

HENRY VIII.'S CASTLES AT SANDOWN,
DEAL, WALMER, SANDGATE,
AND CAMBER.

BY W. L. RUTTON, F.S.A.

A CORRESPONDENCE had place in *The Times* of September and October 1896* relative to Sandown Castle, the originator of which claimed importance for that structure over the other forts along the Kentish coast on the score of antiquity, size, strength, and construction. The writer, indeed, expressed his opinion that Sandown Castle was "undoubtedly of Norman workmanship," of which fact he had found proof in the tooling of Norman masons on its stonework; and on this ancient structure Tudor brickwork had been engrafted as a comparatively modern addition. The discovery must have somewhat startled Kentish archæologists, who would seem to have been living all unconscious of this Norman castle within their borders! But the romance of a greater antiquity than the time of Henry VIII., and any claim for excepting this fort from the group in which up to the present time it has taken its place, will not bear examination.

In Vol. XX. I had the pleasure of bringing forward the building accounts of Sandgate Castle, which fortunately have been preserved. We have not the like source of direct and precise information concerning the building of the companion forts, yet the Sandgate accounts inform us thus far in regard to the castles of the Downs (viz., those of Sandown, Deal, and Walmer), that their construction was contemporaneous with that of Sandgate, this being made evident by the communication shewn to have passed between the builders.† In the same accounts, moreover, we find the explanation of the Norman tooling, which lately has been deemed proof of the Norman construction of Sandown Castle.

The Caen-stone used at Sandgate for facing the masonry had equally been handled, squared, and worked by Norman masons, not indeed at Sandgate, but at the Priors of St. Radegund, Horton, Canterbury, etc., from which, on their suppression and demolition, the material was carted to Sandgate, and there used second-hand. Had we the Sandown accounts, a similar transportation of material

* September 11, 17, 26, and October 5, 1896; the last letter by the present writer.

† Vol. XX., pp. 247-249.

would doubtless be discovered; and one highly probable source was Sandwich, within a distance of four miles, whence, indeed (perhaps from the Carmelite Monastery of the ancient town), some ten loads of stone were brought by sea to Sandgate, distant twenty-one miles. Thus there need be no mystery in regard to Norman tooling.

The historical evidence of the building of these forts is perfectly clear. That of Lambard, who lived at the time, and wrote his *Perambulation of Kent* in 1570, thirty years after their completion, was quoted in the article on "Sandgate Castle." He is the only contemporary writer who mentions the forts severally; collectively they have the earlier notice of Hall the Chronicler, and his quaint reference may here be acceptable:—

"The King's Highness, which never ceased to study and take pain both for the advancement of the commonwealth of this his realm of England, of the which he was the only supreme governor, and also for the defence of all the same, was lately informed by his trusty and faithful friends that the cankered and cruel serpent, the Bishop of Rome, by that arch-traitor Reignold Poole, enemy to God's word and his natural country, had moved and stirred divers great princes and potentates of Christendom to invade the realm of England, and utterly to destroy the whole nation of the same. Wherefore His Majesty in his own person, without any delay, took very laborious and painful journies towards the sea-coasts. Also he sent divers of his nobles and councillors to view and search all the ports and dangers on the coasts where any meet and convenient landing place might be supposed, as well on the borders of England as also of Wales. And in all such doubtful places His Highness caused *divers and many bulwarks and fortifications* to be made."

Leland's excursions, which resulted in the *Itinerary*, were commenced in 1536, three years before the building of the castles; therefore that work has no mention of them. But in his poem "Cygnea Cantio" of 1545, Leland (as Mr. W. D. Cooper points out in his *History of Winchelsea*) thus alludes to the forts, and lauds the sagacity of his kingly patron in building them:

"Prudens continuo per alta passim
Arces littora confici jubebat."

And to Winchelsea or Camber Castle he refers thus:

"Winchelsaya suos sinus tuetur,
Quâ Limenus aquas agit profusas."

And in these lines to Deal and the castles of the Downs:

"Dela novas celebris arces
Notus Cæsaris locus trophæis."

Holinshed is another contemporary who shews Henry VIII. to have been the builder of the castles, a fact, indeed, so well authenticated and established as hitherto to have been unquestioned.

