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# DISCOVER

## Kingscliffe

### THE STARS, THE ROYAL SECRET & BRIGHTON'S PIER THAT DISAPPEARED

A ONE-HOUR WALK



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### THE BOND STREET OF BRIGHTON

St James's Street was originally a farm track between the fields east of Brighton. It grew up in the 1790s as the town expanded and soon bustled with 130 businesses including saddlers, corset makers, book, brush and shoemakers, tea dealers and a fashioner of straw bonnets. One visitor likened it to London's fashionable Bond Street.

Today it is the only major shopping street in the town not to have been widened. An idea of its former splendour can be gained

by looking above the modern shop fronts. Walk on the right-hand (north) side of St James's Street and look across at former farm cottage no. 90 (on the corner of Camelford Street); bow-fronted nos. 95-99 (opposite Cavendish Street); and 102 (originally a wet fish shop) which retains its original Georgian shopfront with small panes, a bow and Ionic columns. Note also bow-fronted nos. 107-111 (on the corner of Madeira Place); and 116-118 (on the corner of Charles Street).



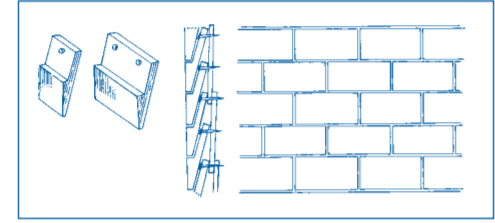
### BROADENING THE FIELD

Roads from St James's Street to the sea follow the ancient pattern of the fields they were built on. Land was divided into 7ft-wide strips, called paupieces, and the width of the streets built on them depended on how many a developer was prepared to buy. Thus, Camelford Street is narrow with small, tradesmen's houses, while New Steine is wide, with a central garden and larger terraces to attract wealthier visitors.

### MATHEMATICAL SOLUTION

Mathematical tiles were overlapping wedge-shaped tiles (see illustration), which avoided a tax on bricks. As Brighton expanded rapidly, many buildings were put up cheaply using timber frames, then covered with the tiles to make them look like fashionable brick. The tiles were also used to update old buildings and as protection against the elements.

More than 150 buildings in Brighton have them – in cream, glazed black and red – but they can be hard to spot because they were usually intended to deceive. Often they have been covered with layers of paint over the years, making them still more deceptive.



JUST PAST SAFEWAY, TURN RIGHT INTO ST JAMES'S PLACE

### OUT OF PLACE

At first sight the six houses in St James's Place, built between 1790 and 1800, seem enormous for such a tiny passage or "twitern". But if you look at their sides, you will see they



### A STAY IN

# Regency Brighton

Two hundred years ago, the Kingscliffe area bustled with boarding houses and lodgings just as it does today. In 1800 one in three Brighton houses offered accommodation and the streets were packed with single rooms or whole buildings to rent for weeks or months at a time, with or without meals.

In 1815 publisher Richard Sicklemore enthused: "No town is better furnished than Brighton for boarding houses. They have all the advantages of an inn, without the bustle, and all the comforts of a private house without the inconvenience of domestic concerns. For £2 12s 6d a week an individual may live in a sumptuous manner."

Once settled, new arrivals headed straight for a library, such as Baker's on the Steine at the bottom of St James's Street, or Tuppen's on Marine Parade, pictured above right. There, they signed a visitors' book announcing they were in town and looked to see who else had arrived.

Soon after, they received a visit from Brighton's Master of Ceremonies – who presided over the town's balls, concerts and a

range of other social activities – to arrange introductions and invitations. A typical day revolved around promenading and taking



part in events on the open space of the Steine, or visiting the libraries which were like clubs where one could buy or borrow the latest novels or gossip and gamble at cards.

But the pastime which first put Brighton on the map was bathing. Usually done before breakfast, it was seen as a necessity for good health rather than an amusement.

Visitors undressed in a sentry box-style bathing machine which was pulled by a horse or wheeled into the water (below left).

They would descend to be immersed by an attendant – male ones were called "bathers" and female "dippers". Many people bathed naked but some women wore long flannel dresses – not surprisingly, as folk on the shore often watched through telescopes!

Novelist Fanny Burney wrote of a 6am dip with friends in 1782: "By the pale blink of the moon we went to the seaside where we had bespoke the bathing women to be ready, and into the ocean we plunged. It was cold but pleasant. I have bathed so often as to lose my dread of the operation, which now gives me nothing but animation and vigour."

### POET'S CORNER

St Mary's Church was a favourite church of poet laureate Sir John Betjeman (1906-1984). It was originally built in a classical style in 1826 by Amon Henry Wilds, the architect son of the well-known builder. It was said to be a copy of the Temple of Nemesis, goddess of vengeance, in Athens. But in 1876 it collapsed and was rebuilt by Sir William Emerson in a French Gothic style. It has a splendid interior with a vaulted ceiling and seating for up to 1,000. A painting of the original church hangs in the vestry (ask and you may be shown).

