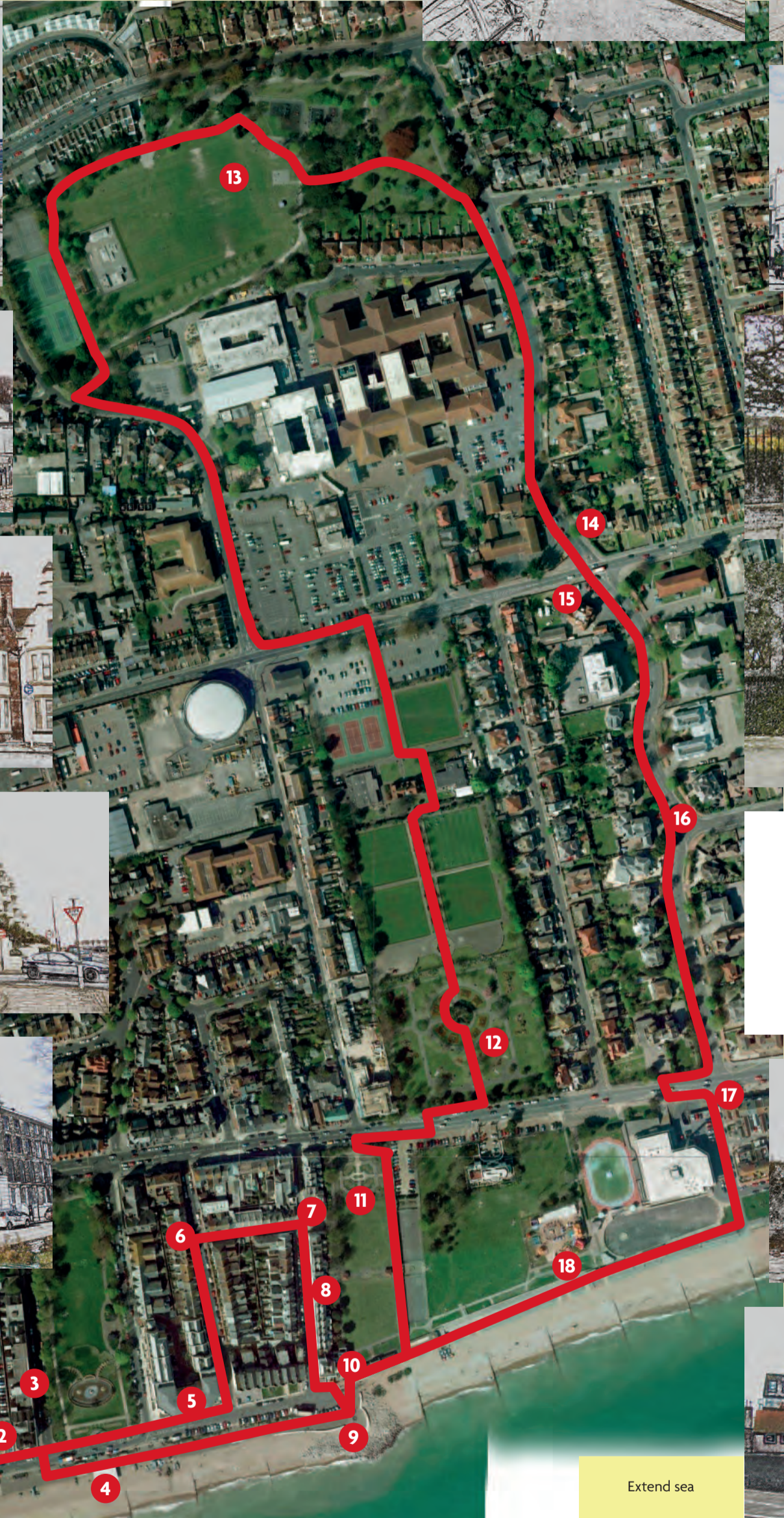
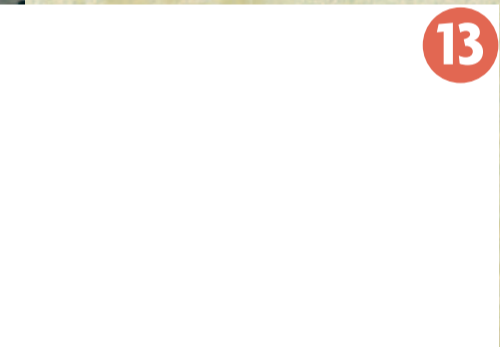


