



National  
Trust

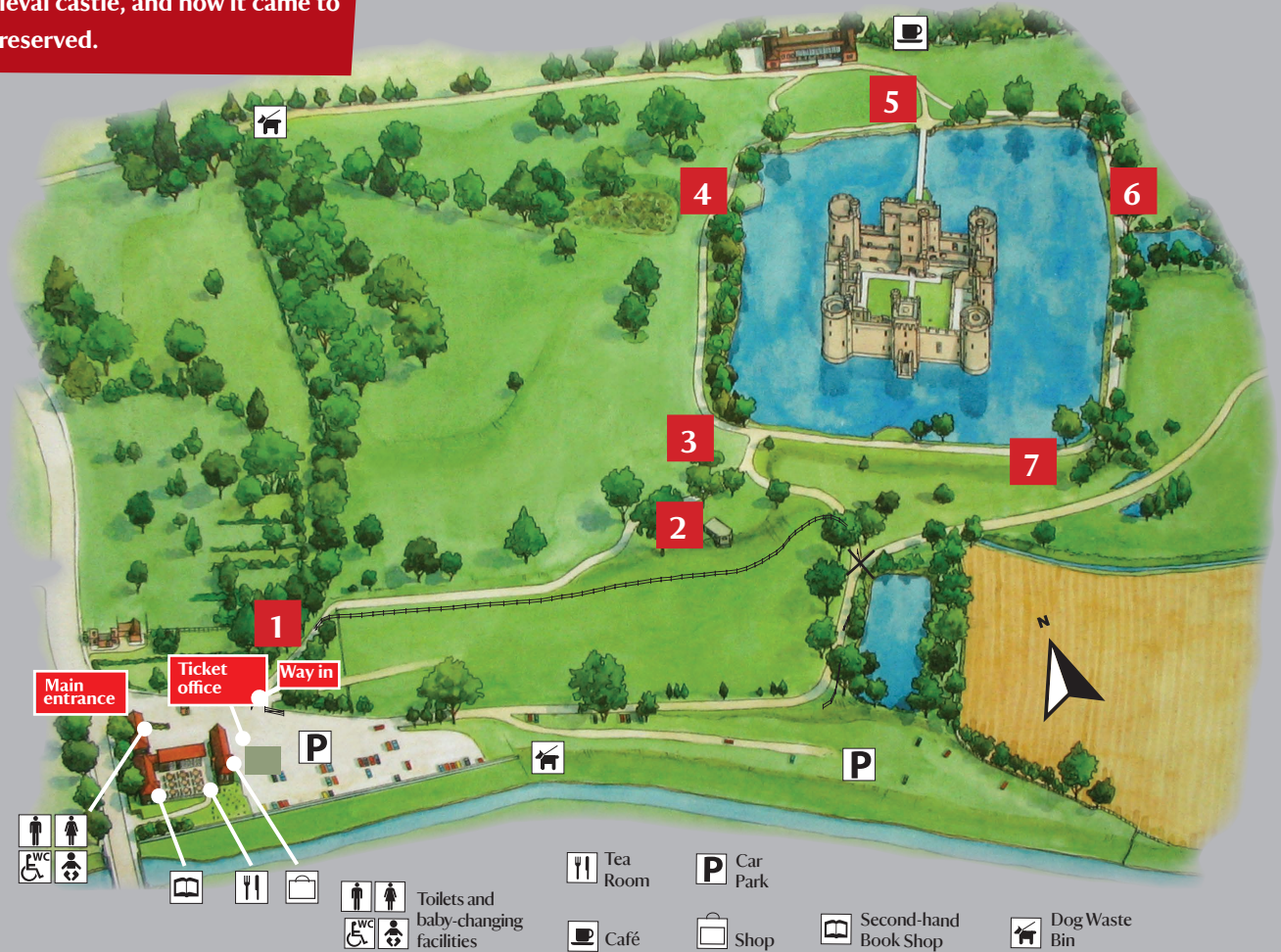
## Welcome to Bodiam Castle



**B**odiam Castle was built to impress. It stands free from outbuildings and is magnified by its reflection in the moat. The castle dates to around 1385, the age of Chaucer, wars with France, the Black Death, royal disputes and social change. The castle was built for Sir Edward Dallingridge and his wife Elizabeth Wardedieu.

It was a luxury home and an expression of their status. Over time the interior fell into ruin. Remarkably the walls, towers and setting survived. From the 18th-century it became known for its appeal as an ancient monument.

