BOGNOR REGIS HERITAGE TRAILS

TAILORED WALKS UNLOCKING THE BEST OF BOGNOR REGIS' RICH HISTORY

TRAIL 3 The Sir Richard Hotham Trail

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TRAIL 3 The Sir Richard Hotham Trail

This trail explores the buildings which Sir Richard Hotham was instrumental in building at the start of the creation of Bognor as it was known at the time.

The Trail covers Chapel House (Now Hotham Park House), its clock tower and estate. With the building of Hothamton Crescent, Sir Richard Hotham's aim was to attract Royalty to the town thereby increasing its status and popularity as a healthy bathing resort. Dome House, part of Hothamton Crescent, was built with the hope that King George III would visit.

The trail includes the Ice House, part of the original Hotham Park Estate and one of the best preserved examples of its kind in West Sussex.

Hotham Park is owned by Arun District Council with the support of the Hotham Park Heritage Trust. The gardens were developed in the early 1900s by William Fletcher, who was interested in Arboriculture, in association with Kew Gardens.

The final part of the Trail finishes at the Railway Station and Picturedrome. These building are not directly linked to Sir Richard Hotham, being built long after his death in 1799. The buildings do however represent an important element in the development of the history and culture of the town.

THERE ARE TWO CAR PARKS IN AND ADJACENT TO HOTHAM PARK. THE SMALLER SHORT STAY (LODGE) CAR PARK WITHIN THE PARK ITSELF IS ACCESSED DIRECTLY FROM THE ROUNDABOUT ON UPPER BOGNOR ROAD AT THE JUNCTION WITH HIGH STREET. THE LARGER LONG STAY CAR PARK IS LOCATED NEXT TO HOTHAM PARK OFF LONDON ROAD CLOSE TO THE ICE HOUSE.

TRAIL 3 STARTS HERE

The start of the trail is Hotham Park House at the south east corner of Hotham Park close to the bandstand. The house was acquired and renovated in 1977 by Mr Abraham Singer and converted into luxury flats which today are private residences.

1 Hotham Park House

Hotham Park House is Grade II* listed and is surrounded by 9 hectares (22 acres) of parkland, which is open to the public.

Sir Richard first visited Bognor in 1784 during a period of ill health to take the benefits of sea bathing. The benefits of sea water in the treatment of diseases of the glands was reported by Richard Russell in 1750, thereby starting the trend of the Sussex coast as seaside spas.

At the start of his grand plans for the town (then a small hamlet), he acquired some 1,600 acres of land for his project. Sir Richard paid £700 for 35 acres immediately east of the current Royal Norfolk Hotel and a field close to Bognor Lodge on which he was to build Chapel House (Today known as Hotham Park House). (1)

Sir Richard Hotham was not new to property development. In 1764 he purchased Moat Farm in Merton in Surrey and developed it into Merton Place, which became the future home of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton.

At Bognor Sir Richard Hotham converted a farmhouse into his first mansion in 1787 named Bognor Lodge. This building was demolished in 1937.

Hotham Park House was built to the north of the Lodge in 1792 as his main residence in Bognor. Known then as Chapel House it included a private chapel built at the rear of the house and the clock tower.

From 1815, the House was renamed Bersted Lodge (pictured below).

John Ballett Fletcher purchased the property on the 18th May 1857 for £8,500, he demolished the chapel shortly after in 1859 but the clock tower was retained.

In 1899, it was renamed Aldwick Manor by his son William Holland Ballett Fletcher, who was Lord of the Manor of Aldwick at the time. He moved to the property in 1900 with his wife Agnes who had an interest in reptiles; her pets included pythons, boa constrictors, small crocodiles and giant lizards. William's own interest was Arboriculture and he spent a fortune laying out the grounds and planting them with magnificent trees and shrubs. He also built a lake with water lilies and large goldfish. The fruits of his work we see today as Hotham Park. (1)

During the war the building was requisitioned and leased to Government ministries.

