

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

WALMER CASTLE

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Name:	WALMER CASTLE
County:	Kent
District:	Dover (District Authority)
Parish:	Walmer
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.200781 Longitude: 1.3994259 National Grid Reference: TR 37579 50111 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000291 Date first listed: 01-May-1986

## Details

A late C18, C19, and C20 formal and ornamental garden associated with a C16 moated castle, with features designed by William Pitt and by the C19 horticulturalist, William Masters and set in C19 parkland.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Walmer Castle was begun by Henry VIII in 1539 as part of a system of fortifications around the coast of southern Britain which also included nearby Deal and Sandown Castles. It was first garrisoned in 1540. During the Civil War, all three castles were in the hands of the Parliamentarians and were later used to protect shipping during the Dutch Wars in the 1650s and 1660s. By the end of the C17 the castles had become obsolete as fortresses and in 1708 Walmer Castle became the official residence of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. The first occupant, the Duke of Dorset, altered and extended the Castle while William Pitt, appointed Lord Warden in 1792, extended the grounds by leasing more land to the north and west. From 1803 until Pitt's death in 1806, his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope lived at Walmer and assisted with improvements to the grounds. The Duke of Wellington stayed regularly at Walmer during his tenure as Lord Warden between 1829 and 1853, lending the Castle to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert for a month in 1842. The last major alterations to the Castle were carried out by the second Earl Granville, Lord Warden from 1865 to 1891, who commissioned George Devey to extend the accommodation and restored and developed Pitt's work in the grounds. Walmer Castle was transferred from the War Office to the Ministry of Works in 1905 and opened to the public shortly afterwards. The most significant recent addition to the grounds is the garden created in 1997 by Penelope Hobhouse, as a gift from English Heritage to commemorate the ninety-fifth birthday of the then Lord Warden, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. Both the Castle and the grounds are now (2003) managed by English Heritage.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Walmer Castle lies between the eastern edge of Walmer village and the B2057 north/south coast road from Deal to Kingsdown. The registered area comprises 6.5ha of formal and wooded ornamental gardens and 6.5ha of parkland and meadows. The north-east half of the site lies on the narrow, level coastal strip, the land rising gently to the south-west onto the edge of the dip-slope of the North Downs and, beyond the site boundary, an open landscape of rolling, arable farmland. The iron-fenced parkland is bounded to the north-west and north by minor roads

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
WALMER CASTLE

and the housing of Walmer village. To the south, the fenced woodland belt within the site is bounded by a public footpath and the rear gardens of properties on Hawks Hill Road, with the open countryside of Hawkshill Down beyond. To the east, the partly wooded, iron-fenced boundary abuts the coast road, which is separated from the beach by a bank of shingle.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The site is approached from the B2057, Kingsdown Road. A gravelled drive enters through wrought-iron gates hung on brick piers with stone ball finials, then swings c 60m south-westwards to the Castle. The entrance, which remains in its original C16 position, is through the gatehouse in the north bastion, which is approached across the moat on a bridge and drawbridge (Campbell 1984) although in the C19 the principal approach drive was from the north-west across Castle Meadow (Tithe map, 1844). The present double avenue of holm oak lining this route was planted in 1866 by William Masters (1796-1874) of Exotic Nurseries, Canterbury, for the second Earl of Granville, some trees subsequently being felled at various times in the C20 (Campbell 1984) and replacement planting being carried out in the late 1980s. The avenue remained the principal approach until superseded by the present drive, also shown on the Tithe map, in the 1950s.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS** Walmer Castle stands at the extreme eastern edge of the site, on level ground and looking out over the coast road and the shingle beach to the sea. It is set within a deep, circular moat and is built of stone to a quatrefoil plan in which a central, circular keep is surrounded by an open courtyard protected by a concentric curtain wall from which four bastions project. The first alterations to adapt the Castle to a residence were during the various periods of tenure of the Duke of Dorset, from 1708 until his death in 1765. He built out from the keep over the bastions to increase the number of first-floor rooms (illustration by J and N Buck, 1735, reproduced in guidebook) and in c 1730 added a two-storey weatherboarded house for a Gunners' Lodging at the rear of the south bastion. Interior alterations were made in 1746 to create the East and West Lounges and in 1874 the second Earl of Granville commissioned George Devey (1820-86) to build extra rooms over the gatehouse bastion using stone from Sandown Castle, then being demolished.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The formal gardens and pleasure grounds extend south-westwards from the Castle and also lie within the moat. The moat, divided into four sections by walls and the drawbridge, is laid out to a broad continuous ribbon of lawn, flanked by serpentine beds of banked shrubbery against the inner curtain wall. The moat appears on the Buck engraving of 1735 (guidebook) and is first recorded as being gardened in 1852 when described as the Duke of Wellington's kitchen garden (Campbell 1984). It was extensively planted ornamentally in the second half of the C19 on the advice of George Devey but the greater part of this planting and the central path shown on the 1863 plan had been removed by 1937. The moat garden was replanted after the Second World War, but largely cleared again in 1980 before the present shrubbery was laid out. The gardens are approached across a timber bridge spanning the moat from the south-west side of the south bastion. A gravel path flanked by yew hedging and shrubbery follows the curve of the moat wall 15m northwards to the Broad Walk, which forms the north-east section of the principal axis of the gardens. The wide, gravelled walk, lined with 3m wide herbaceous borders and backed by high, massive sculpted yew hedges, was designed and planted in 1866 by William Masters, the borders originally containing annuals and standard roses and the yew hedges being formally clipped (photograph of 1898, in Campbell 1984). Altered c 1916 to the present herbaceous planting, by 1959 the clipped hedges had adopted their present naturalistic, loose form. North of the Broad Walk, the axis extends over two terraces, defined by grass banks and framed by mature trees to north and south. The lower terrace is broadly rectangular and laid out to a croquet lawn, while the upper one, planted as a parterre with annuals and with a central sundial, is semicircular in shape and enclosed on the south-west side by a clipped hedge, replanted in the late 1980s. The terraces were cut from the former Paddock by Masters in 1867 (Campbell 1984) and are shown on the 1st edition OS map surveyed in 1872. Their two axial flights of connecting stone steps were built in the 1920s by Lord Beauchamp, who also modified the shape of the lower terrace for tennis and croquet. An iron gate set within the enclosing hedge leads the axis south-westwards out into the Paddock.