Of Sandown, Deal, and Walmer Castles, large clear plans—to the scale of twenty feet to the inch, and made *circa* 1725—are

found in the King's Library, British Museum.* In the same collection, also, is a plan of Sandgate Castle and its vicinity, but only to the small scale of 200 feet to the inch, therefore not so complete and satisfactory. Of Camber Castle on the Sussex coast I have only the Ordnance survey, 208·33 feet to the inch. These plans, reduced or enlarged to a uniform scale, are now presented for the purpose of comparison of size and arrangement. This also will be assisted by the following Table:—

CASTLE.	Outer Diameter of Keep.	Number of Lunettes.	Approximate Form.	General Dimensions.†	Area Covered.‡
	Feet.			Feet.	Acro.
Sandown - - -	83	4	Quatrefoil	165 × 165	0·59
Deal - - - - -	86	6	Sexfoil	234 × 216	0·85
Walmer - - - -	83	4	Quatrefoil	167 × 167	0·61
Sandgate - - -	48	3	Trefoil	200 × 150	0·66
Camber - - - -	70	4	Quadrangle	200 × 190	0·73

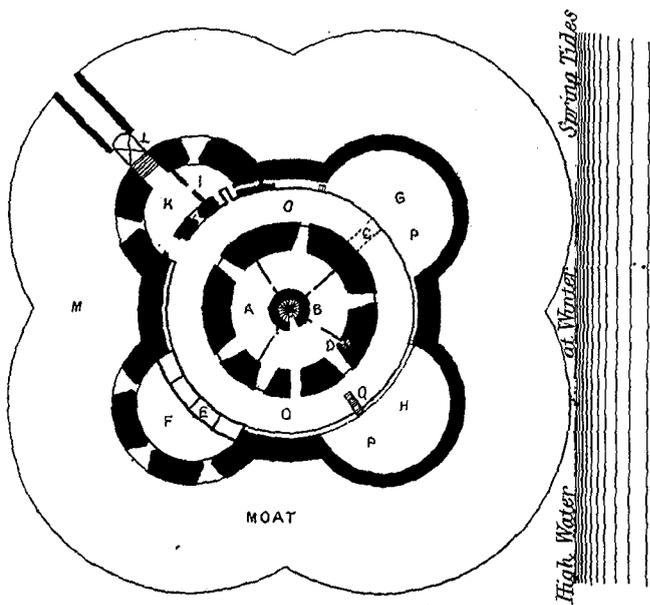
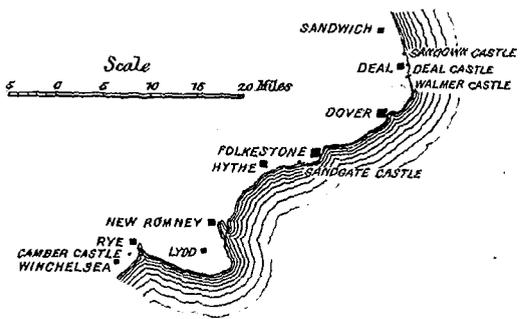
It will be seen from the plans, and from the Table, that Deal Castle was considerably the largest, that in point of size Camber Castle came next, that Sandown and Walmer were twin forts, and that Sandgate Castle, though different to these in form, covered as much ground. Far from having greater importance by reason of its size—as claimed by the correspondent of *The Times*—Sandown Castle was slightly the smallest of the forts; practically it was twin with Walmer.

A general design is apparent in the plans: a central keep environed by outer semi-circular bastions or lunettes. Variation consisted in the number of the lunettes which, being six, four, or three, caused the outline of the fort to approach to a sexfoil, quatrefoil, or trefoil figure. The central circular keep varied in internal diameter from 58 feet at Deal to 30 feet at Sandgate; its centre was occupied by a column 20 feet in diameter in the three castles of the Downs, and containing a well or staircase 12 feet in diameter. But at Sandgate the central column is only 5 feet thick, and therefore has no staircase. The keep consisted of three storeys, of which the upper two, divided by partition walls into four or five rooms, served for the lodgings of the captain or officer in command; below was the basement or "vault," usually described as bomb-proof, and used for stores. At Deal, however—the superior fort—the keep, if originally occupied by the commanding officer, was not so employed in 1725, for here, the area being greater than at the other forts, space was found for the officer's quarters between the keep and the lunette most salient seaward.

* Sandown XVIII., 50; Deal XVI., 43; Walmer XVIII., 59; Sandgate XVIII., 48.

