



BEACHY HEAD RAMBLERS

Newsletter
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With BHR currently in hibernation there is very little to report in this edition of the Newsletter. Never the less it may contribute in a small way to passing some time during lockdown. Maybe the next edition will carry better news and we will once again be able to enjoy our glorious countryside before summer is over. In the meantime I hope you are all keeping well and finding ways to stay fit and healthy in these strange times. **AH**

BHR EXMOOR HOLIDAY

A decision on the BHR Summer holiday in Devon and Somerset, due to take place in late June, will be made by mid-May. It is obviously looking unlikely at this stage, but all participants will be kept informed.



NAVIGATION COURSES

There was a great response from walk leaders and other members for the courses in navigation skills mentioned in the last newsletter. Before the lockdown, a group had fun trying not to get lost on Mount Caburn. There will be further opportunities to take part in these courses although of course there are no scheduled dates at this time. If you would like to get your name on the list contact David at dfry.architects@gmail.com

Subjects covered include map reading, following a route and basic compass work. These are all useful skills for budding walk leaders or anyone who would like to know how to get the best from their ordnance survey maps.

WALK LEADERS – BE PREPARED!

It will be very useful if our stalwart bunch of walk leaders could have a ready-prepared walk planned for when we are able to start meeting again. It will probably be a ramble you have led before as it is nigh-on impossible to recce any new walks at the moment. A swift response when the lockdown is lifted will enable us to quickly get a walks programme distributed to all members. Many thanks.

THINGS TO DO IN LOCKDOWN - EASTBOURNE'S HISTORY AND MORE

Internet usage has rocketed during the lockdown and it's not hard to see why; there are many organisations, both local and national, that are providing free online information and entertainment to pass the days away.



If you are interested in the history of Eastbourne you may already be aware of the excellent series of illustrated talks given by local history enthusiast Alan Wenham. These have taken place over the years in what was the Underground Theatre and in a number of other venues. The six talks, covering subjects as diverse as Smuggling, Devonshire Park and the evolution of 'Little Chelsea' are now all available for free online at visionforeastbourne.ddns.net

Each of the talks lasts around an hour and is profusely illustrated. They are informative and entertaining and provide an excellent way to pass some lockdown time.

For something more rural, the [South Downs National Park](#) provides links to a number of places that are providing free virtual tours while they are unable to welcome real visitors. Amongst others these include Charleston House, the Weald and Downland Living Museum and Brighton's Royal Pavilion.

Meanwhile, for the bookworms unable to go to the library, [East Sussex County Libraries](#) have added to the list of eBooks and audio books available to borrow online. If you are not already a library member you can join on the website and start borrowing.

Nationally, there is an endless variety of free entertainment available online: There are of course a multitude of keep-fit exercises encouraging us all to run round our living rooms and jump up and down, and when that's done you can relax and enjoy some culture: Plays from the [National Theatre](#) and the [Royal Shakespeare](#), operas from London's [Royal Opera House](#) and New York's [Met Opera](#), gallery and museum tours from the likes of the [National Gallery](#), plus hundreds of hours of extra programming uploaded to the BBC iPlayer, and so much more

HISTORY WALKS : EASTBOURNE'S EAST END

Unless you are fortunate enough to live on the Downs or in a similar rural location, the chances are you are currently pounding the urban streets in search of your daily exercise. But this needn't be as bland as it sounds. Many of our urban shopping streets reveal their history and architecture if we just look up above the shop fronts and corporate fascias. This is true of Eastbourne's Seaside and Seaside Road, considered to be one of the least attractive of the town's streets. But look up

Starting at the western end of Seaside Road by the old T J Hughes store, head east and almost immediately look up to the right to view the magnificently ornate Victorian terrace of Elms Buildings. Completed in 1899, this was Eastbourne's first purpose-built shopping street, the shops being part of the original design and not the result of later conversions as in Terminus Road.



Just a stone's throw further on, on the corner of Queen's Gardens, we come to the Tivoli Cinema (*pictured left*), the first of three picture houses in our short stroll. Built in 1889 as the New Hall, it was converted to a cinema in 1906. After various name changes it became the Tivoli Cinema, eventually closing its doors in 1982.

Next up, on the opposite side of the road, is the grade 2 listed Royal Hippodrome Theatre. It is the oldest theatre in town, and its recently refurbished frontage makes it worthwhile crossing the road to look up at its Victorian facade. Built in 1883 as the Theatre Royal and Opera House, it was renamed the Hippodrome in 1904 when it changed its style from plays and opera to music hall. Many famous names trod the boards in its heyday including Harry Houdini, Marie Lloyd, Vera Lynn and Charlie Chaplin.

➤ [The Tivoli Cinema](#)

Opposite the Hippodrome is a row of rather drab shops which don't afford a second glance, but look up above to view the Colonnades, and imagine what this area was like before the shops were built on land in front of the terrace.



