

BOGNOR REGIS

HERITAGE TRAILS

TAILORED WALKS
UNLOCKING THE BEST
OF BOGNOR REGIS'
RICH HISTORY



TRAIL 2

Bognor Regis Town Trail

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The trail explores the town centre of Bognor Regis starting at the Old Town area to the west of the High Street, finishing on the Promenade. The trail aims to illustrate how the town has changed since the time of Sir Richard Hotham in the mid 1800s, identify some of the buildings that remain from that era and the expansion and changes that have taken place. Prior to Sir Richard Hotham's arrival Bognor consisted mainly of farmhouses and fishermen's cottages. The area between the High Street and the seafront was undeveloped.

A market was established in the town in 1822. The Regency style of building was well established in the 1800s typified by canopied bay windows, decorative ironwork and balconies, many examples of which still survive in the town today.

The town today, as in the past, continues to change and adapt to the demands of local shoppers and visitors to the town.

P VISITORS COMING BY CAR CAN EITHER PARK IN THE CAR PARK NEXT TO THE REGIS CENTRE OR ON THE ESPLANADE, ALTERNATIVELY THERE IS PARKING IN THE HOTHAMTON CAR PARK JUST OFF QUEENSWAY.

TRAIL 2 STARTS HERE

The start of the trail is the drinking fountain erected in 1886 in memory of Dr Charles Osborn the town's Medical Officer of Health who lived at Frederick House, on the site of Barclays bank further down the High Street.

1 61-65 High Street

On the top of Lennox Street, the regency style building dates from around 1820, built by Robert Knapton as a library, stationers and fancy goods emporium. To the west of Nos 61 to 65 is Little High Street. Note the classical figureheads on the Unicorn public house and the more recent addition of the replica bathing machine.



2 The Arcade

Walk along High Street eastwards and on your right is the arcade built by William Tate in 1901.

Originally the arcade was occupied by high class shops catering for the needs of the more affluent clients of the town. In the early 1900s the arcade had its own commissioner at the entrance opening the doors of carriages for the local gentry.

During King George V's convalescence in 1929, Queen Mary visited numerous shops in the town including the Arcade where she purchased a Doll's House from 'Toyland'.

The High Street entrance to the Arcade has three storey turrets on either side providing its distinctive features. The south side of the arcade today provides access to the Regis Centre and the seafront, whilst in William Tate's days it would have provided access to the Kursaal another William Tate Building.

Today the Arcade is still a popular feature in the town with an increasing number of food outlets with outdoor seating under the glass roof.

Opposite the Arcade at the High Street end is London Road, the main shopping centre of Bognor Regis. Now a pedestrian zone, the street also provides café areas and caters for market stalls, events and entertainment to enhance the shopping experience. From the days of tea and scones catering for the up market clientele of the early 1900s to cappuccinos, lattes and shakes today, Bognor Regis continues the trend in café culture.

3 The William Hardwick

The main portion of the Grade II listed building was built by William Hardwick in 1810. Originally called the New Inn, it was used for Bognor's first Council meetings in 1822. The public house was renamed the Sussex Hotel in the 1840s. Its name was changed again to the William Hardwick in 1987.

4 The Lock Centre

Next door to the William Hardwick is No 8 High Street currently the Lock Centre. Built originally as a Fire Station in 1899, the building is one of the more distinctive buildings of the High Street.

5 Melville Lodge

Continue east on the High Street and turn left into Lyon Street (named after the Bowes-Lyon's association with the town). On the right hand side of the road can be found Melville Lodge. Built in the 1820-30s, originally named Arran Cottage by its then owner the Earl of Arran, it was renamed Melville Lodge by Richard Cooper in the 1870s.

6 The Laurels

Take a short walk up Church Path next to Melville Lodge (not sign posted on the wall but easily recognised by the Sussex flint walls). A two minute walk brings you to The Laurels, a small cottage built around 1824 by Susannah Smith, whose husband had bought Chapel House (now Hotham Park House) in 1815.

The cottage was opened as a school by Mrs Smith to clothe poor girls and instruct them in reading and sewing. It was later used as a gardener's lodge for the Hotham Park Estate.

Next to The Laurels is one of the entrances into Hotham Park.

Return down Church Path and Lyon Street to the High Street and immediately on your left is Russell Place.