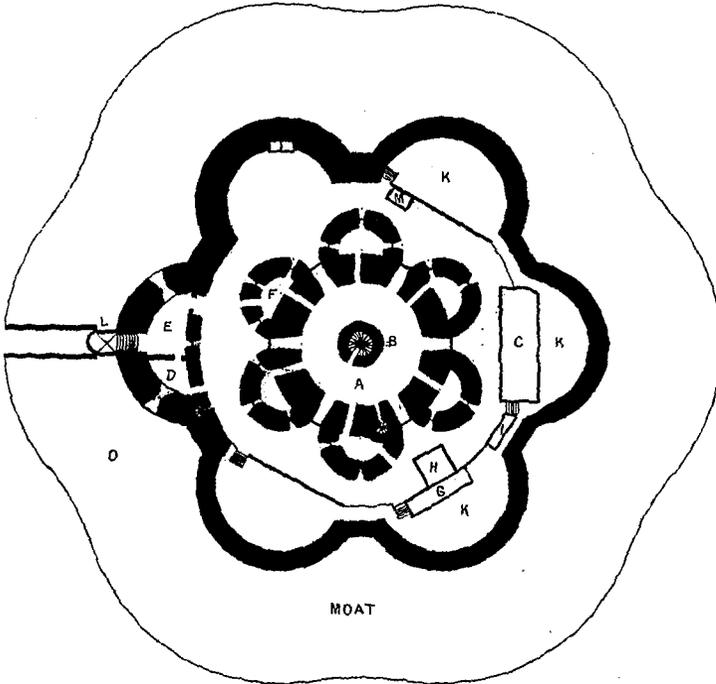
† These dimensions represent a general length and breadth, but do not serve for computing the areas, which are measured from the plans.

‡ The area actually covered by the fort, not including moat.



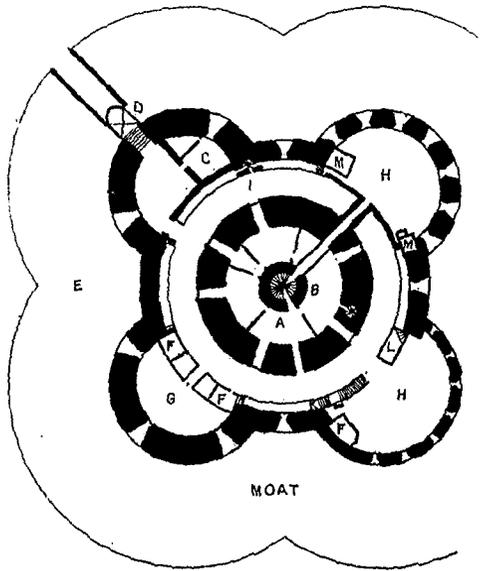
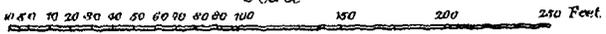
SANDOWN CASTLE





High Water at Common Spring Tides

DEAL CASTLE
Scale



High Water at Spring Tides

WALMER CASTLE

Thus the keep at Deal was free for military purposes, and from it opened six small inner lunettes, the produced centre-lines of which bisected the short spaces intervening between each pair of the six great outer lunettes, thus allowing the fire of an inner battery. The keep walls at Deal, Sandown, and Walmer were about 14 feet thick, and were pierced by the door and by loops which served for light or for defence. At Deal such openings occurred between each pair of inner lunettes, these also having severally their loops or openings outward. Around the keep was a clear passage or alley 14 to 16 feet wide, from which ascended steps to the platform level of the bastions or outer lunettes, on which were planted the guns. A moat about 50 feet wide surrounded the castle, access to which on the landward side was by a causeway crossing the moat and stopping short of the castle wall by ten or twelve feet; across the gap rose and fell the drawbridge, from which, by an ascent of seven or eight steps, the door of the porter's lodge was reached and the fort entered.

At Sandgate Castle the arrangement differed. The small plan of 1725, the only one we have of the building as it existed before the demolition and transformation of 1805, does not satisfactorily afford details as do the larger scale plans of the castles of the Downs. It appears from this small and consequently imperfect plan that the keep was not isolated as in the other forts, but enclosed within a ring of attached buildings; and beyond these was the walk or alley, whence the platforms of the three bastions were reached by stairs. If, however, the keep was immediately enclosed by buildings, it is difficult to conjecture how the two windows (apparently original), which it has to-day, received their light. Possibly the enclosure was not complete. Another peculiarity at Sandgate lay in the three towers which stood at the angles of the central triangular block. They were connected with the keep by the three long galleries which yet exist, radiating from the vault or basement, and they rose to the same height as the building in which they were set, their summits surrounded by embrasured parapets, forming gun platforms. The three towers corresponded, and were concentric with the three bastions in the outer wall. Again, at Sandgate there was no moat,* and the entrance tower (or "Half Moon" as from its form it was named) containing the porter's lodge was passed through before mounting the stairs and proceeding through the great gate on to the drawbridge which lay before the Castle door. The arrangement is described in Vol. XX., p. 254, and there illustrated by Mr. E. Kennett's excellent sketches.

