

## Dartford

Originally a Roman settlement, Dartford is an old market town with a rich industrial heritage. The Borough has been revitalized since the arrival of Bluewater. The regions green belt boasts wild marshlands and green country parks that form part of the Garden of England!



## Facts about Dartford

### *Did you know that....??*

Dartford has a bright future ahead with many new developments currently being undertaken. The town centre has been given £20 million to create a vibrant and welcoming town centre for both residents and visitors enjoy. The aim is to restore Dartford's reputation as a major retail and leisure centre.

Bluewater is Europe's largest shopping centre, situated between Dartford and Gravesham; it was built in March 1999. Since then Bluewater has won a variety of awards for its modern approach to British retailing. Bluewater combines retail with entertainment, eating out, family fun and stunning architecture.

In 2006 Princesses Park Community Stadium was open for use of the local football club and also conference and banqueting facilities. The stadium cost £6.5 million to build and is award winning for being unique and environmentally friendly.

Ebbsfleet International Station will serve the Eurostar, as well as a high speed domestic service to St Pancras, London. It will provide a 17 minute journey into central London, as well as redeveloping the local area to create a large community area.

Since the development of the channel tunnel rail link at Ebbsfleet and the development of Bluewater, Ebbsfleet Valley and The Bridge are the latest developments in Dartford. Ebbsfleet Valley is the largest regeneration project in North Kent, encompassing 1,038 acres of brownfield land. Over the next twenty years the former chalk quarry opposite Bluewater, will become a vibrant mixed-use community comprising of shops, homes and 400 acres of open space, lakes and parkland. The Bridge will redevelop the land around the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge in Dartford, into an area for businesses, new homes, schools and leisure.

As well as Dartford's future developments, its history has not been forgotten. Many of the old buildings and historic features in the town centre are being repaired through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

## Town History

- During the Cretaceous Period 70–100 million years ago, the Dartford area was under 700ft of water, part of a sea covering Northern Europe, which means that Dartford and the surrounding area is rich in chalk and flint deposits, which have been mined in the area for many years. Chalk and flint played a vital part in the early development of the area and Dartford's.
- The first people appeared in the Dartford area around 250,000 years ago. A tribe of prehistoric hunters called Swanscombe Man (a piece of skull from Swanscombe Man can be seen in the Horniman Museum, Forest Hill) and the town's situation has made it an important settlement through the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age.
- The years 1000-1500 saw a remarkable transformation in the size and importance of this former royal manor. Dartford evolved into a thriving and successful medieval town supporting a population of approximately 1,000 people.
- Dartford's status was further enhanced by its role in the religious life and administration of Kent. The expansion and increasing economic prosperity of Dartford during the medieval period was also helped by the large numbers of pilgrims who passed through the town *en route* to the cathedral shrines at Rochester and Canterbury.

- Dartford was one of nearly 700 market towns in England. These towns traditionally depended on agriculture and trading for their prosperity. Dartford was more fortunate than many other similar towns because it was relatively close to London.
- Henry VIII chose Dartford to construct a Manor House between 1541 and 1544 for his personal use. In 1545, this venue became one of the most politically important in Tudor England, when the Privy Council met here. Anne of Cleves was given the Manor House as part of her divorce settlement by Henry and lived there between 1553 and 1557.
- The Borough of Dartford is home to 11 churches that were included in the Domesday Book. One of the most interesting of these is Holy Trinity, located in Dartford town centre. The oldest part of the Church is the lower section of the main tower which was built between 1050 and 1080.
- Dartford paper mills were built in 1862, when excise duty on paper was abolished. Engineering, especially heavy engineering, both in Dartford and the surrounding area expanded and gave a positive effect on the local economy. Since then Dartford has been a popular community for many diverse people and cultures.

## Local Towns and villages:

**Bean** village is about 3 miles from Dartford town centre. This small parish is surrounded by ancient woodlands, and excellent transport links near to the A2.

**Ebbsfleet** sits between the borough of Dartford and Gravesham. The Ebbsfleet River is of great historical importance as it was fed by 8 different natural springs, therefore attracted settlers to the area. The Ebbsfleet valley is the location of urban regeneration, where the new Channel Tunnel rail link has been built. Ebbsfleet International Railway Station will now provide high speed rail link with Eurostar into Paris and Brussels.

**Greenhithe** village grew up from its chalk and lime found in the area, which led to the development of the cement industry nearby. In Victorian times it was a tourist resort with a pier built in 1842 across the river. Bluewater shopping centre is located in a chalk quarry in Greenhithe, built in 1999 it is a luxury outlet with shops, cinemas and dining places and family entertainment.

**Stone**, also known as Stone-next-Dartford is a village on the Gravesend to Dartford road on the South Bank of the River Thames. Iron Age remains have been found here which proves that settlements were made here. North of Watling Street is Stone Castle dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, made completely of flint.

