



**ROBERT ARMSTRONG'S
GUIDE TO
EASTBOURNE**



EASTBOURNE

While the character of this area was determined by a chance of nature, the growth of our town has been a unique balance of human need and vision, commerce and endeavour. Curiously we live in one of the most varied climatic areas to be found anywhere in the British Isles; the town annually records one of the highest sunshine readings, while at nearby Beachy Head the instruments show it to be one of the foggiest places in England.

The Eastbourne winter too is unique, for while a few miles out from town the snow conditions can be grave, the town itself usually has but a mild scattering which rarely lasts for more than a few days.

During the hot English summers water shortages can be a threat to many areas but Eastbourne's supply used to be abundant; it was absorbed through the soft porous chalk until it reached a bed of clay, where hidden from evaporation, it accumulated. But in recent years, the vast development of housing estates out towards Polegate, Stonecross, Westham and Pevensy Bay, has caused heavy demands on the natural resources.

Our South Downs has an important part to play in the town's passive weather, shielding Eastbourne

from the severest of storms. They create the perfect backcloth, in which to frame and protect the town and a unique area, which offers refuge to all manner of wild life.

Probably the most spectacular and awesome sight of the year are the spring tides, when the pent-up fury of the English Channel is unleashed by nature against the sea defences; repelled by the sea wall, the surf thunders high into the air. At these times one is reminded of the constant threat from the sea, as much of the town lies below sea level. Even the multi-million pound sea defence scheme constructed in the 1990's holds back only part of the coastal erosion that annually costs the town council many thousands of pounds.

Every winter large chunks of Beachy Head and the surrounding cliff fall away into the sea; the former lighthouse at Belle Tout, was physically moved away from the edge of the cliff before it too became a casualty, but there is little long-term hope for the survival of the houses and restaurant at Birling Gap.

This same erosion, which breaks the chalk into mounds of rubble, lays bare many artefacts of our ancient history to testify to the presence of ancestors dating back to Paleolithic times.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE ROMANS

The name Eastbourne is derived from East Burne, the Burne being a stream, which springs to the surface and feeds the pond in Motcombe Gardens. This area can truly be called the birthplace of Eastbourne.

King Cogidubnus ruled over the Regni tribe in this area at the time of the Roman conquest in AD 43 and must have found favour with the new government, for he was allowed to retain his position. Sussex green sandstone, now rare, was quarried from the foot of the Wish Tower and used in the building of Pevensey Castle and various Roman villas, the largest of which stood on the site of the Burlington Hotel. Later, as the quarrying operation moved inland as far as All Saints' Church, the excavated trench became a harbour, 'Longus Portus'.

The harbour prospered from a growing trade with Gaul and by the third century a sizable Roman community had spread itself several miles inland. Though actual accounts of this period remain shrouded in mystery, there is good evidence that this was the location of the Roman city of Anderida. In its day, it rivalled many of the great Roman cities of Britain as a centre of learning and healthy living. During the 18th century numerous Roman buildings and pavements were

unearthed; an archaeological paradise that was to remain for one hundred and fifty years until the sites were covered over by the development of the present town.

In the 3rd century the Emperor Diocletian created the post of Count of the Saxon Shore to protect this province of Britain from sea bound raiders. Under his direction, the last great fortress, that of Anderida (Pevensey) was built on a spit of land washed by the sea on three sides. The nearby city of Anderida proved an ideal site for the Count's palace, being well situated in the centre of his line of coastal fortifications. His garrison was always on the alert for Saxon invaders and they used smoke and semaphore as an early warning signal.

The Count's palace, originally started as a villa around the 1st century, covered an area around Burlington Hotel, the Carpet Gardens and stretching as far as the Queen's Hotel. The remains of this Roman villa and a bath in fairly perfect condition were first uncovered in 1717 in Queens Gardens and some mosaic tiles were removed to the safety of Barbican House museum, in Lewes.

A major Roman road linked Eastbourne by way of Jevington, its route has now been incorporated into our modern road system. The line takes in a portion of Green Street, Charleston Road, a

footpath through Gildredge Park, Saffrons Road, South Street to Seaside Road.

THE SETTLEMENT OF BURNE

In 447AD, the Saxon warlord, Aelle, accompanied by his sons, Cymen, Wlencing and Cissa, landed and fired the city of Chichester. Quickly they moved along the coast but met resistance at a place near Eastbourne, called Mearcraedesburne, where a fierce but indecisive battle was fought. Six years later they returned and caused the occupants of our district to flee for safety behind the walls of Pevensey Castle. In 491AD, after many months of siege the defenders surrendered and were brutally slaughtered. Aelle ordered the total destruction of the area; there is now scarcely a trace of the old culture left, buildings were fired and records destroyed.

The Saxons soon populated Eastbourne and the whole of Sussex, building their settlements at the mouths of springs and in the river valleys. Saxon fields soon became a part of the landscape, their outline remaining prominent to this day. The Saxon settlement beside Motcombe Pond farmed both arable and grazing land and many of the ancient field boundaries across the Eastbourne Levels have remained as they were, sheep pasture land.

At Ocklynge, Saxon Place stands on the brow of Willingdon Hill and is the site of a large Saxon cemetery. The graves, which were not disturbed by the builders, still remain, some were buried with small knives and other artefacts, with their heads towards the west and feet to the east, as was a Christian custom. These are believed to date from the 9th century.

The Saxons enjoyed many centuries of peace, a time when the small settlement around the source of the Burne Stream grew into a small village with the Saxon church of St Michael's built upon the site where now stands the Norman parish church of St Mary's.

Many Saxon place names are remembered in the ward and street names; Medes (Meads), Beverington, Upperton, and Upwick. Eastbourne became part of the royal estate of Alfred the Great, then handed down in royal line to Edward the Confessor and ultimately to Earl Godwin, father of King Harold.

THE NORMAN CONQUEST

The monks of Langney Priory lived on the eastern side of an estuary, which flowed as far as Hailsham. The monastery was erected on the foundation of a Roman villa, which was formerly part of Anderida. They worked the salt marshes, tended crops and enjoyed fresh fish caught in

their monastic pond. Their peaceful meditative existence was in sharp contrast to the political rumblings, which were shortly to devour the nation.

When Edward the Confessor died at Westminster Palace in January 1066, Earl Godwin's son Harold was crowned king. Immediately two rivals prepared for an invasion of England; King Hardrada in the north, an ill-fated attempt that would leave him and his army slaughtered by the Saxons at the Battle of Stamford Bridge and, in the south, William of Normandy. The Norman army of 12,000 men landed unopposed from 800 ships at Norman's Bay, and encamped inside the ancient walls of the Roman fortress at Pevensey.

On the 14th October the two armies met at Battle to decide the fate of England. Three times during the encounter William's horses were killed from under him, while the Saxon army fiercely held their position on Senlac Hill. Finally an arrow cut into Harold's left eye and as he lay mortally wounded a Norman knight rounded upon the body, cutting it to pieces.

In one decisive battle, William the Conqueror rose to become undisputed king of England. In the subsequent handout of land, Eastbourne was given to Robert, Count of Mortain, a half brother to William, while nearby Lewes was granted to William de Warenne, who had married William's

daughter, Gundrada. At Pevensey, a new castle was built within the old Roman walls, and this brought prosperity to the district, with a busy harbour and the foundation of a flourishing town.

THE MIDDLE AGES

During the Middle Ages, Eastbourne remained an isolated farming community; it was raked by the Black Death in 1349 and suffered from frequent raids by the French which continued well into the 15th century. In 1306, Mathew of Mount Martin enlarged the manor of Eastbourne by the purchase of considerable land of Saxon origin, Beverington, Yeverington and Cholyngton. In 1307, Mathew was granted a licence to crenellate his dwelling house but as this was not acted upon Eastbourne lost the prospect of a castle.

With the accession of King Edward II, the manor passed to Bartholomew de Badlesmere and his wife, Margret (de Clare). Bartholomew had become a close and trusted friend of the young King Edward and was granted many favours, including the control of Bristol, Leeds and Dover castles. Sadly, Bartholomew turned against his benefactor and sided with the Lancastrian insurrectionists, who in 1322 were defeated at the Battle of Boroughbridge. Bartholomew was later arrested and hanged at Canterbury.

Surprisingly, the estate was not forfeited because of his treason and Margret de Badlesmere was allowed to remain mistress of the manor. King Edward spent the night at the house when he visited Eastbourne in 1324. The present manor house in The Goffs is built on the foundations of that original residence, which was rebuilt around the middle of the sixteenth century.

LAND SPECULATION

In 1555, the second Earl of Rutland held the manor but times were bad and he decided to sell his whole estate. Three local buyers came forward: James Burton, a man of already considerable land in Eastbourne, his son-in-law, Thomas Gildredge and, John Selwyn, who lived at Friston Place. In 1574, the three gentlemen decided to exchange parcels of land, so that some organised boundaries could be made.

James Burton took over the Meads and what is now the town centre, setting up his manor house at Bourne Place, which is now called Compton Place. Thomas Gildredge took over Upperton and the eastern area of the town, with his manor house at The Goffs. John Selwyn took the northern area. It was his grand-daughter who married Thomas Parker of Ratton and on her inheriting the family estate, moved from Motcombe up to Ratton.

The Gildredge family's male line died out in 1668 and their estates passed through the female line to the Gilbert family. In 1792, the Gilberts moved from The Goffs to a new house on the corner of Borough Lane, where they remained until the family moved to Birling Manor at East Dean earlier this century.

NATIONAL EVENTS

Quiet and isolated as this corner of England may have seemed, it was often involved with national events. In the summer of 1588, a beacon was lit on Beachy Head to warn of the approach of the Spanish Armada. Large canons had been sited at Holywell and on the Roman walls of Pevensey Castle.

In 1690, the Battle of Beachy Head was fought between the combined English and Dutch fleet and the French, a few miles off Beachy Head and Eastbourne. Greatly outnumbered, the English and Dutch retreated towards the safety of the River Thames, while the victorious French anchored off the town for several days.

In June 1780, the children of George III spent their Summer holiday at the Round House, which stood where the pier entrance is now. One of the children, Prince Edward, who later became the Duke of Kent was the father of Queen Victoria.

The Round House was demolished in 1841 owing to the encroachment of the sea.

During the Napoleonic wars, a large number of troops were billeted in Eastbourne and in 1804, as the threat of an invasion grew stronger, a line of coastal fortified towers, known as Martello Towers, were built. In addition, two command fortresses were constructed; one at Dimchurch in Kent and the other near the 'Sea Houses' at Eastbourne, which became known as the Redoubt. A few of the Martello towers remain at nearby Pevensey Bay, but within the bounds of Eastbourne there is only Tower 73 at the Wish Tower.

THE EMPRESS OF WATERING PLACES

Up until the 18th century the idea of living near the sea was considered unhealthy. It was the Prince Regent who changed this conception by transforming neighbouring Brighton from a fishing village to a popular health resort and crowning it with the flamboyant Royal Pavilion.

In 1801, Eastbourne consisted of only 243 houses and a population of 1700 inhabitants living in four hamlets surrounded by farmland. It was the attraction of salt water cures and the linking of Eastbourne to the railway in 1849 that prompted the growth of the town.

By the mid-19th century Eastbourne emerged from being a scattered community of hamlets; they consisted of Bourne (Old Town), Southbourne (around Grove Road) Meads and the Sea Houses (Marine Parade). And under the direction of the two main land-owning families, the Gilberts' with 956 acres and the Cavendishs', 2,625 acres, the town started to take shape as a fashionable town.

The main promoter of the town's development was William Cavendish, the Earl of Burlington. Indeed, at one stage there were plans to rename the town as Burlington, but when in 1858, he inherited the title of the seventh Duke of Devonshire and became one of the wealthiest men in England, he dropped that idea and sought only to create an elite community that was 'built by gentlemen for gentlemen'.

It was the 7th Duke of Devonshire, who appointed the brilliant architect Henry Currey to lay out a plan for the town. The Duke sent Currey on a grand tour of Europe intent on creating a town to rival any in Britain.

The result was the varied architecture, classical on the sea front, gothic in the Meads and a street pattern that was well a head of its time with features like the 80 foot wide boulevard in Devonshire Place.

In 1850, Terminus Road was laid over what was formerly a muddy path to the sea. A Vestry Room was built at the station end of Grove Road, moving the Local Board's meeting place from the Old Town into the new Town centre. And in the following year 1851, the Gas Company was formed with their gas works on a site adjoining the railway station.

Soon hotels, mansions and elegant houses spread themselves along the wide avenues and the population increased from 3,433 in 1851, to 22,014 in 1881. The railway was connected to the town in 1849, opening up the area to tourism.

By 1883, Eastbourne's population reached and surpassed the necessary number 22,000 and the town's local board successfully applied for a Charter of Incorporation; the Borough of Eastbourne was born.

Until then, the Local Board in the new Vestry Room in Grove Road had debated the affairs of the town, but this was now too small to house the new Mayor and Corporation. A site known as Stockbank was purchased from the Duke for £3,000 and work commenced on the present Town Hall, which was completed in 1886.

The town was made a County Council in 1911, a status it enjoyed until the reorganisation of local government in 1974.

FAMOUS PEOPLE

Long before Eastbourne was created out of the hamlets and farmland of this valley, authors were inspired to immortalise this area of Sussex. The first book, 'Eastbourne, A Description of that Village' was written in 1787 and dedicated to Prince Edward and the Princesses Elizabeth and Sophia.

It awakened the same attraction that has drawn visitors to Eastbourne ever since. To stand on the promenade with the breeze blowing in from the sea, the cry of gulls and the heat of the summer sun on one's face, is the essence that dreams are made of.

To share this same vision, though removed by centuries, with many great personalities, is a privilege. The poet, Lord Alfred Tennyson stayed at Mount Pleasant, where the Birlington Hotel now stands.

Other visitors included Charles Dickens, Richard Blackmore, Charles Darwin, Lewis Carroll, George Gissing and Richard Jefferies. Jane Austen wrote of the area in her unfinished novel 'Sanditon', while Theodore Hook's 'Jack Brag', drew its scenes from Old Town and the Sea Houses.

Many authors were so inspired by Eastbourne's idyllic setting that they, like the author Jeffrey Farnol, came to live here. The literary associations of Eastbourne could fill a whole volume: Alfred Ollivant's 'Two Men' and its sequel 'One Woman' describe the social conditions. Ivor Brown writes about 'Marine Parade', while E. Nesbit set Eastbourne in her story 'The Incredible Honeymoon'.

Victorian Eastbourne is well documented in a series of reminiscences, which were popular around the turn of the century. These included: Wrights 'Bygone Eastbourne', Robert Cooper's 'Reminiscences of Eastbourne', R. J. Graham's 'Eastbourne Recollections', George F. Chambers 'Eastbourne Memories of the Victorian Period', George Meek's 'Bath-Chairman' and 'Old Eastbourne' by the Rev. W. Budgen.

In 1931, the Rev. W. Budgen, edited 'The Book of Eastbourne', for the British Medical Association's conference at Eastbourne. Even today it ranks as a rich source of local information, baring contributions from most of the leading authorities of that time.

Two books capture the war years: Beckett's 'Front Line Eastbourne' and Hardy's 'Eastbourne 1939-45'. This period has recently been revived in 'Wartime Eastbourne', written on the fiftieth anniversary of those dark years.

Eastbourne's story is also kept alive by the untiring efforts of the members of the Eastbourne Local History Society, whose continued historical research is published in a number of informed booklets and periodical newsletters. In 1981, the Eastbourne Civic Society (now the Eastbourne Society) published 'Eight Town Walks in Eastbourne', a remarkable book full of detail and pen illustrations.

Lawrence Stevens has uncovered a wealth of history over years of archaeological research; the 1987 'A Short History of Eastbourne' updated A.G.S Enser's 'Brief History'. Similarly, 'A Peep at Victorian Eastbourne' written by Richard Crook, uncovered a rich wealth of knowledge of the last century. There are also numerous small booklets written about our many churches.

In 1978, a rare collection of photographs were published in Robert Elleray's 'Eastbourne, A Pictorial History'. This successful format has been continued by Cecile Woodford in her book, 'Eastbourne in old photographs'

In the 1980's, BBC Radio Sussex (now BBC Southern Counties Radio) opened a studio in Eastbourne. The man in charge of the local station was Radio Producer, David Arscott, whose untiring pen has now made him the most

prolific writer of Sussex books in all the counties history.

Over the years, much of the information on old Eastbourne has come from first hand experience: John Stevens' remembered the workhouse days, when he, as a boy, played with the workhouse master's son. This memory and evidence of Eastbourne's rapidly changing history can be found in my first video, now dvd 'Discovering Eastbourne'. While the 'Eastbourne, Then & Now' we have delved even deeper with past memories and comparing yesterday with today.

The Seafront

It is said that the town has three jewels in its crown, the sea, the South Downs and the countryside. The seafront is clearly the most prized by holidaymakers with its shingle beaches edged with sand at low tide and promenades reaching three tiers as they climb closer to the foot of Beachy Head.

