

BOGNOR REGIS

HERITAGE TRAILS

**TAILORED WALKS UNLOCKING
THE BEST OF BOGNOR REGIS'
RICH HISTORY**



TRAIL 1

Bognor Regis Pier and Western Bognor Regis

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The trail explores the western area of the town starting at the pier; the trail takes visitors through one of the most interesting conservation areas of the town. It will look at the links between the western part of town and its links to Sir Richard Hotham and his vision for the town and of course the history of the pier. The trail covers some 200 years of the town's history and development finishing at Marine Park Gardens and the remains of the Mulberry harbour.

1 Bognor Regis Pier

Commence the trail at the Pier and strolling to the end of the Pier on a clear day provides views from Selsey Bill to the west and Beachy Head to the east, a vista of around 50 miles.

Built in 1865 by Sir Charles Fox and J W Wilson at a cost of £5,500 the pier was opened by the Hon Claude Bowes- Lyon. Today the pier is circa 300 feet long but in its heyday it was 1,000 feet long with a pavilion and landing stage at the seaward end.

Storms in 1965, 1999, and 2008 resulted in the loss of a major part of the seaward end of the pier.

Today the pier still retains key elements of the Edwardian Theatre in its Sheik's nightclub and other art deco fixtures in its Legends bar.

At the front of the pier is a plaque commemorating the role of the pier in WW2 when the pier was named HMS St Barbara for gunnery training with anti aircraft guns. During the war, part of the pier sub structure was cut, with a rope bridge connecting the gun emplacement at the seaward end to the landward end. The rebuilding of this section after the war is thought to have been a cause of the weakness due to low quality steel available at this time, which resulted in the storm damage.

2 Waterloo Square

From the pier cross the road at the pelican crossing into Waterloo square, just behind the palmist's booth is the weather station, still used today to record the weather in Bognor Regis. Sunlight measurements recording Bognor Regis exceptional hours of sunlight have now been moved to the roof of Butlin's Hotel.

On the eastern side is the Waterloo Inn dating from the 1800s and on the western side are buildings dated from about 1820 with bow shaped balconies typical of the building style of the period.

At the end of Waterloo Square across the road are the old sunken gardens, currently maintained by the Community Gardeners. The site is part of a planned redevelopment of the area named the Hothamton Linear Park encompassing the car park, playground and sunken gardens.

3 The Royal Hotel

Head back towards the seafront and turn right brings you past The Royal Hotel, (Currently up for sale with plans to develop the building into a restaurant and apartments.) Built in 1888 as the Pier Hotel it was subsequently renamed the Royal Hotel.

4 The Steyne

Continue a short distance from the Royal Hotel and you enter The Steyne. At the entrance to the gardens is the drinking fountain, originally located on the promenade almost opposite to its current location; the drinking fountain commemorated the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1888.

The buildings in The Steyne demonstrate why the area became so popular with most of the buildings in The Steyne being of special interest, with the area designated a conservation area.

Famous visitors are said to include Sir Robert Peel, Lewis Carroll and Gertrude Wallace.

Buildings of note are Wellington House No.6, Gabriels Hall No.25, Richmond House No.27 and the Bath House No.9. The Bath House (also known as the Pier View Hotel) was built in 1824-5 as furnished apartments and sea baths could be taken in the basement, exploiting the idea of the time of the benefits of seawater on many ailments of the time as promoted by Sir Richard Hotham. Customers of the Bath House were charged two shillings (10p) for a hot bath, one shilling and sixpence (7.5p) and one shilling (5p) for a cold bath.

5 Bognor Regis Museum

Continue up The Steyne and turn left onto West Street and then turn left again back towards the seafront where a few metres down on the left you will find the Bognor Regis Museum.

Run by volunteers of the Bognor Regis Local History Society the museum contains a wealth of information, artefacts and knowledge about the town and is well worth a visit. Members of the society prepared much of the information for the Bognor Regis Trails and we are grateful for the permission granted to use the original Town walks as the base for the trails.

Opposite the museum hidden above a shop is a Blue Plaque for Joseph Witham. He became a marine artist and from 1874 he became known for painting of ships. Next door is a Blue Plaque for Frank L'Alouette, wartime photographer for Bognor Regis.

