

Excavations in the 1990s revealed the foundations of the palace buildings that had stood on the site. Overlooking Castle Cliffe Gardens is The Chestnuts, the home of Lewis Carroll's family from 1868 to 1919. He died there in 1898 and is buried on the Mount, the hillside across the valley.



In 1989 Guildford Borough Council incorporated part of the garden of Castle Gate, the house next to The Chestnuts, into the castle grounds. This extension was then laid out as a memorial to Lewis Carroll, with a statue of Alice passing through the Looking Glass - a reference to the book he partly wrote while staying at Guildford.

'Peak's Pond' has always been a special feature of the Castle grounds. Built in 1888 when the grounds were opened to the public, the pond diminished in size and character over the years but in 2007 Guildford Borough Council in partnership with the Guildford Society refurbished the pond, referring to original pictures. Solar power now drives the fountains.

The valley gardens at the base of the motte are a special feature of the grounds. Guildford Borough Council has sought to maintain the high standard of bedding. The annual bedding displays are changed twice a year, spring and summer.

To maintain the historical feel of the grounds, not all types of plants are suitable. Older and more drought resistant plants that reduce the need for water are used where possible: for example Phlox, Penstemon, and Geranium. Sustainable planting is now used at the top of the gardens by the bowling greens. Plants include Lavandula angustifolia varieties, Hebe armstrongii and Thymus "Doone valley". In keeping with this sustainable theme, no peat is used in the gardens. There is a fine Cedrus atlantica glauca in front of the war memorial and an example of the attractive deciduous conifer Ginkgo biloba can be seen on the upper lawn by the bandstand. Also of note are the Golden Elms opposite Peak's pond at the bottom of the valley.

Managed by Guildford Borough Council's Parks & Countryside Services, the grounds are under continuing annual review to maintain or reinstate historical features. We hope you enjoy your visit.



How to get to Castle Grounds



Castle Grounds Opening Times

April – September
8am – 8pm

October to March
8am – 5pm

Castle Opening Times

April – September
10am – 4:30pm

October and March
11am – 4:40pm



The Green Flag Award

The gardens are entered into the Green Flag Award. Strict standards must be achieved such as providing an environmental garden that is a friendly, safe and welcoming place for visitors. Parks & Countryside Services are committed to these aims for the enjoyment of our visitors and residents.