There are eight miles of coastline forming Eastbourne's sea boundary, in the east, the vast new marina called Sovereign Harbour once guarded at Langney Point by a solitary Martello Tower, Langney Fort and in the west, the Downland rising to 575 feet at Beachy Head.

Various authors have tried to capture the magic that attracts people to the town year after year. Railway posters used to show the seafront bathed in summer light with the caption 'Sun Trap of the South', while the Council's own publicity department in the 1950's coined the expression 'Beautiful Healthy Eastbourne'.

Prince Christian once remarked to Queen Victoria, that 'Eastbourne air was like a champagne, minus the headache'. While frequent visitor, King Edward exclaimed that 'nowhere else in the kingdom was peace and nature so well provided for'.

When Eastbourne's Mayor, Mrs Winifred Lee, was presented to the Queen Mother at a Buckingham Palace garden party back in 1966, the Queen Mother said, 'Ah, Eastbourne. That's where the children first saw the sea'.

Seafront – Eastern Parades

Sovereign Harbour

The eastern end of the promenade used to terminate at a vast area of shingle known as the Crumbles, which spread across the beach land to neighbouring Pevensey Bay. Following the approval of the Eastbourne Harbour Act 1980 & 1988 in Parliament, work started on the construction of the largest composite marina in

the UK, a massive undertaking opened in 1993. A large outer tidal harbour is connected by lock gates to four inner basins, known as Inner, South, North and West harbours. The complex offers berths for 600 permanent moorings with another 3,000 reserved for visiting vessels.

Around this harbour has evolved a large extension to the town, with many properties built to resemble the more ancient ports of Britain. This area is known as **Sovereign Harbour South and Sovereign Harbour North** with in its centre a modern shopping centre, while beside the harbour itself can be found waterside restaurants and small shops.

There is another new landmark at the most easterly end of the promenade, which resembles that of a Regency fort – this unusual building is one of Britain's most impressive sewage treatment plants. **The Eastbourne Marine Treatment Works** has been constructed almost entirely underground and involves highly complex civil construction techniques. It provides primary treatment facilities for up to 216,000 cubic metres per day of incoming sewage and, in keeping with stringent environmental requirements, boasts state-of-the-art odour control equipment.

Between the main road and the promenade is a shingle beach, a small reminder of how the

Crumbles once looked; it is effectively now a small nature area.

Opposite **Princes Park**, is the **Sovereign Centre**; it stands on land that was once an aircraft factory during the First World War. It was part of an aviation enterprise created by Major Bernard Fowler in 1909 and known as Eastbourne Aviation Company. Beside nearby Seaside, at Leeds Avenue on fields now bordered by factories, Bernard Fowler built an airfield and taught flying lessons to the early pioneers.

In 1914, the airfield was taken over by the Royal Naval Air Service and the name Leeds Avenue was derived from the first group of young pilots who came from Leeds. After the war, the Eastbourne Aviation Company sponsored flying displays over the seafront making the town a mecca for flying enthusiasts, a role the town still plays with its annual four day Airbourne air display.

At one time, a tramway made its way across the top of Princes Park, stopping at the Golf House and ending a short distance further at tram sheds that stood at the south-east corner of the park, The tramway was unique, with only a 2ft gauge track, it was the only one in the world using double-decker cars.

Fort Fun

Fort Fun near to the Sovereign Centre is as its name implies a family fun park with both indoor and outdoor activities all the year round for children. Rocky's adventure land, the brochure exclaims 'is a huge soft play area where children can plunge down the Niagara Slide, take off from the sky high aerial runway, escape over Indiana's ravine, escape the giant balls, crawl through 50,000 play balls and much much more.'

Outside Fort Fun, is a Go-Karts track, an American Adventure eighteen-hole golf course and a small amusement park.

Princes Park

As one walks the flower-bedecked pathways of any of our three main parks, one is immediately drawn to the conclusion that each retains its own distinctive character, fully suited to that particular area of the town. Princes Park 'fills the role as sports 'stadium, boating lake and recreational centre, with its four bowling greens and 18 miniature golf course. Beside the lake, on the higher ground, stands a cafeteria, so adding yet another amenity.

The 28-acre area of the park, formerly part of the crumbles, was leased to the Eastbourne Council by Mr Carew Davies Gilbert in 1906 at £5 per annum on a 50 year lease. The shingle surface

was covered with ballast waste, topped with soil and fashioned into a park by the unemployed men of the town. It was originally called the Gilbert Recreation Ground but when in June 1931 the Duke of Windsor (then Prince of Wales) planted a tree n to the present grandstand it was renamed princes Park to commemorate his visit.

The boating lake draws its water from the Crumbles Sewer that enters the pond via sluice gates and exits into the sea at the opposite end. During the summer months pony rides are given on the seaside lawns and the large recreation ground beside the golf course, is often used as the show ground area for numerous events.

Royal Parade

Princes Park meets Royal Parade by way of the park's ornate arch at the junction of Channel View Road. Within the park, at the Oval and beside the grandstand stands a solitary tree that once had a metal rail around it and a plaque that declared 'this tree was planted by Prince Edward.

Leaving Princes Park in a westerly direction, behind the seafront tennis courts on our left-hand side, is the old lifeboat station. The station was built in 1903 at a cost of £445; originally, the lifeboat was launched down a metal slipway into the sea. The current lifeboat is now moored in Sovereign Harbour.

Redoubt

We are now at the Redoubt with its bowling greens and as the name implies, the **Great Redoubt fortress**.

This is the start of three miles of promenade, extending to the very foot of Beachy Head. Along the whole stretch of seafront there is not a single permanent shop, this is the result of the foresight of Eastbourne's prominent benefactor; the 7th Duke of Devonshire.

An old resident of Eastbourne, Mr W.T.Cooley, once recalled, 'when standing at the Redoubt Splash Point, with the wind in a South Easterly direction you could hear four bands playing at the same time, one at the Redoubt music gardens, a second at Marine Gardens, the third on the pier and the fourth at the birdcage bandstand at Devonshire Place.'

The Great Redoubt Fortress

The Great Redoubt and its attendant line of Martello Towers is permanent reminder of how seriously the government of the day took the threat of a Napoleonic invasion at the beginning of the 19th century. In May 1803, a French army, 130,000 strong and attended by a fleet of 2,000 vessels was encamped at the port of Boulogne, ready to cross the English Channel.

After considerable debate in the House of Commons, the government finally decided to erect a defensive line of round towers along the vulnerable coast from Dover to Seaford. These, known as Martello Towers, were influenced in their design by similar defensive towers at Mortella Point, Corsica, and were built in the autumn of 1804. In addition, two large command forts were built at Dymchurch and at “Sea Houses, Eastbourne”, though such was their size that they were not completed until 1810.

The land required for the Great Redoubt and for the Ordnance yard nearby, was leased from the Gilbert estate. The fortress was constructed mainly of brick and designed circular in shape. An original entrance was by way of a wooden bridge, across the dry moat 23 feet deep. Until recently this bridge was so rotten that it was dangerous to use, but army engineers have now reconstructed it in the original fashion. The top parapet of the fortress was pierced with eleven gun emplacements, the gun platforms being strengthened with granite. Like most fortress designs, the centre remained hallow and on the same level as that of the outside moat, the area being used as a parade ground. This was ringed by a circle of casements (vaulted chambers), which are a traditional feature of the period and have a protective covering of six feet of concrete.

On completion, the Great Redoubt was capable of housing a garrison of 350 officers and men but five years later the Napoleonic war came to an end and the fortress was never put to use. In 1859, a Royal Commission decided that the Great Redoubt was surplus to requirements and though in 1867 it was found necessary for the War Department to strengthen the sea wall at a cost of £10,000, little more was spent on the fortress itself.

In 1888, the area around the Redoubt was leased to the Eastbourne Council for public recreation and in 1905 the land was purchased outright. The Great Redoubt was to remain the property of the War Department until 1925, when Eastbourne Council was able to purchase the fortress for the sum of £150 and in the following year it was opened to the public. In 1960 the Ministry of Works designated the Great Redoubt as an ancient monument.

During the period up to 1975 the Great Redoubt was rescued from its derelict state and leased to private enterprise for a model village and aquarium but then Eastbourne Council withdrew its lease and began an extensive programme of renovation. This was partly completed by the spring of 1976 in time for it to be reopened to the public. Since then the Great Redoubt has been completely restored to its original design and now houses the Sussex Combined Services Museum and the Museum of Coastal Defences.

Access to all parts of the fortress can be made by way of the wooden bridge on the eastward side.

The Redoubt Gardens

The Redoubt Gardens lie directly below the Great Redoubt fortress, this land was leased to the Eastbourne Council in 1888 and a garden was laid out around a “birdcage” bandstand, brought from opposite the Marine Gardens in 1922. The success of the Redoubt music gardens led to the provision of a stone-built bandstand and party covered auditorium, where up to the mid-1960’s all sorts of ‘Punch and Judy’ and other entertainments took place; it was a sad loss, when the bandstand was demolished, though part of the auditorium still exists.

In its place has been erected the **Pavilion Tea Rooms**, in true Victorian style and often with a background of live piano music to give real flavour of the period. It looks out onto the Redoubt Gardens and in the middle is a tollbooth which original stood at the entrance to the pier.

The promenade was extended as far as the Redoubt in 1884 and to commemorate this, a small metal plaque has been set into the top of a stone block on the edge of the gardens with the inscription reading:

‘This keystone was laid, January .4th 1884, by G. A. Wallis Esq., C.E., 1st Mayor of Eastbourne. Chas. Tomes engineer.’

The building of the first part of **Royal Parade**, its sea wall and promenade, from the Great Redoubt to the pier was an ambitious undertaking planned by the then Local Board, under the Eastbourne Improvements Act 1879. The plots of building land recovered by the reclamation of the foreshore were offered on a 99-year lease, which raised the sum of £48,189, more than covering the cost of the project. The work was not without considerable constructional and legal difficulties and there were times when it appeared that it would have to be abandoned; however, it was completed on February 11th 1884 and officially opened by the Prince of Wales, who later became King Edward VII.

Lying behind Royal Parade, near to the Redoubt, on the corner of **Latimer Road** and **Halton Road** is the old police station; on the wall can be seen the town's coat of arms together with the date, 1895.

Christ Church

Nearby, in the grounds of Christ Church in **Seaside** is a building that was original a school for the working class children of Sea Houses and endowed by Miss Julia Brodie, whose family were great benefactors to the town. An outside inscription above one of the school windows reads:

‘This infants’ school is erected by the 4th daughter of the Rev. Alex. Brodie, D.D. to perpetuate the remembrance of this having been the faithful and beloved pastor of this parish for 18 years.’

The church often called the fishermen’s church being the nearest one to the fishing community, it was also the favourite church for the writer Lewis Carroll who spent his summer holidays between 1876 – 1897 at 7 Lushington Road. His real name was Charles Lutwidge Dodgson and it is told, how he would ‘terrorise’ the vicar into giving sermons that Dodgson felt most appropriate for the occasion.

In recent years a small wall with metal gates on the landside, have been erected along the edge of the seafront promenade to protect the hotels against the heavy springtides, which used to pound the seafront causing considerable damage. In bygone days, visitors often hired a ‘bathchair’ and attendant to savour the sea air, but now visitors can travel the length of the seafront in the comfort of a ‘Dotto Train’, that travel from Holywell down to the Sovereign Centre. These resemble an old fashioned steam engine pulling a line of carriages. Powered by diesel, they have quaint names such as Romeo, Juliet and Cupid.

At **Burfield Road**, on the corner of Marine Road can be found a row of unusually small houses,

known as Tom Thumb Cottages, these were formerly fishermen's cottages.

Just around the corner in Seaside, stands Mr William **Leaf's Working Men's Hall** erected in 1864 its foundation stone reads "to promote the social, moral and spiritual welfare of the working classes". It is now the Leaf Hall Community Arts Centre.

In years gone by, the Bourne Stream, from which the town gained its name, ended here in a large pond, known as Broadbourne. It then soaked away through the shingle into the sea. For over a century this road junction at Seaside/Langney Road, was the favourite meeting place for outdoor religious and political meetings

Along this stretch of Seaside leading from the Leaf Hall to the Lion Inn is a row of older shop premises with the Old Bakery, which dates from 1790. It stands beside a passage or twitten that makes its way onto the seafront at **Marine Gardens**.

At the end of the next block of shops and on the opposite side of the road, stands a long white building now converted into flats. This building was erected at the beginning of the 19th century and used for many years as an assembly and ballroom. It was here that the soldiers destined to fight at Waterloo, danced the night away with their wives and sweethearts, before embarking

for the European continent. During the 20th century it was a labour exchange, then the Busy Bee restaurant; and later the Smuggler's Restaurant.

Marine Parade

Marine Parade is the oldest part of the sea front and was originally known as Sea Houses. Most of the early eighteenth and nineteenth century houses can still be easily identified, nestling between their later and more modern counterparts. In one of them, Charles Darwin wrote part of his great work on the "Origin of Species" around 1850.

Originally located on the corner of Seaside and Langney Road and now re-sited at Marine Gardens is a drinking fountain. It was given to the town in 1870 by Mrs Curling of Kent Lodge, Seaside Road (which is now part of Trimty Trees). Such gifts were fashionable during the Victorian period and this one was first sited on a two-step pedestal in the middle of the road, a spot that became known as 'speaker's corner.'

The metal fountain is still painted green the original colour; two dolphins surmount the top with their tails intertwined and pointing skyward. A metal screw set in the middle is all that remains of the lamp, which used to top the fountain. On the sides is a pair of taps and basins. A cup on a chain originally served these who

wanted to drink of the water but this has long since disappeared.

A brass tablet, badly weathered reads:

‘Erected A.D. MDCCCLXV, whosoever drinketh of the water shalt ever thirst,’and on the other side is a similar tablet: ‘Whosoever drmketh water that I shall give him shall never thirst.’ The texts are taken from the New Testament, John: Chapter 4, verses 13-14. At the base of the fountain there was a drinking trough for dogs but all that remains is a hole.

On the beach opposite Marine Gardens are a number of concrete pillars projecting out of the shingle. These, together with others, which have been reused to support the present shelter, were the foundations for the “birdcage” bandstand, erected by the Eastbourne Council in 1894 at a cost of £300; it was later moved to the Redoubt gardens.

Next to the regency styled **Sea Houses**, stands the Albemarle Hotel, which was formerly known as the Anchor and has, set into the pediment at the top of the building, a finely plaster-worked anchor in the decoration.

The adjoining building, once the Albion Hotel, was formerly a private residence of Lord Ashburnham and was built in 1821. The hotel claims the distinction of being the first in the town to be supplied with electricity and the first

to have a telephone. The number was, in fact, Eastbourne 1.

The Queen's Hotel, at the end of the next block of regency guesthouses and hotels, was opened in 1880, having been designed by the Duke of Devonshire's architect Henry Currey. Much of his inspiration was gained from French and Italian styles.

Before 1898 there was no road between Marine Parade and Grand Parade, just a flight of steps. Grand Parade terminated at a triangular garden opposite the pier entrance. It was here in Roman times, that the Count of the Saxon Shore had his palace. Later, nearby was the Round House formerly a windmill, where in June 1789, the children of George III spent their summer holiday. Undermined by the pounding of the sea, the Round House was demolished in 1841.

Royal Hippodrome Theatre

Behind the Queen's Hotel runs **Seaside Road** with the Royal Hippodrome Theatre, one of the town's most popular variety venues. It was known as the Theatre Royal when it was opened in 1883 and was the creation of one of the best known theatrical architects, C. J. Phipps, who was also responsible for the building in London of the Lyric, Savoy and Queen's Hall. For its entire life, the Royal Hippodrome has been the heart of the town's traditional theatre but in the

1950s this nearly came to an end. The building was put up for sale and was to have become the television studios for ITV's Southern Television; when negotiations broke down the Eastbourne Borough Council purchased it. Since then it has continued to play a prominent role in entertainment complimenting the Council's other theatres, the Devonshire Park and the Congress.

On the opposite side of Seaside Road, on the corner of **Queens Gardens** stands what was once the Mutual Improvement Society's hall, now converted into flats. The Duke of Devonshire commissioned this elegant building in 1879,

In 1908, the top floor was opened as the Electric Picture Hall, one of the first cinematography show places in the town. Four years later in 1912, the name was changed to the Cinema Palace, and again in 1915 when it became the Tivoli Cinema.

The cinema had originally 650 seats; in September 1973 it closed for refurbishment and when reopened on the 26th May 1974, the seating capacity had been reduced to 326. In 1983, following a decline in audiences, the cinema was finally closed. The lower floor was originally the Constitutional Club. The building has now been converted in flats.

Eastbourne Pier

Every Victorian seaside resort worth its salt had its pier but in recent years this has proved an expensive luxury and many piers now reek of decay and disenchantment. Eastbourne, contrary to the normal trend, has kept up with changes, and the pier, with its video pavilion and its disco has retained an aliveness that must be the envy of many similar towns.

The proposal to site a pier at Eastbourne came with the formation of the Eastbourne Pier Company, when after some debate in Parliament, the Eastbourne Pier Act, 1865, was passed and sufficient land ‘under the sea’ was purchased from the Crown.

