

Dover Town Hall (Maison Dieu)

Guided Tours

Guided tours of this impressive, historic building, lasting about an hour, are available on the first Wednesday morning of each month from April to October inclusive, starting at 10am and 11am. Additional tours may be available on some Saturday mornings as announced in the press and on The Dover Society website www.doversociety.org

Guided tours will also be available during Heritage Open Days in September - please see separate publicity. Tours for groups can be arranged at other mutually convenient times. Please contact Derek Leach on 01304 823926 or email derekriverdale@btinternet.com

HISTORY:

Founded by Hubert de Burgh, then Constable of Dover Castle, in 1203, the primary purpose of the Maison Dieu religious house was to provide free board and lodging for pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Thomas a Becket at Canterbury and later to care for the elderly poor and sick of Dover. More buildings were added over the centuries. A chapel was added by Henry III, which was adapted in the 19th century as a court. In 1536 the religious house was suppressed by Henry VIII and then became the King's property.

The buildings became a victualling depot for the navy until 1830 when it was taken over by the Board of Ordnance. Put up for auction in 1834 it was bought by the Dover Corporation. Restoration and adaptation of the Stone Hall and chapel took place between 1852 and 1862. The 19th century stained glass windows in the Stone Hall depict episodes in the history of the town and there are a number of portraits of famous people connected with the Dover. The Council Chamber was added in 1868 and the adjoining Connaught Hall was opened in 1883.



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Directions: The Maison Dieu is situated in Biggin Street, the main shopping street, and (pay and display) car parking is available at the rear in Ladywell, in Maison Dieu Car Park, (Maison Dieu Road) or in Norman Street car park off Priory Road.

Tours are organised by The Dover Society with the co-operation of Dover District Council, the owner, and the Town Hall managers, Thanet Leisureforce Ltd.