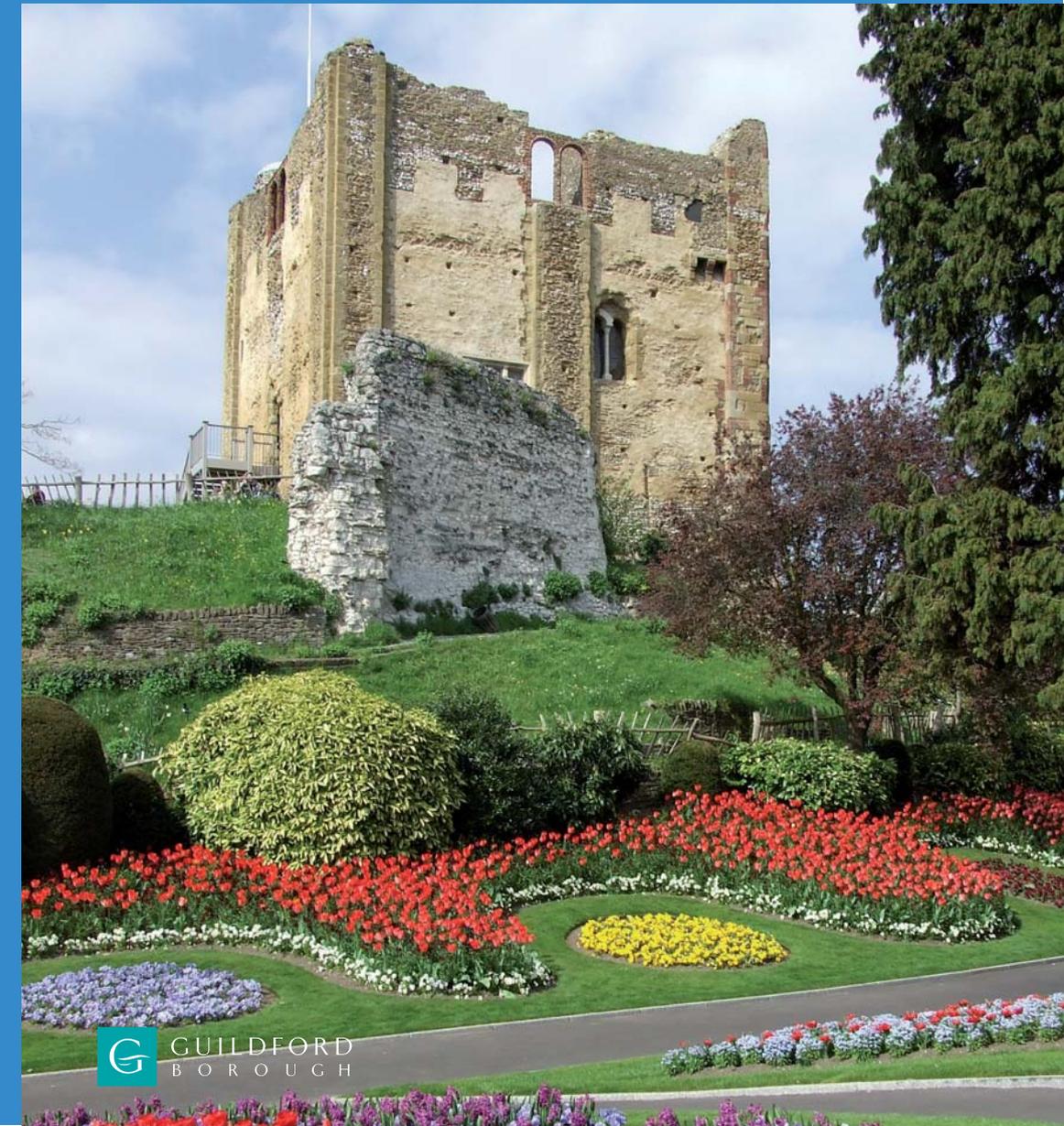


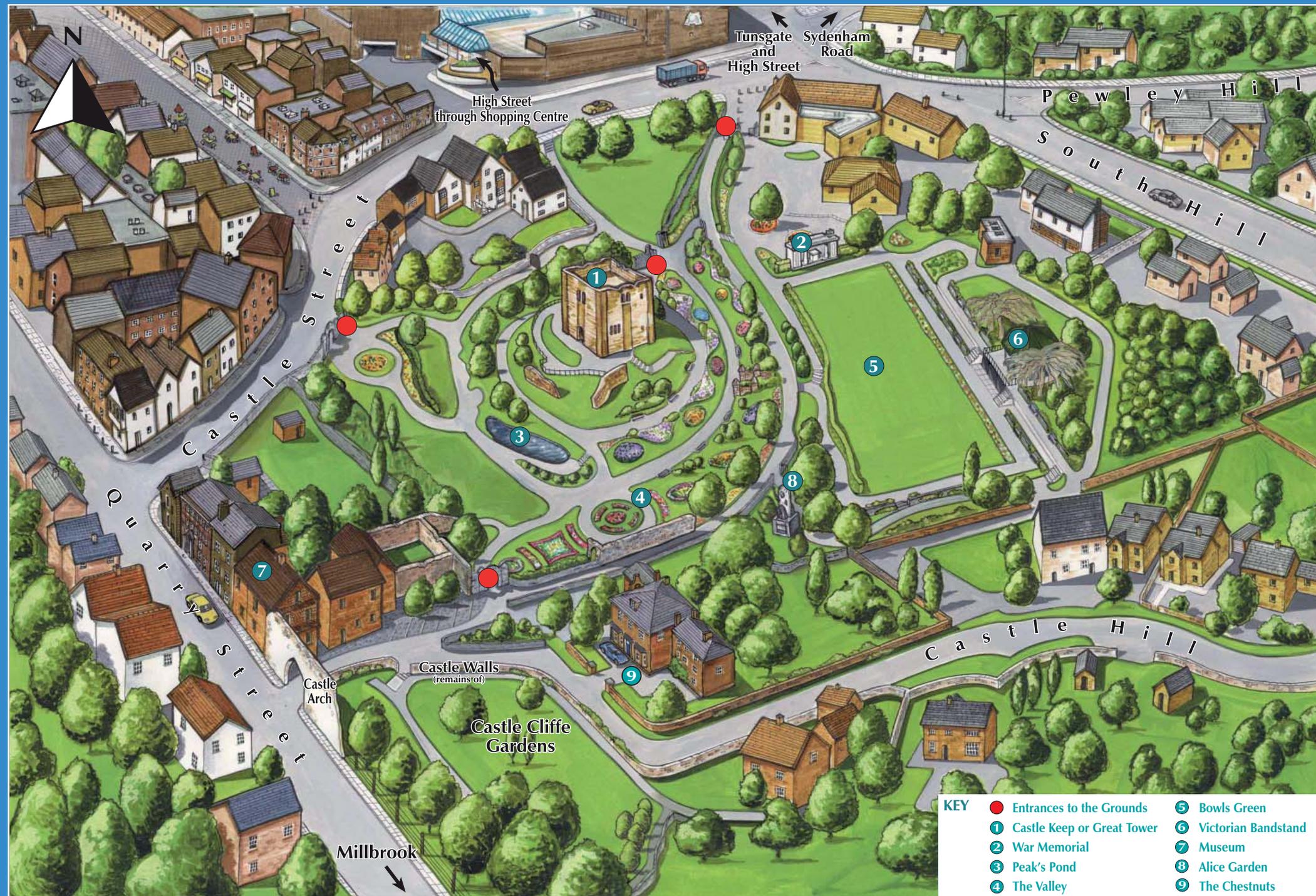
For further information about the Castle Grounds contact 01483 444718 or for Guildford Castle, the Great Tower, contact 01483 444750

