

English Merchant Shipping, Maritime Communities and Trade from the Spanish Armada to the Seven Years War

Walking Tour Three – The Georgians

Sugar, Slaves & Sea bathing

This is a self-guided tour starting from Holy Rood Church, High Street, Southampton, UK, and will take approximately 90 minutes to complete.

1 Holy Rood Church, High Street, Southampton

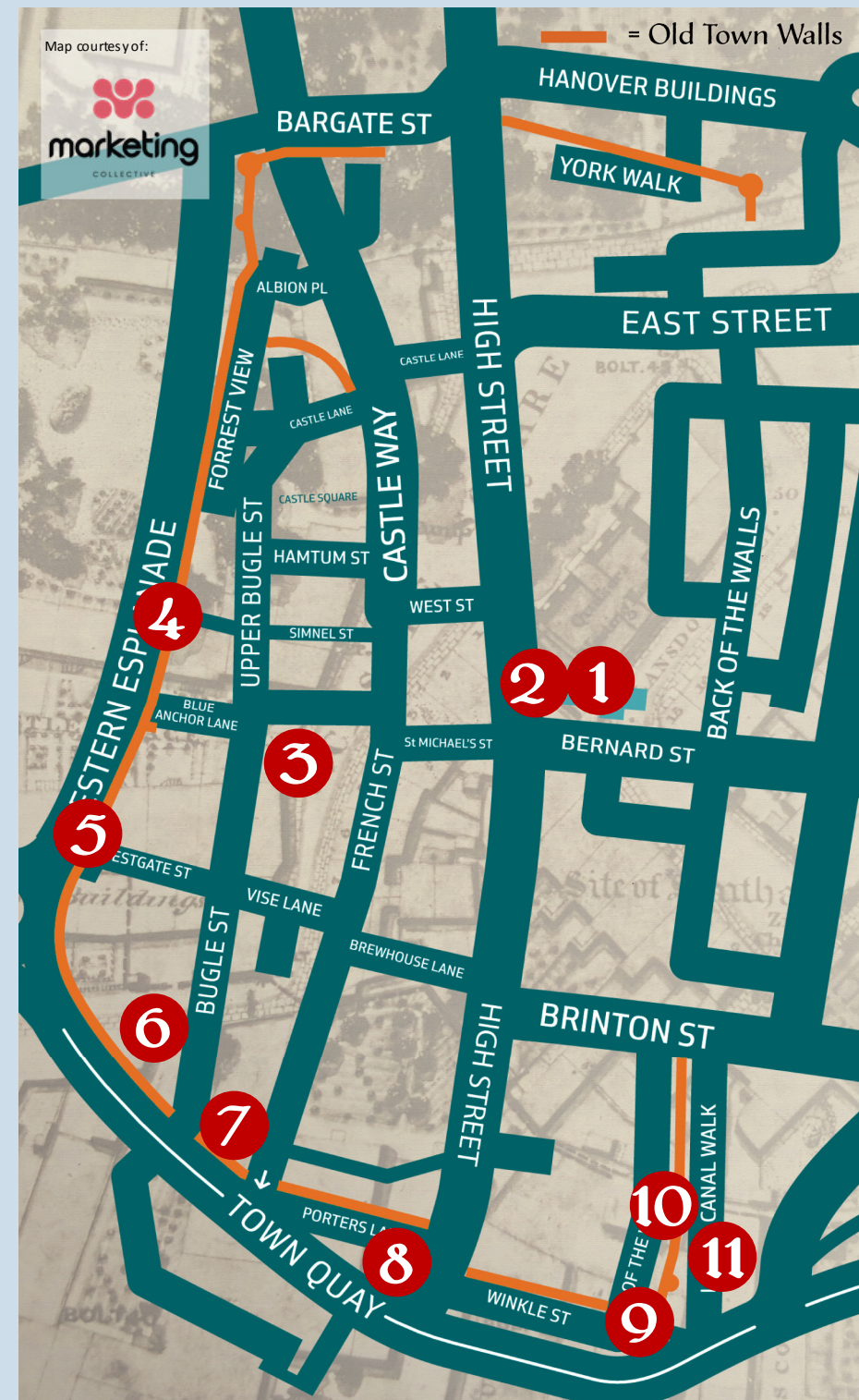


The story of Southampton in the 18th century is something of an aberration. In the hundreds of years before and in the centuries since, the town was always about the port and trade. It was the reason why it was founded and why it became wealthy and successful, but in the 17th century its trade had collapsed and its economy was reduced. As Daniel Defoe commented in 1724: *“Southampton was in a manner dying with age; the decay of the trade is the real decay of the town”*. The 1715 edition of Camden’s *Britannia* reported that its fine houses, rich inhabitants and busy harbour were now things of the past. To revive the town’s fortune it was necessary to re-invent the ancient port and a growing interest in sea bathing provided a new opportunity.

