



HISTORY TRAIL: WAR MEMORIAL TO FIRST BASE

St Stephen's Hall

Built as a glamorous Georgian ballroom in the Steine in 1766, it was the place to be seen for Brighton's fashionable crowd.

It later became the Chapel to the Royal Pavilion before being moved to Montpelier Place, where the building opened as a church in 1851.

St Stephen's Hall now operates as a day centre for people who are street homeless in Brighton and Hove.



Wagner Family

The Wagners were a wealthy and influential family, devoted to improving the situation for poor people.

They were the force behind the construction of many churches and houses that were built between the 1830s and the late 1800s.

Cheesman Family

The Cheesman family builders rose to a high status, having been commissioned by the Wagner family to design and construct many new churches in the town.

The Cheesmans were chosen to re-erect St Stephen's Church on Montpelier Place in 1851.



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You are standing in Old Steine Gardens.

The Steine played a vital role in Brighton's transformation from a small fishing and agricultural settlement into a fashionable seaside resort.

Severe erosion meant that Brighton did not have a promenade. The Steine was a sheltered area with sea views and was the place to be seen by the high society crowd.

In 1750 Dr. Richard Russell published a paper on the health benefits of drinking and bathing in sea water. Bathing machines on the beach could be easily accessed from the Steine.

Between 1770 – 1795 Brighton grew rapidly. The Prince of Wales commissioned Henry Holland to design the Marine Pavilion during this time. The Steine remained the focal point of the town's entertainment.



Look towards the Royal Bank of Scotland on Castle Square.

In 1752 Samuel Shergold bought a house on this site which he converted into a tavern. In 1754 Shergold bought adjacent plots to develop assembly rooms, however Brighton was still a small, poor town which relied heavily on visitors.

The Castle Tavern had the only assembly rooms in Brighton until The Old Ship Hotel opened its function room in 1759. Advertisements from 1761 tell us that the two establishments shared the custom of the town, holding balls and card evenings on different nights.

In 1766 Shergold decided to upgrade the assembly rooms at the Castle Tavern and commissioned John Crunden to design a ballroom to hold 450 people. The ballroom was a lavish and stylish affair which attracted the wealthy. It was a valuable asset to the town and put Brighton on the map.

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Walk west along Castle Square and stop at the roundabout.

Take a moment to look up North Street towards the Chapel Royal. We will reference this building later in the trail.

Now take a left turn and walk along East Street. Until the 1780's East Street formed the edge of the ancient four-street village. It was a densely populated area of the town which saw development of many businesses following the opening of the Castle Tavern. Look for No.36 East Street (now Fishy Fishy restaurant); the former residence to Brighton's most famous dipper, Martha Gunn.



Representation of the Grand Salon at Brighton Pavilion

Continue along East Street towards the seafront and take a right turn along Kings Road. Walk west until The Old Ship Hotel is on your right.

In 1767 The Old Ship Hotel built new assembly rooms, now known as the Paganini Ballroom and the Regency Suite. These were the most magnificent public rooms in the town.

Shergold died in 1791 and The Old Ship Hotel was sold at auction in 1802. Rivalry increased under the new management. Shergold's successors did their best to compete but The Old Ship Hotel could cater for new trends.





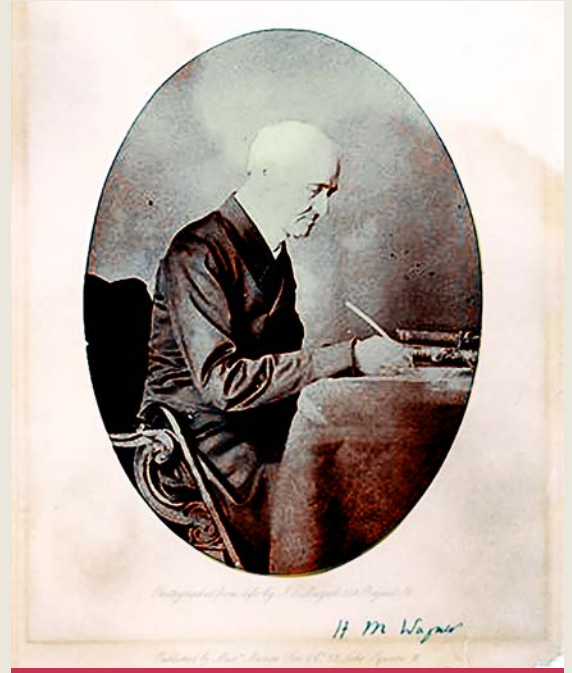
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Continue along the seafront and take a right turn up West Street. You will see St Paul's Church on the left-hand side.

The population of Brighton grew rapidly and Rev. Henry Wagner, Vicar of Brighton between 1824-70, spent thousands of pounds on building churches to address this.

He appointed George Cheesman, a local builder, to construct many of these projects, including St Paul's Church.

Following completion, Rev. Henry Wagner appointed his son Arthur Wagner perpetual curate to St Paul's Church in 1850. Arthur went on to build more churches in the town, in addition to 400 houses in Hanover area.



Continue up the hill to the Clock Tower and turn left up North Street. Walk a short way up Dyke Road and pause for a moment to take in Wykeham Terrace on your right.

