

# Welcome to the Folkestone Town Trail.

Folkestone dates back to around 630AD. At that time it became an important part of the first Christian kingdom in England, the Kingdom of Kent. The complete Trail, which is about 2.25 miles long, stretches from the cliffs of East Cliff down through Folkestone Harbour and up The Old High Street to the ancient parish church of St Mary and St Eanswythe. It then goes attractively out onto The Leas, the town's long showpiece Edwardian clifftop promenade.



It features the first four of the original 74 mysterious Martello Towers which formed a defensive line against an expected invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte. The seven I-shaped information boards cover the history of the Martellos and at least 4 invasions or expected invasions of Great Britain in which Folkestone, looking out at Cap Gris Nez twenty three miles away, was always on the frontline.

If you want a different or more circular walk read the **'Or You Could'** boxes which explain how you can start in the town centre instead, or ring the changes in various ways.



## The East Cliff

Go to Wear Bay Road by either bus (to the 'East Cliff Pavilion') or by car (parking at ECP). From the car park (Satnav Postcode CT19 6BL) take the footpath by the seaward side of the large 1920s brick Pavilion through a gate with the excellent pitch and putt course on your left and the sea on your right. Follow the 'rabbit' marked official footpath up the slope

onto the golf course for 100m to the first Town Trail viewpoint, at Martello No 3. From here you see the magnificent views of the White Cliffs of East Wear Bay, but also the remains that summarise East Cliff's warlike history: Martellos 1 and 2, the World War II gun emplacement now adapted for a Coast-watch station, and the secret 1958 nuclear bunker beneath your feet. If you took the footpath in the opposite direction you would come to Martello No 1, the wilderness of Folkestone Warren, and eventually Dover.



But return to Wear Bay Road and walk downhill towards the town. You will within 200m turn left down to the clifftop telescope platform. Where two paths meet stands East Cliff Town Trail board which tells you more about the actual or potential invasions East Cliff has been involved in, the smuggling and Folkestone's links with J.M.W. Turner, perhaps Britain's greatest painter. From this point in 1803-5 you could have seen, on a clear night, the camp fires of Napoleon's intended invasion army strung out on the cliffs near Boulogne.

Take the signed beach steps down to the left of the telescope platform. Then take the promenade right toward Folkestone passing the rock-pools and beautiful swimming area of Sunny Sands Beach. This is Coronation Promenade. It was originally named for the never undertaken coronation of Edward VIII in 1936.

When you get to the walled end of Sunny Sands beach keep walking along the harbour-side chains by the Harbour Town Trail Board. Don't miss the modern Mermaid perched on the rocks. This sculpture by Cornelia Parker is explained. But the major story is the building of the harbour in 1809 and its sudden importance when it was bought out

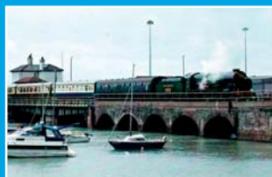


of bankruptcy in 1843 by the South-Eastern Railway, and became Britain's main rail gateway to The Continent for over a hundred years.

You will see that the original harbour is split by the now quiet Victorian railway viaduct which went out to the Harbour Arm. The Stade, with its shops and pubs, was rebuilt as part of 1930s slum clearance to provide better housing for the local fishermen and women. Above the houses on the hill is St Peters, the fishermen's church.



You can divert to see this on your way there or back, via half-hidden, cliff-side steps. Watch out for any local fleet boats in the harbour. They will have the designation FE25, FE53 etc.



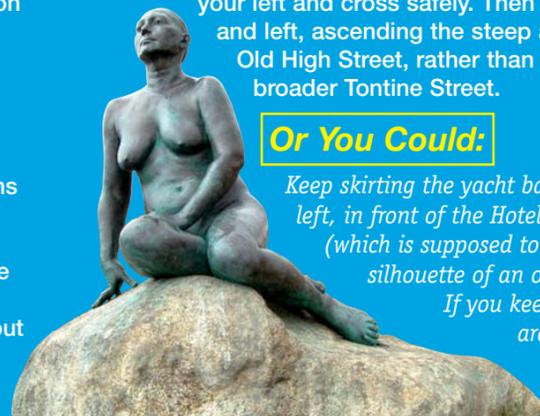
The cobbles and arches under the old viaduct feel Dickensian and indeed

Charles Dickens knew the town well. You come through the arches to the picturesque inner harbour area. Walk ahead to the main road with the children's fountains on your left and cross safely. Then turn right and left, ascending the steep and narrow Old High Street, rather than straight to broader Tontine Street.