At the back of the church is the grave of Richard Taunton, who made his money, not only in the herring and wine industry, but also by privateering; he was part owner of two privateers – the *Prince Frederick* and *The Duke*. In 1745 his vessels fought three French ships and secured their cargo, including 45 wagon-loads of silver. Taunton was also in business with Frederick, Prince of Wales, who visited the town in 1750 and swam in the western bay, thereby giving the town royal approval as a watering-place. The discovery of a chalybeate spring in 1746 meant Southampton could also be called a spa town; it was firmly on the watering-place map by 1740. Taunton died in 1752 and left the bulk of his estate for charitable purposes, including support for the poor and the training of their children in work and industry, fitting them for the ‘sea or otherwise’.



Tomb of Richard Taunton,
Holy Rood Church



2 Exterior of Holy Rood

On the tower is a memorial tablet to Charles Dibdin, the son of a parish clerk of Holy Rood, who was baptised here in 1745 and who wrote songs and ballads about the sea, including 'Tom Bowling' – still sung on the Last Night of the Proms. The song was inspired by Dibdin's brother who was 29 years his senior and captain of a ship which was struck by lightning. The song contains the line 'His form was of the manliest beauty, his heart was kind and soft, faithful below he did his duty – now he's gone aloft.' Napoleon rated Tom above Nelson for inspiration and it is said he brought more men into the navy than the press gangs. Dibdin also wrote the first-known version of the pantomime that we know as *Jack & the Beanstalk*.



Charles Dibdin Memorial Plaque

Opposite Holy Rood was the site of the Audit House. It was there in 1710 that the mayor of Southampton hosted a banquet for the 'Kings of the Five Nations of the Iroquois': the Iroquois delegation. As colonisation progressed across the American continent, it brought the colonists into contact with indigenous people such as the Iroquois. The town records show the names of the delegation in Iroquois and English; the Iroquois names were written down phonetically and

differ somewhat from how they are written today. Their English names were: Hendrick, Brant, John, Nicholas.

Although the Southampton Records show that there were five kings, one had died on the voyage to England. The delegation therefore is known as the Four Kings: three Mohawks and one Mohican. The men had travelled to England to seek British military support against the French in what is now Upstate New York and Canada. During the visit Queen Anne commissioned their portraits from John Verelst and these are the earliest known surviving oil 'portraits from life' of Native Americans.

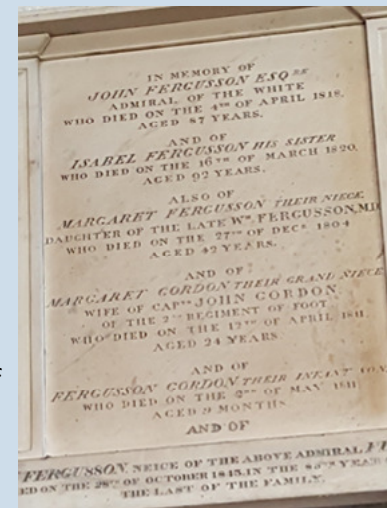
*Cross the High Street and go up St Michael's Street.
Cross the road and proceed to St Michael's Church*

3 St Michael's Church

The church contains many memorials which date from the 18th century including several dedicated to Royal Navy Admirals. Naval men often found living in Southampton convenient as it had all that polite society required and was close to the naval centre of Portsmouth. Three colour flags were used at sea, each with its own Admiral: the blue, the white and the red (the most senior). Promotion continued throughout an Admiral's life, even after retirement, so if you lived long enough you could become an Admiral of the Red.

There is a memorial to the Fergusson family. One of John Fergusson's most famous actions was in Honduras which had been a stronghold for the British, including during the Seven Years War (1756–63). However, by 1775, tension was building with the local inhabitants known as the Miskitos. Fergusson was appointed superintendent of the Mosquito Shore.

In 1780 Southampton was used as a port during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War when the British and Dutch were fighting yet again over trade routes and colonies. Things came to a head in 1781 at the Battle of Dogger Bank. *HMS Berwick* commanded by John Fergusson was part of the British naval fleet. The battle was a bloody affair with high casualties on both sides. The war ended in 1784 with Britain gaining free-trade rights in parts of the Dutch East Indies.