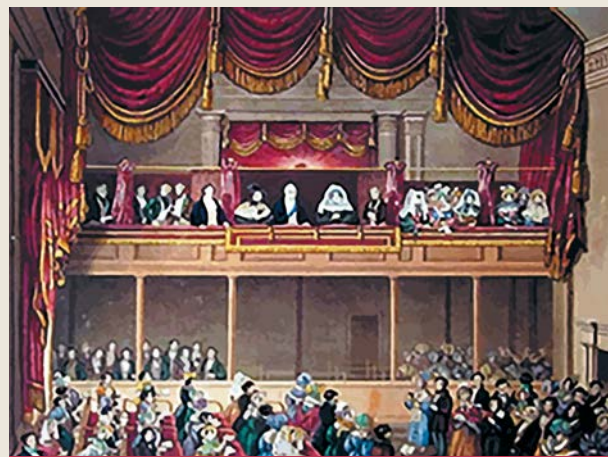
In 1855 Rev. George Wagner, nephew to Henry and cousin to Arthur, bought houses in Wykeham Terrace and developed an institution offering support and rehabilitation to women involved in prostitution.

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Enter St Nicholas churchyard ahead of you.

Brighton is now divided into 20 Anglican parishes, but St Nicholas was the original parish church for Brighthelmstone.

The Prince Regent didn't often attend church; St Nicholas Church was uphill and overcrowded. In 1795 the Chapel Royal was built to encourage him to attend, but he was offended by a sermon on immorality and so didn't return.



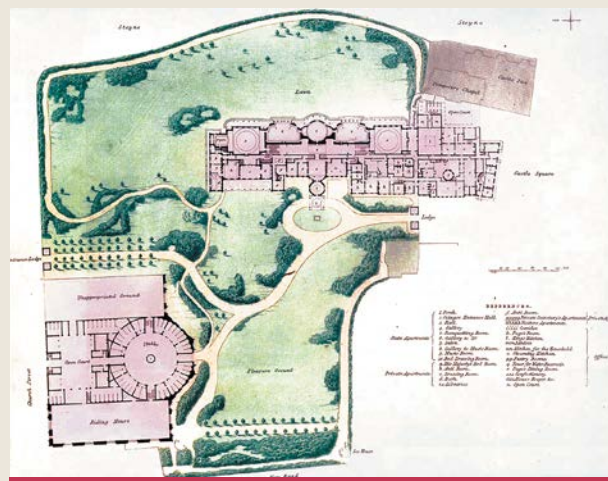
In 1814 the Castle Tavern ballroom closed. The Prince Regent took the opportunity to purchase the ballroom, which he connected to the Royal Pavilion and converted into a chapel, which opened in 1822. King George IV, as he now was, worshipped in the chapel until 1827, followed by William IV and Queen Victoria.

Take a moment to look for Martha Gunn's gravestone in the south-eastern corner of the churchyard.

Now leave via the exit to the north of the churchyard, onto Church Street.

Across the street is a playground— beyond this, to the north, is the former site of the Church Hill Workhouse which opened in 1821.

It was constructed by John Cheesman, a relative to George.





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At the 'T' junction turn right and walk up Dyke Road, and then take a left turn onto Clifton Terrace.

Clifton Terrace was built in 1846 and was a popular development. The railway had reached Brighton, meaning that many residents chose to move out of the town towards Hove.

The Crown began selling off parts of the Royal Pavilion estate in 1847. It was well known that Queen Victoria disliked the Royal Pavilion; she thought it was pretentious and was baffled by its lack of sea views. The Royal Chapel was destined for demolition until the Bishop of Chichester claimed that the building was consecrated and therefore belonged to the Church. The claim was accepted.

Mary Anne Wagner, the unmarried sister of Rev. Henry Wagner, had built a number of houses in Montpelier and offered a piece of land and money towards the re-erection of the building on Montpelier Place, to serve as a place of worship for the Montpelier-Clifton area.

Legend has it that the building was moved brick-by-brick, however it is more likely that a new shell to the exact measurements was built and the interiors were reinstated. A new classical street façade and octagonal lantern, designed by George Cheesman, was added when the building was re-erected.

Now take a left turn down Clifton Place and a right turn onto Montpelier Place and continue west until you reach St Stephen's Hall.

St Stephen's Church opened in 1851 but was not consecrated until June 1852.

Rev. Henry Wagner appointed perpetual curacy to his nephew Rev. George Wagner however he unfortunately died aged 39. A tablet erected in his memory by the congregation can still be found in the hall today.

If you have time, walk down Borough Street to see the former St Stephen's School, built by Rev. George Wagner in 1855.

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The Church was discontinued in 1939.

For a number of years the building was used by the Sussex Diocesan Association for the Deaf and Dumb, prior to becoming First Base in 1984, a day centre for men and women who are street homeless in the city.

HISTORY TRAIL: MAP





BHT Heritage Project

In 2010 BHT received Heritage Lottery Funding to deliver a five-year learning and participation project:

- to involve BHT clients in heritage activities and conservation training to develop new interests and skills
- to share our research with schools, colleges, community groups and the wider public through a range of resources, talks, tours and events


Contact us

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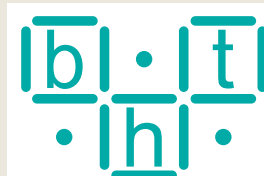
 [@heritageBHT](https://twitter.com/heritageBHT)

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BHT (Brighton Housing Trust)

BHT is dedicated to combating homelessness, creating opportunities and promoting change.

The Trust seeks to enable people to live independently through the provision of a range of services which aim to address the causes and effects of homelessness, including poverty, vulnerability, discrimination, abuse, addiction and poor mental and physical health.



Combating Homelessness
Creating Opportunities
Promoting Change

Support Us

BHT relies on grants and donations to provide vital services, and every contribution makes a difference.

To make a donation please visit:

 www.bht.org.uk/support-us/make-a-donation