## Or You Could:

Keep skirting the yacht basin on your left, in front of the Hotel Burstin (which is supposed to have the silhouette of an ocean liner!). If you keep walking around to the



opposite corner of the harbour you will be getting closer and closer to the newly refurbished Harbour Arm. This amazing new 2015 attraction is a collection of restaurants and bars on a majestically long 1890s stone jetty with the former Harbour railway station and lighthouse, and with frequent musical events. You can also walk right along the quiet coast road to Sandgate but the first part may have building works. It is prettier to diverge coastwards from the Town Trail at the Leas Lift or the Zig Zag Path.



Going up the Old High Street you are going from the fishing town to the high town. If you look carefully you will see two ancient flights of steps crossing it at different points. It is now, with Victorian Tontine Street at the bottom, the centre of the Cultural Quarter which includes The Quarterhouse venue in Tontine Street. Artists' studios supported by the Roger De Haan Charitable Foundation are interspersed among shops.

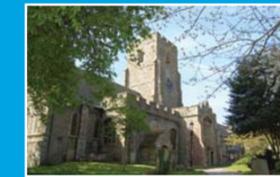
At the top of The Old High Street the Town Trail turns to the left, going past some plaster pig heads on a house that was Taylor's pork butchers, and then curving right into the oldest surviving part of Folkestone, The Bayle. Two traditional public houses The Guildhall

(1849), and the much older British Lion, punctuate Georgian and even older houses with the 14th century church, and St Eanswythe's School, at the end. The Bayle Town Trail Board is placed near The Bayle Pond, the descendant of the old, less trammelled Town Pond and parish pump. Here you will learn of Eanswythe, the 7th century patron saint of



Folkestone and the abbess of the earliest female Christian foundation in England, and see earlier pictures and photographs of the old pond.

Walk straight into St Mary and St Eanswythe's Churchyard. If it is open the church has the saint's relics and stained glass, my favourite being the ancient lancet of the expulsion of Adam and a nubile Eve from the Garden of Eden. David Railton, curate here, originated the idea of the Grave of the Unknown Warrior, an idea taken up around the World.



## Or You Could do The Loops:

YOU CAN START THE TOWN TRAIL AT THE PARISH CHURCH IF YOU WISH TO START AND FINISH IN THE TOWN CENTRE. By turning right at the main church doorway, you pass the Town Cross and the site of the birthplace of Sir William Harvey and walk up Church Street. Bear left for the Classical Town Hall, which is also the tourist information centre and museum, and then left again for the main shops of Sandgate Road and Bouverie Place. There are still a few fine old buildings in Sandgate Road, such as the Victorian former Post Office, and you are only a block away from The Leas. So do The Leas Loop by walking through the town shops until you wish to turn left and go onto The Leas to resume the Trail. Alternatively do the Harbour Loop back to the Old High Street by turning right at the end of Church Street to go through the characterful cafes of Rendezvous Street. In this way you can do half of the Town Trail one day and the other half the next, centred



on the historic oasis of The Bayle and the parish church. The Leas Loop is wheelchair-friendly; by now you will know this is not true of the Harbour Loop!

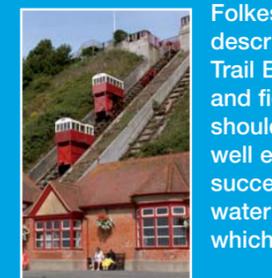
Keep to the official Town Trail at the Church by turning left through ancient graves until you meet the quiet rear footpath at three ornate listed iron bollards. Turn right, looking down to the harbour and right to Regency style Albion Villas where Charles Dickens stayed whilst writing Little Dorrit. At the end the church footpath crosses to the dramatic Step Short Arch.



The Town Trail Board at the end of The Leas is the work of Step Short, a local charity dedicated to remembering the First World War. The Arch, together with the poetry and inscriptions surrounding both it and the Road of Remembrance formed the only major new monument in Great Britain commemorating the centenary of the Great War in 2014. For local people the original listed 1920's War Memorial is vitally important and is explained.



A pleasant stroll along The Leas is at first slightly compromised by a few ill-advised post 1965 buildings, but the Harbour views compensate. However the town's Victorian seaside history is quickly invoked by The Leas Lift and the Leas Pavilion. The listed Art Nouveau Pavilion, once



Folkestone's main theatre, is described more in the Leas Town Trail Board. It is currently empty and fighting for its life, but it should be handsome enough, and well enough located to find a successful use. The Leas Lift is a water powered, 1880s cliff lift which provides, in season, the



nicest way to get down to the beaches and the adventure playground of The Lower Leas. It is unique in Southern England.

