

Take a Pictorial Walk through History along The Dymchurch Heritage Trail

Discover where Smugglers
lived and hid their
Contraband ...and the old
Courtroom and Gaol
where many ended up!



Find out about the two old
Forges where Blacksmiths
issued local Coins.



Visit the Norman
Church dating from
the mid 1100s.

See where famous Authors, Artists
and Actors once lived including
Edith Nesbit and Russell Thorndyke,
the creator of Dr. Syn, the Smuggler.



Martello Towers, the Old Mortuary,
the spot marking the Gallows, the Old Workhouse and
much more all lay along the Route of The Heritage Trail.
With the help of old Photographs, we hope you can
envisage how Dymchurch looked not so long ago.
To find out more about these and other Buildings, visit
www.dymchurchheritagegroup.co.uk

The World, according to the best Geographers,
is divided into Europe, Asia, Africa, America,
and Romney Marsh.

From The Ingoldsby Legends by Rev. Richard Harris Barham

Published by the Dymchurch & District Heritage Group
with support from the Dymchurch Parish Plan
and the Dymchurch Parish Council.



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The Heritage Trail - The History

1. Rose Cottages, 49-55 High Street

During the 18th century until 1842, The Rose Inn was situated in one of these cottages and, in 1793, William Wood was the landlord. The artist Paul Nash lived here in 1923.

2. Dormer Cottages, 19-27 High Street

Built in the 15th century, one of them became Smiths Stores, this is now the Hospice Furniture Shop. The cottages have, at different times, had some famous people living here, including Edith Nesbit, Noel Coward and artist, Paul Nash.

3. The Corner House Restaurant

Alex's Pie & Eel Shop was situated here in the 1950-1970s. It was formerly four residences known as Allcorn Cottages.

4. Mackett's Cottages, 10-16 Mill Road

Built in 1740, they became the village workhouse in 1791. In 1836, it was closed and the inmates were transferred to the Union Workhouse in New Romney.



5. Old Tree Cottage, 22 Mill Road

A Grade II listed 18th century cottage built originally for agriculture workers. Between the 1920s and 1950s, it was owned by the notable actor/director Milton Rosmer. Some of his productions were Lady Windermere's Fan (1916), Little Women (1917), Wuthering Heights (1920) and Goodbye Mr. Chips (1939). He befriended Russell Thorndyke and produced his film, Dr. Syn, in 1937.

6. Dr. Syn's Restaurant & Guest House, 24 Mill Road

This building has seen many changes. This Grade II listed building was originally a residential cottage called Mewslade which later became known as The Cat & Kettle Tearooms. After that, it became Dr. Syn's Restaurant and, later, Guest House.

7. Dunkirk End, 26 Mill Road

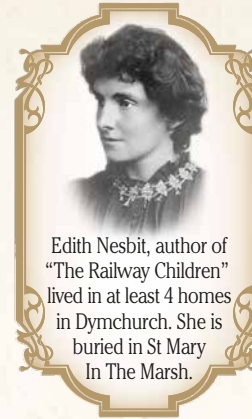
There is a date stone on Dunkirk End of 1736 together with the masons' marks A.K. & R.H. To the left is a herring hang where fishermen used to smoke their fish. This building is Grade II listed and the small window in the gable end that looks down Mill Road, is believed to have been a smuggler's lookout.

8. Bridge View & Middle Cottage, 24 Mill Road

These two cottages to the left of Dunkirk End date from the late 1700s.

9. Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway

This 15" gauge railway was the passion of Captain J.E.P. Howey and was opened on the 16th July 1927. During World War II, it was requisitioned by the War Department which ran a miniature armoured train. The railway also helped with building the PLUTO pipe line that stretched across the English Channel to France. Dymchurch Windmill stood on this site until it was demolished in 1906.



Edith Nesbit, author of
"The Railway Children"
lived in at least 4 homes
in Dymchurch. She is
buried in St Mary
In The Marsh.

10. Old School House, 15 Mill Road

Built in 1800 by Jeremiah Wraight as a village school, the Parish paid him 4 guineas per annum rent. Mr. George Roberts was the first school master in November 1800.

11. Wraights Cottages & Sunny House, 7-13 Mill Road

Built in the 1700s, during 1819 William Wincles lived here and was, like many of the villagers, a smuggler. On 26th March 1819, he was seized by a Customs Officer on Dymchurch beach. He was tried in New Hall Court, found guilty and sentenced to 3 months in gaol. If you can, pay a visit to the Gaol, you can see where he carved his name and date on the wall.

12. Martello Tower No. 25 (in the car park)

In 1841 there were 23 people living here in very cramped conditions. During the night of 12th June 1944 two Royal Observer Corps, Mr. Archie Wraight and Mr. Ernest Woodland, reported the sighting of the first V1 "Doodlebug", to cross our shores. 2,400 of these bombs fell on Kent.

