

TOWN TRAIL

Welcome to **Broadstairs** especially if you are visiting us for the first time. We are very proud of our quintessential, family, seaside town and hope you enjoy our Trail taking you on a wander past some of our historic and interesting places.

We invite you to start at **Broadstairs Information Kiosk**, which is on the promenade opposite **Chandos Square**. It is run by volunteers is open from April until the end of September.

Take a stroll along the promenade to the **Charles Dickens Public House**, at one time the Royal Kent Library and the Assembly Rooms.



A few doors along to the left the **Dickens House Museum (1)** was the home of Mary Pearson Strong upon whom Dickens based his character Betsy Trotwood in David Copperfield. There has been a dwelling on this site since Tudor times and the current museum houses many artefacts of the great Victorian author.

The Royal Albion originally started life in 1706 as The Phoenix and renamed in 1805 following the Battle of Trafalgar. Dickens was a regular customer and was particularly fond of the gin sold by the then landlord James Ballard.

The bay below is **Viking Bay (2)**, originally known as Main Bay and renamed following the celebrations of the 1500th anniversary of the landing here of Hengist and Horsa in 449. It is one of seven beautiful sandy beaches in Broadstairs, although many of the bays have small areas with different names we will keep to seven to save confusion. This trail does not include any more of our beaches but we encourage you to include them in another walk; please check the tide times if walking on the sand.



While facing the sea, turn to your left, the building next to the Royal Albion was the Marine Library until its closure in 1864. A few buildings along and there is a small garden known as **Balmoral Gardens**. This used to be the Tea Gardens of The Balmoral Hotel where white jacketed waiters would serve the visitors in genteel splendour during the 1920s.

Near to this is Prospect House which was home and birthplace of Victorian engineer **Thomas Crampton**. One of his many achievements was the laying of the first international submarine cable in the world from Dover in 1851. Chiappinis was for many years known as the Bath House, whose patrons included **Charles Dickens** and Royalty, Thomas Crampton installed a pump here to raise water from the sea.

Continuing through Eldon Place there are several small interesting shops on the left and what would appear to be a blank wall on the right but you may see the remnants of what was The Chinese Lantern café where the proprietress Sonia Ramsay was murdered in 1927. This is now home to the Sailing Club.

At the end of Eldon Place look up Harbour Street to the **Old Curiosity Shop**, originally two cottages with a well which served the houses of **Union Square (3)** and may well have been built in 1588. Continue down Harbour Street. On your right is the **Palace Cinema** built in 1911 as a museum to house the Armoury collection of Sir Guy Laking, eminent armour expert and son of the physician to King Edward VII, and then called York Gate Hall.

Pass through **York Gate (4)** built by George Culmer in 1540 to defend the town against privateers. The original structure had a portcullis and stout wooden gates.

Look right to see **The Pavilion** which was built in 1933 by public subscription and stands on the site of Whites Shipbuilders where many wooden ships of up to 400 tons were constructed.

Beyond the Pavilion stands the original building of Station House which, in Napoleonic times, was the HQ of the Coast Blockade. News of the victory at Waterloo was learnt here first in 1815 when Major Percy was sent by the Duke of Wellington straight from the battlefield to report the news to the King. He landed here with the captured French Eagle standard and was fêted all the way to London, causing the house to be renamed **Eagle House**.



Follow the road down towards the harbour. In 1455 shipbuilding was the most important industry in Bradstow and nearby St. Peter's and in 1538 **George Culmer** built the first pier to protect his shipyard in Harbour Street. The current Pier dates back to Tudor times with original timbers within the present structure.



The 300- year-old white lookout building is the **Old Boathouse (5)** which survives despite regular battering by storms, watched over by The Highlander and The Grecian Head both from wrecked ships.

The Mary White was the town's first lifeboat launched in 1850 with a second lifeboat, the Culmer White being added shortly after. In 1857 the two lifeboats were hauled overland to Kingsgate Bay to rescue 23 lives from the American 'Northern Belle'.

Opposite the harbour, the **Tartar Frigate** was built in the 18th Century and was reputed to be a drinking haunt of smugglers who operated throughout the Isle of Thanet. Take the fairly steep footpath up beside Admiralty Cottage, built in 1815 and one of only two remaining weatherboard houses in town.

Follow the right hand fork and see **Bleak House**, previously known as Fort House, the taller part of which was built in 1801 as a private residence, and in later years used by Charles Dickens as a holiday home.

From here you can follow the coastal path around the Isle of Thanet and visit 4 more beautiful bays of Broadstairs, including Botany Bay in Kingsgate, or continue your walk along the Eastern promenade to Joss Bay and Elmwood Avenue, which leads to Reading Street and St Peter's (Approx. 2.5 miles – See below). Or turn back down the footpath and turn right away from the harbour, then right at the Old Curiosity Shop into **Union Square**; named following the Union of England and Scotland in 1707 and an area steeped in smuggling legend. Out of Union Square, right up Harbour Street, left into Albion Street, and almost immediately cross over into Alexandra Road.