# TOWN TRAIL 4



Extend sea

# WORTHING HERITAGE TRAILS

## TOWN TRAIL 4

Introduction: this trail explores the parks and leisure areas of the town centre, including social and wartime history.

**Duration:** allow up to two hours.  
**Terrain :** follows pavements and paths through parks – this trail should be suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

**1** This walk starts at the **VisitWorthing Information Centre**, based at the Dome. The Centre has information about accommodation and places of interest both in Worthing and the surrounding district. The Dome cinema in its present form dates from 1923, but cinema was a feature of the building since it first opened as ‘The Kursaal’ – an Edwardian multi-entertainment centre – in 1910. Originally the cinema was situated on the first floor and the ground-floor auditorium was used for roller-skating and public meetings. In February 1913, a meeting organised by local Suffragettes ended in a riot, as protesters threw bags of flour and soot and waved football rattles. The name ‘Kursaal’ was dropped during the First World War as sounding too Germanic and the name ‘Dome’ was chosen following a public vote.

**2** Only a shell now remains of **Stafford’s Library**, although it has been adapted to a modern use. Libraries fulfilled an important social purpose in the early nineteenth century and were popular with those seeking company and musical entertainment.

**3** Worthing’s first purpose-built hotel was the **Steyne Hotel** – today’s Chatsworth Hotel, which in 2012 celebrated its

bicentenary. The name ‘steyne’ means stony field. There are also ‘steynes’, with slightly different spellings, at Brighton and Bognor Regis. In all three cases the fields were close to the sea and used by fishermen to mend their nets and gut their fish. By the time the Steyne Hotel was opened, such practices were deemed vulgar and offensive, and in time, the fishermen were removed and the Steyne became a place of recreation for visitors and residents alike. An attempt by Edward Ogle, the owner of Warwick House (to the north of the Steyne) to claim the field as his own private recreation ground was rebuffed by the angry townspeople, who broke down the fences he erected and threw down the signs that declared the land to be private property.

**4** At the southern end of the Steyne is a war memorial, built in the style of a ‘**Cleopatra’s Needle**’, to the Worthing men who lost their lives in South Africa during the Boer War of 1899-1902.

**5** The current **Warnes** is a modern building of upmarket apartments, which replaced the earlier Warnes Hotel after it was gutted by fire in 1987. The first Warnes was named after a local businessman who was the first person in Worthing to own a motor car.

villas to be found in the town. The street is lined with mock-Victorian lighting columns. But the lamppost on the roundabout at the junction with Farncombe Road and Church Walk is an original. During the early 1970s, the Council removed these ornate columns, putting up modern replacements. However, Pat Baring, the octogenarian chairman of the Worthing Civic Society, who lived close by, was determined that this column should not be removed. She chained herself to it and only relented in her protest when the Council agreed that the column could remain.

**17** This modern block of flats marks the spot where, until the 1960s, stood **Esplanade House** – a turreted late Victorian villa. It was here, during the summer of 1894, that Oscar Wilde wrote the Importance of Being Earnest. Wilde was much feted in Worthing at the time. The town was still recovering from the tarnishing its reputation had received as a result of the typhoid fever outbreak of the previous year. However, Worthing repented its associations with Wilde, when the following year the playwright was convicted on charges of sexual indecency. One of his alleged victims was fourteen-year-old Worthing newspaper boy, Aphonso Conway.

