

TOWN TRAIL 3



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WORTHING HERITAGE TRAILS

TOWN TRAIL 3

Introduction: This trail follows a route along the seafront, exploring aspects of the town's maritime history.

Duration: 90 minutes

Terrain: follows pavements and seafront promenade – this trail should be suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

1 The walk commences at the **Visit Worthing Information Centre**, from where it makes its way to the **Pier Pavilion**. When the pier was built in 1862 a small hut housed the piermaster, who would take the entrance money. In 1889 two ornate kiosks were added, and it was these that were removed to make way for the current pavilion in 1926. Designed to mirror the appearance of the **South Pavilion** at the sea end of the pier, the symmetry could only be appreciated for seven years, as the sea-end pavilion was lost to fire in 1933.

2 **Worthing's first pier** was designed by Sir Robert Rawlinson and cost £6,500. However, it was a narrow deck pier with little space for promenading – so beloved of the Victorian middle class – so the pier was

widened and a sea-end pavilion added during the years 1887-89. On Easter Saturday in March 1913, a violent storm and high tide swept away the central section of the pier. (The isolated sea-end pavilion was accordingly nicknamed 'Easter Island'.) The reconstructed pier was opened amidst much local celebration by the Lord Mayor of London in May 1914. A fire in September 1933 gutted the southern pavilion and much of the decking. The current Art Deco pavilion was opened in 1935. During the Second World War the central section of the pier was removed to prevent it being used as a landing stage by enemy invaders. Today the pier is considered one of Worthing's biggest assets and is in a far better state of preservation than many neighbouring piers on the Sussex coast.

3 **Montague Place**, formerly Montague Lawn, dates back to the late eighteenth century and the origin of Worthing as a seaside resort. Notice the bow-fronted windows on the buildings to the south. The terrace was once fronted by gardens – hence the name 'lawn' – but these were removed in the 1920s and the current cul-de-sac built. The large red brick wall on the opposite side of the road to the terrace forms the western elevation of the old

Woolworth building. This was built on the site of Sumner Lodge, one of Worthing's most imposing houses, which, in its early days was let out to wealthy visitors during the summer season – indeed it is marked on early maps as 'Summer Lodge'.

the earliest buildings in the town centre, dating back to the late eighteenth century. Only the timely intervention of Worthing's then Conservation Officer, Eric Cockain, ensured that the building was not sold at auction for redevelopment. The inlaid porchway is reminiscent of an upturned boat. At the back of the building are porthole windows, all of which suggests that someone of a nautical disposition was once in residence.

5 At the back of 1 and 1A is a small building with a corrugated roof. This is all that is now left of a building that was once the **barracks of the Salvation Army** when they first came to Worthing in 1883/84. The Salvationists faced bitter opposition in the town from the 'Skeleton Army', which violently disrupted their marches and prayer meetings. On one hot summer's evening in 1884 a mob several hundred strong attacked the Salvation Army barracks, smashing all the windows. That night the mob made attacks on other properties in the town linked to the Salvationists. They also attacked the Police Station. Eventually the Riot Act was read and mounted Dragoon Guards from Brighton entered the town to restore order. The temperance beliefs of the Salvation Army coupled with the equal status they afforded to men and women inflamed their opponents who saw them as troublesome outsiders disrupting the quiet of the town.

6 The flint cobble-fronted cottages in **Prospect Place** contrast with the bow-fronted terraces of Montague Place and Bedford Row, where the wealthier citizens

lived. However, residents here in the nineteenth century were not poor by the standards of the day and these homes were superior to those in nearby Surrey Street, which in turn were more desirable than the slums in Chapel Fields and Cooks Row.

7 **The New Street Brewery** (Mexican Lining in 2013) once went by the memorable title of 'Pacy's Bloodhole'. Pacy was the landlord, while the 'bloodhole' referred not to the violence of the patrons, but rather to the habit of the local fisherman of gutting their fish in the bar!

8 **West Buildings** are so named because for many years these buildings marked the western extremity of the built up area of

Worthing. Fields lay between here and the cottages of 'Little Heene'. Not until the 1870s was the gap filled, following the creation of the West Worthing Commissioners in 1865, charged with developing the Heene end of town.

9 **The old Lifeboat House**, now a private residence, was built in 1874. The lifeboat was housed in the lower storey of the building, while the little tower was a place for observation. The lifeboat was launched from a ramp close to the pier. A lifeboat was stationed in Worthing from 1853 until 1930. An annual Lifeboat Day was a big event in the town, with the bedecked vessel being pulled through the streets by horses. It was the tragic loss of eleven fishermen attempting to rescue the crew of a stricken barque in 1850 that led to the demand for a lifeboat in Worthing.

10 **The Old Coastguard House** dates back to 1822, at which time there was an epidemic of smuggling along the Sussex coast. Clashes between coastguards and smugglers, both at sea and on land, were frequent events. A Lieutenant Seeworthy was in charge of the Coastguard House in those days. By the 1850s, effective policing, reformed tariffs, and an improving economy had all combined to make the smuggling of old a receding memory.

11 The **twitten** at the back of the Coastguard House marks the historic boundary between Worthing and Heene. During the days when smuggling was rife, the Worthing Town Commissioners (the Council of their day) identified the Heene population as being a particularly lawless community, and one that should be kept out of Worthing at all costs. Consequently the Commissioners ordered that a wall should be built between Worthing and Heene at this point. The chairman of the Commissioners at that time was Sir Edward Ogle and hence it became known as 'Ogle's Wall'.

12 **Edinburgh Cottages** in Western Row are one of Worthing's best kept secrets and today very popular as holiday homes. It should be remembered, however, that when they were cottages for fishermen, whole families would have squeezed into these small dwellings. Worse still, sanitary provisions were of a very basic nature, and this, coupled with the general stock in trade of fishermen,

including clothing, nets, etc., suggests that conditions in the Row, especially in summer, may not have been very fragrant!

13 Cross over the main road and return back to the Visit Worthing Information Centre along the promenade. You will notice a **display board** erected by Worthing Borough Council that tells the story of the Ice Prince, a cargo ship that shed its load of timber planks along the beach at Worthing in January 2008. On the pier is a memorial to the crew of a Lancaster bomber which crashed on the beach in December 1944, killing all the crew. The pilot was hailed as a hero for guiding the stricken plane away from the town centre, thereby saving countless lives.

The Worthing Heritage Trails are a project created by the Worthing Heritage Alliance (www.worthingheritagealliance.org.uk) and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

www.VisitWorthing.co.uk

More information about the history of Worthing can be found at
www.oldworthingstreet.com
www.worthingcommunityplay.org.uk
www.worthingsociety.org.uk

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The Town and the Sea



www.worthingheritagealliance.org.uk