6 Portland House

Portland House was built in 1816. The house was built by Joseph Pipson the ostler and tapster of the original Hotham Hotel of the time.

7 The Royal Norfolk Hotel

Situated at the bottom of West Street is the Royal Norfolk Hotel. The hotel replaced an earlier hotel built by Sir Richard Hotham, which was closer to the sea.

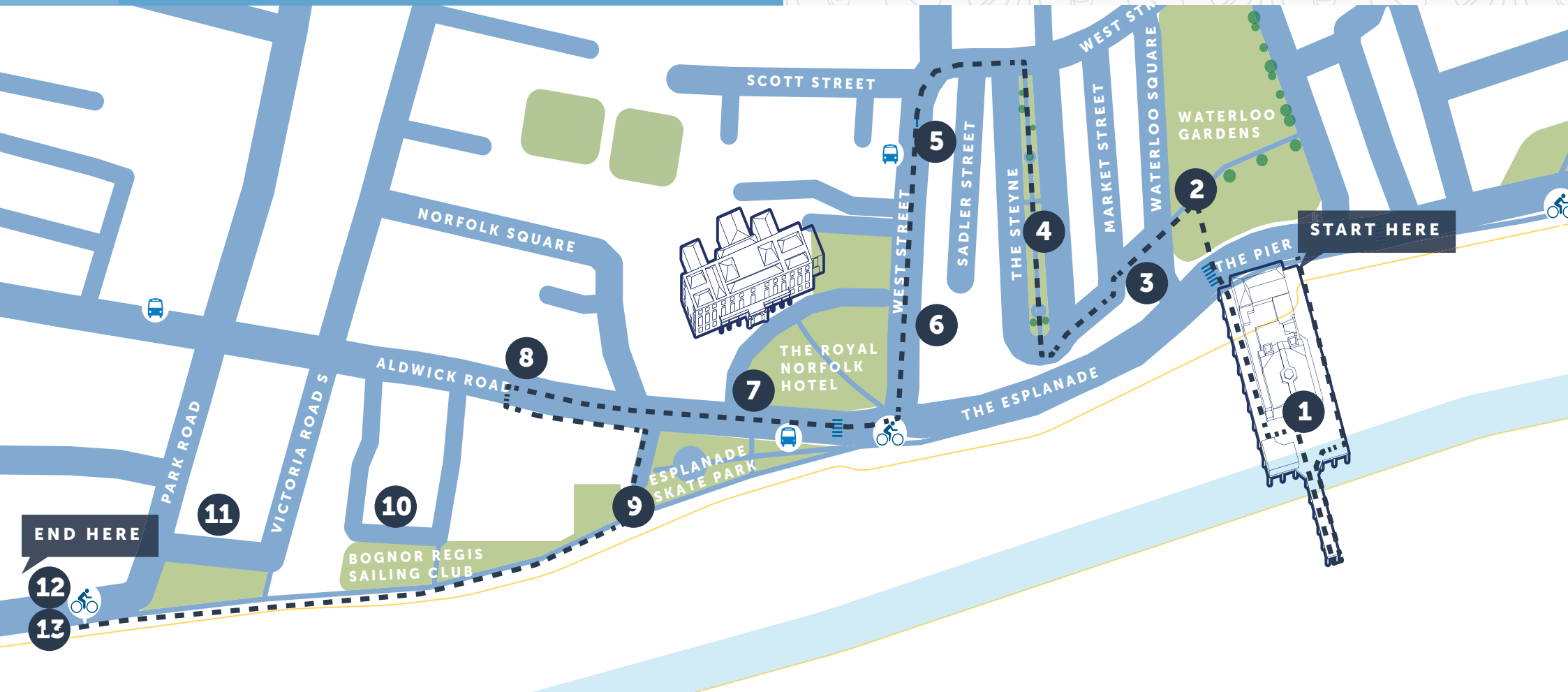
Famous guests include the exiled Emperor Napoleon III in 1872, Queen Alexandra and her sister Empress Maud of Russia.

On the entrance gate to the hotel is a blue plaque to commemorate the time that Tony Hancock spent at the hotel while filming "The Punch & Judy Man" his last film.

TRAIL 1 The Trail Map

Simply follow the numbered trail on the map and read the corresponding numbered descriptions and images throughout this leaflet.