This guide will help you discover what remains of the medieval castle, and how it came to be preserved.



### General information

#### Where can I picnic?

You are welcome to picnic in the grounds.

#### Are dogs allowed?

Dogs are welcome on short leads in the grounds.

#### Can I feed the ducks and fish?

Help to keep them healthy by not feeding them human food.

#### Where should I take extra care?

Please be aware of the moat and river, which have steep banks and deep water.

# Bodiam Castle

Follow this route around the exterior and grounds of the castle with points of interest along the way.

## 1 Millpond

As you step into the medieval world, get a feel for your surroundings. Although a quiet part of Sussex today, it was a busy working landscape. Behind you is the River Rother, connecting Bodiam to Rye Harbour. The road to your left roughly follows the path of the Roman road from Rochester to Hastings. Bodiam was built on a crossroad, historically an important place for trade and control.

With the river and the historic site of the wharf behind you, to your right is a rectangular shaped lawn, once a millpond. It still often floods in winter.



## 2 Pillbox

The Second World War pillbox was part of a line of defences along the River Rother. It was built in 1940 to slow down an advance from the south. The Canadian Army and later the Home Guard were armed with an anti-tank gun and machine guns, aimed at the bridge. Some feel the pillbox disrupts the romance of the setting. Others value its wartime significance and the rare proximity to a castle.

## 3 Postern Tower

You are looking at the back of the castle. Originally there was a bridge to the Postern, or secondary, gate. Look for the three heraldic shields on the tower. The middle shield and the ram's head above bear the arms of Sir Robert Knollys, with whom Dallingridge served in France.

All these features may once have been painted.

The Great Hall is just behind the wall. The big south facing window indicates the prestige of the space. Above it a walkway to the south-east tower. The walls are crenellated: protected with the square indentations so typical of medieval castles. Once all the walls would have had this feature.

Turn left past the kitchen and as you walk note the symmetry of the castle. The curtain wall is 2.2m thick at the base and rises to 13.15m. The castle is built from Wealden sandstone.



## 4 Medieval bridge

Dallingridge would have crossed the moat where you are standing now. The stones on the bank mark the site of the original bridge, which at the Octagon would have made a sharp right turn. This made the bridge easier to defend and the walls look more imposing.

The medieval bridge was lost centuries ago. In 1919 the then owner Lord Curzon discovered the foundations: 'Little by little the main timbers were exposed to view, lying in the mud as they had fallen.' Since the 18th century access has been from the north bank, as it is today.

On your left the remains of two medieval fish ponds. Although they no longer have water, you can see their shape.

## 5 The Gatehouse

Visitors would have passed the Barbican, the small defensive structure, before reaching the Gatehouse. Look out for the portcullis. Tests reveal that it is original, and one of only a few of that date surviving in Britain.



On the tower is Dallingridge's coat of arms. His tournament helm features a unicorn, in the medieval period a symbol of Christ. His shield is flanked by that of Wardedieu, for his wife Elizabeth, and Radynden for his mother Alice. Dallingridge was an experienced soldier, a knight who had fought in the wars with France. Bodiam Castle was an expression of his power and status.

Today it houses a different family of sorts. The Gatehouse hosts the largest maternity roost of Daubenton bats in England, as well as Natterer bats. They leave when their young are strong enough to fly. In the moat which is approximately 8ft deep, you may see carp.

## 6 The Chapel

The Chapel is the most notable feature of the east wing. The large window would have held stained glass. We are not sure when Bodiam Castle stopped being a home, but estimate it was between the 15th and 17th centuries. Today much of the interior is lost. There is no evidence of a siege. Instead it seems the castle slowly fell into disrepair. The stones may have been removed to be used elsewhere.

## 7 A survivor

During the 18th-century, Britain's ruins became fashionable again. People wanted to record and protect such sites. Bodiam began to attract visitors and artists. The last private owner was Lord Curzon, the former Viceroy of India and Marquis of Kedleston. He left Bodiam Castle to the National Trust in 1925.

**Bodiam Castle**  
bodiamcastle@nationaltrust.org.uk  
BodiamCastleNT



Images: National Trust/Gesine Garz/Alasdair Ogilvie/  
Matthew Antrobus/Elizabeth Vessey. Please recycle this  
leaflet after use. © National Trust 2021. The National  
Trust is a registered charity no. 205846.