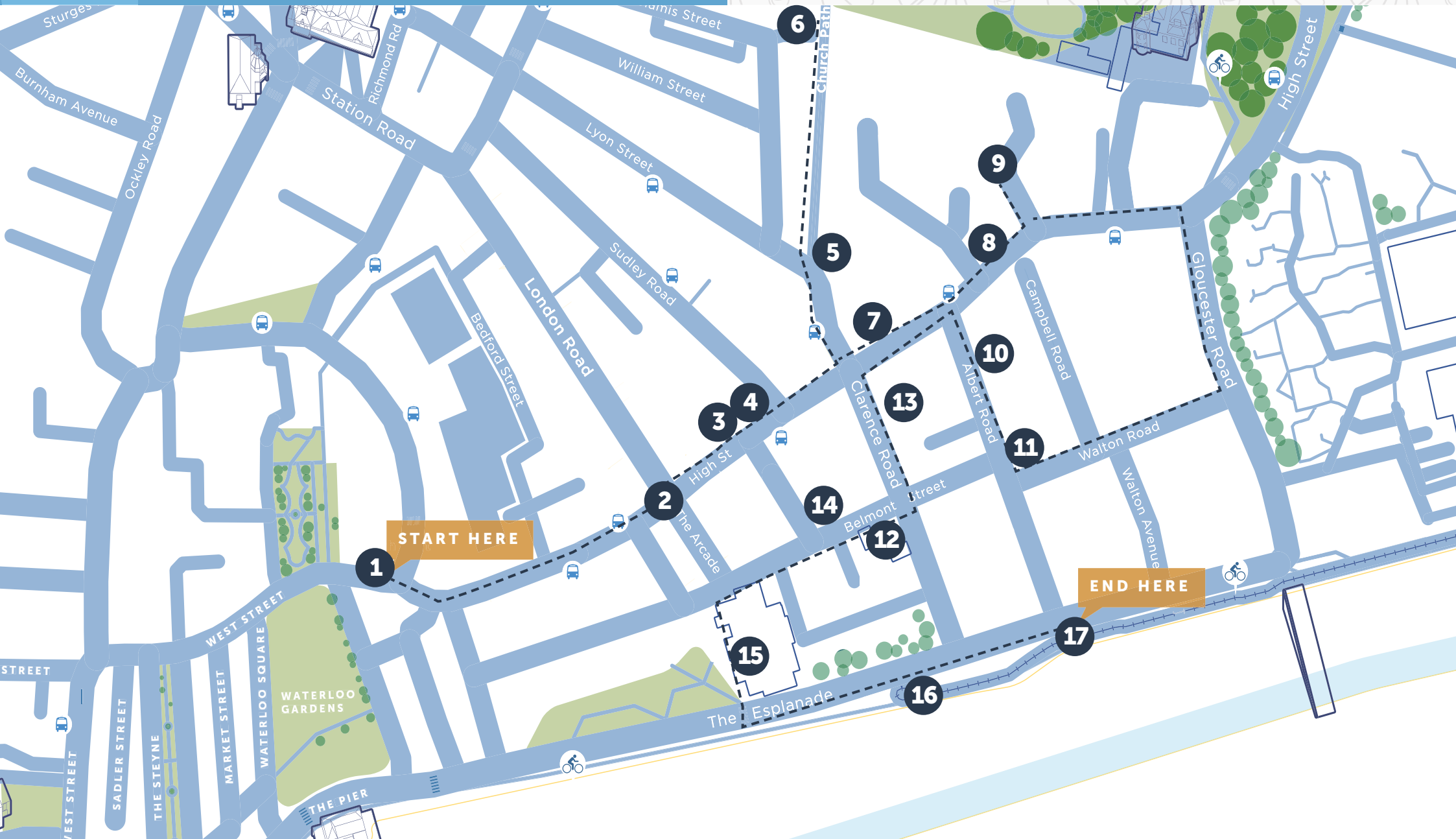
TRAIL 2

The Trail Map

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

BOGNOR REGIS

HERITAGE TRAILS



7 Russell Place (Valhalla and Manora)

The houses named Valhalla and Manora are two fine examples of the Regency style of architecture in the town. Originally known as Nos 2 and 3 Russell Place, they were built by Edward Curtis and probably let as furnished lodgings, as the benefits of the towns bathing increased in popularity. The name Manora first appears in 1881.

Both buildings demonstrate the Regency Style of bow windows with canopies and metal balconies.

Continuing along the High Street eastwards are South View, South View Cottage and Ross House (now Rosshaven and The Cottage). These properties were originally farmhouses dating back to 1778 and were part of the original hamlet of "Great Bognor" before Sir Richard Hotham's arrival and are some of the oldest buildings remaining in the town.

8 Den Lodge

On the corner of Den Avenue is Den Lodge; this was built as a gate lodge to the home of the Hon. Claude Bowes-Lyon (from 1865 the 13th Earl of Strathmore). He performed the official opening of Bognor Pier on the 5th May 1865. In 1862 he bought Sudley Cottage and nicknamed it the [Lyon's] Den, giving rise to the naming of Den Avenue.

9 Sudley Lodge

Continuing our walk eastwards to Sudley Gardens, at the rear of the flats can be seen Sudley Lodge. The House and Sudley Cottage (The Den) were built on the land purchased by the 3rd Earl of Arran (Viscount Sudley) following the break up of the Hotham Estate around 1827. During WW2 it was requisitioned for use by Government departments. It was subsequently purchased and converted into flats in the 1970s.