BOGNOR REGIS HERITAGE TRAILS





8 The White Tower

Continue along Aldwick Road West and you will be greeted by the outstanding White Tower. The White Tower is one of the most iconic buildings, not only on this trail but also in Bognor Regis.

The Tower was built in 1898 by John Cyril Hawes, a renowned architect who went on to become a Franciscan monk and a famous builder of churches in Australia and the Bahamas. A museum dedicated to his work was opened in Geraldton Western Australia in 2016.

The White tower was designed and built as a summer house for Mr Hawes and his two brothers and contains many of the original features thanks to it being kept in the Hawes family until 2010.

The listed Building was the most recent to receive a Blue Plaque in 2018 in conjunction with a visit to the house by followers of John Hawes from Australia.

Not only is the size of the four storey building impressive but the artistic features such as the animals supporting the roof over the front door adds to its amazing character.

9 Site of The Esplanade Theatre

Walking back towards the promenade and through the car park adjacent to the Skate Park is the site of the original Esplanade Theatre. The site was originally part of the Royal Norfolk Hotel grounds and sold for £60 in 1901. Originally a bandstand was commissioned and by 1913 the venue was so popular that it was enlarged and deckchairs made available. By 1945 the venue had a canvas roof and tiled floor and renamed the Esplanade Concert Hall. Further improvements were made in the 1950s and the named changed again to the Esplanade Theatre in 1951. Stars who appeared at the Theatre included Tony Hancock, Roy Castle, Dusty Springfield, Petula Clark and Bill Pertwee.

The Theatre continued into the 1970s but changing tastes resulted in the Theatre being closed and demolished in 1980.

10 Marine Parade

From the Skate Park walk along the promenade to the west past West Rock Gardens where you will find the attractive buildings of Marine Parade.

Marine Parade comprises some beautiful buildings characteristic of old Bognor. No. 1 with its chateau style roof was built in 1891; No. 2 is a regency style cottage with No. 3 and 4 built in 1850 by Edward Curtis. No 5 was built later in c1890 with two storeys added to match the style of No 3 and 4.

The whole terrace was listed for its architectural interest in 1975.

11 Park Terrace

A further couple of minutes walk past the sailing club is Park Terrace. Built in the 1870s the buildings were part of a plan for a large Victoria Park Estate extending north away from the seafront.

It is worth noting the plaster detail on the house at the corner above the windows.

TRAIL OPTION

You now have the option of returning along the promenade back to the Pier and town or carrying on to explore Marine Park Gardens, a further 5 minutes walk along the promenade to the west.

12 Marine Park Gardens

The gardens were bequeathed by William Fletcher who was responsible for developing the trees and planting in Hotham Park in conjunction with Kew Gardens.

Marine Park Gardens are well planted with shrubs, grasses, with a large feature pond at the far end of the gardens.

Opposite the gardens is West Park with cafe facilities and playground.

13 Mulberry Harbour & Bognor Rocks

Visitors should take the opportunity to cross over the beach where at low tide the remains of a concrete section of a Mulberry Harbour can be seen on the beach. The section broke loose in a storm prior to being towed across the channel for the D Day Landings, once again reminding us of the important role played by Bognor Regis and the area during WW2.

Also visible at low tide is the offshore reef known as the Bognor Rocks, the rocks are made up of calcareous sandstone and historically was an important building material.

One of the earliest references to the Bognor Rocks was the recording of them on a map by John Speed in 1610. John Speed's map of 1610 is particularly interesting as it identifies Selfey Peninsula (Selsey), Pagham, North and South Berstead, Flansham and Felpham as well as the Bognor Rocks.

TRAIL 1 ENDS HERE

The Pier and Western Bognor Regis trail ends here at the start of Aldwick parish and visitors can stroll back to the town or car parks eastwards along the promenade.

There are a number of pubs and restaurants worth sampling along the way.

P

PARK IN THE CITY CENTRE CAR PARKS, ON THE PROMENADE OR BY MARINE PARK GARDENS (NO.12 ON TRAIL) JUST A SHORT WALK TO THE PIER (TRAIL START).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to the Bognor Regis Local History Society for use of "A series of Three walks around Bognor Regis – Walk Number One", A Brief History of Bognor Regis, and Sylvia Endacott's work on the White Tower and Blue Plaques of the town.

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