

## Fascinating Facts

### Thomas and William Caxton



Pittlesden Manor housed a leading merchant family. In 1449, Thomas Pittlesden secured Tenterden's Cinque Ports status with lawyer Thomas Caxton.

His brother William Caxton trained in the cloth trade and visited Bruges where c.1743 he made the first book printed in English, and brought a printing press to England.

### Our American Cousins

Four Tenterden families were early New England pilgrims. Nathaniel Tilden, Mayor in 1622, emigrated in 1635 aboard the Hercules. His descendant Samuel Tilden later ran for U.S. president in 1865.

In 1746, Tenterden Unitarians built a Meeting House where Joseph Priestley and Benjamin Franklin spoke in 1774.

Thomas Coombe, a Royalist and Franklin's friend, was imprisoned during the American Revolution, later becoming Vicar of Tenterden.



### Mathematical Tiles – Bricks in Disguise

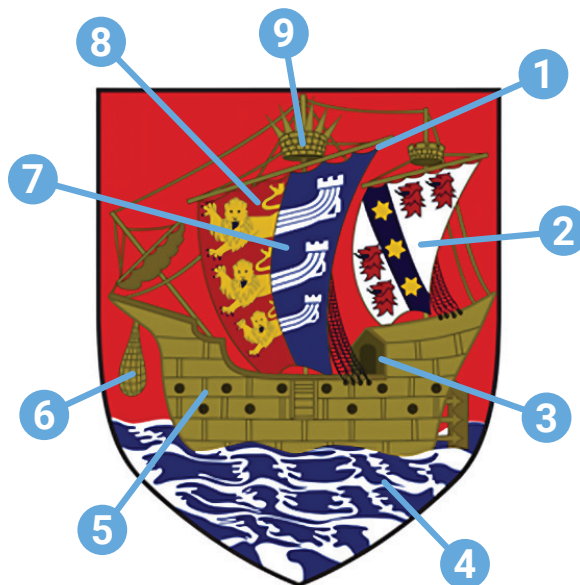
This clever 18th-century technique was used across Kent and East Sussex to modernise timber-framed houses. Carefully hung tiles mimic real bricks, blending seamlessly into the architecture.

Tenterden has fine examples at No. 6 & 7 East Cross, No. 2 West Cross (map number 8, a Kent Historic Building), 142 High Street, and No. 30 with painted tiles. Spot the unusual buff-coloured ones at No. 16!

**Think you can find more? Clues lie in the corner finishes and "quoins" edges, revealing these masterful brick illusions.**

## Tenterden's Coat of Arms

Tenterden's Coat of Arms tells the story of its rise as a Cinque Port and its decline as the sea retreated. Each symbol reflects its naval past, trade, and lost harbour: look closer to uncover its history.



1. Main Sail: Arms of the Cinque Ports
2. Arms of Thomas Pittlesden, first Bailiff of Tenterden Cinque Port
3. Cabin for the fighting men
4. The sea, ultimately to retreat leaving Tenterden high and dry
5. Fish and goods were also carried
6. Silting up of the port, not helped by jettisoning the sand anchors
7. The English Lions shown as fighting ships
8. Defiant three Lions of England, sticking out tongues to the enemy
9. The crow's nest, a lookout

## Tenterden A Heritage Tour

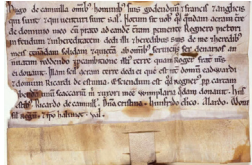


### An introduction to The Jewel of the Weald

Produced by Tenterden & District Local History Society ([www.tenterdenhistory.co.uk](http://www.tenterdenhistory.co.uk)) & Tenterden Museum ([www.tenterdenmuseum.co.uk](http://www.tenterdenmuseum.co.uk))



# A Timeline of Tenterden



Anglo-Saxon Charter



The 'Shambles'



Romney Sheep



St Mildred's Church



Queen Elizabeth I



The Woolpack



The War Memorial



Diana, Princess of Wales opening the leisure centre

## 7th Century

The Anglo-Saxon origins of "Tenterden": people (wara), travelling south from Thanet (Tenet), set up pig pastures here, i.e. a den: thus Tenet-wara-den.

## 9th Century

Local forest clearings are permanently settled, the coast is conveniently nearby.

**1086**

By now the small church of St Mildred's is built of stone. Tenterden is held by St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, thus is not recorded in the Domesday Book.

**1279**

Illicit shops in front of the church are fined, for encroaching on "The King's Highway". These 'Shambles' must pay 12 horseshoes a year to keep trading.

## 14th Century

Romney Marsh is drained, providing excellent sheep pasture. Tenterden becomes a major wool-weaving centre with nearby ports boosting exports. Skilled weavers from North Belgium settle here.