Other details of the several castles will be understood by refer-

* Professor T. Hayter Lewis, in the plan which accompanies his article on "Sandown and Sandgate Castles" in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, vol. xl., p. 173 (1884), shews a moat at Sandgate *within* the walls. This could scarcely have been, although in the building accounts there is mention of a "ditch," position not indicated. Bucks' picture (*Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. XX., p. 252), shewing port-holes of chambers at a low level precludes the idea of water *within* the walls.

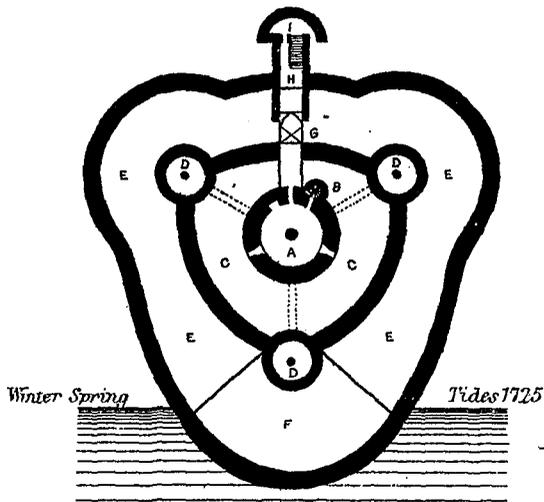
ence to the lettering and explanation of the plans copied *verbatim* from the originals.

There is not much history attaching to these forts. The little gathered in reference to Sandgate had its place in Vol. XXI., where it was said that no mention is found of a gun having been ever fired from its battery on a foreign ship. In Mr. Elvin's excellent account of the castles of the Downs (*Records of Walmer*) we hear of but one such shot, and it was fired from Deal Castle in January 1628, when "the admiral of a fleet of Hollanders, having passed Walmer Castle without striking his flag, was fired into as he passed under Deal Castle, and made to haul down his colours." But there was fighting here in 1648, sad to relate, between Englishmen, banded on the side of King or Parliament. In the month of May that year the Royalists rising in Kent gained possession of the forts, and kept them until towards the end of August, when one after another they were retaken by the Parliamentary forces. Walmer Castle, having been besieged for a month, had surrendered in July, and the most serious encounter occurred on the 14th of August, when a force of 800, landed from the Royalist fleet (which had attempted the relief of Deal and Sandown Castles), was defeated with a loss of 180 killed and 100 prisoners, the principal officers being included in the loss.

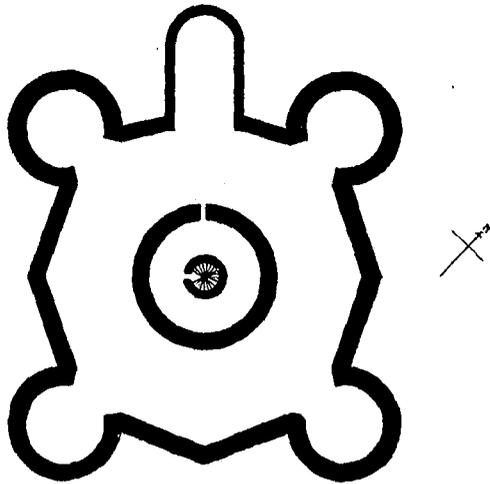
Of Camber Castle there is even less to report. Mr. Cooper (*History of Winchelsea*) shews that as early as 1626, it being in a decayed state and useless for the defence of the coast on account of the recession of the sea, a commission was directed to the Lieutenant of Dover Castle and other officials, including the Mayors of Dover, Romney, Hythe, and Lydd, for the demolition of Camber Castle and for sale of the materials, of which the value was to be applied to the fortifying of other neighbouring castles and forts. The order, however, was not carried out at that time, and the castle was not dismantled until 1642, when the guns were removed and the structure abandoned to ruin.

At the present day all that remains of Sandown Castle is a fragment, the ruined strength of which amazes its occasional visitor. The destruction wrought by the sea was completed by the hand of man in 1864, when, the materials having been previously sold, the keep and greater part of the bastions were demolished. In later years the military engineers have practised their art of scientific explosion and destruction upon the remnant, yet in defiance of their assaults masses of the old walls remain.