The land at the shore end of the pier was leased from the Local Board at five shillings per annum for 999 years. Even with inflation this is still the amount that the company pays today!

The architect for the project was Eugenius Birch, who had distinguished himself as the most prominent pier designer of the last century; his work included Margate, Deal, Blackpool, Hastings, Plymouth and Brighton piers and Eastbourne’s was considered one of the best. On April 18th 1866, Lord Edward Cavendish officiated at the “driving in of the first pile”. During the ceremony a canister of documents

was deposited for posterity down the iron column. The pier was officially opened on June 13th 1870 and a report in the Eastbourne Standard of the same year gives the following details:

‘The total length of the pier will be about 1,000 feet and will terminate with a spacious head, having landing stages on either side so that steamers can land passengers at any state of the tide. Since the death of J. E. Dowson, Esq., the former contractor the works have been carried out by Messrs Head Wrightson & Co the present contractors under the superintendence of Mr Henry Matravers the resident engineer and the whole of the iron work has been cast at their Teesdale Iron Works at Stockton-on Tees In March last there were only about three spans of girders erected but since that period four more spans have been added. The pier now runs out a distance of five hundred feet. The pier has a clear deck width of twenty-two feet, with comfortable seats on either side, the whole of its length being relieved by two recesses 68 feet wide. The body of the pier will consist of twelve bays or spans of girders 60 feet long, which are supported by cast iron columns let into very strong screw piles that penetrate into the bed of the sea a distance of seven feet. The bed consists of very hard blue clay. The columns are twelve inches in diameter and 25 feet in length, fixed into screw plies eight feet long. The second recess will, when finished, form a convenient space for refreshment stalls,

and the band during the summer months will play to the delight visitors to Eastbourne. The termination of the seventh span was tested on Sunday last by the firing of two six-pounders and it was found that there was not the slightest vibration thus showing that the pier is amply strong to resist any seas that may come in contact with it.'

The pier was finally completed in 1872, but was little more than a promenade and at the pier head, a landing stage with four kiosks and a windbreak. Over the next three years the pier suffered considerable damage from storms, and had to be materially strengthened. On January 1st 1877, a severe storm completely washed away the whole of the shoreward end; so it was back to the drawing board and this section was redesigned higher than the original level and joined to the seaward end with a slope.

In 1888, a theatre was built at the seaward end to accommodate four hundred people it had a flat floor and cost £250 to erect. When, in 1899, a new theatre was erected, the former one was taken apart and removed by wagon to Lewes, where it became a cattle shed. No longer did the audience have to peer around the obstructing pillars; balconies were also built on the cantilever principle. It was not only a theatre but a complete complex, with a bar, a café, the pier offices and, on the top, a camera obscura dome which by the

use of a lens, mirror and round canvas screen, projected a picture of the whole area around the pier. The view moved 360 degrees as the operator turned the apparatus by the means of a hand windlass.

Sadly in 1970, a pier employee set fire to the theatre, which caused considerable damage. It took many years before the camera obscura was repaired and again open to the public. The theatre has since been converted into the disco-showbar. However, the modern building blends adequately with the older Victorian features.

In 1901, two games saloons were erected mid-way, and in 1902 and 1903, a cast-iron windscreen, painted in silver with dolphin designs picked out in red, was positioned along the length of the pier. The shoreward end of the screens was destroyed during the Second World War but the rest remain.

In 1925, a music pavilion to seat 900 people was built at the seaward end and continued later as a ballroom until again, with a change in public demand, it was converted into an amusement arcade. There have been three differing main entrances to the pier, the second coming in 1912, to be redesigned in 1951 with the present kidney-shaped flat-roofed building.

During the Second World War, the pier was considered a security risk and in May 1940, orders were given for it to be blown up. At the

eleventh hour there was a reprieve and only the decking mid-way was removed. For the duration of the war, a machine gun was positioned at the camera obscura and a bofors gun at the shoreward end.

The pier suffered badly from air attacks and on one occasion a 10,000-gallon water tank near the camera obscura was holed by cannon shell, flooding the offices below. Later, when a sea-mine exploded near the shoreward end, it pushed in the side of the pavilion and lifted ten tons of shingle onto the roof but luckily the understructure remained firm.

When peace returned, the two sections of the pier were rejoined with concrete slabs and this decking was later extended down as far as the showbar; from that point the wooden planking was retained because it was found to be resilient to the movement of the pier in stormy conditions.

Since it's opening, the pier has always been a place of entertainment. Sunday concerts were originally given from a bandstand at the pier head, until the Lord's Day Observance Society forced a reluctant Duke of Devonshire, who was the chief shareholder, to have them stopped. In the late 1870s, the bandstand was moved to the middle deck (where it was less windy) and there the minstrels, pierrots and military bands entertained each evening. During the First World War, the Knuts Kamp Komedij Kompany from Summerdown Convalescent camp became a

popular success. These concert parties were the forerunners to the popular summer shows which flourished until January 1970, when the theatre was burnt down.

The first performances of “talking pictures” in Eastbourne were given at the pier theatre and those same early film projectors remained in their projection box until they were sold in 1946. In the years up to 1939 there was a constant flow of paddle and screw steamers calling at the pier head but with severe losses sustained by the merchant fleet, especially at Dunkirk, this sight has been lost.

Cavendish Place

In the centre of **Cavendish Place** at its junction with Royal Parade and Grand Parade and directly facing the pier stands the Royal Sussex Regiment Memorial.

The statue standing on the column was designed by Sir William Goscombe John A.R.A., who also designed the statue of the 7th Duke of Devonshire at the seaward end of Devonshire Place. It depicts an officer of the regiment standing with sword in hand. The granite base was fashioned by the well-known local stone mason, R. Francis. The memorial was unveiled by the Duke of Norfolk in February 1906 and its inscription reads:

‘2nd Royal Sussex Regiment. To the honour and glory of the officers, non commissioned officers

and men of the 2nd Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment formerly 107 Regiment Bengal Infantry who lost their lives during the service of the Battalion abroad in Malta, Egypt and in India from 1882 to 1902 and in special memory of the campaigns in which the Battalion took part, the Black Mountain Expedition of 1888 and the TIRAH Campaign of 1897/98. This memorial has been erected by their comrades.' On the Cavendish Place side of the granite base are listed the names of the officers and men who lost their lives in the above campaigns.

At 4, **Cavendish Place**, the social reformer Friedrich Engels assisted Karl Marx in his revolutionary manifesto for working class equality. After his death, Frederick Engels' ashes were dropped into the sea five miles off Beachy Head. Among the mourners was Eleanor, the widow of Karl Marx.

The terraces on each side down as far as the traffic lights at Seaside Road are part of the Earl of Burlington's plan of the 1850s, together with Victoria Place (top of Terminus Road) and Cornfield Terrace. Between the traffic lights at Seaside Road and Pevensey Road, on the left hand side is the Cavendish Place chapel, once the oldest nonconformist meeting place in Eastbourne, which was originally called North Street Chapel. Its design is by James Berry, a surveyor to the Duke of Devonshire, and John

Haine, the founder of the undertakers of that name, built it in 1857.

Beside the chapel is Cavendish Villa, formerly Salem Villa, when it was used as the residence for the minister. In 1880 it became Bijou Villa; its present name came into being in 1885.

The flats on the south corners of Pevensey Road, was once the Ear Nose and Throat Hospital. Recently, during refurbishment the name appeared briefly from under the paintwork, faded but legible, it was once again covered by a new coating of paint

On the northeast corner with Pevensey Road, is a block of flats with a thick wall separating them from the other houses. This is all that remains of Pevensey Congregational Church built in 1860 and demolished in 1977.

Seafront – West Parades

Grand Parade runs westward from the pier as far as the Grand Hotel. It is an imposing parade of the finest hotels in Eastbourne and commences with the town's largest and first major hotel to be built and named after the Earl of Burlington, whose family name was originally considered for the name for the town, Burlington.

The **Carpet Gardens**, beside the promenade are international famous and have played an important part in the image making of Eastbourne, having for over a century been a source of pleasure to visitors and residents alike. The spotlight standards, carefully positioned at the beginning and end of each section, have the town's coat of arms emblazoned on each base. At night the fountains play rhythmically in tune with the varying colours of lighting set beneath the pillars of water.

Devonshire Place is an 80-foot wide boulevard and was originally intended to be a showpiece of the new town, connecting the seafront with the railway station. This never came to be but its tree grandeur is quite imposing, even though in recent years many of the fine mansions 'have been demolished to make way for modern apartment blocks. At the north end is Memorial Square where the bronze statue of a winged victory was erected in memory of the fallen of the two world wars. The statue, that of an angel holding in the right hand a downward pointing sword and in the left hand a victor's laurel wreath, was unveiled by General Lord Home, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., who was the Commander of the 1st Army in the Great War.

At the south (seafront) end is a statue of the 7th Duke of Devonshire, fashioned by Goscombe John and erected by public subscription in 1901.

The Central Bandstand

It is positioned mid-way between the pier and the Wish Tower, the Central Bandstand and arena were opened in 1935 with a capacity to seat an audience of 3,000. It is considered to be one of the best-designed bandstands in Britain. It is protected from the Channel winds by glass screens, which allow the maximum advantage of views and sunshine. The arena has been designed to act as a sounding board and with the aid of modern public address amplifiers; the music can be heard comfortably over the whole area.

Within the arena area, a shelter opposite to the bandstand contains a memorial panel to John Woodward, who lived in Eastbourne for many years and was a member of the Eastbourne Municipal Orchestra. He was a member of the ship's orchestra aboard the ill-fated Titanic when it sank on its maiden voyage on April 15th 1912.

A Cornish granite tablet with three panels in bronze contains in the centre, a portrait of John Woodward with on the left, a picture of the Titanic sinking beneath the waves and on the right, the inscription:

‘This tablet is erected as a tribute to the self-sacrifice and devotion of John Wesley Woodward (formerly a member of the Eastbourne Municipal Orchestra, the Duke of Devon-shire’s Orchestra and the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne, orchestra) Who, with others of the

hero musicians of the ship's band, perished in the Atlantic through the sinking of the White Star Liner Titanic on April 15th 1912' - 'Faithful unto death'.

Cavendish Hotel is an appropriate name for one of Eastbourne's fine hotels, honouring as it does the town's foremost landowning family. The Cavendish Hotel was designed by T.E. Knightley and built in 1866 but due to financial difficulties it did not officially open until 1873.

On Monday, May 4th 1942, the east wing was destroyed in a hit and run air raid on the town and several people trapped beneath the wreckage lost their lives. When the east wing was rebuilt, it was done in the modern squared design and remains completely out of keeping with the rest of the excellent Victorian architecture.

The **Transport and General Workers Union Building** is situated in Grand Parade between **Howard Square** and **Lascelles Terrace** and is on the site of the Mayfair Hotel, which was a fine Victorian building containing 84 bedrooms and commanding a prominent position on the sea front. When it was demolished in 1966 the empty site became an embarrassment to the Eastbourne Council so that the application by the Transport and General Workers Union to site their 8-storey centre was passed with little or no consideration to the character of the area. The resultant building when viewed from a distance has the appearance

of a burnt out structure using as it has extensive panels of smoked glass.

Opposite the Wish Tower slopes is **Carlisle Road** running westward towards the district of Meads and on towards the Royal Eastbourne Golf Club and the South Downs at **Paradise Drive**. Within the first section of Carlisle Road is a haven of shops and cafes ideally suited for the holidaymaker. On the corner of **Carlisle Road** and **Compton Street** stands the **Tower House**, now the new Eastbourne Heritage Centre.

Eastbourne Heritage Centre

Following the closure of the Devonshire Baths complex, grave concern was voiced over the future of the site, especially the Tower House on the corner, which since its construction in 1886 had been the flag tower and manager's lodgings for the Devonshire Park Company. The Eastbourne Civic Society launched a campaign to save the building from demolition and to give it a new lease of life. Thus the idea of a Heritage Centre was born. On January 11th 1982, the Eastbourne Council agreed to lease the building to the society on a 21-year lease at a 'peppercorn rent'. After many delays, conversion began early in 1983, in line with plans drawn up by local architects Ford, Newman and Whitty. Richard Crook, who had the unique position of being both a member of the society and of the firm of architects, worked untiringly in every phase of

the work; many features of the centre are of his own special creation.

The task of conversion was a major undertaking, requiring the removal of all the rooms and the staircase on the ground and first floor into two full-size galleries. The basement came in for the same treatment providing a 40-seater lecture and audio-visual theatre. To link the three floors, all the rooms in the tower were removed and a new fireproof, classically detailed staircase, installed.

On Saturday November 5th 1983, the Mayor, Councillor Dennis Cullen, officially declared the building open; a name plaque was unveiled above the entrance while three signal rockets sped skyward. From the top of the tower, Richard Crook armed with a bottle of champagne, christened the new centre, as a prelude to the raising of a union jack from the flag post.

Sadly, the Devonshire Park Baths are no more, once an epitaph to Victorian Eastbourne. Designed by G. A. Wallis and opened in 1847, the baths were the largest heated, salt-water baths in Britain. They were a brilliant example of civil engineering, using the natural rise and fall of the English Channel to fill and empty the baths by way of a cast iron pipe laid under Grand Parade. The site is now covered Devonshire Mansions.

The Devonshire Park and Winter Garden

The Devonshire Park Company was formed in 1873, to create and manage an entertainments and recreational centre on the marshy ground near to the Wish Tower. This resulted in the construction of the Floral Hall (Winter Garden), the Devonshire Park Theatre, a Pavilion and a Racquet Court, adjacent to which the company also erected eight shops in Carlisle Road, a public House in Compton Street and, on the corner of the two roads, the Tower House.

Our Victorian ancestors were able to enjoy these grounds for 6d before 6 30pm or one shilling for the evening. Within, there were music garden, facilities for cricket, tennis, roller-skating and racquets while another popular pastime; bicycling, was allowed on some of the paths. The sum of sixpence was in those days considered a lot of money and this area became a pleasure ground reserved mainly for the richer residents and visitors.

On July 18th 1881, the first demonstration of electric lighting in Eastbourne was staged at the Devonshire Park by the newly formed Eastbourne Electric Light Company. Arc-lamps were used to illuminate the Winter Garden's

Floral Hall and the Eastbourne Chronicle of Saturday, July 23rd records:

‘The Floral Hall - like a miniature Crystal Palace - wore the appearance of one of the enchanted palaces to be read of in the Arabian Nights.’

In 1891, the Indian Pavilion, formerly the property of the P. & Q Steamship Company, was erected in the grounds; it provided dressing rooms for the cricketers and tennis players, together with a refreshment room for visitors.

In 1912, the Devonshire Park grounds were offered to the Eastbourne Council for the sum of £110,665, but mixed opinion delayed any decision and it was not until 1929 that the council finally purchased the Winter Garden, the Pavilion, the Tower House (now the Eastbourne Heritage Centre) and the outside roller-skating rink.

In 1963 the Congress Theatre was built and is connected to the Winter Garden by a restaurant building. This enterprise was designed to place Eastbourne firmly among the leading conference centres. In 1973, plans to build a large exhibition hall on the site of the Indian Pavilion were approved, later this became the main Council Entertainment Department offices and another hall was build on land that was formerly tennis courts.

The Winter Garden is considered an outstanding replica of original Crystal Palace in London, lost in a fire in 1936. Along with the Palm House at Kew Gardens it ranks as unique. During the war, the glass panes were removed and it took 65 years, to 2004, before they were replaced.

The Devonshire Park ground has been the focal point of much of our local history. In 1875, J. C. Plimpton, the inventor of the roller-skate, opened the massive indoor and outdoor rink with a skating demonstration. By the 1880s Eastbourne boasted of being the first seaside resort to have its own symphony orchestra. With the incorporation of Eastbourne as a municipal borough in 1883, the first meeting of the Eastbourne Town Council was held in the Winter Garden. Following Louis Bleriot's triumphant flight across the English Channel in 1909, his monoplane was brought to Eastbourne and displayed on the lawns of the Devonshire Park. The list of outstanding events is endless, with extravagant balls banquets exhibitions and performances of all kinds, including the highlight of each municipal year the Mayoral Ball

Today, **Devonshire Park** ranks high among the international tennis tournament centres, second only to Wimbledon.

The **Towner Art Gallery** was moved from its location in Manor Gardens in 2009, to a new state-of-art building attached to the Congress

Theatre. Broadcaster, David Dimbleby, officially opened it.

King Edward's Parade starts at the Wish Tower and was named to commemorate the visits to Eastbourne of King Edward. VII. It was formerly part of Grand Parade, the name being changed in 1913. The wall bordering the Wish Tower slopes was originally built of Sussex Green Sandstone quarried from that very spot. The wall has recently been rebuilt, but at its base remains a harvest of antiquity in the shape of rare licence plates. These examples are key-hole shaped and bear one or other of the following letters:

BC/S - Licensed bathchair man (another can be found in Southfields Road)

GC/S - Goat chaise stand

HC/S - Hackney carriage stand

SP/S - Saddled pony stand

Along this stretch of pavement can be found a lamppost stand with the Eastbourne coat of arms on the lower panel, while a granite block at the boundary with Western Lawns, marked with an arrow and the letters W.D. (War Department) defines the area of the Wish Tower.