South of the Broad Walk, the path around the outer wall of the moat leads south-westwards on to the c 100m long Oval Lawn, the shape of which is first shown on the Tithe map of 1844, although its design is attributed to William Pitt (*ibid*). The lawn, now (1997) used for concerts and as an informal picnic area, is enclosed by 2m tall yew hedges, shown as a double line of trees on an estate plan of 1863 (Beresford 1995), and is dotted with trees of mixed age and species including yew, a large central lime (its planting attributed to Pitt), sweet chestnut, and holly. East of the Oval Lawn, immediately south of the moat wall and enclosed

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
WALMER CASTLE

on its north, east, and south sides by high, castellated red-brick walls, is the Queen Mother's Garden. Opened in 1997, it is laid out with a central, 28m long lily pool, overlooked at the north end by an arcaded summerhouse and flanked with broad panels of lawn, surrounded by gravelled walks and broad mixed borders. At the south end, facing the summerhouse, is a turf mount, crowned with yews clipped to form a castle. The rectangular outline of the present garden is first shown on a conveyancing plan of 1810 (*ibid*) and was probably laid out by Pitt. By 1844 (Tithe map) it had become a formal garden, divided into quadrants, although the brick walls are not clearly depicted until the plan of 1863. In the 1920s, although still referred to as the Kitchen Garden, it was turned into tennis courts, the hard surface of which was grassed over in 1959 (Campbell 1984).

Between the Oval Lawn and the Queen Mother's Garden, the Woodland Walk leads around the entire southern and western perimeter of the grounds through a belt of mixed-age trees and an understorey of shrubbery and drawn-up yews. The tree belt, which was first planted in the late C18 by Pitt as a shelter belt on newly leased open parkland, had become dense woodland by 1863 (estate plan) and is now (1997) dominated by beech, ash, and chestnut. It suffered extensive damage in the storm of 1987 and was replanted in the 1990s. The tree belt forms the southern and western boundary of the Paddock, an oval-shaped open meadow dotted with several groups of trees and first shown on the 1844 Tithe map. In the 1860s, it was recommended by William Masters as the site for a pinetum and was planted with pines, cypresses, and holm oak, a few of which survive (1997). In the 1920s, Lord Beauchamp added shrub planting to integrate the Paddock with the garden and the axis on the Broad Walk was given a focus by a statue of Mercury (100m south-west of the terrace), replaced in 1968 by the present cherub on a pedestal (Campbell 1984). In the north-west corner of the gardens, the Woodland Walk leads past The Glen, a former chalk pit, now (1997) heavily overgrown with trees and understorey, laid out in c 1805 by Lady Hester Stanhope as a natural garden of 'creepers, furze and broom' (Lady Stanhope's correspondence, quoted in Campbell 1984). It is intended to restore the planting and path system of The Glen.

**PARK** The grounds north of the gardens, named as Castle Meadow on the Tithe map of 1844, are open in character and mostly grazed. They are enclosed to the north-west, north, and east by iron-railed estate fencing and, on the Granville Road boundary to the north, by Meadow Plantation which is shown on the 1844 Tithe map and which was largely replanted after the 1987 storm. There is a scattered line of pines along the eastern boundary and the meadows are screened along their southern boundary from the Paddock by ribbon shelter belts planted during Lord Granville's tenure in the late C19 (Campbell 1984). The land now forming Castle Meadow was purchased by Lord Liverpool from the Leith Estates in the early C19 and placed in a trust for the use of future Lords Warden. The area immediately to the north of the kitchen garden and yards forms the present (1997) car park.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden lies on the north side of the Broad Walk and is divided by a secondary, south-westerly, grassed axial path. It is enclosed along its north side by lean-to glasshouses, built against the red-brick stable block, which are shown established by 1906 (OS) and which were enlarged and extended in the 1930s. The eastern half of the garden is divided into two rectangles, edged along the axial path by dwarf box and espaliered fruit trees and laid out to vegetables and cut flowers, while the western half is laid to grass with orchard trees. The kitchen garden is first recorded on a plan of 1725 as the Governor's Garden and was laid out during Pitt's tenure as Lord Warden (Campbell 1984). By 1844 (Tithe map), the stables and sheds had been built and by 1863 (estate plan) the garden was divided into four quadrants by paths edged with trees. It was reduced to its present size in the 1860s by the establishment of the Broad Walk on its southern edge.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 46 (1 November 1919), pp 552-7 J Newman, *The Buildings of England: West Kent and the Weald* (1969), pp 470-1 O Campbell, *The Landscape of Walmer Castle*, (HBMCE 1984) *Walmer Castle and Gardens*, guidebook, (English Heritage 1992) *Walmer Castle, Gardens and Estate*, Background report for Commission tour, (English Heritage 1995) [copy on EH file] C Beresford, *Walmer Castle: Walled Garden Outline History of Development*, (report for English Heritage 1995) [copy on EH file]

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1871-2, published 1887 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1871 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1906 1936 edition

Description written: September 1997 Amended: June 1999 Register Inspector: VCH Edited: November 2003

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## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.