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Parks and Discover Countryside Guildford's Castle Grounds





Welcome to Castle Grounds

Castle Grounds was opened to the public in 1888. It is a hugely popular park for residents, tourists, photographers and film crews wishing to enjoy its unique character and famous horticultural colour.

William the Conqueror began the building of Guildford Castle shortly after 1066. The motte - or mound - was surrounded by a deep ditch, with a bailey - an outer area defended by a rampart and a wooden palisade - to the south. There was probably a wooden tower on the motte at first. In the early 1100s a chalk wall, or shell-keep, was built around the top of the motte. Crumbling parts of this wall can still be seen. Then the massive great tower or keep was begun. It was probably built as the king's private apartments and originally had two storeys. Not long afterwards, another floor was added.

The other buildings of the castle, such as the great hall and the apartments of the royal family, were in the inner bailey. In 1245 Henry III purchased land along what is now Quarry Street to extend the bailey. Here were built a set of rooms for Edward, the seven-year-old heir to the throne. The ruins can still be seen in Castle Cliffe Gardens. In 1256 the gate on Quarry Street was built and later more accommodation was added.

Guildford Castle was never attacked or besieged, and in the 14th century it was no longer needed. The palace buildings were allowed to fall into disrepair, but the great tower continued to be used as the county gaol until the early 16th century. In 1544 John Daborne was made 'keeper of the castle garden'. He put the brick windows and the fireplaces in the great tower, perhaps using it as an official residence. In 1611 the castle estate was sold by James I to Francis Carter and he - or his son - built the house at Castle Arch soon after. The lead and timber roof of the great tower was removed in 1630, and the ruin used as a cockpit.

In 1885 Lord Grantley of Womersley, who owned a large part of the castle estate, sold it to Guildford Corporation. The grounds were laid out as "Public Pleasure Gardens" to the designs of Henry Peak, the borough surveyor and the tower and other medieval walls were consolidated. A tunnel below the public footpath linked the upper and the lower parts of the grounds. A pond was made at the foot of the motte and a bandstand built above the bowling green and the nearby pub was turned into the groundsman's cottage. The grounds were ceremonially opened on 28th June 1888.

There have been changes since. The bowling green was restored in 1911 and a war memorial erected by it in 1921. The cottage was rebuilt in 1939 and the splendid formal bedding was introduced in the late 1940s. In 2003-4 the great tower was conserved, during which the original battlements were discovered. A floor was re-instated at first floor level, the tower reroofed and the ground floor now houses a display about the castle.

In 1970 Guildford Corporation acquired the house known as Castle Cliffe. The gardens were opened to the public, adjacent to the medieval gateway.