The name Wish is derived from 'Wise', an old English word for a marsh. From the summit of the Wish Tower mound can be enjoyed the finest view of Eastbourne's promenade and in the

distance across the bay, Bexhill, St Leonards and Hastings.

The Wish Tower mound was further heightened when the Romans dug out a channel to create a harbour on land now covered by the Devonshire Park. They called their harbour 'Porta Longis'.

The Eastbourne Lifeboat Museum

(The William Terriss Memorial Lifeboat House)

Built of Sussex red brick from Keymer and costing £1,314, the original lifeboat station was paid for after an appeal was launched by the Daily Telegraph in 1898, to commemorate the Victorian actor William Terriss, who had been stabbed to death by a disgruntled small time actor, outside the private entrance to the Adephi Theatre in London.

The lifeboat station was to become a fitting memorial to a man who loved the sea and whose prompt action had saved three people from drowning. His first production at the Adephi, was as Lieutenant David Kingsley in Harbour Lights; a play that ran for over 500 performances and which ended, dramatically with a lifeboat rescue.

The foundation stone of the new lifeboat station was laid by the Duchess of Devonshire, on Saturday, July 16th 1898. His fellow actor, Charles Wyndham, made this tribute to his memory:

‘What he was before the public he was to his friends in private. Every heroic deed of his upon the stage was just such as we could imagine him performing off the boards - nay, as on more than one occasion he did perform. It is impossible to conceive a grander parallel between the artist and the man. He lived a life as worthy and died a death as tragic as any man he has represented on the stage. We must remember with satisfaction that the boat which this house will cover will, whenever she goes forth on her noble mission, immortalize the name and vitalize the spirit of William Terriss.

The museum holds records that date back to 1822 when the lifeboat was housed in Marine Road In those far off days, it was Mad Jack Fuller who privately funded the lifeboat at Eastbourne. This building is now converted to an electricity sub-station. It stood on the beach which came up as far as the rear of the old bakery (1790), which now stands beside Marine Gardens.

The station ceased active duty in 1924 and was later reopened as a museum in 1937 gaining the distinction of being the first of its kind in the world The exhibits give a comprehensive history of Eastbourne as a major Royal National Lifeboat Centre from the time when the town was served by two lifeboats second being stationed at the lifeboat building on the shoreline near Prince’s Park.

The Wish Tower

The Wish Tower (Tower 73) is the most westerly of the line of defensive towers built to oppose a landing by Napoleon's army in 1803; the seventy-fourth Martello tower at Seaford was not added until 1810. Around the tower is a dry moat, which was originally spanned by a footbridge; the entrance is now by wooden stairs from the moat garden.

There were originally fourteen such towers between Pevensey Bay and Eastbourne, of which only six remain:

Number 60 at Pevensey Bay.

Number 61 externally restored it is now the centre piece of the Martello estate with pleasant lawns and paths which blend with the development of nearby houses and bungalows

Number 62 known as the Grey Tower has been carefully converted into a dwelling with additional rooms added.

Number 64 on the Crumbles.

Number 66, stands as a landmark at Langney Point and has for many years 'been a look-out post for the coast guard service serving the new Sovereign Harbour.

The Wish Tower (Tower 73) has been carefully restored by the local council and is now a puppet

museum. It is distinctly different from most other Martello towers in that it is surrounded by a dry moat and embankment, part of which was removed in 1961 for the erection of a cafeteria and sun lounge on the westerly side. This offers perfect views of the English Channel and along the coast towards Beachy Head.

The westward slope of the Wish Tower drops onto a flat plateau, known as the Western Lawns.

Western Lawns

During the Victorian and Edwardian period when Eastbourne was at the height of elite elegance, these lawns became the meeting place of the wealthy, whose highlight of the week was “Sunday Parade” when the gentlemen and their ladies “took of the sea air” and strolled the lawns, to see and be seen. In 1885, the Duke of Devonshire leased this land adjoining the Wish Tower to the Eastbourne Council at £10 per annum for 99 years.

In the middle of the Western Lawns, directly opposite the famous Grand Hotel, stands the statue of the 8th Duke of Devonshire, erected “in memory of his great generosity to the town”. It is fashioned in bronze and depicts the Duke robed as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge; the sculpture was by Alfred Drury, A.R.A.

The Grand Hotel

This is the town's only five star hotel, as rated by the Automobile Association. It was designed by local architect R. K. Blessley (who was also responsible for the Leaf Hall) and opened in 1876. The list of visitors to this hotel might easily read as a section for Who's Who, but perhaps the Grand is best known for the celebrated B.B.C. broadcasts of the Palm Court Orchestra, with many famous musicians such as Albert Sandier, Tom Jenkins, Van Leir and Arthur Beckwith, who regularly entertained from there until the 1950s.

From all sides, the Grand is a delight of architectural features, especially at night when the front of the building is bathed in floodlighting.

The Western Parades

Probably the most ambitious and expensive project undertaken by the Duke, the Western Parades were designed by Henry Currey in his 1872 development plan and commenced in 1878. It required the removal of some 400,000 cubic yards of chalk, which were transported and used in the foundation of the roads and buildings at the east end of the town. Three parades were created

on different levels, running parallel to the shore and connected by a series of zig-zag paths. In the wall of the eastern zig-zag path can be found the date of its completion, 1881, set out in brown flints. Beside the paths are numerous alcoves and bowers, thatched shelters on the lower parade and a variety of shrubs, firs and flora. Here as at Western Lawns a social pattern emerged, as the Eastbourne Gazette of 1881 records: “The promenaders of the Upper Parade look down with the severe and ineffable contempt of the true born hidalgos on the motley crowd of nondescripts who saunter lazily along the lower walk”.

These parades were favoured by King George V and Queen Mary during their many visits ‘to Eastbourne; among the rocky seashore pools the young Princess Elizabeth (our present queen) and her late sister Margaret used to play. Here in this favoured part of Eastbourne the Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known by his pen name of Lewis Carroll, found inspiration for his many books here, in 1905, the composer Claude Achille Debussy was moved to write three symphonic sketches for orchestra, collectively entitled *La Mer* (The Sea).

The Prince’s Seat

At the end of the middle tier of promenade, is a large mound with bushes and a spiral path leading to the top. It was here on June 30th 1883, that the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, officially opened the western parades

Here the parades terminate at a picturesque 'horseshoe-shaped hollow known as Holywell with its Italian Gardens, while above on the opposite side of the main coastal road, is South Cliff and the controversial South Cliff Tower.

South Cliff Tower

This is tallest building in Eastbourne, 200 feet high with 19 storeys and erected in 1966 at a cost of £500,000.

Holywell

Holywell is a varied area of chalk cliffs and grassy plateaux lying at the foot of the downland which rises from the promenade up towards the heights of Beachy Head. To the west, Foyle Way cuts a boundary between the South Downs and the sharp slopes which fall away to the Holywell pumping station, partly hidden behind a corrugated-iron fence. Within this chalky cove the early fishermen first settled, before being moved to the eastern end of the town.

At a short distance, Pinnacle Point, sometimes known as the Sugarloaf because of its white chalk peak, stands on the cliff edge, a landfall for passing boats. A muddy path winds its way back towards the main road, with St Bede's School on the left hand side and Helen Gardens on the right. Within a tangled shrub area near to the cliff are

the remains of Wellcombe Cottage, now laid to rubble and at risk from the erosion of the cliffs.

Below, set into the cliff at the top of the beach can be found the original Holy Well, a place of pilgrimage for local churches and visitors.

All Saints' Hospital

Mother Harriet was the head of an Anglo-Catholic order founded in 1851 and known as the community of All Saints' Sisters of the poor. In 1862 she was taken ill and sent to Eastbourne to convalesce. The beauty and peace of the town inspired her to propose the building of All Saints' Convalescent Hospital. The hospital, believed to be the first purpose-built convalescent hospital in Britain, was designed by Henry Woodyer and erected between 1867 and 1869. The land was given by the Duke of Devonshire and in 1874 Woodyer added the Victorian chapel, which stands in the grounds and is an outstanding example of the high gothic revival, so much in keeping with the rest of Meads. An early lift in the building is operated by waterpower and is a unique piece of Victorian engineering.

The hospital has now been converted into flats.

The foot of Beachy Head

From this point the South Downs commence, with plainly marked footpaths that lead up to the summit of Beachy Head. The coastal road,

known as Upper Duke's Drive, skirts the bottom of the Downland before making a zig-zag line up the side of the South Downs to meet Beachy Head Road just before the top of the hill. At that point the road divides off, south to the Beachy Head and north to East Dean.

Beachy Head

Beachy Head is the highest cliff on the South Coast of Britain. At 575 feet above sea level, it offers breath-taking views across the countryside. On a clear day one can see Dungeness in the east, and the Isle of Wight in the west; but normally a haze restricts the view as far as Hastings and Newhaven.

In 1929, the Duchess of Kent (later the Queen) unveiled a seat on the Beachy Head, commanding fine views across Eastbourne, this was to commemorate the purchase of this area and the surrounding Downland by the Council in 1926.

The word Beachy is derived from the old French beau-chef, 'air head or promontory'. In a document written during the reign of Henry IV, the Commissioners of sewers were instructed to view the banks of the Pevensey Marsh lying between Bixle (Bexhill) and Bechief (Beachy Head).

The foreshore to the east of the Head is known as Falling Sands, the Head itself Gun Gardens and to the west, Boulder Bank.

On the highest point of the Head there used to be a Lloyds signal station with semaphore and flagstaff, but only the base remains. The officers used to be housed in some cottages, which stood beside the road a short distance away, but these were destroyed by fire.

During the war and for a short time afterwards, there was a R.A.F. radar station on the Head. The raised earth in front of the Beachy Head clearly marks the position and below, there are several stories of rooms cut deep into the cliff.

Beachy Head was once called 'the grave yard of the English Channel' and even during this present century it has been the scene of many wrecks. In 1902, the S.S. Robert Ingram was in collision with a German liner. In 1912, the P & O liner Oceana sank after colliding with a German barque. On the afternoon of April 26th 1955, the 3,000 ton S.S. Germania collided with the S.S. Maro and ran aground half a mile east of the lighthouse.

The Lighthouses

In 1706, Jonathan Darby was appointed rector of East Dean church. When an 800 ton schooner ran aground at Birling Gap with heavy loss of life,

the rector was moved to build a lighthouse in the cliff between Beachy Head and Birling Gap.

It was, to quote my book 'The Beachy Head Light', that 'Jonathan Darby spent every spare hour hewing with a chisel and axe, fashioning the rock face into caves, using chalk fissures to create a staircase rising six feet from the beach. At the top, a vertical tunnel, commonly called the chimney, ascended into lofty rooms, the seaward of which had a balcony 20 feet above high water. The chimney was reached by means of a rope which dangled down to the staircase'.

After Darby's death on October 26th 1726, the cave fell into disuse, but remained a curiosity until the early part of last century when it disappeared through cliff erosion.

In 1834, John Fuller M.P. financed the building of Belle Tote lighthouse on the cliff above Darby's old cave. It was designed by William Hallett and built of Aberdeen granite drawn across the downs from Maidstone by teams of oxen.

The 'lighthouse rose to a height of 47 feet, being 334 feet above the high tide mark. The illumination was powered by 30 oil-fed lamps each housed in separate reflectors. The structure revolved every two minutes and the light was visible 'on a clear night 23 miles out to sea.

Beneath Belle Tote lighthouse, Trinity House ordered the excavation of three caves to provide shelter for ship-wrecked seamen.

But Belle Tote lighthouse never came up to expectation, for fog often obscured the light. At the end of the last century the lighthouse was moved on rollers, away from the eroding cliff.

Beachy Head Lighthouse

The present lighthouse was built in 1902. A major operation requiring the erection of an aerial railway, which carried men and materials from the base camp, perched high above on the headland.

The lighthouse is divided into seven floors, reached by a spiral staircase. The lower part was originally the crews quarters, but the lighthouse is no longer manned and is now operated by a remote control link.

The light flashes twice every 20 seconds, with an intensity of 510,000 candelas. This is complimented by a 2,000 watt nautophone fog horn for bad weather, which gives a warning call every five minutes.

. The lighthouse is 142 feet high and constructed from 3,660 tons of granite cut into four or five ton blocks. The foundation s embedded eighteen feet into the chalk, creating a 50 foot base.

The light is visible for 16 miles .

MEADS, THE BELGRAVIA OF EASTBOURNE

In 1872 the Duke's architect Henry Currey drew up the second phase for the development of the western area of the town known as Meads. This was to be an exclusive district of fine villas and tree-lined streets. In proportion and quality it established an area of outstanding Victorian character, which, in contrast with the white classical style of the sea front, has given Eastbourne a unique example of the period. Much of Meads is now protected by a conservation order, which encloses an area bounded by the sea front, St John's Road, Gaudick Road, along the foot of the downs behind Carlisle Road, Darley Road, Wellcombe Crescent and back along the lower Downland to encompass Holywell. This, then, is a living cultural inheritance, which establishes Victorian Eastbourne just as further along the coast to the west is Regency Brighton.

Meads Street

At 27 Meads Street, on the corner of Derwent Road, is a plaque set into the wall. Below a shield with the words, 'G. LUCK 1897, is this inscription: 'These premises are erected on the site of the Old Ship Inn which was built about A.D. 1600.'

Down **Meads Road** between Carlisle Road and St John's Road, Meads Road divides into a dual carriageway. The left side was originally intended as a service road to the many large mansions on that side, while the right-hand side is part of the old highway from Meads to Southbourne. Gaudick Road branches off here and at the top north side corner stands the 18th century **Meads Place**, formerly the farmhouse for Place Farm. The word Gaudiek is derived from a corruption of the ancient word "goredyke", meaning triangular piece of land on a slope.

In 1970, George Wallis's flamboyant creation Fairfield Court, which used to stand on the corner of Carlisle Road and Meads Road, was demolished; all that remains are two solitary pillars of the original gateway engraved with the name. Nearby, on the opposite side of Carlisle Road, stands Ascham Gate, the last reminder of Ascham School that stood on this site from 1889 until 1977. The entrance arch on the Carlisle Road side is engraved with the words:

'In memory of 49 gallant men who were at school here in their early boyhood and gave their lives in the service of their country during the Great War of 1914-1918. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we shall remember them.'

The poem, from which the above line is taken, "They shall grow not old", comes from "For the Fallen" by Laurence Binyon

‘In memory of 49 gallant men who were at school here in their early boyhood and gave their lives in the service of their country during the Great War of 1914-1918. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we shall remember them.’

The poem, from which the above line is taken, “They shall grow not old”, comes from “For the Fallen” by Laurence Binyon

(1869-1943). A plaque on the left hand pillar records:

‘Ascham: Members of the old Aschamian Society gratefully record that on this ground there thrived Ascham St Vincent’s Preparatory school from 1889 to 1939 and Ascham, the college preparatory school, from 1946-1977. Virtute et Valore.’

On the inside pillars of the entrance arch can be found a list of names of the “49 gallant men”, while in the middle are engraved the words:

‘They went with songs to the battle, they were young, Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow. They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted They fell with their faces to the foe.’

Ascham School was named after Roger Ascham (1515-1568), who was born at Kirby Wiske North Yorkshire and educated at St Johns College, Cambridge; he became language tutor to

Lady Elizabeth and promoted to Latin secretary to King Edward VI Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth I

On the corner of **Granville Road** and **Meads Road** a Victorian school house still stands, now converted into a private dwelling and renamed 'The Cottage.' Beneath the eaves on the Meads Road side of the building is a plaque engraved:

'This infants' school was erected and established by Blanche, Countess of Burlington 1836. "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"

King Redman House built in 1973, stands on the site of St Peter's church, designed by Henry Currey and built in 1896, the church was favoured by King Edward VII, Queen Mary, George V and Queen Elizabeth and by our present queen when they stayed at nearby Compton Place.

Opposite stands **Greystone House**, an 18th century boulder faced residence of special architectural interest.

Compton Place (Compton Park Road)

Queen Elizabeth I was on the throne when James Burton built Bourne Place around 1574. In 1724 the estate was sold to Spencer Compton who was later created Earl of Wilmington and the house was renamed Compton Place. During the period

1726 to 1731 it was extensively enlarged under the masterful architectural supervision of Colen Campbell, who had gained distinction as a pioneer of the Palladian style in British country houses. Probably the finest room in the house is the state bedroom, with its stucco ceiling created around 1728 by Charles Stanley, which depicts a burst relief of Colen Campbell with the tools of his trade, a compass and dividers.

Compton Place first became a place of importance when the Earl of Burlington inherited the estate and commissioned the well-known architect Decimus Burton to lay out a plan for a new town to be called Burlington. Probably the earl had second thoughts and became reluctant to spoil his newly acquired realm, for little more was heard of Burton's design, which included a two-tier shopping arcade along the seafront.