The building was acquired by Bognor Regis Urban District Council in 1946 along with the grounds and neighbouring land and opened to the public in 1947.

The Listed building status describes the building comprising 2 storeys and semi basement, 10 windows, Stuccoed Cornice and parapet. 2 large bays, which are linked on the ground floor by an arcaded verandah raised above ground level. Above the verandah is an iron balcony with hood supported on trellis columns (this was removed during renovations in 1977). The building demonstrates many of the attributes of Regency style.



TRAIL 3 The Trail Map

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

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BOGNOR REGIS HERITAGE TRAILS

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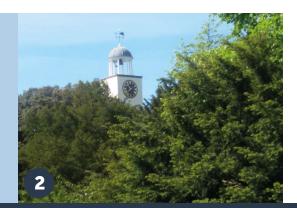
2 The Clock Tower

The Grade II* Listing describes the clock tower to the north west of the building as being built of four sections, each set back within the lower section. It has clock faces on the north and south sides of the top section with the cupola containing the bell supported on 8 columns. A weather vane sits on top of the cupola.

John Twaites of Clerkenwell designed the clock and mechanism with the bell cast by Whitechapel Bell Foundry of London, which has cast other famous bells during its history including 'Big Ben'.The Hotham Park Clock Tower Bell was cast in 1794 and weighs 3 cwt, 2qts, 3 lbs and 8 ozs (175 kgs).

For further information on the Clock Tower a good place to start is " A Tall Story" the story of the Clock Tower at Hotham Park House Bognor Regis, West Sussex complied by Sylvia Endacott published by Hotham Park Heritage Trust.

Continue northwards up from the clock tower towards the Lodge in the Short Term car park exiting the park and crossing the road into Upper Bognor Road. Access to Dome House, Mordington and St Michael's is via the entrance to Chichester University Bognor Regis Campus where the buildings today form part of the University



Dome House (Hothamton Crescent) Upper Bognor Road

Hothamton Crescent, comprised three separate buildings; Dome House, Mordington and St Michaels's originally containing seven residences. All three buildings were built by Sir Richard Hotham in the 1790s with the aim of attracting Royalty to his developing resort away from Weymouth and Brighton.

Dome House is Bognor's only Grade I listed building and was the centrepiece of the crescent. The building is constructed with multi coloured bricks with an imposing front entrance and is surmounted with a plaque of Hothamton Crescent and coat of arms of Sir Richard Hotham.

The building originally formed three residencies 123 feet long with around 50 rooms and a tea room under the dome. (1) It was designed in size and scale for its intended affluent clientele. Anthony Dale who was an architectural historian described Dome House as one of the finest example of buildings of the period on the South Coast.

Sir Richard's ambition of bringing royalty to his bathing resort came in September 1796 when the then Prince of Wales came to visit his mistress Lady Jersey who was staying at Dome House. (1) The Prince Regent's daughter, Charlotte, was a summer visitor from 1808 to 1811.

In 1946 the building was acquired by West Sussex County Council as a teaching centre for troops returning from the War as part of their repatriation.

Bognor Regis's tradition as a centre for Education and learning and the subsequent formation of the Bognor Regis Campus of Chichester University are intertwined as a part of this story.

Today all three buildings are part of the Bognor Regis Campus continuing the education and learning heritage.

Niagara House

On leaving the campus and heading north on Upper Bognor Road at its junction with Mead Lane is Niagara House. This is possibly an older property with a Georgian façade. Princess Charlotte who stayed at Dome House purchased buns from a shop on the Mead Lane site.

Spencer Terrace

Continuing on Upper Bognor Road is Spencer Terrace also built by Sir Richard Hotham in 1790. It is named after Lord Spencer, a politician and neighbour of Sir Richard when he lived in Wimbledon.

Otterham House, next to Niagara House was No's 6 and 7 of Spencer Terrace at the sale of Sir Richard Hotham's estate in 1800. Known as Slindon House between c1870 and 1941 and was purchased by the County Council after World War II.

