @-@ east and north @-@ west towers , now only one @-@ storey tall , were covered with turf , turning the rear of the outer ward into a flat , grassed esplanade . The southern tower was reduced in height to two storeys , but remained in use as a gun platform . The covered corridors between the keep and the towers were now one @-@ storey high as well , linking to the buried towers in the north @-@ east and north @-@ west bastions . The upper storeys of the gatehouse were rebuilt , although the ground floor remained in its 16th @-@ century condition .
 The modified castle was completed by 1808 , and held eight 24 @-@ pounder (11 kg) guns along the outer wall , a gun on the roof of the southern bastion , and another on top of the keep itself . The new castle could hold a garrison of 40 men .
 In 1859 , the castle was re @-@ equipped with heavier artillery , a combination of 32 @-@ pounder (15 kg) and 68 @-@ pounder (31 kg) guns . A new magazine was constructed , comprising a large , brick @-@ built building divided into three rooms for storing gunpowder , specially designed to keep the powder dry . The exterior gun emplacements were also redesigned , reusing the 1806 foundations ; the two surviving emplacements , in the north @-@ east and north @-@ west bastions , date from 1859 .
 Coastal erosion remained a problem . By the middle of the century , the tides had reached the southern edge of the castle , and a 1866 report stated that the walls had been undermined by the sea . Despite protective piles being driven around the castle , it was badly affected by flooding in 1875 and 1878 , creating serious fissures in the stonework . The high costs of maintaining the property , combined with its dwindling utility , encouraged the government to sell the castle to the South Eastern Railway company in 1888 , who intended to turn it into a railway station . It was then sold to private owners and a small museum was created in the castle , which was sometimes opened to the public for an entry price of one penny .

20th ? 21st centuries

 The receding coast line continued to threaten Sandgate Castle , and severe storms in 1927 and

1950 undermined large parts of the castle . By the time that a new seawall was built in the early 1950s , the southern third of the castle had been entirely destroyed .

 In 1975 , Peter and Barbara McGregor began to restore the ruins of the castle , with the support of the Department of the Environment , Kent County Council and the British Army . As part of the project , archaeological investigations were carried out between 1975 and 1979 by Edward Harris . The part of the 1806 esplanade around the north @-@ east bastion was excavated , revealing the lower 16th @-@ century stonework of the tower and the east side of the 1859 magazine , and a retaining wall was built to support the newly exposed walls . This created two levels in the outer bailey : a higher level on the western side , which still covered the north @-@ west tower , and a lower one on the eastern . The keep was turned into a private residence , with a new sun room built on top of the gun platform . In 2000 , Geoffrey Boot and his wife acquired the castle , which is now used by Boot 's company , AMT South Eastern Ltd .

 The castle is protected under UK law as a grade I listed building . The two 16th @-@ century ledger books from the original construction , written by the project clerk Thomas Busshe , survive in the British Library . They are 350 pages long , and form what the historian Peter Harrington has described as the " most complete building account of any Tudor fortification " .