

Westgate Towers

The largest and arguably the finest of the country's surviving medieval gateways was built during the 100 Years' War to defend Canterbury from foreign incursion, and to demonstrate the city's wealth and importance. The 60-foot (18m) stronghold did not stand alone, as it does now, but was approached over a drawbridge and flanked by impressive walls.

Time passed, the military threat lessened, and Westgate was converted into the city gaol. This function, too, came to an end; after a brief period as an archive, it became a museum at the start of the 20th century. Brought back into active service in both World Wars, it played a crucial role in the city's air defences. Sixty years later, dedicated private investors undertook to bring the museum up to date, fashioning a spectacular window into the history of our city and nation.

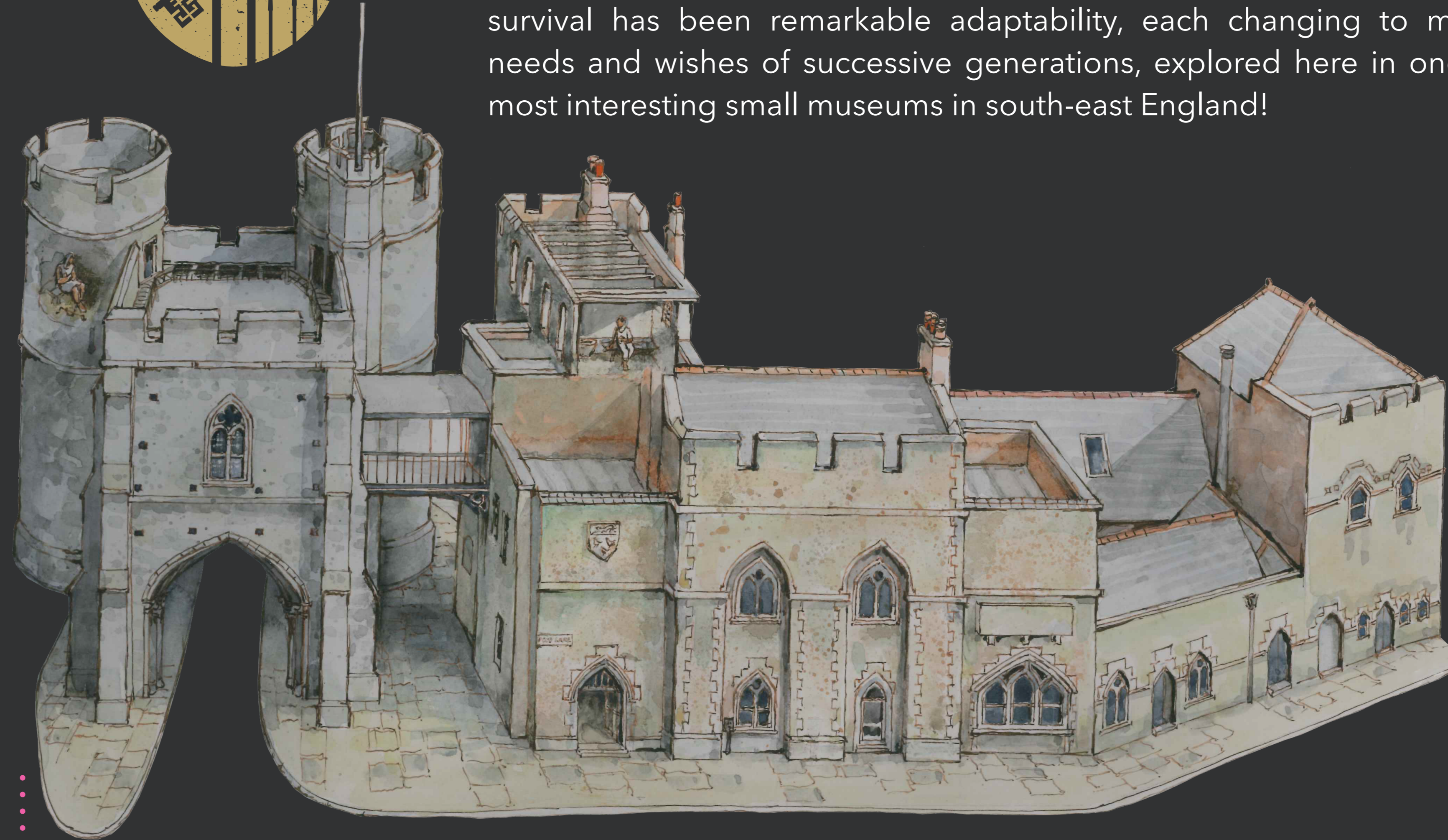
1380
WESTGATE
TOWERS

THE GUARD
CHAMBER



Welcome to the story of England's largest surviving medieval gateway

This pair of fine old buildings is steeped in English history. The key to their survival has been remarkable adaptability, each changing to meet the needs and wishes of successive generations, explored here in one of the most interesting small museums in south-east England!



Westgate Towers
Constructed 1380
Defensive Gateway

One Pound Lane
Constructed 1829
Gaol Extension & Gaoler's House

Constructed 1907
Police Station Extension

One Pound Lane

The Towers' younger sibling, has proved no less flexible. Following condemnation of the foul conditions inside the gateway, it was constructed in the early 19th century as a new extension to the gaol, linked to the old one by an iron bridge (where you are standing now). When the gaol closed half a century later, the building became a Police Station (with new cells), then Kent Music School. Finally, in the 21st century it was rescued from its dilapidated state and converted into the delightful heritage complex you see today.