**18** At the time of writing, Worthing’s new **‘Splash Point’** swimming complex is under construction. The central section of the 1939 raised pebbled walkway has been removed, allowing a clear view of Beach House. Designed by John Rebecca, **Beach House** was built in 1820. For many years it was the home of the town’s MP, Sir Robert Loder. Many influential guests visited the Loders at their seaside residence, but none more distinguished than King Edward VII, who twice stayed here during his reign. Following Sir Robert’s death, the house passed to his son Edward. The American playwright Edward Knoblock became the next owner. In 1927 the house and its grounds were purchased by Worthing Town Council. Twice, in 1947 and in 1976, the Council sought to have Beach House

During the early years of the twentieth century several motor car rallies were organised from Warnes and attracted a great deal of national media attention. In 1936, the Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia stayed for several months at Warnes, following his country’s defeat at the hands of Fascist Italy.

**6** As you walk up **York Road**, notice the ‘Dutch gables’ of the houses to your left – a most unusual architectural feature in the town. Turn right into **Alfred Place** and you will see another singular architectural design – the ‘boat porches’ of the cottages in this street. It is said that they were built to mimic upturned fishing boats, although this may be just a quaint local legend.

**7** As you come to the junction with Warwick Road, notice the tall building to your right. This was once **Chapman’s Brewery** – also known as the Tower Brewery. It has now been converted into flats. Looking northwards up Warwick Road you will see, across Brighton Road, Warwick Place, which consists of a row of buildings dating back to the early nineteenth century.

**8** Turning right now, the trail continues southward down **Warwick Road**. The terrace on the left is one of only five Regency terraces to survive in the town, and is remarkably unaltered.

**9** **Splash Point** has been greatly altered over the years. Two hundred years ago there was a discernible point of land here, but the persistent action of the sea has eroded this away. The increased danger of severe flooding led in recent times to the construction of the present wall and the massing of stone boulders in front of it as a defence. The fountain and other ornamental features were added in 2012. For many years an old disused sea mine stood at Splash Point into which donations to the RNLI could be deposited.

**10** **The Rowing Club** is a 1930s building which replaced a late Victorian building used for the same purpose. The buildings to the left were once known as ‘Greville Terrace’, and were the scene, in 1850, of a famous case of ‘rough music’. The lady of the house – a new arrival to Worthing – had caused offence locally and was party to an action for slander against another society lady in the town. A mob with blackened faces and rattling old tin cans and kettles filled with beach pebbles, assailed the house, letting out ‘loud groans’ and shouts of disapproval. They ended their demonstration by raining a shower of stones against the windows of the house, breaking every pane. This was one of several instances of ‘rough music’ that took place in Worthing during the mid-nineteenth century.

**11** **Denton Gardens** were laid out in 1922 at the expense of Alderman James Gurney Denton, four times mayor of Worthing. The water features have been replaced with a sunken garden.

**12** **Beach House Gardens** (we will pass Beach House later in this trail) once formed part of the Beach House estate and were acquired by the Council in 1927. The original ornamental gates were taken down during the Second World War; the current gates were removed from the Warren, when the latter was demolished in the 1960s. The memorial to the Warrior Birds – carrier pigeons of the Second World War – was erected at the behest of the actress, Nancy Price, who was a great lover of birds. She moved to Worthing in the 1930s and died in the town in 1970. The bowling greens are much admired and the annual World Bowls Championship has taken place at Beach House Gardens for over thirty years.

**13** **Homefield Park** was opened as Worthing’s first recreation park in 1873. Initially known as the ‘People’s Park’, it covered the entire area from Lyndhurst Road to

# WORTHING HERITAGE TRAILS

## TOWN TRAIL 4



## Parks and Gardens

demolished, and twice the Secretary of State intervened to preserve the building. It is now divided into luxury apartments.

**19** This trail now returns along the promenade to the **VisitWorthing Information Centre**.

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