Fergusson Memorial,
St Michael's Church

*Cross the square and turn right on to Bugle Street.
Take first left down Biddlesgate to Western Esplanade*

4 Biddles Gate

This was the site of the baths constructed



Biddles Gate

by John Martin in 1761. The baths where people 'took the flounce' were filled and emptied by the tide. With the increasing popularity of bathing, Martin added viewing platforms and then the Long Rooms where Assembly Balls took place. Bathing was segregated and the bathing costumes were made of green flannel: long gowns and socks for the women; shirt and breeches for men. Ladies' hair



was protected in a leather bag, with oiled silk to preserve curls. Bathers were ordered to drink sea water for two days before bathing. It was recommended to bathe for three days, fasting on those days, and then miss a day. When the chalybeate spring was discovered, visitors were encouraged to drink that water instead as it was claimed to cure many complaints:

To drink Chalybeate water in conjunction with seabathing is especially beneficial. One tumbler to be drunk in the morning and again in the afternoon for the greatest benefit.

Chalybeate water is especially helpful in the treatment of jaundice, scurvy, paralytic disorders, barrenness in females, green and yellow fever, intestinal blockages, feebleness experienced by young females, fainting fits, lassitude and other female complaints.

The waters are especially beneficial against eye problems and rabies in both people and animals.

Subscriptions to the Spa 15s per year (2d per glass for non-subscribers) poor people free water before 8am.

Turn left and proceed down Western Esplanade until you reach the medieval West Gate. Go through the gate

5 West Gate

In the mid-18th century the engineer Walter Taylor used the gate tower as his workshop. He produced ships' pulley blocks on a vast scale for Royal Navy. He also invented the circular saw. Walter had a black servant, Antony de Sourze, depicted in the painting of



West Gate



Cuckoo Lane

the Taylor family, *Mrs Taylor's New Year's Feast*, by Maria Spilsbury. Taylor was a Congregationalist and involved in the movement to abolish the slave trade. Antony de Sourze lived with the family in Portswood and married a local woman. However, when the fortunes of the Taylors foundered, it seems Antony ended up on poor relief in South Stoneham. He is one of the few black Sotonians of this period for whom we have an image in a painting that is usually displayed in Tudor House Museum.

Go up West Gate Street to the junction with Bugle Street: turn right. On the right hand side of the road, just before it meets Town Quay, turn right along the passage which leads to Cuckoo Lane

6 Cuckoo Lane, site of Bugle Hall

The small park on Cuckoo Lane was once the site of Bugle Hall, the 18th-century home to the Gunthorpe family, one of the many plantation families who influenced politics in the town as the 'West Indian' faction. William Gunthorpe owned the plantation 'Painters', with its 350 enslaved people, on the isle of Antigua. His black servant, John Fusso, was baptized in Southampton.

Contemporary with the Gunthorpes were the important political figures, Josias Jackson, George

Rose and Bryan Edwards. Jackson and Rose were MPs for Southampton. Jackson was heir to five plantations on the island of St Vincent and became a colonel in the local Volunteers in Southampton. He became an MP in 1807 and stood against abolition. Rose had estates in Dominica and

Antigua and wrote *A History of Jamaica*. Edwards was a partner in a local bank, which was ultimately taken over by Lloyd's. He owned more than 600 enslaved people and his estate was valued at £73,328 (over £5.5m today).

Turn left down Cuckoo Lane and cross over Bugle Street to the Wool House on Town Quay

7 Wool House



The Wool House was originally built in the 15th century as a warehouse to store the valuable commodity of wool which was produced at the local abbey of Beaulieu. Following the collapse of the wool trade in the 16th century it became a general warehouse. In the 18th century there were so many conflicts and wars that the period is sometimes called the second Hundred Years' War. Southampton was used as a military port, even while it was promoting itself as a health resort; at times this led to outbreaks of illnesses such as typhus. During hostilities so many prisoners were taken that often there were not enough suitable prisons, so warehouses like the Wool House were commandeered as temporary jails. French and Spanish prisoners of war were incarcerated here and their names can still be seen carved into the beams and walls of the building. The area adjacent to the building was known as the Spanish burial ground.

Proceed westward, cross French Street, proceed along Porters Lane

8 Water Gate

In 1738 James Oglethorpe had ships in the harbour to take people to colonise Georgia. The ships *Hector* and *Blandford* were moored just off the Water Gate at Town Quay. They were taking troops to Georgia, in the hope the men would be encouraged to marry and stay. Georgia was the last colony to be developed by the British prior to the American War of Independence. The leader of the expedition, James Oglethorpe, was a soldier and politician who had served on a parliamentary committee on prison reform and was particularly concerned with the treatment of debtors. The trustees of the expedition were conducting an experiment in the way the colony was promoted, which involved relocating the disadvantaged poor; that is say, the worthy poor. Benefits to the government included being able to save on parish relief, as well as bringing benefit to British trade policy and providing a military buffer for the colony of South Carolina from Spanish or French incursions from Florida and the Mississippi Valley. The colony was based on small farmsteads with each colonist receiving fifty acres to cultivate. There were rules and restrictions: slavery was prohibited and



Water Gate

each farm had to cultivate mulberry trees to support the proposed colonial silk industry. Women were seen as important to the success of the venture – to support the men, relieve them of menial tasks and to preserve their health. In 1738 group weddings were held at Peartree Church in Southampton between men and women migrating to Georgia. The colony, however, was already in trouble, lacking in funds and with insufficient labour. As a result. the restrictions on slavery were lifted and in 1751 the trustees surrendered their claims to Georgia to the Crown.