**Longfield** is located 10 miles south of Dartford and originates from Saxon times when the village was pronounced 'Langafel'. The local village has a railway station, shopping area, countryside pubs and historic church. It is part of the New Barn parish near to Meopham.

**Swanscomb** is the location of the cement making industry due to its local resources of chalk and clay. It also has a rich history of Viking settlements as well as prehistoric bones which are now held in the National History museum in London. Today it too it's the location for regeneration as the International Rail link passes through.

## Parks & open spaces:

**Central Park, Market Street, Dartford**- comprises of 26 acres ranging from formal gardens near to the Town Centre, through ornamental areas, to informal open spaces including large grass areas and junior football pitches. Central Park hosts numerous events, particularly in summer, including the popular Dartford Festival weekend in July.

**Hesketh Park, Park Road, Dartford** features many active facilities. The main areas are dominated by sports and the park is home to the Dartford Cricket and Bowls Clubs, and Crackenford Hockey Club. There is also a children's play area and woodland area.

**Dartford Heath, Upper Heath Lane** - is an area of 130 hectares of outstanding natural beauty and provides opportunities for informal recreation. The heathland soils support a unique range of wildlife and are popular with dog walkers. There are 3 ponds as well as the Heath, which has played an important role throughout Dartford's history.

**Beacon Wood County Park, Southfleet Road, Bean** –is a site of Nature Conservation Interest, as well as being packed full of amazing history. The park attracts many different types of wildlife depending on the season. Several sites of the industrial past can still be seen, including the foundation blocks of gunpowder buildings and the routes of the railway lines used to transport clay.

**Darenth Country Park, Gore Road, Dartford** - was developed as a National Millennium Project. However, the park also offers visitors a taste of history as the area was an ancient Saxon burial ground, with twelve Saxon graves discovered, as well as artefacts from the period. The park also includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest and mainly comprises grazing pasture and environmentally managed wildflower meadows.

**Darenth Wood, Wood Lane, Dartford** - is a nationally important site for a number of semi-natural ancient woodland types which has been developed on the range of different soils associated with the area. Another important feature of the high forest in particular is standing and fallen dead timber, which is used by hole-nesting birds and many types of wildlife.

## Places to visit:

### Heritage sites:

#### **The Manor Gate House** - Priory Road, Dartford

Henry VIII built the house in 1541 and 1544 for his personal use. It was then given to Anne of Cleves as part of her divorce settlement by Henry and she lived there between 1553 and 1557. Elizabeth I retained the use of the Manor house but only stayed there on two occasions. Today, it is just the Gatehouse that remains, visitors can view the exterior.

#### **Swanscombe Skull Site** - Southfleet Road, Dartford

This was the site that 3 perfectly matching pieces of a 400,000 year old skull were found in Swanscombe in 1935, 1936 and 1955. These pieces are amongst the oldest human remains ever discovered in Europe. Three commemorative stones mark the places where the fragments of the skull were found. Thousands of primitive stone tools have been found on this site from this period, some of which are at display at the Dartford Borough Museum.

#### **Holy Trinity Church**, Dartford town centre.

The oldest part of the Church is the lower section of the main tower which was built between 1050 and 1080. Holy Trinity became popular with pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. Sights inside the Church include a dramatic 15th century wall painting of St George and the Dragon together with the early 17th century tomb of Sir John Spilman.

## Theatres:

#### **Acacia Hall**

High Street, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1DJ

## Museums & Libraries:

#### **Dartford Library**

Central Park, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1EU  
Tel: (01322) 221133

#### **Dartford Borough Museum**

Market Street, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1EU  
Tel: (01322) 224739

Email: [museum@dartford.gov.uk](mailto:museum@dartford.gov.uk)

Tel: (01322) 343475  
Email: [gail.mills@dartford.gov.uk](mailto:gail.mills@dartford.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.acaciahall.co.uk](http://www.acaciahall.co.uk)

**Mick Jagger Centre**

Shepherds Lane, Dartford, Kent, DA1 2JZ  
Box Office: (01322) 291100  
Enquiries: (01322) 291101  
Website: [www.themickjaggercentre.com](http://www.themickjaggercentre.com)

**Miskin Theatre**

Oakfield Lane, Dartford, Kent  
Tel: (01322) 629472

**Orchard Theatre**

Home Gardens, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1ED  
Tel: (01322) 220000  
Email: [orchard.theatre@dartford.gov.uk](mailto:orchard.theatre@dartford.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.dartford.gov.uk](http://www.dartford.gov.uk)

## Shopping & family entertainment:

Dartford Town Centre is pedestrianised and features a wide range of shopping facilities. The traditional main streets are the High Street, Spital Street, Hythe Street and Lowfield Street. There are also two shopping centres; the Priory Centre and the Orchards Shopping Centre. Just outside Dartford is Bluewater shopping centre, with over 330 stores of fashion, 40 cafes, bars and restaurants plus a 13-screen cinema.