Look back across Albion Street at **St Mary's Chapel (6)**, built on the site of Our Lady of Bradstow's Shrine. This is the oldest structure in Broadstairs, dating back to Saxon times. The wooden Chapel was rebuilt around 1070 in stone and flint and some of the original structure remains within the current building. For several centuries, ships would dip their topsails to the shrine as they passed. After being badly damaged in storms in the 1520s, the building was restored for Protestant worship in 1601.

Walk up Alexander Road through the gated area known as Culmer's Land which was bequeathed to the town by the Culmer shipbuilding family and is now in use as allotments and amenity land. As you leave the amenity land, walk through the car park and then bear left and walk up Vere Road, at the top of which you will see **Pierremont Hall (7)**. Designed by Samuel Pepys Cockerell and built in 1792 by Thomas Forsythe. It knew various owners until its sale in 1896 to Leonard Posnett who used it as a school. Most of the original 30 acres of land were developed as housing and the building and remaining park were sold to the Urban District Council in 1927. The young Princess Victoria stayed at Pierremont Hall in 1829 and the single storey building was once the royal music room. At the top of Vere Road you may choose to turn right towards St Peter's (one mile – St Peter's Extension below).

This route will take you past the **Crampton Tower Museum (8)** which is a memorial to Thomas Crampton who brought a water system to the town and designed steam locomotives; it also houses the Broadstairs Stagecoach. Alternatively enter Pierremont Park by the War Memorial and keeping Pierremont Hall to your right, follow the path down through the park and out through the entrance onto Queens Road. Cross the road and turn left into York Avenue and continue on to Oscar Road.

Half way along turn left into Chandos Road and then right into **Chandos Square**. If you continue along Chandos Road just out of the square you will find the Blue Plaque on the building where **Oliver Postgate** used to live. Chandos Square is full of flint faced houses and where, in Wellington's day there was a gun battery which housed three cannon.

KINGSGATE & READING STREET



Turning right out of the Square there is a blue plaque on the wall to commemorate the Olympic Athletes who stayed there before leaving for the games in 1924. Cross over onto the Promenade and you will see the Bandstand in the Victoria Gardens which were opened in 1892 by Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria.

Towards the sea is **The Jubilee Clock Tower (9)** which commemorated Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee; destroyed by fire in the 1970's, its replacement celebrated the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.



To your right you will see Grand mansions; originally the **Grand Hotel (10)**, built in 1882, which housed one hundred rooms, a billiard hall, stables and a coach house. At this point you may decide to continue your stroll to Dumpton and Ramsgate (approx. 2 miles) there is also a coastal walk through to Ramsgate harbour and Town.

You are now at your starting point again.

© Images courtesy of Dean Spinks

KINGSGATE, READING STREET AND ST PETER'S EXTENSION

Walk along the coast road and pass the **North Foreland Lighthouse**, which was the last Walk along the coast road and pass the North Foreland Lighthouse, which was the last manned lighthouse in the country, its keepers finally leaving in 1998. If you continue past Joss Bay to Kingsgate Bay, you will see the estate of Lord Henry Holland (formerly Paymaster General Henry Fox). **Holland House**, the white building facing the bay, was built in the 1760s. Above it, **Kingsgate Castle** was built to house his servants and horses. Kingsgate Bay was named after a forced landing there by King Charles II in 1683. Turn left by the castle into Convent Road, to return to Broadstairs via St Peter's.

Alternatively turn left at Joss Bay into Elmwood Avenue, up past North Foreland Golf Club and turn right into Flemish-inspired **Reading Street**. Trinity Square with its tiny cottages is one of the smallest in the country. Lord Northcliffe lived in the White House and the row of cottages on the seaward side was built on the old cemetery for sailors killed in the St James Day battle off North Foreland in 1666. Turn left into Beacon Road, cross the railway bridge and fork right into Church Street, through to St Peter's, which during the Middle Ages was a busy farming community and far more important than the nearby village of Bradstow, now Broadstairs. **The Mockett's Farm House** by the Village Green dates from 1682. Turn left into the High Street opposite the church and on the left is **Nuckell's Almshouse**, built in 1753 as the parish workhouse. Another major industry was smuggling, and many tunnels from the coast ran inland to cellars in the village. The original **Parish Church** was constructed in 1070. During the Napoleonic wars the Church tower was a naval signalling station.

The house known as The Coves was built in 1769, and is an excellent example of Georgian architecture. The 'Coves' are probably the caves cut out in the garden which once connected to the seashore by subterranean passages. **Ranelagh Grove** is on the right of the High Street and was the location for the Ranelagh Pleasure Gardens, established in 1818 closing in 1852. **The Assembly Rooms** are now used as private dwellings, as is the Steward's Cottage.

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