



U.S. Lighthouse Society ~ Lighthouses of the United Kingdom

Dover Castle Roman Lighthouse (Dover, Kent)



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History

- The remains of this Roman lighthouse are within the grounds of Dover Castle.
- Next to the lighthouse is the Saxon church of St Mary-in-Castro part of which can be seen in this photo.
- The Roman pharos or lighthouse was probably built in the first century A.D.
- A similar lighthouse was built on the Western Heights and at night guided Roman ships into the port of Dubris.
- The tower was octagonal outside and rectangular inside rising to a height of perhaps 80 feet (24m). It had eight stories each set back 1 foot (0.3m) from the one below, which gave the whole structure the appearance of an extended telescope.
- Only the first four Roman stories remain, the present topmost storey being a fifteenth century reconstruction.
- The present splayed shape of the pharos is a result of the severe weathering it suffers in exposed position and mediaeval refacing.
- In the late Saxon period when the adjoining church of St Mary-in-Castro was built the already ancient pharos became a free standing bell tower.

Dover castle's lighthouse was built by the Roman's who realize the importance of the straights of Dover. Though this is the oldest visible evidence of fortifications and buildings on the site of Dover, there is evidence that it extends back further all the way to the iron ages. It is possible that an Iron age hill fort existed on the site. This is just one example of how consecutive civilizations have seen the area as one of immense strategic importance. The Roman lighthouse identified Dover so that ships would steer clear of it.