**Bluewater**

Greenhithe, Kent, DA9 9ST  
Tel: 0870 777 0252  
Website: [www.bluewater.co.uk](http://www.bluewater.co.uk)

Big Blue Rock Climbing Wall at Bluewater  
Tel: 07870 194 695

Boating at Bluewater  
Tel: 01732 360630.

Showcase Cinema's Bluewater  
Tel: 0871 220 1000  
[www.showcasecinemas.co.uk/pages/bluewater](http://www.showcasecinemas.co.uk/pages/bluewater)

**Fairfield Pool**

Lowfield Street, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1JB  
Tel: (01322) 224400  
Fax: (01322) 284722  
Website: [www.leisure-centre.com](http://www.leisure-centre.com)

**Broadditch Farm - Treasure Trail**

Broadditch Farm Shop,  
New Barn Road, Kent DA13 9PU  
Tel: 01474 834 161  
Email: [enquiries@broadditch.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@broadditch.co.uk)

## Local markets:

Dartford has a fantastic tradition of hosting markets and as well as holding traditional weekly markets on Thursdays and Saturdays a number of speciality markets including French, Italian and Farmers Markets are taking place throughout the year.

Thursdays Market is held in the car park of the Priory Shopping Centre.

The Saturday Market is held in Dartford High Street.

Website: [www.dartford.gov.uk/markets](http://www.dartford.gov.uk/markets)

Tel: Market Manager 01322 343812

## Famous residents of Dartford:

Sir Mick Jagger and Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones are said to have met at Dartford railway station in the early sixties, although they had already known each other at primary school. Jagger attended Dartford Grammar School, Richards attended the then Dartford Technical College. Today the Grammar School is the location for The Mick Jagger Centre, a funded arts centre for all of the local community to use.

## Tourism Figures: Key headline figures for Dartford for 2006

- It is estimated that around 200,147 overnight tourism staying trips were made to Dartford in 2006. Of these trips, domestic visitors made 89% of trips (177,731) and overseas visitors made 11% of trips (22,416).
- It is estimated that around 8.7 million tourism day trips were made to Dartford in 2006, generating a further £346,032,790 trip expenditure.
- In total, around £374,011,948 was spent on trips to Dartford in 2006 by staying and day visitors. Expenditure by friends and relatives on visitors, and visitors spend on second homes generates a further £8,083,000. This tourism activity generated a total of £382,094,948.
- Of this expenditure, £364,990,000 translates into direct income for local business; and a further £72,998,000 of income is generated through indirect and induced effects (a total of £437,988,000 business turnover.)
- This income supported 6,351 FTE jobs and 8,687 Actual jobs.
- It is estimated that 2% of total trip expenditure went towards the cost of accommodation. Approximately a third of total trip expenditure (34%) was spent in catering establishments and 43% was spent in the retail sector. Approximately 10% of total trip expenditure went on visits to attractions and other entertainment. Finally, the remaining 11% of total trip expenditure was spent in the transport sector.

\*Figures from Cambridge Model 2006

## Accommodation in Dartford:

Of all commercial accommodation available to visitors, serviced accommodation (hotels, guest houses and B&Bs) was the most popular choice among visitors (used by 33% of domestic staying visitors and 13% of overseas staying visitors). Significant proportions of both domestic and overseas visitors were accommodated in the homes of friends and family during their trip to Dartford (60% and 71% respectively).

Type of Accommodation	Bedrooms/ Units/Pitches	Bed spaces
Serviced (Hotels, B&B's & Inn's)	610	1,336

\*Information sourced by Tourism South East

## Population Figures

	Male	Female	Total
<b>Population (Mid 2006)</b>	44,100	45,000	89,900
<b>Population Forecast</b>	-	-	-
<b>2011</b>			100,900
<b>2016</b>			108,700

Source: Population Estimates Unit, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

## Useful Local Tourism Contacts:

### Dartford Borough Council

Civic Centre, Home Gardens,  
Dartford, Kent, DA1 1DR  
Tel: 01322 343434  
Fax: 01322 343422  
Website: [www.dartford.gov.uk](http://www.dartford.gov.uk)  
Email: [customer.services@dartford.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@dartford.gov.uk)

### Visit Kent

Kent County Council  
Invicta House  
County Hall  
Maidstone  
Kent, ME14 1XX  
Tel: +44 (0) 1622 671411  
Website: [www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk)  
[www.visitkent.co.uk/business](http://www.visitkent.co.uk/business)