In 1847, a local surveyor, James Berry, was appointed to design a sea wall of green sandstone blocks, which was built in the following year. With the arrival of the railway in 1849, came the development of Cavendish Place, Victoria Place and Cornfield Terrace following the building of the Burlington Hotel in 1851. When the earl succeeded to the title of 7th Duke of Devonshire in January 1858, he renewed his interest in the development of the whole area. This time he called upon Henry Currey, who had been a pupil of Decimus Burton, to draw up a new plan. The

design included an 80 foot wide tree-lined boulevard called Devonshire Place.

The work of creating Eastbourne continued at a rapid pace, so much so that in 1872 Henry Currey was required to expand 'his original plan, to develop the west end of the seafront as far as Holywell and to create the area inland known as the Meads. The 7th Duke died in 1891 and was succeeded by his son, Spencer Compton, the 8th Duke of Devonshire, who followed closely his father's inspirations. When the 8th Duke died in 1908 he had no children and that line of the family ceased. The title 9th Duke of Devonshire was inherited by his brother's son Victor.

During the period up to the death of the 10th Duke in 1950, Compton Place entertained many distinguished guests including members of the royal family: King Edward VII, King George V and Queen Mary and our present Queen Elizabeth, when she was a child. In recent years the house has been leased as a school of English, a purpose it still serves.

The estate grounds, once endowed with many ancient and stately trees are drastically being reduced with the gradual spread of housing development. The estate borders onto the Royal Eastbourne Golf Club, where on the edge of the greens at Paradise is a summerhouse (sometimes known as a folly). It was built in 1739 of knapped and squared flints with Portland stone dressing

and though sheltered by the over-spread of Paradise wood, is a building of curiosity.

Above, in **Paradise Wood**, which was badly damaged by the 1987 hurricane lies the ruins of Pashley Mill This mill was one of only three horizontal mills built by Thomas Mortimer of Eastbourne.

The Saffrons Cricket Ground

This green space bordered on one side by the Compton Estate and on the other by the elegant outline of the town hall, has for over a century been the centre for the sport of cricket in Eastbourne. The name Saffrons originates from a species of crocus grown on the site during the last century; its dried stigmas were used as a dye and for flavouring in medicinal products. The ground is in two sections and the part known as Larkin's Field dates from around 1700 when it was rented to a saddler in South Street; here he grazed his cattle, the leather being used in the manufacture of his saddles.

Cricket first came to Eastbourne in 1738 when a match was played between the parish team of Eastbourne and that of Battle, the home team being the winners. Probably the earliest ground was at Paradise on land now used by the Royal Eastbourne Golf Club. As the sport became popular, the site was moved to Ashford Road, where the last remnant, Cricket Field Cottages, were only recently demolished to make way for

the multi-storey car park. The game moved to Devonshire Park in 1874, where it remained until its move to the Saffrons in 1886. Since that time most of England's well-known cricketing personalities have appeared in matches at the ground.

In 1947, the main pavilion was destroyed by fire and having been replaced by the existing building, it too was damaged by fire in 1977. In 1983, huge financial losses were announced by the club; a situation which by 1989 resulted in the sale of Larkin's Field for the development of housing.

In Larkin's Field on the western boundary with Compton Place Road, there is a memorial stone to a dog named Harlequin, engraved with the words:

'Here lies Harlequin, Pet Foxhound of the 9th Service Battalion The Border Regiment (Pioneers), run over by a motor car and killed on 21 February 1915.'

The Saffrons Room

Adjacent to the Saffrons Cricket ground and opposite to the town hall, on the corner of Meads Road and Saffrons Road, is the Saffrons Room, formerly a ballroom with a sprung floor, it was designed by J W Woolnough in 1910 The building has been for many years the head office of Caffyns Limited, which was founded by Percy

T Caffyn in 1902 One of his Sons Sir Sydney Caffyn, was the mayor of Eastbourne for two terms from 1956 - 58 and again in 1973, when Eastbourne changed from county borough status to that of a borough council on the reorganisation of local government

The Town Hall (Grove Road)

When the Local Board considered the building of a central office for the town, Eastbourne was still a country community and the initially contemplated expenditure of £8,000 was beyond the board's wildest imagination. Even so, some foresighted gentlemen laboured to push the project forward and it was decided to offer a prize to an architect who could design an adequate town hall. Many plans were submitted, most being extremely attractive but often too elaborate to have any practical worth. The most practical came from Mr Foulks of Birmingham, who was awarded the prize.

Nevertheless the Local Board still considered the plan too expensive and instead, Mr Schmidt, the town's former building surveyor, was asked to submit a cheaper design. This after several alterations was approved on the recommendation of the Law and Parliamentary Committee. What was to follow amounted almost to disaster Mr O Mitchell the Quantity Surveyor, found himself unable to relate the plans to the specifications and suggested that the discrepancies were so serious

as to render the project unworkable Little notice was taken of his remarks even opposition from many local architects and from several members of the board and the pressure of a noisy public meeting did not change the board's decision and shortly. a tender from Dore and Sons, at £28,745, was accepted.

. At one of the largest parish meetings ever held in Eastbourne, speaker after speaker condemned the board s action and only when Dore and Sons withdrew their tender did the board yield to public opinion. The plans were then sent to the Duke's architect, Henry Currey, for his advice and. he favoured Foulks's original design. Mr Foulks was then invited to watch over the undertaking and a second tender, from James Peerless for £30,000, was accepted. The work commenced at a site known as Stocksbank, on ground purchased from the Duke of Devonshire for £3 000 On October 9th 1884, the foundation stone was laid by Lord Edward Cavendish, the 3rd son of the 7th Duke of Devonshire.

It was hoped that Queen Victoria would accept an invitation to open the new building but she declined. A second invitation was quickly submitted to the heir apparent Prince Edward but with the same result As time was running out the newly elected mayor, Alderman George Boulton was asked to conduct the opening ceremony.

Wednesday, October 20th 1886 was a day that vibrated with festivity; bunting decked the

streets, shops closed half-day to enjoy the holiday and the Mayor, holding a gold-headed key presented by Mr Foulks in a velvet-lined case, announced:

‘I should declare this building open. It ‘is ready and available for the business of the town and country and for religious social and pleasurable gatherings and will I hope remain a monument and show the future generations the goodwill and good washes of the present and continue and ever remain the ornament and pride of the town.’

In the centre of the building the domed clock tower, 130 feet high, remained empty until 1892, when a clock was installed by Messrs. Gillett and Johnson. This clock strikes the Westminster Chimes on four small bells, the hour being struck on a large bell weighing a ton.

The Church of our Lady of Ransom

On the corner opposite to the town hall, at the junction of Meads Road and Grange Road, this fine church was designed by Frederick A. Walters, F.S.A., who later built Buckfast Abbey in Devon. It was opened by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark on Sunday, December 15th 1901, but the tower was not added until 1912 and the side chapels and chancel in 1920.

On the corner of Grange Road and South Street, the New Inn stands on the site of a former coaching inn. It was built in 1880 when the area

was redeveloped to allow the widening of South Street. Richard Cooper, the 19th century author of *Eastbourne Reminiscences* owned a brewery at the rear of the inn, which was established in 1749.

St Saviour's Church (South Street)

Half way down South Street is St Saviour's Church, considered to be the finest Victorian church in our town. It was built on land given by the 7th Duke of Devonshire. The distinguished church architect, George Edmund Street, was responsible for its design, James Peerless for its construction and it was paid for by George Wheipton of Hastings, whose son H. U. Wheipton became its first vicar.

The foundation stone for the church was laid on October 17th 1865 and the building was consecrated by Dr. A. T. Gilbert, Bishop of Chichester, on January 31st 1867. The church spire, 175 feet high, was completed in 1872 and has continued to remain one of the outstanding features of central Eastbourne,

In 1973, following the demolition of St Peter's Church in Meads Road, the two parishes were amalgamated to form the parish of St Saviour and St Peter.

In 1990, the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher and most of her ministers, gathered at this church to pay homage to Ian Gow, the Member of

Parliament for Eastbourne, assassinated by a terrorist bomb at his Hankham home (The Dog House) at 8.40am on July 30th. He had represented Eastbourne since 1974.

Dyke House

This Office and shop complex was formerly the Labour Exchange and the subject of a major redevelopment scheme for the construction of a high office block which would have engulfed Wish Road and the adjacent properties as far as Hardwick Road. What has been achieved is a prime example of how a building of character can be converted to meet the needs of commerce.

The name Dyke House is taken from ‘the Shomer Dyke which once flowed down South Street and was the sewer from Southbourne (Grove Road area) to empty into the sea near the Wish Tower.

Eastbourne College (College Road)

On March 27th 1867, prompted by a gift of land and financial help from the Duke of Devonshire, a certificate of incorporation was granted for the establishment of Eastbourne College, as an elite school for the Sons of gentlemen. The Duke’s architect, Henry Currey, designed the first purpose-built block for the new school in 1870 and the foundation stone was laid by Lady Edward Cavendish, wife of the 7th Duke’s youngest son, on July 30th 1870. The Rev. James Russell Wood M.A., Lid., was appointed the first

headmaster and took up residence in a large house in the grounds known as Larkfield, which had been built in 1835.

In October 1872, a fire caused damage to part of the school house, but this did not cause delay or give rise to any serious problems. In May 1873, the gymnasium was completed and on June. 20th 1874, the college chapel designed by Henry Currey was consecrated by the Bishop of Chichester, though this did not include the chancel, which was not built until 1888. After this initial surge, the school settled down and no further building took place until 1888, when with the appointment of a new headmaster, the Rev. Dr. Crowden, extensive improvements commenced, including the laboratory, a workshop, Wargrave and Gonville houses the Cavendish Library and the top dormitory in the school house. The Cavendish Library, completed in 1899, was the last of Henry Currey's work for Eastbourne College and stands behind the chapel.

In 1889, the Duke had extended the grounds to include the Links and a pavilion was built there in 1891. By 1897, this area was again enlarged. During 1891, sick quarters were built onto the schoolhouse and in 1893 studies in the library passage were erected. Dr. Crowden was forced through ill health to resign his office in 1895 but by that time the school had grown in size and shape to nearly its present form.

During 1909, W. Hay Murray designed the main assembly hall and theatre. The fine gates erected in 1927 in College Road are a memorial to H. R. Thompson, a former headmaster. At the end of the last century, the college opened its doors to female as well male pupils. An extensive and detailed history of the school, entitled *Ex Oriente Salus* was written by Mr V. M. Allom, to celebrate the school's centenary. A copy of this book is available in the reference section of the Eastbourne Central Library.

The Old Town and Ocklynge

Southfields Road

Southfields Road connects the old hamlet of East Burne with Southbourne. It was originally called Watery Lane as the Burne Stream had to be forded at this point. Beside the lane was a large pond, appropriately called the Sheep Dip, as this was one of its main purposes. Sheep farming along with the whole of Sussex, was a major industry and at Stocksband (where the Town Hall stands) a annual sheep fair was held every October.

In 1990, the stream was covered over and made into a culvert and houses were built over it. In 1908, the name, Watery Lane was changed to Southfields Road at the request of the new residents.

The Goffs

Two brothers called Goff lived at Goffs Cottage, their house stood there in the 18th century, hence the name. It was originally part of Pashley Drove, an ancient right-of-way for drovers crossing from the Downs to Tutts Barn with their cattle for pasturing on the marshes.

The Drill Hall

This building now turned into flats, started life as the headquarters for the Local Volunteer Forces, later to become known as the Territorial Army. At the rear of the building was a watermill and millpond fed from the Burne Stream. Built in Saxon times, it is mentioned in the Domesday Book, it was the last watermill to cease operation in the town. The statue of Neptune, now in Motcombe Gardens, once stood on the bank of the pond.

The Old Manor House (The Goffs)

The old manor house, standing beside the original main entrance to the Manor Gardens, is full of antiquity; it has a jakes (a medieval privy), a fine wall mosaic rediscovered only a few years ago, a priest hole and, the last remains of a secret passage from the cellar.

Prominent amongst the families who have lived there was Bartholomew de Badlesmere and his wife Margaret (de Clare), who took up residence in 1314. The exploits, which led from his

friendship with the king to his execution at Canterbury, are recorded in the brief history section of this guide.

Lady Badlesmere who was allowed to remain at the manor house after the death of her husband, later married into the Despencer family. Her son, Giles Badlesmere had left no offspring and his lands were divided amongst his three sisters. Margaret, who was married to William, Lord de Roos of Hamelake, gained the Eastbourne share. It remained in the de Roos family for nearly 200 years, passing then by marriage to Sir Robert Manners, who was created Earl of Rutland in 1525.

The Earl of Rutland sold the manor and its land in 1555. At the end of the 19th century the manor came into the possession of the Gilbert family, who, with the 7th Duke of Devonshire, were responsible for the creation of the town of Eastbourne. The family moved to a new manor house on the corner of Borough Lane and more recent times to East Dean..

The Court House (Moat Croft Road)

Built in the 17th century, this building was used for the sessions of the Hundred Court, the legal body that oversaw the rights of chief landowners. Today, it is a restaurant.

Gildredge Park and the Manor Gardens

Gildredge Park is a recreational ground surrounded by mature trees, with a children's play area on one side, and two bowling greens on the easterly boundary. In contrast, the adjoining Manor gardens are a carefully planned area of floral beauty, with fine rockeries and well-established trees. In the middle are seven hard and two grass tennis courts. At the northwestern end, beside Borough Lane, stands the Gilbert Manor house, now the Towner Art gallery. At a short distance, somewhat hidden by the foliage, is a regency summerhouse, known as the Adam House.

Gildredge Park was formerly farmland owned by the Davies Gilbert family and by 1883 was within an area of rapid development. To preserve this land as an open space for recreation the town council approached the Gilbert family with offers to purchase. At first the owners were reluctant to come to an agreement but in 1886 part of the 'land was leased to the council for fifty years at £1 per annum.

In 1908 the council were allowed to purchase outright, some fifteen acres for £20,000. The Manor Gardens and the house were purchased in 1923, with the proceeds of a legacy given by Alderman J. C. Towner. The house was

converted into an art gallery and named after the benefactor.

When walking in the gardens it is interesting to realise that the park and gardens, formerly known as Elphicks field and South field, have a history of cultivation dating back over some 2,000 years.

In the middle of the Manor Gardens is a large mound topped by a stone toadstool. This is said to be the resting place of one of the family's horses. Such mounds are not uncommon, a similar one was erected by a Quaker lady Miss Rickman, at South Mailing near Lewes. The mound, 40 foot high was the grave of her favourite horse, Charlie. Under trees at the Borough Lane entrance to the Manor Gardens is another grave, this one is in memory of a dog, the headstone reads 'Duke, February 1912'.

The Manor House on the corner of Borough Lane, was formerly the home of the Davis'Gilbert family who have now moved to East Dean. It was built in 1776 for Rev. Dr. Henry Lushington. Vicar of Eastbourne. On his death, his widow's brother Charles Gilbert, purchased the house and grounds and later it became the manor house for the Eastbourne-Gilbert estate

On the opposite side of Borough Lane, is the **Pilgrims House**, once part of a monastic community called the Brotherhood of Jesus that held several properties around the parish church.

In the cellar was found a Norman chapel, hidden for centuries by a secret wall. There is also a secret 'priest hole' upstairs a reminder of how dangerous it was to be a catholic during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Queen Mary used have afternoon tea with the owner, an old lady, when she visited Eastbourne

St Mary's Parish Church

The parish church of St Mary was erected on the foundations of a Saxon church dedicated to St Michael; the present building was erected around the period 1145-1190, and rededicated to St Mary the Virgin. Its fine Norman tower is a dominant feature of the Old Town. With the constant erosion of the town's ancient character, the church now stands in the centre of a small island of local history, flanked on three sides by the old Parsonage, the Lamb Inn and by the Pilgrims house in Borough Lane.

St Mary's like many churches of the period has the chancel at an angle to the nave. This is believed to represent the body of Christ on the cross, with the head of Christ leaning to one side. In the fourteenth century the church was enlarged to its present size, when the outside walls, the last bay in the nave and the massive tower were added. At one end, the fourteenth century font is made of local Sussex green sandstone, fashioned into a plain square bowl with panelled stem. Two other examples of this period are six sculptured

heads mounted at the top of columns and the rare remains of an ancient rood screen in the side chapel of St Margaret and St Bartholomew; a stone staircase up to the rood screen loft, which used to lead by way of a hollow pillar, is now a private room set aside for prayer. A peal of six bells cast in 1651, were increased to eight in 1818.

In the south wall at the west end of the nave, is a tablet to the Revd Alexander Brodie, whose family endowed the town with the first local schools for working folk, it reads:

‘Sacred to the memory of the Revd ALEXANDER BRODIE, D.D., 18 years the beloved and esteemed Vicar of this parish, who died June 18th 1828, in the 54th year of his age. In him a widow and eleven children mourn the irreparable loss of an affectionate ‘husband and kind parent, while the poor lament a beneficent and considerate friend, and the Christian world an active and zealous member.’

The parish records date from 1558, and one should note the longest incumbency, that of Canon Pitman, who was vicar of St Mary’s for 62 years.

St Mary’s church is worthy of a quiet saunter; its ancient glass windows blend with the modern, especially one depicting the former church of St Michael’s designed by Hugh Easton, or the Resurrection window by Douglas Strachan.