13. The Ocean Inn, 2 High Street

Built in 1733, the mason's mark has the initials I.F.E. The earliest records show that in 1840 William Parris was the owner and landlord of The Ocean beerhouse. The name was changed to The Victoria in 1897, possibly to commemorate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. In 1952 during renovations, the original name was found on a mural behind the wallpaper and it was decided to change the name back to The Ocean. The mural is on the wall for all to see.

14. Smugglers Chest, 4 High Street

Dating from 1784, the same William Parris was the first known owner. In 1794, because of the lack of small coinage in circulation, he issued his own halfpenny token. Wellworth Stores was here for 32 years until 2003.



15. Pilgrims Hospice Bookshop, 10 High Street

Formerly five cottages, the Hoper family lived in the front two cottages in the High Street around 1891, where they sold sweets and bakery produce. In 1939 Beatrice Hoper, with the help of her mother, took over the shop and called it Beat's Sweet Shop. After Beatrice died, her sister took it over and when she retired it was sold to Iris Findley. Iris died in 1999 and left the shop to The Pilgrims Hospice.

16. Dymchurch Amusement Park (MW's Fairground)

In the 1930s this was a small fairground with a putting green. Prior to this, it had been allotments for the Coastguards. The roller skating rink, is still there under the ghost train.

17. Coastguard Cottages, 26-40 High Street

Built in 1905, they replaced the cottages that were in the garage car park opposite Well Cottage & Oak Cottage (34).

18. Martello Tower 24

Built in 1806, this Martello Tower is now owned by English Heritage and is open to the public on particular days. If it is open, do take the opportunity to pay a visit to this wonderfully restored building of the Napoleonic period.



19. Marine Terrace, 50-60 Sea Wall Road

This large block of buildings includes The Arcade Gift Shop and was built by Frank Elliott in 1895 for the Stoakes-Jones family. These were the first houses built as holiday residences in Dymchurch. Russell Thorndike, the author of the Dr. Syn books, lived in Nos. 3 and 4 with his parents and siblings.



20. City of London Public House

Built in the 1700s, it is mentioned in Russell Thorndike's Dr. Syn books where he called it The Seawall Tavern. Jonah Lorden was the landlord in 1841.

Why is The Pub Called City of London?

Rumour has it that during a storm in 1775, a ship called City of London was blown ashore causing substantial damage. The ship's timbers were used to repair the pub and its name was changed to reflect this.

21. The Plater Hall

This memorial hall was built in 1908 in memory of a popular vicar of Dymchurch, the Rev. Charles Eaton Plater. When he died the people of the village paid to have the hall built.

22. Dymchurch Angling Club

This little building was, in its early days, the Coastguards Rocket Apparatus Station No. 131. It became the Dymchurch Mortuary between 1939-1963. During World War II many servicemen's bodies were placed in here, including German airmen.

23. Cluny Cottage, 3 Sea Wall Road

Built in 1710, it was little changed until Brigadier General Gordon Macpherson CBE and his wife added the tower room and arch in the 1930s. Prior to that, it was owned by the Stoakes-Jones family who were very prominent in the village.

24. Tudor Cottage, 4 Sea Wall Road

Before 1791, this was one of the original Poor Houses in the village. It had its own school room and chapel and is a listed building.

25. Clissold Cottage, 6 Sea Wall Road

This Grade II listed building was built in the early 19th century. In 1843 a fisherman called William Tolhurst lived here. He was heavily involved in smuggling.

26. The Ship Inn

Dating back to the 16th century, it was a coaching inn and a haven for smugglers. There were many secret hiding places and a secret tunnel that led across the road to the church.

The main road used to be in the front of the pub and it went on to run alongside the sea wall.



27. Mary's Tearoom, 110 High Street

This was one of two blacksmith's forges in Dymchurch and, in 1670, Andrew Clifford worked here. He issued his own coinage due to the lack of small change.

28. The War Memorial

This land was given by the Lords of the Level of Romney Marsh and was the original site of the Dymchurch gallows. The War Memorial was paid for by the people of the village in memory of those men who gave their lives during World War I.



29. St. Peter & St. Paul Parish Church

A Norman church built circa 1150. Inside, there is a Norman arch that divides the nave and chancel. The church was enlarged in 1821 because of the growing population.

30. New Hall & Gaol

In 1252, a Charter by King Henry III granted self government to Dymchurch & The Romney Marsh, provided they maintained the sea wall. Dymchurch was the seat of government but, unfortunately, the original building burnt down in 1573. In 1574, New Hall was built to replace it. Inside is an 18th century courtroom, a museum and a wealth of history. William Pitt, Prime Minister, came here to discuss building the Martello Towers and the Military Canal. The Gaol is to the right of the front door. Inside are drawings and words carved by prisoners who were held there.



31. Willowdeck, 108 High Street

Once known as Laburnam Cottage, it was the home of Sir Edward Elgar's great grandparents. William Elgar married Catherine Moate in the parish church on the 29th June 1786.

32. Sycamore House, 102 High Street

This was Sycamore Farmhouse and Sycamore Gardens was the farm. This Grade II listed building has also been the village rectory. Edith Nesbit rented this property and she used to call it "The Other House". Her friends used to stay here when visiting and on holiday.