The main part of Spencer Terrace was No's. 2 to 5 in 1800 and like many of the buildings became a school in 1845, initially Hope House Academy for gentlemen, after 1866 Dr Alfred Conder's Middleton School and from 1913 to 1962 was Northcliffe House School. The Building was acquired by the County Council for student accommodation, and then converted into private flats in 2000.

No 1 Spencer Terrace (Redgate House) was also a school until World War II.

The Shrubbery

Further along Upper Bognor Road is The Shrubbery originally called Garden Cottage and described as being at the entrance to Hothamton. From the 1820s it was a parsonage for the minister of St John's Chapel in the Steyne. It was renamed The Shrubbery in 1880 with a new front added in 1900, and became a welfare centre for evacuees in the war and later an annex to the training college before conversion to private flats in 2000.

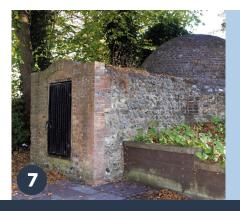
The Ice House

The Ice House was originally part of the Hotham Park Estate and gives you some idea of the size and extent of the original grounds. It is thought to date back to 1792 for storage and preservation of food for the House. The brick structure as seen today would originally been covered with a layer of soil with trees planted around it for shade.

The entrance is north facing and the vault below ground would have been floored with pebbles for drainage and the vault packed with ice and straw as part of the preservation process. William Fletcher continued to use the Ice House for preserving ice up to about 1914. (1)

The Ice House is 6 metres deep and about four metres in diameter and is considered to be one of the only surviving undamaged examples of an Ice House in West Sussex. Owned by Arun District Council as part of the Hotham Park estate it was restored in 1970.

The Ice House completes the Sir Richard Hotham element of Trail 3 and walkers can either carry on and visit the Railway Station and Picturedrome cinema a short walk along London Road. Alternatively walk through the Car Park and explore Hotham Park and explore its many attractions including the Tree Trail, miniature railway, Alice in Wonderland characters, Forest Falls Adventure golf or have a drink or snack at the café.



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8 The Railway Station

Carry on down London Road and turning right into Lyon Street West will bring you to The Railway Station. The opening of the branch line from Barnham in 1864 followed by the pier just one year later was a major factor in increasing the popularity of the town as a seaside resort with the growth of day trippers.

The present station building was completed in 1902 at a cost of £68,000 creating the imposing building replacing the original wooden structure, which burnt down in 1899. Under threat of demolition it was Grade II listed in 1989 as a complete example of an Edwardian Seaside Terminus. The station has undergone further restoration with £2milllon investment in a Creative Digital Hub in 2018 and new paved pedestrian and landscaped frontage to the station.

Opposite the Station on Canada Grove is the Picturedrome Cinema.

9 The Picturedrome

The Cinema was originally built as the New Assembly Rooms and opened in May 1886. It was renamed The Queen's Hall in Coronation year 1911 and the octagonal lantern Tower had a pedal powered revolving light.

It became a cinema opening of the 5th June 1919 and had various owners including Cannon, Classic and ABC Cinemas.

Under the threat of closure in 2009 by its then owners The Bognor Pier Company Ltd, it was Grade II listed for preservation and purchased by Bognor Regis Town Council in 2010. The Cinema is operated by the Picturedrome Electric Theatre Company and has undergone £1 million investment in screens and cinema technology. Today it provides filmgoers with a low cost venue compared with the major Cinema multiple chains.

TRAIL 3 ENDS HERE

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 2008 and reprinted 2011 by Ron Iden.

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

(1) Gerard Young. The History of Bognor Regis (1983)

The Picturedrome ends The Sir Richard Hotham Trail

An article from The Argus May 2015 by Sylvia Endacott on Hothamton Crescent.

A Tall Story, The story of the Clock Tower at Hotham Park House compiled by Sylvia Endacott.

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