**1414**

King Henry V visits the shipyard where his 1,000 ton ship "Jesus" is being built.

**1465**

St Mildred's magnificent tower is built, a sign of great prosperity and the piety of the townspeople.

**1600**

With income from the Cinque Ports declining, Tenterden seeks a new Charter from Queen Elizabeth I. "Borough" status includes the right to hold markets and an annual fair.

**1661**

A debtor imprisoned in the cold Town Hall lights a fire which gets out of control. The building and its precious ancient documents are destroyed. The Council start meeting in The Woolpack.

**1785**

Two burglars are executed at Gallows Green, watched by 1,000 townspeople: the last hanging ordered by the town council.

**1798**

During the Napoleonic Wars, an active garrison is hosted nearby.

## Later 19th Century

Improvements in the town include better roads, gas, and piped water, but downturns in agriculture bring poverty.

**1920**

The War Memorial is dedicated to the lost lives of World War I, with additions sadly for World War II.

**1974**

Tenterden becomes a parish within Ashford Borough Council.

**1990**

Diana, Princess of Wales, opens the Tenterden Leisure Centre.

**600 AD**

## 8th Century

The first settlers here from North Kent named their wooden church for Saint Mildred: a royal lady and a much-loved Abbess of Minster-in-Thanet.

**968 AD**

An ancient Tenterden manor "Heronden" is recorded in an Anglo-Saxon charter, witnessed by King Eadgar. A lady Aethelflaed sells it for 1450 pence.

**1275**

Tenterden's influential Pittlesden family and their manor feature in a Royal document.

**1380s**

The town is badly affected by the Black Death plague, and by the Peasants' Revolt which follows.

## 15th Century

Rye, a nearby town, is an important member of the Cinque Ports Confederation, supplying ships and men towards national trade and defence. Tenterden helps Rye meet these demands.

**1449**

Tenterden joins the Cinque Ports, with a Charter granted by King Henry VI. The town gains great privileges; its leaders ('Bailiff and Jurats') have the power of life and death over the people. At Smallhythe the era of superb shipbuilding continues.

**1538**

King Henry VIII visits Tenterden to inspect his most splendid fighting ships and is entertained with dance and music.

**1635**

Tenterden families are amongst the earliest emigrants to New England, sailing out on the "Hercules".

## 18th Century

Tenterden is a small market town. The sea has retreated 10 miles away and the ports are no longer navigable.

**1792**

A splendid new Town Hall is built using part of the Woolpack.

## Early 19th Century

For the population of 2,000, the town's business is cattle and sheep; hop farms & market gardens also are important. Crops of corn are stored in millers' warehouses.

**1903**

Tenterden station opens on the Rother Valley Railway, built by engineer Colonel Stephens.

**1944**

238 V1 flying bombs crash around Tenterden, make it the most bombed place in "Doodlebug Alley".

**1982**

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, visits our Kent & East Sussex Railway.



Saint Mildred



Plague Doctor



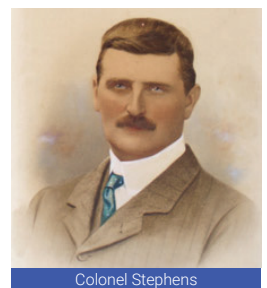
Tenterden (Cinque Ports)



Henry VIII's Ship 'The Grand Mistress'



Tenterden Town Hall



Colonel Stephens



Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother

**2000s**



# The Heritage Walking Route

**1 Town Hall**  
This excellent Georgian building was purpose-built in 1792, to replace the old town hall sadly burnt down in 1661. Inside are a fine set of Assembly Rooms, and the names of all the mayors since 1449.



**2 The Woolpack**  
A "Wealden Hall House" built 1478 and originally called The Woolsack: clues to our ancient source of wealth. **Notice the coaching entrance** where horse-drawn coaches could be caught to Maidstone and London.

**3 St Mildred's Church**  
Named for our patron saint Mildred, a beloved 7th Century Kentish Abbess. The stone church dates to the 1100s, with a 1461 tower built from unique Bethersden Marble and featuring distinctive double doors. In the churchyard, find barrel-shaped family tombs.

**4 Nos. 28-40**  
Situating above the ancient churchyard: old bones may be found in these cellars!

**5 Lock Up - Back of No. 50**  
Long before there was a police force, wrongdoers in the town got locked up in here. Disorderly drunkards would be let out once sober - **spot the barred window** still facing St Mildred's!

**6 Kent & East Sussex Railway**  
Our superb heritage railway opened in Tenterden in 1903. You could travel to London via Headcorn and to Hastings via Robertsbridge. Sometimes the local cattle travelled on it too. Following its closure in 1954, volunteers have worked hard on restoration, to make it the wonderful time-travelling experience it is today.