Continuing on, the road name changes from Seaside Road to Seaside, and we pass Seahouses Square, named after the settlement that existed here before the growth of Eastbourne. The drinking fountain situated here was originally sited in the middle of the road near our next stop, and our next grade 2 listed building; Leaf Hall.

Despite its spire, Leaf Hall was never a place of worship. Commissioned in 1863 by philanthropist William Leaf and designed by the same architect responsible for Eastbourne's Grand Hotel, its purpose was "*to promote the social, moral and spiritual welfare of the working classes of Eastbourne*". Leaf had been concerned by the drunkenness and rowdiness in the East End and his hall offered what he hoped would be an alternative to the pubs and brothels in the area.

➤ [Leaf Hall](#)



Facilities at the hall included a coffee room (no alcohol was sold), a lending library and reading room, and a large room on the first floor which was both a lecture room and theatre. Many touring shows appeared at the venue including, in 1865, a performance by 'General' Tom Thumb accompanied by his manager the legendary showman P T Barnum.

➤ [P T Barnum and Charles Sherwood Stratton, better known as General Tom Thumb. Today we view the Victorian-era freak shows with alarm, but in his autobiography Stratton, who was a 3'3" dwarf, maintains his gratitude to Barnum for saving him from a life of poverty and discrimination.](#)

While Leaf Hall was for the working men, the women were not forgotten: Immediately opposite the Hall stood the Charles Jewell Working Women's Club, housed in an attractive terrace that is worth looking up for. It is now the YMCA.



At this point it is worth taking a short detour on your left in to Langney Road to view the Salvation Army Citadel. An extraordinary building festooned with battlements it would be at home in Disneyland, but the style is in fact not unusual in Sally Army buildings elsewhere in the country.

➤ *The Salvation Army Citadel. Or is it Disneyland?*



Returning to Seaside, we see in front of us the Marine pub, formerly the Marine Hotel. Built in 1806 it is one of the oldest pubs in the town, and its rear entrance would once have opened directly on to the shingle beach where the fishing boats were hauled on to the shore. Today, on leaving from the rear, you cross Marine Road, walk round a large block of Victorian terraces and along St Aubyn's Road before crossing Royal Parade on to the beach. All of this, in common with everything else built to the south of Seaside, has been built on the vast shingle bank known as the Crumbles, the edge of which was once marked by Seaside.

➤ *These days the Marine is most famous for its incredible Christmas decorations which are a sight to behold.*

Moving on, we come to two cinemas facing each other across the road. In both cases their architecture immediately gives away their original purpose. On our right is the New Eastern Cinema: Opened in 1912 it was the first purpose-built cinema in Eastbourne. It was renamed the Regal in 1945 but closed for good in 1953. It became a branch of Woolworths, then a car showroom, then a bedroom and kitchen showroom and now, a funeral directors.

Facing it is the Gaiety Cinema: Built in 1914 as the Eastbourne Picture Theatre it became the Empire, then the Elysium and, in 1936, the Gaiety. It is grade 2 listed because of its interior plasterwork which is sadly no longer accessible to the public. Currently, it is an empty shop to let.



The New Eastern Cinema



The Gaiety Cinema



Next is another grade 2 listed building: Christ Church was consecrated in July 1859, but in 1870 the tower was added causing the church, which of course was built on shingle, to become unstable. Work to rectify the problem was finally completed in 1879 along with other alterations, resulting in the building we see today. It is well worth taking a walk around the back to view the rear of the church from the picturesque Warrior Square.

➤ *The rear of Christ Church viewed from Warrior Square. The Square consists of two rows of terrace cottages built in the decade following the construction of Christ Church. Today it is a peaceful and picturesque oasis just a stone's throw from Seaside.*

Among the regular worshippers at Christ Church was the Rev. Charles Dodgson, better known to the world by his literary pseudonym of Lewis Carroll. He was a regular visitor to Eastbourne, always staying at lodgings in Hyde Gardens, and when in town would frequent Christ Church. Dodgson was a polymath, being a successful writer and author, a talented pioneer of photography and a much-respected mathematician, as well as an ordained minister of the church. In this latter capacity he is known to have preached from Christ Church's pulpit on at least one occasion.



➤ *The Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, aka Lewis Carroll. Despite the fame and fortune that came after the publication of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and its sequel Alice Through the Looking Glass, Dodgson continued in his role as a lecturer in mathematics at Oxford. He lived in his apartment at the University until his death in 1898, two weeks short of his 66th birthday.*



The final stop on our short tour is yet another of Seaside's grade 2 listed buildings: The King's Arms must be one of Eastbourne's most attractive pubs. Dating from 1900, it is notable for its first-floor wooden veranda topped by a copper canopy, and for its octagonal corner tower. Historic England also cite the internal tiling and plasterwork as reason for its listed status.

➤ *The King's Arms*

What's true of Seaside is true of many urban shopping streets. We all tend to walk along looking around at eye level, but looking above the shop fronts to the upper stories can often be informative and rewarding. Just don't walk in to any lamp posts. ✍ AH



"Yes, I'm working from home today"



ramblers
at the heart of walking