A happier fate has befallen the castles of Deal and Walmer, for within these old forts have been fashioned luxurious residences in keeping with modern requirements, and serving as the sea-side resort of illustrious and rest-seeking statesmen. Deal Castle was thus transformed by its captain, Lord Carrington, the contemporary of William Pitt, his neighbour at Walmer; and from him it has passed through the hands of other noble captains to its present occupant, Lord Herschell, the ex-Lord Chancellor. Walmer Castle, as the residence of the Lord Wardens of the Cinque Ports during a



SANDGATE CASTLE



CAMBER CASTLE



century and a half, has indeed an illustrious roll of occupants. The Duke of Dorset was the first of these to occupy the castle, in the middle of the last century; his successors have been the Earl of Holderness, Lord North (afterwards Earl of Guilford), Right Hon. William Pitt, Lord Hawkesbury (afterwards Earl of Liverpool), the Duke of Wellington, the Marquess of Dalhousie, Viscount Palmerston, Earl Granville, Right Hon. W. H. Smith, the Marquess of Dufferin, and the Marquess of Salisbury. Each of these eminent men has left his mark, either on the building or its grounds, or in the personal effects which survive him; and of the latter class of memorials, those of paramount interest are the articles of furniture used by the Great Duke in the little room wherein he died.

At Sandgate Castle the picturesque effect of age was effaced by the transformation of 1805; only on close inspection is there now found to be anything more than an exaggerated Martello tower; and over what remains threateningly hangs the Damocles' sword of a Railway Company; while of Camber Castle the ruined walls, standing prominently against the seaward horizon, yet attract the attention of the wayfarer passing between Rye and Winchelsea.

EXPLANATION OF THE PLANS, AS FOUND ON THE ORIGINALS.

SANDOWN CASTLE.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The Keep. B. Stairs to the leads [in centre of Keep]. C. Archway over the Passage [surrounding the Keep]. D. Stairs into Lower Gallery. E. Gunners' Cabins. F. Gun Room. G. Battery of seven Guns. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> H. Battery of five Guns. I. Porter's Lodge. K. Gate-House. L. Drawbridge. M. Moat. O. Passage about the Keep. P. P. Casemates. Q. Stairs up to y^e Platform. |
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DEAL CASTLE.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The Keep. B. Staircase [in centre of Keep]. C. Governor's Lodgings. D. Porter's Lodge. E. Gate-House. F. Guard-House. G. Trophy-Room. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> H. Stable. I. Gun-Room. K. K. K. Stone Platforms. L. Drawbridge and Port. M. Gunners' Cabin. O. Moat. |
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WALMER CASTLE.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The Keep or Governor's Apartments. B. Staircase [in centre of Keep]. C. Kitchen. D. Drawbridge. E. The Moat. F. F. Gunners' Cabins. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> G. Gun-Room. H. H. Stone Platforms, 14 Guns. I. Staircase up to y^e Wall. K. Stairs down to the Gallery. L. Stable. M. M. Summer Houses. |
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SANDGATE CASTLE.

The original Plan, being drawn to a very small scale, does not shew the several divisions of the Castle. The following reference is therefore in some degree conjectural :—

- A. The Keep, in which were the Captain's apartments.
- B. Staircase from basement to roof.
- C. Buildings removed in 1805; a passage, not shewn in original Plan, may possibly have surrounded the Keep.
- D. D. D. Three Towers connected with the basement of the Keep by galleries yet remaining, and probably also connected with the upper storeys. The basements of these Towers are existing, but above ground they have been removed.
- E. This space seems to have been partly occupied by a ditch; but that there were cellars or casemates in the landward bastions is evident from the embrasures, which in Bucks' picture* appear at a low level in the face of the outer wall.
- F. The Principal Battery, called the "Gun Platform," or "Mount," or "Stone Platform," from its being paved. Being elevated it was reached by stairs, and from the little Plan seems to have mounted eight guns.
- G. The Drawbridge.
- H. A strong Gate, yet *in situ*.
- I. The Porter's Lodge (from its shape called "The Half Moon") of two storeys, from the lower of which there was ascent by stairs to the Gate on the upper level. The stairs could be closed overhead by a "falling door," to receive which, when up, a recess remains in the side wall.

CAMBER CASTLE.

This Plan is merely an outline obtained from the Ordnance Survey. The Castle has been a ruin during two centuries and a half.

* S. and N. Buck in their *Antiquities* give views, taken c. 1735, of all five Castles. Of their former condition something at least is learnt from these pictures, although much reliance cannot be placed on accuracy of delineation. A copy by Mr. E. Kennett of the view of Sandgate Castle is in *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. XX., facing p. 252.