Within this hallowed place, kings and queens, lords and ladies, mayors and the common folk have worshipped for over 900 years; before leaving, the visitor should enjoy a few minutes quiet meditation.

St Mary's Church Yard

Beside the path, at the east end of the church is an ancient Celtic cross, transported by sea from Cornwall by Davies Gilbert, sometime in the nineteenth century. Nearby are remains of the old village cross, converted into a sundial in the eighteenth century. The yew tree sheltering this spot is reputed to be the oldest tree in Eastbourne.

The old Parsonage is connected to the church by way of a sheltered passage, and is of fifteenth century origin. The building has fine examples of Tudor stonework and retains much of the early timber. Many Royal visits to St Mary's have been recorded in photographs, which are on display at the entrance to the hail, while, at the foot of the first flight of steps down into the main hail, is the entrance to a secret subterranean passage which leads to the vaulted monastic room beneath the Lamb Inn. To the west end of the church, on the right hand side of the path, is a stone monument, the Brodie memorial.

The Lamb Inn

Situated at the corner of Church Street and Ocklynge Road, the Lamb is probably the oldest

hostelry in Britain. For many years it was the place of arrival and departure for the London stagecoach and until 1875 its public room on the first floor was the only place of entertainment in the town. In the course of external repair in 1912 the plaster was removed from the western front and fine ancient half-timber work was revealed and restored. By a strange coincidence, the famous Star Inn at Alfriston underwent a similar restoration at the same time. Both have the distinction of being resting places for mendicant friars and pilgrims, who travelled to and from the shrine of Richard de la Wych at Chichester.

In 1240 the house was granted to the Rector of St Mary's Church for the churchyard extended to the side of the inn. The underground passage which connects the Old Parsonage with the inn was probably constructed to assist the monastic brothers in attending the daily services, though in later years it might easily have been the secret passage used for "moonshining" in smuggling days.

Under the inn still remains an early vaulted chamber with lofty ribs and a central boss in very good preservation, now used as the storage room for beer casks.

Motcombe Gardens

Motcombe Gardens are truly the heart of Eastbourne for they are the original site of an Anglo-Saxon settlement set beside a burne,

meaning brook or stream, from which the town gained its name. The word East was added later to distinguish it from Easebourne or Westbourne on the other side of the county. The gardens were a gift to the town from the Duke of Devonshire in 1908 and were originally part of Motcombe Farm, the house of which can be seen opposite.

Just outside, beside a lane which runs from Parsonage Road down to the gardens, stands the farm's original Sussex barns, now beautifully converted into private dwellings. At the north end is a mediaeval, flint-faced dovecote, by which means the farmhouse was always ensured of fresh pigeon pie! In the very centre of the gardens is a square-shaped pond; where a large statue of King Neptune complete with trident sits on an island in the middle of the pond. The pond's present shape dates from 1857 when bricks were used to line the sides; it was fenced off and a pump and trough installed at the nearby roadside to permit its use as a source of drinking water.

Prior to that the pond filled most of the low lying area and its bordering reedbed held a reliable supply of thatching material, basket and matting weave. In 1859 the Eastbourne Waterworks Company was formed and pipes were laid from the pond to a pumping station, situated at the Seaside Road end of Susan's Road, for distribution to the rapidly expanding areas of the town. The Burne Stream, though depleted in flow, continued under a rustic bridge at the south

end of the gardens, passing behind the houses in The Goffs, to a water mill, which once stood behind the Drill Hall.

The Burne Stream continues its passage under the town towards the Leaf Hall where it originally entered the sea.

Eastbourne Workhouse, Church Street

The site is now a housing estate. All that remains of the Eastbourne Workhouse (which formerly stood in Church Street and was located between Vicarage Road and Summerdown Road) is the Master's house a few yards down from Summerdown Road, which is now turned into flats.

When the French army was massed to cross the channel during the Napoleonic war, Eastbourne saw the arrival of military forces. In the Old Town a cavalry barracks was built (1809 - 1815). At the end of hostilities, the property was purchased by two local landowners, Lady Elizabeth Compton and Mary Ann Gilbert. In 1817, they leased the buildings to the Board of Guardians of the Parish Workhouse at a rent of £90 per year, to extend their existing premises in nearby Bradford Street.

In keeping with many such institutions, Eastbourne's workhouse had a reputation for

harsh and callous treatment, as may seem evident in a newspaper report published one Christmas:

‘Erring women who have been driven to seek the cold shelter of the workhouse walls in their hour of need have been excluded from any participation in the trifling luxuries afforded to the inmates at the joyous season of Christmas and now are to be debarred from hearing the addresses and singing in the festivities at this time of goodwill towards men.’

In 1834, the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed in Parliament, which tightened the regulations defining the duties of the master and matron of the workhouse but this did little to alleviate the suffering of the sick who were cared for by female inmates instead of trained nurses.

On January 3rd 1877, the workhouse announced: ‘The guardians of this union will, at their meeting on Friday, the twelfth day of January instant, at eleven o’clock in the forenoon, proceed to the election of a single woman to fill the office of Nurse to the sick poor in the Union Workhouse. Salary £25 yearly and rations.

Eastbourne Workhouse Union, or Spike, as it was referred to colloquially, served a number ‘of parishes, comprising East Dean, Aifriston, Folkington, Friston, Jevington, Litlington, Lullington, Pevensey, Seaford, Westdean, Westham, Wihingdon and Wilming ton. In 1895,

the catchment area was increased to include Alciston, Berwick and Selmeston.

In 1889 new regulations necessitated the separation of infectious from non-infectious patients in the infirmary and a new block was built on the east side. Later an Infectious Diseases hospital, originally known as Downside, (now a housing estate) was built alongside East Dean Road. This grew in size and by 1904 accommodated 62 beds in seven blocks.

The workhouse continued to be run by the master and matron, which was usually a dual appointment for a married couple, and under their authority were a chaplain, a schoolmaster and a schoolmistress. In 1913 the workhouse was reorganised and enlarged with the addition of a new master's house, which later became the administration block and is now a private dwelling.

With the outbreak of World War One the workhouse reverted back to military use and the inmates were removed to the Hastings workhouse at Ore, while a number of the infirm were housed under the charge of a Sister Appleyard in Upperton Gardens. From the middle of 1915 onwards St Mary's became a major military hospital, with large numbers of wounded being brought by train to Eastbourne and then by ambulance to the hospital. These patients were affectionately known by the locals as the "blue boys" from the blue uniforms they wore. In 1919

the inmates were returned to Eastbourne, and in 1920 the sick wards were designed under the Public Assistance Act as a poor law hospital, so allowing for the establishment of a nurses' training school.

In the period up to 1928, when the Duke of Devonshire officially opened the 'centre block', considerable modernisation took place. Finally, on April 1st 1930, the Poor Law Act was rescinded and the Eastbourne Workhouse closed. The buildings were renamed St Mary's Hospital and together with the Board of Guardian's office at Avenue House, came under the authority of the Eastbourne Council.

At the commencement of the Second World War, St Mary's was evacuated, pending the need to accommodate war wounded but the only admissions were civilian emergencies. During 1940 and onwards many casualties were dealt with, a number of bombs fell near the hospital, one causing severe damage to the operating theatre.

The hospital was closed in 1989 and whole area is now covered by a housing estate. Only the old master's house and part of the original workhouse wall remains.

Burnt Cottage (12 East Dean Road)

A strange name for a cottage one might well say, and so it is, but the history of Burnt Cottage is charged with all the intrigue and adventure of

19th century England. The story is told of a band of smugglers who for many years traded contraband in the area until their hiding place in this cottage was discovered. The Revenue Officers then set fire to the building, leaving only a burnt out shell. But such good had been done to all the people in the district by the sale of “moonshine”, that a public collection was made to pay for the rebuilding of the cottage. To commemorate this, a stone let into the middle of the row of three cottages, is inscribed “Rebuilt by voluntary subscription 1930”

In 1956 the Eastbourne Council ordered that the three cottages, together with fourteen other adjoining properties, should be demolished under a compulsory purchase order. The late Mr E. G. Spears, the owner of Burnt Cottage, promptly appealed and at a public enquiry subsequently held at the town hall, the cottage, together with the adjoining one, appropriately called Smuggler’s Cottage, was saved. Sadly, the third cottage and the fourteen other properties were pulled down.

In 1970 Burnt Cottage became empty and the present owner, the well-known local historian, Harold Spears, decided ‘to have the interior modernised. When the old staircase was removed the top of a brick arch was revealed at ground level and following an account of the smuggling incident in J. C. Wright’s book, *Bygone Eastbourne*, Mr Spears decided to have the

ground excavated. it was then that a flight of steps was discovered, filled in with pieces of stone, mixed with several rusty cast iron pots, a cast iron kettle and a glazed earthenware jar. At the bottom of the stairs a fivefoot archway to the cellar Was found but this was filled in with stone and the room itself, now under the adjoining garage yard, was found to 'have been completely filled in.

Willingdon Road

Willingdon Road is the old stage coach route into Eastbourne. The coaches wound their way down Ocklynge Road to find rest and refreshment at the Lamb Inn. Descending the steep hill, where Gore Park Road, St Mary's Road and Lower Road break away on the right hand side, one is reminded of the Brodie family, for there formerly stood Gore House, the residence of the family until the end of the 19th century. They are now commemorated in the name Brodie Close at the bottom of the hill.

The Rev. Alexander Brodie came to Eastbourne in 1809, to take up the appointment of vicar at St Mary's. He was fatally injured in a carriage accident a short distance from the Crown Inn. While Gore House is no more, the Crown inn, built in the 17th century, remains, a part of the terrace of Victorian shops in Crown Street.

In Lower Road, behind a cast iron fence, is the only remaining blacksmith's shop in Eastbourne.

Originally part of Motcombe Farm, it holds within its walls a feeling of walking back in time; the furnace, horseshoes, anvil and array of tools survive from the 19th century.

Back to **Willington Road**, on the skyline at **Ocklynge**, stands the prominent 102-foot high square tower of **St Michael and All Angels' church**, built in 1911. It stands overlooking Ocklynge cemetery, formerly known as Ocklynge Piece, which was consecrated in April 1857. In the grounds are the "Episcopal" and "Dissenters" chapels, fashioned in flint and sandstone by the architect, Benjamin Ferrey, who also was responsible for Christ church, Seaside, built two years earlier. In this hallowed ground at Ocklynge lie many of Eastbourne's distinguished gentlemen, whose deeds could fill many an interesting volume.

The **Hurst Arms public house** on the corner of nearby Mill Road, reminds us of the Hurst family, prominent millers, brewers and owners of Ocklynge Manor. Note the elaborate griffins mounted on the corner of the roof.

The name **Mill Road** is derived from St John's Mill which used to stand in a yard next to **Ocklynge Manor**. Even with its 'top removed and in its later days, as a round store house in a builder's yard, it retained an age-old character. Both mill and in latter time, the builder's yard have gone and in their place stands Lovell Court,

but echoes of the past still linger in the mill wheels that now decorate the wall.

Ocklynge Manor (Mill Road)

The manor stands on the site of a commandery of the Knights of St John, from which it takes its name the Manor of St John of Jerusalem, Ocklynge, Rushlake and Swines. The knights were a religious body whose exploits are catalogued extensively during the Ottoman crusades in the Middle Eastern empires, ending with their defeat at Rhodes in 1522. Their occupation of this site from the middle of the 12th century until the suppression of the monasteries in 1540, links this isolated area of Sussex with world history. It is, therefore, of unique value to find preserved at the manor, the head of a pillar pisema of Eastbourne green sandstone, belonging to the period not later than the 14th century and without doubt from the chapel of the commandery.

After 1540 the property reverted to the crown and remained so until the reign of Charles II when, together with other lands, it was transferred to a trustee to be offer for sale. Eventually it fell into the hands of the Hurst family, who made Ocklynge Manor their home. Until 1894 there were 32 acres of land including the chapel and St John's windmill. The Hurst family remained over some four generations until 1956 and their presence has been well recorded by both the

naming of Hurst Road and the Hurst Arms public house, which stands on the corner of Willingdon Road.

The present garden has a gazebo purported to be an original look-out tower for the London stage coaches, while behind the manor house is a fine example of an 18th century grotto. Near to the gate connecting the house with Mill Road, is a deep well, which disappears like a cavern into the earth. It is said, that on rare occasions a ghostly visitor is seen in the living room, a long since departed monk who walks through the wall into the side garden.

Saxon Place

On the summit of Willingdon Road is a spot enjoyed for its excellent views both towards Ratton and across the valley towards Herstmonceux and Hastings. Beneath, hidden by several feet of soil, are the graves of the original Saxon settlers; they are buried in rows, with swords and other ornaments, heads to the west and feet to the east.

The Town Centre

The railway was extended from Polegate to Eastbourne in 1849, a date that was to establish Eastbourne as a prominent seaside resort. Beside the railway siding known as **Wharf Road**, the first gas works were constructed in 1852. In those days, few buildings stood in this area and it

wasn't until 1870, that the Gilbert family built The Avenue and its adjoining roads and grassy squares.

Terminus Road

Between Barclays Bank and Langney Road are all that remains of Sussex Gardens, built in 1877 as an impressive row of terraced mansions within a tree-lined embankment. You can still see the original buildings above the line of shops on the eastern side, with their distinguished urn-shaped pediments on the roof.

Opposite, built like a miniature Crystal Palace, is a shop that started life as a piano emporium. The ironwork was cast at the famous Victorian foundry of Walter MacFarlane & Co.

Central Methodist Church Hall (Langney Road)

Methodism started in Eastbourne around the time of the Napoleonic scare when a group of dissenters set up a meeting place at Seahouses, near to the pier. The first Methodist Chapel was built in 1810 in Grove Road and was followed by the Central Methodist Chapel in 1863, later reconstructed into the present church was built in 1908. The Central Methodist Church Hall was formerly a national school.

Pevensey Road

Above number 14, is a fine statue of a knight in silver armour with a red shield, red and black cape with sword in hand. It is set into a niche above the shop with a brick and stone canopy painted in silver; the remaining frontage is distinct from the neighbouring buildings because of its reproduction Tudor beams.

Number 20, Pevensey Road has nothing special in its appearance, even though it, along with the terrace, dates back to 1860. For the curious (as to why it has been mentioned at all), it is the birthplace of this Guide to Eastbourne, being the abode of the author.

Number's 102 to 120, at the far end of the road are buildings of distinct character, with faces of dogs and lions set into the front walls just below the guttering.

Number 122 was formerly the headquarters of one of the town's oldest auctioneering families, the Wenhams, and has a fine ornate blue and white glass dome surmounting its roof.

Susans Road

Susan's Farm used to stand on the south side of Seaside Road, with the farm buildings and land stretching away down the line of Susans Road.

On the left side, is the Eastbourne Synagogue, built on the ground floor of a Victorian house.

Nearly opposite, is **All Souls Church** endowed in 1882, by Lady Victoria Wellesley, the great niece of the Duke of Wellington, who lived in the Meads. The church is built in Byzantine style, its foundation are 20 feet deep as it was originally constructed on marshland. Originally the tower held five bells, but these reduced to one when the tower was found to be unsafe. Behind the church, Wellesley Road has been named after its benefactor.

Trinity Trees (Originally part of Seaside Road)

In the 19th century, this was known as Shady Lane, because of its numerous trees. The first water works were built here in 1884, piped from Motcombe Gardens and hidden behind a greenstone wall.

Holy Trinity Church was originally known as Trinity District Chapel and was erected in 1838, as a chapel of ease to the Parish church of St Mary's in the Old Town. Built in Gothic Style, it was designed by Decimus Burton.

Lushington Road

Named after the Rev, Dr, Henry Lushington, it was built in 1867, as part of the 7th Duke's vision of an Eastbourne, 'built for gentlemen by

gentlemen.’ At number 7, Lewis Carroll occupied what he described as ‘a nice little front-floor sitting room with a balcony and bedroom adjoining.’ Here he spent two months every summer writing his books, including his last work ‘Sylvie and Bruno.’ There is a commemorative plaque on the front wall, recording that he stayed here from 1876 – 1897.

Willingdon and Hampden Park

Willingdon seems an isolated backwater its history lost in the veils of time. On the South Downs above the village are signs of the first settlers to the area; Bronze Age people (2200 – 750BC) left their mark with numerous burial and ritual sites. In the 11th century, the land at Willingdon was a royal estate, leased by Earl Godwin, the father of the ill-fated King Harold, for an annual rent of £60. After the Norman Conquest of 1066, the land passed to Count Robert of Mortain, who held Pevensey Castle .

Today, Willingdon has spread from the original village on the hill (Upper Willingdon) to its border with Polegate (Lower Willingdon). At Church Street it is subdivided into two administration areas, to the south Eastbourne and north Wealdon. On the edge of the village formerly stood Ratton Manor the home of the Parker family. It was Major Freeman-Thomas, 1st Margess of Willingdon, (1866 –1941) of Ratton

Manor, that served as Governor General of Canada and later as the 22nd Viceroy and Governor General of India. He took his title name from the ancient village and his statue can be found at the top of the main landing in Eastbourne's Town Hall.