Cross the High Street, proceed along Winkle Street and through God's House Gate to God's House Tower.

9 God's House Tower



God's House Tower

In the 18th century the medieval God's House Tower and gateway had been transformed into the town's main prison. One of the punishments meted out to prisoners found guilty of certain crimes was to transport them to the colonies in America. Prisoners were routinely sent there as punishment and to help the development of the colonies through their labour.

In 1765 William Stow, servant of the sometime mayor and town doctor John Monkton, was sentenced to transportation to America for seven years, alongside his brother Joseph. Thomas Dormer the Younger was bonded to transport the men in his ship, *St George Snow*, which was moored at the Water Gate quay. Should the men escape he would have lost the £100 bond he had signed for undertaking the job.

Smuggling was a growing problem at this time, due to the rise in customs duties and continental wars. God's House prison housed a number of captured smugglers. Tea, gin, rum and brandy were popular smuggled goods.

Retrace your steps through the gate and turn right. Proceed up the lane to the remains of the friary gate

10 Gloucester Square, Sugar House

The medieval friary which stood here had been dissolved by Henry VIII and, by the 18th century, the plot of land which stretched from the gateway across the modern car park to the High Street was a semi-industrial area. In 1743 the Brissault family moved to Southampton from London and acquired the land. The Brissaults was Huguenots, Protestant immigrants originally from France. The family money came from slavery. They owned a plantation in Jamaica which produced coffee and ginger, but not sugar. Their 90 acres were worked by twenty-five enslaved labourer. John Brissault opened a sugar house on the friary site. Sugar houses were factories where raw sugar was refined into sugar suitable for use in tea, a fashionable new drink from China. Brissault's Sugar House was ideally placed with easy access to Town Quay, but far enough away from the fine houses on the High Street, Bugle Street and French Street so as not to cause complaints from the local residents. The growth in new amenities in the town at the time

included coffee houses, circulating libraries and assembly rooms where drinking, tea, chocolate and coffee was the height of fashion.



Site of Friary and Sugar House

The Sugar House was a seven-storey stone structure with room for five boiling pans, cisterns and stoves, a sugar store and mill. The family lived on site and also had their own shop. Despite the importance of the sugar industry, however, Brissault went bankrupt in 1775 and had to auction off the site, along with the 15,000 pots and sugar moulds and other utensils needed for the refining of sugar.

He may have been affected by a backlash against sugar by the Anti-Saccharites who abhorred the use and treatment of the enslaved who toiled on the sugar plantations. Sugar boycotts were organised many of them.

Between 1776 and 1791 the British West Indies produced over a million tons of sugar. Enslaved people toiled in the cane fields, often working 18 hours a day. The cane was cut with machetes and taken to a sugar mill to be crushed and boiled. Another by-product of the sugar making process was molasses, used to make rum. Rum was, of course, a

staple drink of the Royal Navy which was deployed throughout the 18th and 19th centuries to protect British interests in the West Indies. After the Brissaults gave up the building, the Sugar House was used as a temporary garrison for soldiers being sent out to fight in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars and in 1795 troops were sent from here to serve in the West Indies.

Go through the Friary Gate to the Ditches, turn right and walk down to God's House Tower. Look to your left and see the buildings which became the 'old docks' – all built on reclaimed land

11 Ditches

The Ditches was so named as it was where the medieval town moat ran: from God's House, up the east side of the town, and around to the Bargate. By the end of the 18th century, the old town moat was repurposed as part of the Southampton to Salisbury canal. By the dawn of the 19th century, Southampton was about to return to being a busy working port.



The 'Ditches' Old Canal Walk

New vessels such as the steam ship the *Prince of Coburg* were taking visitors to the Isle of Wight, the Channel Isles and, as the Napoleonic Wars came to an end, to France. Land was reclaimed for the building of new docks capable of accommodating these larger ships.

The railways were about to come to Southampton, too. One William Fitzhugh had shares and investments in all these developments. He had retired to Southampton in 1791 at the age of 34, having made his fortune in the East India Company, serving as a factor in China.

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