The Leas Town Trail Board is dedicated to Sir William Harvey, the Folkestone born discoverer of the circulation of the blood and the real role of the heart within the body, one of the greatest medical discoveries. It stands on The Leas but near his statue just inland. Here you can also read about the delicate bandstand and the Zig Zag Path.



**Or You Could:**

Go down the Zig Zag Path which zigs left opposite The



Bandstand down to the adventure playground. Then as a seaside alternative to The Leas you can walk through the Lower Leas Coastal Park to the beaches between Folkestone and Sandgate or left to the harbour.

But the Trail itself continues past the curved back of listed Clifton Crescent, where, in World War II the massive former naval guns of HMS Hood were mounted on the grass. The Channel views here include the whole curve of Hythe Bay stretching to the two lighthouses and the nuclear towers of Dungeness.



The Town Trail boards were put together by a small committee consisting of Go Folkestone, Step Short and the Folkestone Local History Society, with some early assistance of local schools. The final artworks by John Sims.

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Hotels which stand here side by side, still glowering at each other. Broad modern steps in line with The Metropole go down to the coastal promenade.



Walking to the end of The Leas, you follow the romantic parade of elegant swans' neck Edwardian lamp standards. Here within half a mile of each other

are the 1930's dream retirement home of Lord Baden Powell of The Boy Scouts, and the path down to Spade (Now Wells) House, the dream home of H.G.Wells', where he wrote many books in the 1900s. Much more on these, and Buffalo Bill too, is given in the final Town Trail Board which stands at the natural end of the walk. Here the ivy covered ruin of Martello Tower No 4



has a Folkestone Triennial art installation by Cristina Igesias framing its secret wildlife haven.



If you go one block inland, through lovely Cliff Road houses to busy Sandgate Road, the bus services to Folkestone Bus Station are very frequent. There one change gets you all the way back to East Cliff if you wish.

**And You Finally Could:**

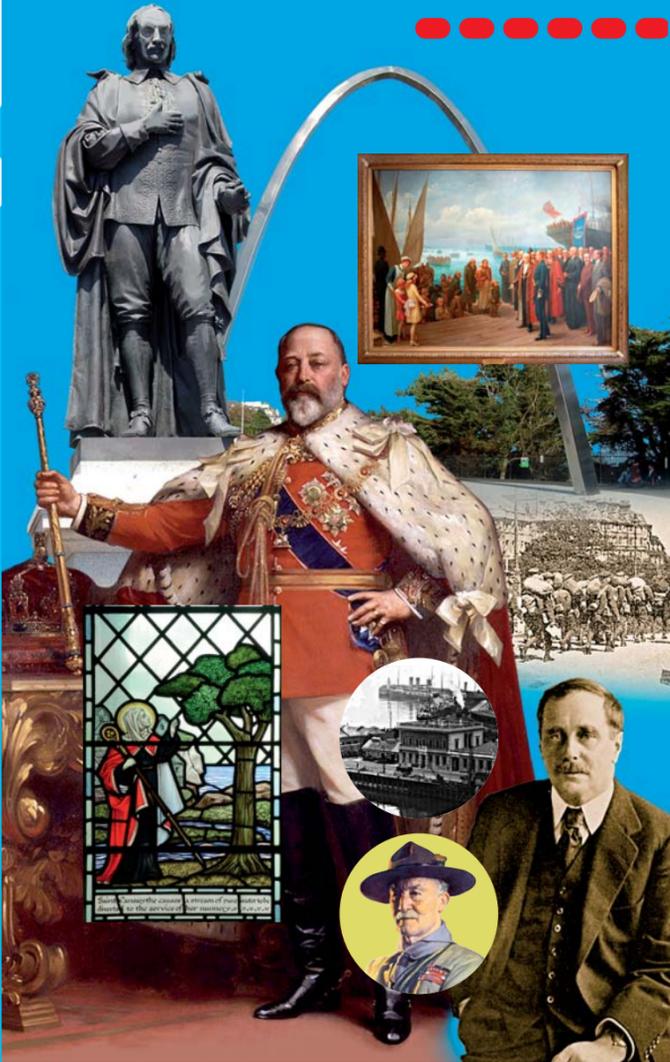
By taking the steep footpath at the very end of The Leas, or the more obvious one 150m earlier, you can wend your way down to the sea. You turn left when you get to the next road and then hair-pin right at the bottom to Sandgate, or left to go back to Folkestone, perhaps ascending on the Leas Lift when tired!



For further information visit:  
[www.folkestonetc.kentparishes.gov.uk](http://www.folkestonetc.kentparishes.gov.uk)  
 or call 01303 257946  
 or mobile scan the QR code below



# Folkestone Town Trail



Design: John Sims: www.picturethisdesign.co.uk

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