Willingdon is still a picturesque village, partly hidden in the folds of the South Downs beneath **Butts Brow**. In Church Street, the church of St Mary's stands outlined on the brow of a small hill. The church is a mixture of many centuries from the 12th onward, inside can be found memorials to the Parker family dating from the 16th and 17th century.

Opposite the church Stands The Hoe, a fine residential building, the name taken from the Saxon word for high place. It was built as a private house, by Sir Edward Landseer Lutyens (1869 -1944), who was considered one of the greatest British architects of the 20th Century. After the Second World War, it was converted into a number of flats The gardens of the Hoe are listed by English Heritage for their Outstanding beauty.

The most curious of all the features of Willingdon is the Pump House in Wish Hill; the walls are decorated with animal bones. Opposite, next to the Red Lion, is a row of cottages built to house the servants that formerly worked at Ratton Manor. When Ratton Manor was partly destroyed

by fire during the Second World War, some of the stone and flooring were incorporated into the present cottages. Under the end cottage, 97 Wish Hill, flows an underground stream that eventually feeds the pond in Hampden Park.

Eric Arthur Blair, better known by the pen name of George Orwell stayed at Chalk Farm and wrote his book, *Animal Farm*, published in 1945. Much of the village features in detail and the public house, the Red Lion is mentioned

Originally, the area of Willingdon stretched across what is now Hampden Park and the Willingdon Levels to meet the sea at the Crumbles. In those days, the railway at Hampden Park was known as Willingdon..

As late as 1946, the housing boundary of Eastbourne ran along Decoy Drive. On the north side of that road was Spots Farm, which covered the whole area as far as Brodrick Road, which ran along the ridge of the hill.

Hampden Park

Hampden Park was originally a decoy pond on part of Freeman-Thomas's Ratton estate. In 1898, it was offered to the Eastbourne Council, 82 acres of land for the sum of £3,000, with a provision that a road would be built linking Willingdon with Eastbourne, to be called King's Drive. It took some three years in planning and lying out, and together with the original land purchase, cost the council £10,018. The park was opened by

Lord Rosebery on August 12th 1902, and named after Mr Freeman-Thomas's grandfather, Viscount Hampden.

Today, Hampden Park is a tranquil haven for wild fowl and in the middle of its lake is an island sanctuary. The parkland around the lake is well wooded, with squirrels eager to beg food from the casual visitor. Cutting through the middle of the park is a road for motorists, though its flow has been stopped by the closing of Park Avenue. Access is from Decoy Drive or Rosebery Avenue, and there is unrestricted parking beside the road. To the east side are a miniature rifle range, tennis courts, a covered bowling pavilion, which is adjacent to the playing fields and a cafeteria.

The lake known as the Heron's Pool, in the middle of the park is fed from a small stream that springs to the surface near Ratton. It enters Upper Kings Drive midway, running down the north side of the road and then through a drainage pipe under the main A22. Re-emerging, it flows behind the houses in Kings Drive, crossing under Decoy Drive to enter Hampden Park at the west corner

On the east side of Heron Pool is a small rustic bridge, where the Decoy Stream continues its passage to meet the Willingdon Sewer, just below the industrial estate on the Willingdon Levels. The word sewer is a quaint Sussex name for what is an attractive river. On its way it skirts

Ham Shaw Wood, sandwiched between Hampden Park and the Ball Park, off Rosebery Avenue. Ham Shaw Wood dates back to the Great Forest of Anderida, a vast woodland that covered most of this area.

Willington, Southbourne and the Eastbourne Levels

In many ways Hampden Park is a separate community to Eastbourne and retains the feeling of a village. The reason for this comparative isolation is because the town has evolved around an inner open heartland, known as the Levels, which has been kept from development because it is a flood plane draining water from as far as Folkington.

The area was once a broad, shallow valley with a salt water estuary reaching as far as Hailsham. The formation of a shingle bank at the Crumbles cut it off from the sea and though below sea-level (High water Level 4.4 metres A.O.D.), it has become water meadows, through the use of dykes and streams.

The field boundaries and scenic beauty have changed little over the last thousand years. The rich peatland has made it an area of scientific interest, with rare flora and fauna. Wildlife has found a haven there, including one of the last families of otters, now nearly extinct in the rest of England.

Shinewater Park

Shinewater Park is of recent creation, with large flood storage lakes and reed beds creating a unique wildlife reserve as well as a peaceful area in which to stroll. Despite the main A22 cutting along its westerly boundary, there is a pleasant isolation. Even the playing fields and children's play area blend with nature to make this an ideal setting.

In 1995, during the construction of the park an exciting discovery was made. Dating back to Late Bronze Age, occupational and ceremonial wooden platforms, which originally stood above the estuary water, were unearthed. This find was of great importance to British archaeology, as few waterlogged prehistoric sites have been found.

In Bronze Age times, the whole community would have set about to build the platform. A track way led from the site towards the Bronze Age settlement above on the South Downs between Butts Bow and Jevington. The extensive workings reinforced the belief that this was the centre of a large, wealthy population.

The platform is made of oak posts driven into the clay subsoil. The decking was covered with brushwood, reed matting and gravel and artefacts found at the site showed clearly that the platform had clearly been lived on. Maybe the jetty was used for fishing, or even being close to the

English Channel, were boats could tie up for trade. Then there is another role, for such watery places were important in ancient religious ceremony.

Langney

In 1950, Eastbourne extended only as far as the Langney roundabout, where the bus service stopped and from which point the countryside spread its hedge-lined fields out across the marshes towards the villages of Pevensey and Westham. A few houses broke the scenery; to the left of the main road stood Langney Farm and behind this at a distance, the brick yards and a few cottages at Hide Hollow. To the right, behind a high brick wall, stood Priory Orchards, with a short terrace of houses. Cutting at an angle across this tranquil agricultural land, ran the Langney Sewer, though how this pleasant stream could be so misnamed is to me a mystery.

Langney Priory (Etchingam Road)

Nestling among tall trees a short distance from the main road lie the ancient buildings of Langney Priory. By the middle of the 1950s all this land had been compulsorily purchased by the Eastbourne Council, for the development of a large housing estate. The priory was also earmarked for demolition. There ensued a legal battle to preserve this building, its cause championed by the then owner, Mrs B. M.

Fenwick together with the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England.

Right prevailed and what is probably Eastbourne's oldest building was saved at the eleventh hour. Langney Priory, parts of which date back to the reign of Edward the Confessor, was erected on the foundations of a Roman villa. It is now somewhat hidden by the Langney Village estate, though a Sussex barn, at the entrance in Etchingham Road, draws attention to the short lane that leads up to the priory, which is privately owned.

The word Langney, written as Langelie in Domesday Book, is Saxon for Long Island. Originally the priory stood on a slight rise above the Pevensey Marsh, which at high tide was often surrounded by the sea. The oldest part of the building is the east area, housing the chapel, with a fine Saxon archway, adjoining a refectory or hall, with a long dormitory above. The three foot thick walls at this point are supported by heavy buttresses.

In the fourteenth century the east and south walls were faced with large squared blocks of Sussex green sandstone, with smaller squares of knapped flint. During the fifteenth century an arch shaped tie-beam and king post were added across the 'west end of the building. The windows on the west side were fitted with shutters and contain seventeenth century panels. The front of the

priory 'dates from the sixteenth century and was faced with sham timbering, with later addition of a porch.

In the walled garden at the rear is a small pond, the remains of a monastic fish stew or pond, where the monks' ' kept their fish In its mud have been discovered several interesting articles of antiquity With the dissolution of the smaller monasteries by order of King Henry the Eighth in 1539 the priory in keeping with similar monast'ic houses, reverted to a farm, and remained so until the present century when it became a private dwelling.

The priory chapel has been in use as a place of worship since Saxon times. Miss Morvyne Fenwick-Owen told how the Bishop Bell reconsecrated the chapel and how later last century when Bishop Peter came he said, 'he felt very thrilled to be the first monk since the destruction of the priories to celebrate Holy Communion here.'

Langney Priory has many secrets. Its fine timbered front remained hidden under plaster until rediscovered earlier this century. Another is the location of a secret passage running away from the house somewhere under the north court yard.

Sovereign Harbour (built on an area formerly known as The Crumbles)

To the east of Eastbourne, during centuries of tidal movement, the peculiar motion of the sea formed the Crumbles. Even today there is tidal erosion, lifting the shingle from the central beaches around the pier and depositing it to the west of Langney Point.

In the early part of the 19th century there was a grand naval harbour envisaged for this area, but with the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, this was cancelled. In February 1881, a special committee of the Local Board was appointed to consider a similar plan devised by the Duke of Devonshire, though there was such opposition from the town's folk that the board was forced to shelve the project until 1883. With the creation of the new borough council, the plan was resurrected, and under the auspices of the mayor, George Wallis, taken before a select committee at Westminster.

The Duke's plan was considered at great length but finally turned down, a defeat that was not to deter the other campaigners, for future generations would periodically brush the dust aside, modify and try again. One enemy would remain forever constant; the sea, which once crept in as far as Hailsham, is again on the turn, for many of the Martello Towers erected in 1803, between Pevensy Bay and Langney Point are now below the high tide mark.

For thousands of years the Crumbles remained a nature haven, the breeding ground for meadow pipit, reed bunting, redshank, lapwing, common tern, yellow wagtail, partridge, linnet and nightingale. With every passing year, the variety of birds became rarer as their habitats elsewhere are being destroyed. The common lizard, sand lizard and slowworm are also on the danger list as they too are deprived of their natural abode. Upon these once windswept shingle dunes, great varieties of flora provided an annual harvest of colour and shape, from the bright red of the poppy, or the delicate blossom of soapwort, scarlet pimpernel, stinking hawksbeard and sea Other plant life blend in contrast in a carpet of beauty: hawksbeard, viper's bugloss, cotton thistle, mountain groundsel, trifoliums and samphire.

Of the shingle landscape very little now remains, the need for a marina and the demand for ever larger housing development is the price of progress.

Local Entertainments

Early Days

Our Victorian ancestors enjoyed a variety of 'live entertainment. The high light was music and song, mainly carried to towns and villages by travelling shows, which were performed on the village green.

There were permanent entertainers, especially in towns like Eastbourne, where there was a changing audience through the large numbers of visitors. Amongst these were pierrots and clowns, organ grinders and the Victorian version of the busker.

There was a blind fiddler who could always be found at the bottom of the Wish Tower slopes. His name was James Collins and he had been blinded in a shooting accident in his native Ireland.

It was his Irish music that endeared him to thousands of visitors. So popular did he become that his picture appeared in national newspapers and on the pages of Punch magazine. Even a prominent playwright in London based one of his characters on his colourful image.

James Collins soon became a legend, 'drawing charabancs full of' visitors specially to see him and listen to his violin. Popularity was not enough to fill 'his stomach, and in the winter of 1895, he caught influenza and finally died in near poverty at his home, 1, Gilbert Road.

Around the turn of the century, new bye. were brought in by the local council making all forms of entertainment on the seafront illegal unless covered by a licence The traditional forms of 'buskers' disappeared over night and were replaced with more conventional military bands and officially sited music gardens.

The Live Theatre

The Theatre 'Royal has always been 'the vaudeville centre in the town. Even today, with the theatre's name changed to the Royal Hippodrome it is still the most popular of our live entertainment venues. During the summer old tyme musical shows cater for a large audience of family holiday makers.

The Devonshire Park theatre started life as the home of the Duke of Devonshire's Orchestra. It was run by the Devonshire Park Company, which was formed in 1873.

Since the turn of the century, the Devonshire Park theatre has been the traditional venue for plays. Taking over a role once accorded to the South Street theatre that was pulled down last century.

During the twenties and thirties, many pre-London runs were tried out at Devonshire Park, before being transferred to London's West End. In 1939, with the Second World War only months away, the impresario Leon M. Lions reversed the trend bringing successful West End productions down to the seemingly safe haven of Eastbourne.

By March 1940, Eastbourne had become a front line town and this short period when the town rated high in box office successes, ceased. 'Number Seventeen' was one of many long-

running major plays performed at the Devonshire Park during that season. It was a suspense drama opening with a foggy dockland setting of the east end. My father was chief electrician and had the task of creating the fog effect, as the curtain went up.

The black-out caused many people to stay at home and even with the creation of Friends of the Devonshire Park Theatre, which offered reduced admission tickets, it proved uneconomical the West End productions ceased and the theatre went back to more conventional repertory.

Since its earliest days, the Devonshire Park theatre has always had to contend with the uneasy title of 'the white elephant'. Today 'it continues in its role of putting on plays, hampered by the growing loss of audiences to television.

The near-by Winter Garden Pavilion made history in 1875, when J. C. Plimpton demonstrated his newest invention, the roller-skate on a massive indoor rink. The glass partitions opened and skaters could glide out into the open air of the Devonshire Park grounds.

In the 1880's Eastbourne 'had its own symphony orchestra using the Winter Garden as its home. Between wars, Captain Amers conducted the Eastbourne Municipal Orchestra, bringing it to the height of its career. How did he keep his fine

figure? The curious found out that the captain wore corsets!

The Winter Garden flourished as a dance hail, with many popular bands coming to the town. This trend continued through the fifties, sixties and seventies, with band leaders like Gorden Ryder. In recent years the high cost of hiring the hall and a limited number of Council sponsored events, has caused the downward spiral of ballroom and modern dances.

The Congress Theatre ‘ built in 1963 has had a difficult history. At the time of its erection many saw it as an invasion of the open space covenant agreed by the Council in 1946. It was also out of character with the surrounding buildings, though curiously, the building was given a design award!

The choice of the name Congress against many other suggestions, appeared out of place in a seaside resort. My own contribution was ‘Lawns Pavilion’, which I felt blended with Winter Garden. Then few of us realised the emphasis that was to be put on Eastbourne as a possible conference centre.

The Eastbourne Pier, which was built as a landing point for the coastal passenger paddle and screw steamers, soon became an important part of the entertainments scene following the erection of a theatre at the seaward end in 1888.

The pier theatre has the distinction of presenting the ‘first performance of ‘talking pictures’ in

Eastbourne and these same early film projectors remained in the projection box until they were sold in 1946. Sadly in 1970, the theatre was burnt down by an arsonist and so ended eighty-one years of theatrical history.

The Moving Picture (The Movies)

The first performance of the moving picture as early cinema was called, may well have taken place under canvas at Horsey (Churchdale Road area). This was a popular site for the many travelling fairs that came to Eastbourne. It was as a side show that the early pioneers of cinematograph hand-cranked their projectors.

Wenham's the furniture auctioneers had their Seaside shop enlarged at the back for conversion into a cinema, but before it could be opened, the local authority refused permission because there was not an adequate fire exit, so the project was shelved.

The earliest permanent cinemas were: the Electric Picture Hall (1908), the Gallery (July 1913) where the main entrance to the Arndale Centre now stands, the Winter Garden's first floor hall (1914), the Old Town cinema (1914) which stood on the site now occupied by the superstore in The Goffs, the Empire (1914) originally on the other side of the road near Christchurch and the Eastern (1914) on the opposite side of the road, now a showroom.

In 1919, the Central cinema opened in Seaside Road is now converted to flats and the Luxor in Pevensey Road (1933) now a bingo hall. Only one cinema have survived the 'television invasion', Eastbourne's largest cinema the Curzon, formerly the Picturedrome (1920).

There was also the Classic that was a late comer to the scene. It stood in Trinity Trees and was opened in 1938. I once worked there as a projectionist running the Kallee projectors and enjoying every moment of it. The cinema closed its doors in 1966, was converted to Clarke and Lambert's ear showroom for a short period and is now covered by a block of flats.

The Curzon Cinema has been running for over seventy years. In March 1973, it was converted into a triple cinema with seating for 537, 238 and 237 respectively and is currently owned by Curzon Cinemas (Eastbourne) Limited.

One of the former directors, Charles Tester, started in 1936, as a rewind boy at The Gaiety Cinema in Hastings; and with the exception of six and a half years war service with the Royal Artillery, has worked for the same cinema group with promotion to manager of the Picturedrome in June 1946.

In the fifties, the Picturedrome produced its own Local Newsreel, a unique celluloid history of Eastbourne that recorded everything from Victor Birkett swimming the English Channel to the

courtesy visit of the last of Britain's battleships, the Vanguard. The captain of which used to spend his Summer months in Eastbourne!

Today, the cinema's director, Roy Galloway keeps the magic of cinema alive. A dream that started in 1919, when local people were invited to buy shares for the construction of a 'Picture Palace', a flotation which was quickly over-subscribed.

Confidence in the future of the traditional cinema comes with the building of a new multiplex centre at the Sovereign Harbour shopping centre in August 1990. With six screens, 217 to 316 seaters, it can accommodate 1,574 patrons. It boasts the latest in projection technology, using a Dolby stereo system and with a special screen surface that gives increased brilliance to the projected picture.

[I am very grateful for the kind assistance of Roy Galloway and the late Charles Tester in my research of the local cinemas.]