**7 Tenterden & District Museum**  
This 18th Century weather-boarded building used to store goods, which were used by the brewery behind The Vine pub. Our amazing museum opened here in 1976 and today is run entirely by volunteers.



**8 2 West Cross - Historic House of Kent**  
This house is a key example of 'Mathematical Tiles' - **read more in 'Fascinating Facts'**.

**9 Heronden Hall Gatehouse**  
A dramatic outer gatehouse, hinting at the Gothic splendour of a huge Victorian mansion situated within. Heronden is an ancient manor of Tenterden, significant enough in 968AD to warrant its great selling price: fourteen hundred and fifty pence.

**10 War Memorial**  
Built of Portland Stone in 1920, at the end of WW1, with sad additions for WW2: every name engraved here has a Tenterden story to tell. In previous centuries, on market days, these Greens would be overrun with sheep and cattle.



**11 Borough Place Nos. 93-103**  
Near here once stood a Tudor House, provided for the poor by Tenterden "Borough". A better Poorhouse was built in 1724 with a buttery, brewery and laundry. In Victorian times, a harsher regime banished the poor to a prison-like building outside the town.

**12 Pittlesden Gatehouse No. 91**  
The oldest house in the town dating perhaps from the 1300s. Legend says it was the manor gatehouse of the Pittlesden family - prominent leaders of the town whose coat of arms is on the town crest.

**13 Zion Baptist Church No. 69**  
Many townspeople strongly opposed the Church of England, and built alternative chapels of worship.

**14 White Lion Hotel**  
Another fine 15th Century "Wealden Hall House". Three times a week you could catch a horse-drawn coach here, to Cranbrook and London.



**15 The Pebbles Nos. 53-55**  
Apothecary (doctor) John Mace had this house built in 1777. Look for his exceptionally tall doorway: he wished to ride his high horse through to the back and not remove his impressive top hat! Another notable inhabitant of this house in the 1830s was Horatia Ward, the natural daughter of Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson and Lady Emma Hamilton.

**16 The Millennium Garden**  
**Have a quiet rest** in the garden of The Pebbles, re-planted and re-wilded to celebrate the year 2000.

**17 Milestone beside No. 53**  
**Find a milestone on the pavement outside No. 53** and spot a small historic plaque on the wall of No. 50 across the road; in the 1700s all traffic had to stop at the gates and pay a Turnpike Toll. When the Tolls were ended, townspeople gleefully flung all these wooden gates onto a bonfire.

**18 Jacksons Lane**  
Walk along here, look up for a sign "Soup Kitchen 1875". Hard times in farming brought poverty to the town. Free soup was tastily brewed up - in an ancient candle-making cauldron of immense proportions.



**19 Bells Lane**  
In Napoleonic times, soldiers from Reading Street barracks brought life to this lane, home to a theatre and weather-boarded cottages. **Clues remain in the house names.**

**20 Wealden Hall House Nos. 29-33**  
Built in the 1400s for a wealthy merchant. It became a butcher's shop in the 19th Century and meat hooks are still visible outside.

**21 Corn Warehouse Nos. 19-21**  
Clad not in bricks but in mathematical tiles! **Look up to see doors and pulleys** - which is how the merchant hoisted the milled corn to store safely on the upper floors.



**22 Wine Cellars No. 5**  
Down the stairs to find a basement wine cellar, once a public house named "Ye Olde Cellars": proud to be the most basic and dustiest pub in the town. For health reasons it was closed down in the 1980s.

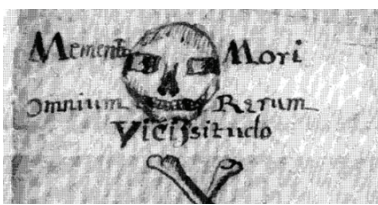
**23 The Embassy Cinema**  
An attractive Art Deco building opened in 1937 during the golden age of cinema. During the 1960s its doors were closed by the growing popularity of television.



**24 The Picture House, Oaks Road**  
The town's first cinema opened here in 1912 with electricity and state-of-the-art air conditioning. It closed in 1937 and became shops known as the Fairings.

**25 The Old Grammar School Nos. 18-20**  
500 years ago it cost £10 to build this Tudor house. For centuries, Tenterden's better-off children were taught here. In 1843, a new Church school opened, but many Protestants founded a rival British School - a divide that lasted into the 1950s.

**26 Dr Cliff's House No. 22**  
Dr Jeremiah Cliff or "Dr Death", was fascinated by the process of dying. During 1713 - 40 he recorded in his notebook the gruesome details of 1,245 deaths around the town.



Discover even more of Tenterden's rich history on a guided heritage tour. Scan the QR code to see upcoming dates, or to get in touch.