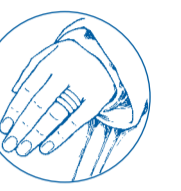


St John the Baptist Church, built in 1835, houses the tomb of Maria Fitzherbert, pictured left, the Prince of Wales' secret wife.

George was 22 when he met twice-widowed Maria at the opera and instantly fell in love with her. But he could never publicly make her his bride because of her Catholic faith.

Maria, who was 28, charming and virtuous, refused to be his mistress. Mad with desire, George secretly and illegally wed her in 1785, without the necessary permission of his father George III. But after many happy seasons together in Brighton, George tired of Maria

and left her with a £3,000-a-year allowance. He married his cousin Princess Caroline of Brunswick in return for his father paying off his £600,000 debts. That was a disaster and he took up again with Maria, only to snub her a second time because of her faith when he became Prince Regent in 1811. After George's death in 1830, his brother William IV allowed Maria to dress her servants in royal livery. She died in Brighton, aged 80. Her memorial, on the right-hand wall, shows her wearing three wedding rings – one for her secret royal marriage (see illustration right).

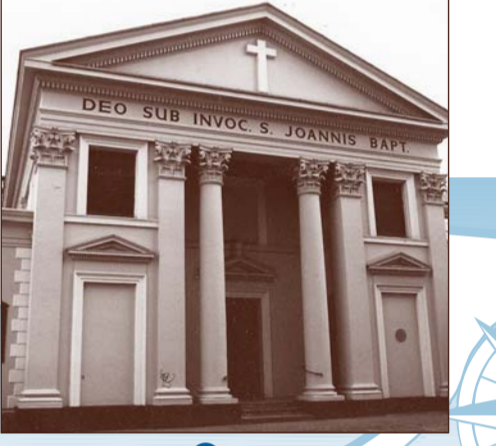


### CHIMNEY PIECES

Marine Gardens was a service road for the large houses in neighbouring Charlotte Street. No. 12, lived in by generations of chimney sweeps, is cobble-fronted – a traditional seaside feature created from beach pebbles and often coated with tar to keep out the rain. No. 14 was the first Brighton home of classical actress Dame Flora Robson, pictured right.



RETURN TO UPPER ST JAMES'S STREET AND CONTINUE PAST WYNDHAM STREET, WHERE ACTOR FRANK FINLAY LIVED, AND THE SIDEWINDER, WHICH HAS A PRETTY BEER GARDEN. CROSS BACK TO ST MARY'S CHURCH (OPEN MOST MORNINGS EXCEPT MONDAYS)



### A ROYAL RESORT

The streets to the east of the Palace Pier sprang up between the 1780s and 1870s as the little fishing town of Brighthelmstone, or Brighton, exploded in popularity into Europe's most fashionable seaside resort.

The wealthy flocked to spend the "season" promenading, going to balls and meeting their society friends. Many came to bathe in and drink the sea water, which they believed cured a string of ailments from abscesses to tumours. Others merely enjoyed the sea air, said to give "health, spirits and a ravenous appetite".

By 1783, Brighton had caught the eye of the fun-loving Prince of Wales – nicknamed Pranny – who later became George IV.

George, pictured below, was a drinker and gambler but also a fashionable man of taste. He arrived not long after his 21st birthday and was delighted with the place. He returned again and again and built himself a wildly exotic holiday home, the Royal Pavilion.

Suddenly Brighton, which had just six principal streets, was bursting at the seams. Its population rocketed from 3,500 in 1780 to more than 40,500 in 1831. The eastern area, rising to 80ft above the sea, was regarded as a particularly bracing and healthy place to live.

Originally known as East Cliff, it was re-named King's Cliff in 1908 to mark a visit by Edward VII. Today it is a colourful district, rich in heritage, with 381 listed buildings and a body dedicated to preserving its character, THE KINGSCLIFFE SOCIETY.



### SEA AND BE SEEN

Marine Parade, pictured left, is considered one of the finest seafront facades in Britain. During the "season" – which in its Regency heyday ran from July to March – fashionable society folk would ride along here daily on horseback or in carriages to see and be seen. It was said one could get a dozen invitations to dinner on the journey from Kemp Town, in the east, to Hove.

Many of the houses were built in the 1820s by the celebrated partnership of architect Charles Busby and builder Amon Wilds, who designed some of Brighton's most beautiful terraces. Examples are nos. 41 to 45 and 102 to 104.

No. 76, Brighton Royal British Legion club, is thought to be by Sir Charles Barry (1795-1860) who later designed the Houses of Parliament. Residents today include actress Dora Bryan.

### BOARD AND BODGING

Charles Street, built in the 1780s, was one of the first streets to spring up as Brighton expanded and is now one of the town's oldest survivors. Its houses were rented out as lodgings and their rounded bow windows were designed to ensure the best possible views of the sea. The small panes of glass were blown, then spun out by craftsmen. The swirled "bottle glass" panes used today to create mock-Georgian style were in fact the makers' "seconds" and would never have been used on the front of a building. Houses nos. 25 and 26 are modern copies, built in 1996.