10 1-6 Albert Road

From Sudley Gardens turn back towards the town and take the first left on the High Street into Albert Road. The four storey buildings with first floor balconies were built in 1882. Some were hotels or boarding houses but today most are flats.

11 Wellesley Court

Continue down Albert Road and on the corner of Walton Road is Wellesley Court characterised by its tall chimneys. Built as the Victoria Wellesley Convalescent Home in 1891 and remained so until 1970 when it was converted into flats.

The home's founder was Lady Victoria Tylney-Long Wellesley, the grand niece of the Duke of Wellington.

Opposite from Wellesley Court is St Joseph's, where a Blue Plaque (located high on the second storey of the building on Albert Road) commemorates Henry Leopold Foster Guernonprez (1858 – 1924). He collected and recorded thousands of species of flora and fauna of West Sussex and the Bognor Regis locale and part of his collection is displayed at Portsmouth City Museum.

12 Bognor Regis Town Hall

Walk a few metres back up Albert Road and turning left into Belmont Street will bring you to Bognor Regis Town Hall. The Town Hall was designed by Charles Cowles-Voysey and built by local Builder H.W. Seymour at a cost of £18,000 in 1929- 30. In 1929 the Town was granted "Regis" status by King George V following his successful convalescence at nearby Aldwick.

The building was granted listed status in 2003 and on the staircase just inside the building is the portrait of Sir Richard Hotham, the founder of modern day Bognor Regis.

13 Church of Our Lady of Sorrows

Further up Clarence Road is the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Sorrows. Established by the Servite Fathers in 1881, the church was finally completed in 1956 and originally dedicated to "Our Lady of Seven Delours" later better known as "Our Lady of Sorrows."

14 Belmont Lodge

Walk back down Clarence Street towards the Town Hall and turn right along Belmont Street. Belmont Lodge next to the Arcade was built as three houses around 1850 and today is combined into a single building.

A Blue Plaque commemorates the time that Dante Gabriel Rossetti spent at the property where he used the coach house as a studio in the 1870's while staying at nearby Aldwick. He was a major influence of the pre-Raphaelite Group of artists.

15 The Regis Centre

Opposite the Arcade on the seafront side of Belmont Street is the Regis Centre.

Replacing the Theatre Royal and Rex Ballroom, which were demolished in 1975, the Regis Centre with its 350 plus seating Alexandra Theatre, studio, meeting rooms and cafeteria was opened in 1980 by the Duke of Norfolk.

The area next to the Regis Centre was named Place St Maur following the twinning of the French town with Bognor Regis in the same year.

The Theatre is still well supported and hosts the Christmas Pantomime and many other events during the year such as the annual South Downs Folk Festival.

Once again the future of the town's theatre is under review with plans for a Winter Gardens style complex on the site of the Theatre and adjacent car park.

16 Drinking Fountain Promenade

On the promenade opposite the Regis Centre is a Victorian drinking fountain with the inscription Public Notices on the back.

17 The Bandstand

Just past the drinking fountain is the Bandstand a key feature of the promenade. The Bandstand was purchased from Cheltenham Corporation in 1948 for £175 with a further £450 spent on its dismantling, transport and rebuilding on the Promenade.

The Bandstand is a popular venue for artists and plans to move the Bandstand to Waterloo Square gardens in 2018 met with local opposition.



TRAIL 2 ENDS HERE, BUT...

...we can't leave the story of the town and seafront without mention of W.E. (Billy) Butlin. At the far end of the promenade is the current Butlin's site with its famous Sky Line Pavilion. Even the current Duke of Sussex was impressed with the size and scale of the building on a recent visit to Bognor Regis. Today Butlin's, with its Shoreline, Ocean and Wave Hotels, entertainment facilities and a new £40 million family pool, attracts over 200,000 visitors a year to the town and is a key source of local employment.

But Butlin's impact on the town was much earlier than the Holiday Camp, which opened at Brooklands in 1960. W.E. Butlin's first investment in the town was his Butlin's Recreation Centre located on the Esplanade at the corner of Lennox Street at the Pier end of the town. The venue in 1932 contained the typical seaside amusements still popular today namely slot machines and dodgem cars!

The Recreation Centre was followed by the Butlin's zoo in 1933 on the seafront with bears, leopards, monkeys and elephants.

The seafront venues of Butlin's were closed when the Holiday Camp opened in 1960 at a cost of £2.5 million, changing the way many holidays were taken for the next two decades before the cheap packaged holidays abroad became popular.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Ron Iden and 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 published 2008 and reprinted 2011 by Ron Iden.

Images by Alan Barber & Carla Hardy.

The series of three booklets was combined into one publication: Bognor Regis; Buildings of Interest, by Ron Iden published by BRLHS in 2010.

Sylvia Endacott's work on Butlin's Bognor Regis History 2014 and also her study of Blue Plaques of the town "Words in Stone and Steel – Blue Plaques, Memorial and Foundation Stones around Bognor Regis"