A brief Chronicle of Eastbourne

1883 The population of Eastbourne reached 22,000 allowing the Local Board to apply for a Charter of Incorporation, officially making Eastbourne into a town. The first mayor was George Wallis, the Duke of Devonshire's agent.

1885 The first electricity generating station was opened at the end of Ashford Road, now covered by the back entrance to the Arndale Centre.

1886 The new Town Hall in Grove Road was finished and officially opened by Alderman George Boulton.

1886 The railway station was rebuilt for the third time, on the site where it now stands.

1890 The Home Secretary consented to the town having its own police force. In the same year, the volunteer Fire Brigade was formed with Fire Stations in the Meads, Old Town, Cavendish Place and Grove Road.

1891 Death of the 7th Duke of Devonshire

1899 The first motor taxi licence was granted, it was to see the demise of the horse cabmen whose shelters were strategically placed throughout the town and seafront.

1900 The electricity generating station was purchased by the Council and new works erected at Horsey (Churchdale Road). On July 18th 1881, the town had held the first demonstration of electric lighting at the Devonshire Park and shortly afterwards; electric arc lamps illuminated the promenade.

1901 The Church of Our Lady of Ransom was opened by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark, on Sunday, December 15th.

1902 Beachy Head lighthouse came into operation on Thursday, October 2nd, the year of the coronation of King Edward VII. The tower has seven floors and the navigation light flashes twice every 20 seconds. In 1974, the oil burning mantle apparatus was replaced with a 400 watt metalarc electric lamp and a 2,000 watt nautophone electric fog horn.

1992 The three tiers of promenade from the Wish Tower to Holywell were handed over by the Duke of Devonshire to the Council, subject to certain covenants made to protect this scenic walk from any commercial use.

1902 Eleven years after the death of the seventh Duke of Devonshire, a statue to his memory was unveiled at the seafront end of Devonshire Place.

1902 Hampden Park, formerly the decoy pond of the Freeman-Thomas Ratton estate, was purchased by the town for £3,000 and officially opened as a park on August 12th, named after Mr Freeman-Thomas's grandfather, Viscount Hampden.

1903 The novelist Edna Lyall (Ada Ellen Bayly) died in Eastbourne on the 8th February. Since 1884, she had lived at 6, Osborne Road and gave three of the peal of bells at St Saviours Church. Her novels were greatly admired by Gladstone.

1903 The Lifeboat Station on the shoreline near Princes Park was built at a cost of £445.

1903 King Edward VII, a frequent visitor to Eastbourne, stayed at Compton Place.

1903 Eastbourne Council started the world's first municipally owned motor omnibus service. The first bus had solid tyres, commenced its service on April 12th and travelled at a maximum speed of six miles per hour on a route via Cornfield Road, Boulton Road and Grand Parade, stopping for refreshments halfway in Meads Village.

1904 The Theatre Royal (built in 1883) was renamed the Royal Hippodrome. In the mid-1950's the building was put up for sale and was to have become a television studio for ITV's Southern Television; when negotiations broke down it was purchased by the Eastbourne Council.

1904 The Technical Institute (a museum, art and boys school) was opened on the site of the present Central Library. This fine building was made possible by the donation of £10,000 from Mr Andrew Carnegie and by the gift of land from the Duke of Devonshire. Sadly, on December 18th 1942, it was badly damaged by enemy bombers. After the war, the Council decided to demolish the building to make way for Council offices and the new library.

1905 The composer, Claude Achille Debussy, composed *La Mer* (The Sea) while staying at the Grand Hotel. It was the year of his divorce and remarriage. In a letter of his visit, he said, 'It's a

little English seaside place, silly as these places sometimes are. I shall have to go because there are too many draughts and too much music’

1906 The Tivoli Cinema in Seaside Road opened. Formerly the Mutual Improvements Society’s Hall (1879), the top floor was used for cinematograph shows, which must date it as one of the earliest permanent cinemas in Eastbourne.

1906 The Gilbert Recreation Ground (Princes Park), 28 acres, was created on part of the Crumbles. The shingle surface was covered by ballast waste, topped with soil and fashioned by the unemployed men of the town.

1908 Motcombe Gardens was given as a gift to the town by the Duke of Devonshire, it was formerly part of Motcombe Farm.

1908 Death of the 8th Duke of Devonshire while on holiday in Cannes. A statue was later erected to his memory in the middle of the Western Lawns.

1908 Gildredge Park was purchased outright by the Eastbourne Council. It was formerly farmland owned by the Davies Gilbert family and first leased by the Council in 1886.

1909 Louis Bleriot’s monoplane was displayed on the lawns of the Devonshire Park, following his successful flight across the English Channel on the 24th July.

1909 The explorer-poet, C. M. Doughty, lived at 18, Southfields Road, until 1923. On 7th February 1921 his guest was Lawrence of Arabia.

1911 Eastbourne became a County Borough moving out its boundary to include Hampden Park, which was formerly part of Willingdon.

1911 St Michael's church in Willingdon Road was completed and with its 102 foot high square tower became a landmark on the skyline. It was designed by G. E. S. Streatfield and originally started in 1900.

1911 The Eastbourne Flying School's airfield on the Willingdon Levels beside St Anthony's Mount, was officially opened on December 1st. This later became the Eastbourne Aviation Company and its story is recorded in my book 'Wings over Eastbourne.'

1912 John Wesley Woodward, formerly a member of the Eastbourne Municipal Orchestra, the Duke of Devonshire's Orchestra and the Grand Hotel Orchestra was drowned through the sinking of the White Star Liner Titanic on April 15th. A memorial tablet was erected on the back wall of the Central Bandstand.

1912 Rupert Brook, the poet, spent his summer holiday at the Beachy Head Hotel, where he revised his poems.

1912 Captain Oates, who was a member of the ill-fated Scott Antarctic Expedition, came ashore to visit his family while on voyage to the North Pole.

1912 Lamb Inn found to have ancient external timber beams, uncovered during restoration of the building.

1913 King Edward's Parade was named to commemorate the frequent visits of King Edward VII.

1913 The Eastbourne Aviation Company inaugural meeting was held at the Queen's Hotel on February 13th; it took over the airfield at St Anthony's Mount and paved the way for the erection of an aircraft factory on the Crumbles. (The site is now covered by the Sovereign Centre)

1914 St Andrew's Church in Seaside opened.

1915 The Workhouse (later St Mary's Hospital) was closed and taken over as a military 'hospital, to cope with the large numbers of wounded being brought from France by train. Nearby, the Summerdown Convalescent camp was erected to house the 'blue boys', the name affectionately given to the soldiers.

1915 The Author, H. G. Wells, took his first flight in an aircraft from St Anthony's Airfield, piloted by Claude Grahame White. In 1893, he had spent a holiday at 6, New Cottages, Meads Street, and wrote to a friend, 'I have been led out daily to an extremely stony beach and there inhaled the sea air'. Later, in September 1923, he spent a holiday in Eastbourne with the noted novelist Rebecca West and her son, who was the

child of. H. G. Well's ten year long liaison with Rebecca.

1921 The Eastbourne Aviation Company ceased its 'joy rides' from the beach opposite the Queen's Hotel after three crashes.

1921 Frederick Soddy, born in Eastbourne in 1877, was awarded the Nobel Prize as a pioneer of atomic science. He lived in Boulton Road.

1923 The Towner Art Gallery was opened. The building was formerly the Davies Gilbert manor house; it was purchased by the Council with the proceeds of a legacy given by Alderman J. C. Towner.

1925 The Redoubt Fortress (1806) was acquired from the War Department for £150. In 1960, the Ministry of Works designated the Great Redoubt as an ancient monument.

1926 Eastbourne Council acquired the former aircraft factory on the Crumbles and used it for storage.

1926 All Saints Church in Carlisle Road was badly damaged by fire and rebuilt.

1926 The Eastbourne Corporation Act was passed by Parliament giving the Council the power to purchase all 4,000 acres of Downland within the borough, including Beachy Head and the cliffs to Belle Tout lighthouse. This effectively protects the Downland from commercial use, enforcing a covenant that 'the

Council will keep such part of the land that is not already built upon as an open space for ever.’

1927 A memorial plaque on the outside wall of Eastbourne College records that, ‘Lt. Colonel F. F. Minchin, CBE, DSO, with two brave colleagues, set out to fly the Atlantic from Britain to America on 31st .August 1927 and passed out of the sight of man’. Minchin was educated at the college.

1929 The Winter Garden, the Pavilion and the Tower House (now the Eastbourne Heritage Centre) were purchased by Eastbourne Council.

1930 The Workhouse was closed on April 1st, following the repeal of the Poor Law Act. The buildings became St Mary’s Hospital.

1931 To commemorate the visit of the Prince of Wales in June, a tree was planted by the Prince near to the present bandstand in Princes Park, thus giving the park a new name.

1932 Eastbourne Aviation Company was dissolved on November 8th.

1935 King George V and Queen Mary spent their summer holiday here. Chalet number 2 below Holywell, has a plaque commemorating that the royal couple used this chalet in March 1935, while staying with the Duke of Devonshire at Compton Place.

1936 St Elisabeth’s Church in Victoria Drive opened. The church was built and endowed from

a bequest of £80,000 by Mrs Eliza Watson, as a memorial to her two brothers and daughter.

1936 The Central Bandstand was built to replace a Victorian birdcage bandstand. With a seating capacity of 3,000, it is considered to be one of the best-designed bandstands in Britain.

1939 Beresford House School moved from The Avenue to new premises : Summerdown Road.

1939 Death of the Town Clerk, Mr H. W. Fouargue (author of 'Municipal Eastbourne') who had risen from office boy to chief officer in 49 years.

1940 The 5,000 ton merchant ship Barnhill was hit by a lone bomber off Beachy Head, at 10.30 pm on Wednesday, Mardi 20th. Early next morning the blazing ship drifted ashore at Langney Point. A few days later she broke in two, spilling her cargo of cheeses, tinned food and typewriters into the sea. There is n account of an amazing rescue by two lifeboatmen, Alec. F. Huggett and Thomas Alichorn, who at considerable risk reboarded the blazing vessel to rescue the captain Michael O'Neill, who had been blown from the -bridge. Despite a double fractured arm, a fractured collarbone and five broken ribs, he had crawled along the - deck and seizing the bell rope with his teeth, attracted attention to his plight.

1940 The first bombing raid on residential property in Britain, destroyed Birchfield's

grocery stores on the corner of Clarence and Whitley Road. The raid took place at 11 am on Sunday, July 7th and left a trail of devastation along the stretch of Whitley Road to St Philips Avenue. There were two fatal casualties and a pillar of flame rising from a fractured gas main.

1940 Christ Church School in Redoubt Road was hit by an oil bomb and set alight on September 13th. The school reopened in 1946 (the year I became a pupil at the school). The building was later demolished to make way for flats (Suffolk Court).

1941 St Mary's Church in Hampden Park was destroyed by a direct hit on Thursday, October 10th. Two hours earlier, the adjacent church hall that was used daily as a communal feeding centre, had been crowded with people.

1942 The Bourne Street area was nicknamed Hell Fire Corner, following the complete devastation of the area on January 15th. The ruins were later used as a battle training ground. When new blocks of flats were built on the site after the war, a memorial plaque was placed on the front wall.

1942 St John's Church in Meads was set ablaze by a direct hit on Monday, May 4th. In the same raid the east wing of the Cavendish Hotel was destroyed.

1942 St Anne's Church in Upperton Gardens was destroyed by an incendiary bomb on August

11th. After the war the charred walls were pulled down and in its place houses were erected in Bernard and Beatrice Lanes.

1942 Winston Churchill secretly visited Eastbourne on Easter Monday, to inspect war defences.

1943 The Technical Institute (on the site of the Central Library) was damaged by a direct hit. In the same raid on Sunday, February 7th at 3 pm, the National Fire Service headquarters in Grove Road was also destroyed.

1943 Metropole and Balmoral Hotels on Royal Parade destroyed by a direct hit from a low-flying raider.

1945 At the end of the war it was revealed that Eastbourne had received more attacks than any other town in the southeastern region. Between 1940 - 44, there were 98 raids, 671 high explosive bombs and 3,625 incendiaries. Civilian casualties numbered 1,100; 174 fatal, 443 badly injured and 489 slightly hurt. 475 houses were destroyed, 1,000 seriously damaged and 10,000 slightly damaged.

1946 A bomb, nicknamed Herman the wicked, which had lodged 28 feet deep under the Seaside Recreation ground since the war, was detonated at 3 pm on Thursday, January 3rd. The sound was heard one thousand miles away, through the BBC's overseas broadcasts.

1947 Victoria Place renamed as part of Terminus Road.

1948 The Freedom of the borough was bestowed on Sir Winston Churchill. He first visited Eastbourne in 1900, to give an illustrated lecture at the Devonshire Park Theatre on 'The War as I saw it', after his escape from the Boars in South Africa.

1950 St Richards Church in Etchingam Road, at Langney, opened.

1952 Jeffery Farnol, the author of 'The Broad Highway' amongst his other greatly acclaimed novels, died at his home, 14, Denton Road.

1953 Battle to save the Smuggler's cottages in East Dean Road won by Mr E. G. Spears at a Public Enquiry.

1963 The Congress Theatre was erected in the Devonshire Park ground on the site of the Winter Garden car park.

1965 The Central Library was erected on the site of the Technical Institute in Grove Road.

1966 The controversial South Cliff Tower; 200 feet high - 19 storeys, was completed in April, despite a storm of public protest. It was warned that, 'it would completely alter the nature of Eastbourne and spoil the beautiful and unique scenic vistas of the seafront'.

1970 Pier theatre badly damaged by an arsonist.

1971 Demolition of rare architectural listed Regency buildings at 27, 27A, and 31 Church Street, to make way for road widening, later new houses were built on the land. The road was never widened.

1971 The Royal Sovereign lightship was replaced by a light tower, at a cost of £2 million.

1973 Demolition of the historic heartland of Eastbourne in Old Town. The loss of the quaint narrow lanes with their boulder-faced cottages and the Star Brewery building, which was a noted landmark.

1975 Harbour Bill first rejected by Parliament, because of fears of coastal erosion and flooding.

1977 Eastbourne District General Hospital in Kings Drive officially opened by Princess Alexandra, afterwards she was taken to the Leisure Pool, where she conducted a similar ceremony.

1978 Francis H. Busby died after 34 years as Town Clerk.

1979 The Duke of Kent officially gave the new lifeboat his name.

1980 Arndale shopping centre opened in November. The clearing of the site required the compulsory purchase and demolition of Terminus Place, Junction Road and part of Tideswell Road; many small traders lost their shops.

1980 Harbour Bill setting out plans to build a Marina on the Crumble was represented and passed by Parliament. The fears of the original opponents to the plan were found to be valid as tons of shingle from the Wish Tower to Holywell was scoured away by the change of tidal movement. A massive regeneration of the whole of Eastbourne's seafront had to be undertaken with millions of tones of shingle imported by barges to the shore

1982 Death of the radio, film and stage comedian Sandy Powell in June. He came to live at 'Starbourne' in Elms Avenue in Eastbourne in 1948 and through his long running summer show on the pier 'had earn him the title of 'Mr Eastbourne.' He had also the distinction of having performed at more Royal Command Performances than any other artist

1983 Celebration of Eastbourne's Centenary. I was inspired to write the book, 'The Birth of Eastbourne' from which my first video 'Discovering Eastbourne' was based.

1985 Beckett Newspapers closed their main Pevensey Road offices and printing presses, which had been their home for over a centaury.

1987 Hurricane left a trail of devastation; buildings damaged and thousands of trees lost. Eastbourne once one of leafiest towns in Britain,

lost many of its roadside trees, which were never replaced.

1988 Tivoli Cinema closed.

1989 Sovereign Harbour officially opened by Princess Diana.

1990 Eastbourne's Member of Parliament, Ian Gow, killed by a terrorist bomb at his Hankham home, The Dog House (July 30th at approximately 8.40am). He had represented Eastbourne since 1974.

1993 The Eastbourne All Weather Lifeboat '*Duke of Kent*' ID no 37-37 ON number 1055 was transferred from the lifeboat station near Princes Park to Sovereign Harbour in June 1993.

1999 Due to cliff erosion threatening the future of Belle Tout lighthouse the building was moved on rollers 17 metres (56 feet) back from the edge of the cliff.

2009 The pleasure boats, William Allchorn and the Southern Queen, that ferried visitors on coastal cruises from the beach west of the pier, ceased operation. It was fisherman, Edward Allchorn in a large sailing lugger, the Skylark, that first started pleasure boat trips from Eastbourne's beach in 1861.

2009 New Towner Art Gallery completed, built at a cost of £8.6 million, it was opened on April 4th by broadcaster and writer David Dimbleby.

2009 The world's oldest man, resident of Eastbourne, Henry William Allingham died on 18th July at the age of 112.

2010 A Centurion Mark 111 tank, which had been a landmark at the Redoubt since 1988 was removed on April 26th. It had originally seen action during the Korean War.

2011 The South Downs National Park officially opened on Saturday, April 2nd 2011 with a celebration at the Beachy Head Countryside Centre. It has taken 60 years for its creation of almost 1000 square miles of South Downs from Eastbourne to Winchester to become a National Park.