RETURN TO MARINE PARADE AND CONTINUE PAST NO. 18, OLIVIER HOUSE, ON THE CORNER OF MADEIRA PLACE, WHICH IS THOUGHT TO BE BY BUSBY AND WILDS.

### TRACK OF ALL TRADES

Camelford Street was built as lodgings and tradesmen's houses and is considered one of Britain's best surviving examples of small-scale Regency architecture. In 1800 residents included two shoemakers, a grocer, tailor, carpenter, cow keeper and "pony" keeper. No. 36 later became home to social reformer Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906), who founded an irreligious sect called Secularism and was the last man ever jailed for atheism.



### THE PIER THAT DISAPPEARED

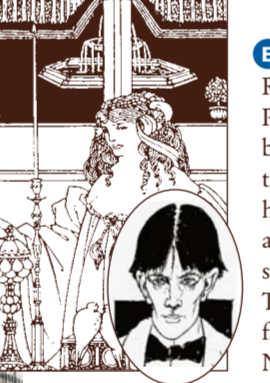
The Royal Suspension Chain Pier, built opposite New Steine, opened in 1823 as a landing stage for ferries to and from Dieppe. Described as "a great curiosity", it was a stunning engineering feat, consisting of four iron towers supported by eight huge chains. It



was Britain's first pleasure pier. Up to 4,000 people a day paid 2d to stroll the 350-yard length, buying novelties and souvenir china and having their portraits cut out in silhouette. Other attractions were a saloon lounge, reading room and camera obscura – a live "cinema" in which views of the sea and shore outside were projected into a dark room through a periscope-type lens in the roof.

The pier was badly damaged by a succession of storms and at 10.30pm on December 4, 1896, in driving rain and howling gales, the entire structure finally collapsed into the sea.

Its two octagonal entrance booths were left on the shore. They now stand on either side of the main amusement arcade on the Palace Pier, which opened in 1899, and can be seen from this spot (see inset). A plaque on Chain Pier House at 48 Marine Parade – former home of the Chain Pier's designer Captain Samuel Brown – commemorates his vanished masterpiece.



RETURN TO MARINE PARADE AND CONTINUE LEFT PAST MORE BUSBY AND WILDS ARCHITECTURE AT NOS. 50, 51, 53-55, TO THE RED-BRICK LANES HOTEL

### BRIGHTON ROCK

Lower Rock Gardens takes its name from Rock House, which stood on the site of Chain Pier House. It was an isolated, cliff-top home built in 1788 above an odd-shaped outcrop on the beach (long since covered by shingle). The house was rebuilt in the 1980s but some of its arched windows and castle-like wall can still be seen at the bottom of the road, on the left. The Victorian illustrator Aubrey Beardsley, left, famous for his grotesque and erotic Art Nouveau images, spent much of his childhood with his aunt at no. 21.



### TAKE A BOW

The Lanes Hotel was originally three bow-fronted houses. The corner one was rebuilt in 1880 by Victorian architect Col R W Edis, who later built London's Marylebone Station. The date 1844 on the side is completely bogus. The house later became The Crest Hotel and guests included composer and stage star Ivor Novello, pictured top, who worked on his 1939 musical *The Dancing Years* there.



Comic actor Tommy Trinder, right, lived next door at number 71.

### HALF-NELSON

Royal Crescent was Brighton's first major development and was built between 1798 and 1807 by West Indian merchant J B Otto. The crescent's name was originally painted above the splendid black mathematical tiles (see overleaf) by a Mr Leggatt who, when he got to the 'S', leaned back to admire his work and fell to his death on the railings below.

Otto tried to win Royal favour by putting up a 7ft plaster statue of the Prince of Wales on the front lawn. It did not weather well and its fingers and nose soon dropped off, then its right arm – making it look more like Lord Nelson. The furious Prince banned anyone from ever again mentioning Otto's name in his presence.

Actor Laurence Olivier, later Baron Olivier, stayed at the home of theatre chums at no. 7 while they were away. Olivier, above right, liked it so much he bought no. 4 before they got back, then no. 5 for his children.



WALK DOWN ROYAL CRESCENT MEWS, ON THE RIGHT, TO SEE WHERE HORSES AND STABLE HANDS WERE HOUSED.

RETURN TO MARINE PARADE, THEN TURN LEFT INTO BURLINGTON STREET (FLIP MAP OVER TO CONTINUE).

OUR WALK STARTS IN MARINE PARADE, NEAR THE SEA LIFE CENTRE, AND ENDS BACK ON THE OLD STEINE (PRONOUNCED STEEN), NEAR THE ROYAL PAVILION.

CONTINUE PAST NO. 76 (SEE MARINE PARADE) AND NO. 79, THE HOME OF PLAYWRIGHT SIR TERENCE RATTIGAN, WHO WROTE *THE WINSLOW BOY* AND *THE BROWNING VERSION*

BURLINGTON STREET