33. The Old Manor House, 100 High Street

A 17th century listed building that was owned by Sir Edward Dering of Pluckley. His ancestor, also Sir Edward Dering, was the MP for New Romney 1761-70 and 1774-87. The family had a long connection to Dymchurch.

34. Well Cottage & Oak Cottage, 119-121 High Street

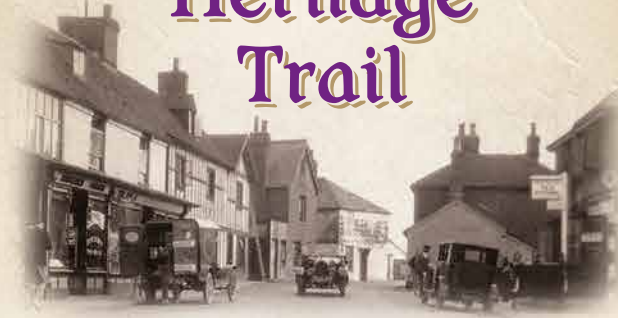
Built in the 17th century, Oak Cottage was the village post office for many years. Well Cottage was another of the properties where Edith Nesbit resided. To the rear of this property was one of the village water pumps used before mains water came to Dymchurch in 1926.

35. Methodist Church, High Street

Erected in 1880 to replace a small chapel that was situated where Deck Amusements are now.

Find out more at www.dymchurchheritagegroup.co.uk

The Dymchurch Heritage Trail



Follow our Walk around the Village of Dymchurch, on Romney Marsh in the County of Kent and discover the History of the Buildings and the People who once lived here.

Written by The Dymchurch Heritage Group.



A Short History of Dymchurch

Dymchurch is rich in history going back over two thousand years. It began with the gradual formation of Romney Marsh. Thousands of years ago, when Romney Marsh was under the sea, shingle banks started to build up where the sea defence wall in Dymchurch is now. Marshy areas formed behind these banks and our predecessors began to reclaim the land for occupation and cultivation. The sea was first kept at bay by using blackthorn branches and clay, then stone blocks and finally concrete. The Dymchurch Wall was born.

Dymchurch became the headquarters for law and order on the Marsh and its name derives from Deme, Mediaeval English for judge or arbiter. The governors of the Marsh met in New Hall, the courtroom located opposite the 12th century Norman church St. Peter & St. Paul, just over the road from the 16th century smuggling inn, The Ship.

Feel part of Dymchurch's history by walking The Heritage Trail. See where Edith Nesbit, Paul Nash, Noel Coward and Russell Thorndike stayed; the Martello Towers, built as defences against Napoleon; the old Coastguard Cottages; and much more.



The Heritage Trail - The Route

The complete Heritage Trail is about 1½ miles (2.4 km) long. The shorter Village Heritage Trail is about ½ mile (0.8 km) long. For interesting historical facts about the route, please see the reverse of this leaflet.

Please note: Homes are private property and must not be trespassed upon.

The Heritage Trail is a complete loop so you can join it anywhere but we will start from the pedestrian crossing in the High Street. Cross to the side of the road furthest from the sea and walk towards the mini roundabout.

1. Rose Cottages are a row of white terraced cottages after the first few shops.



Continue along the High Street and **2. Dormer Cottages** are another group of white terraced cottages.

At the roundabout, follow the pavement into Mill Road to **3. The Corner House**.



Pass The Corner House, to the right you will see **4. Macketts Cottages**, the former village Workhouse.



Just around the curve in the road is Grade II brick-built **5. Old Tree Cottage**.



Next door is **6. Dr. Syn's Restaurant & Guest House**.



Turn left at the junction. Set back from the road is **7. Dunkirk End**, with **8. Bridge View and Middle Cottage** to the left.

For those on the Village Heritage Trail, turn back here and go straight to No. 10, Old School House. Otherwise carry on to No. 9, Dymchurch Railway Station.



Cross the dyke and turn right to the **9. Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway Station**.

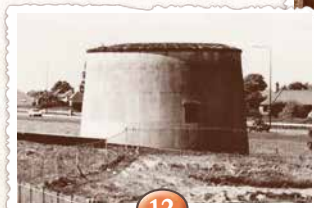


Return back to the road, turn left and then right at the junction. **10. Old School House** is opposite Dr. Syn's (6).

Along the road on the curve, are **11. Wraights Cottages & Sunny House**.



At the roundabout, turn right and carefully cross over the road. Continue along the main road to **12. Martello Tower No. 25**.



Walk up the slope and turn left. At the next slope, either turn left to go down to the road, or carry on to see the cannon on top of Martello Tower No. 24 (18). **13. The Ocean Inn** is on the right as you go down the slope.



Turn right at the bottom. Next door is **14. Smuggler's Chest**.



Follow the road round into the High Street to the stone built **15. Pilgrim's Hospice Bookshop**.



16. The Amusement Park is next door. Walk along until there is a gap in the shops.



17. The Coastguard Cottages are either side of the gap.



The Heritage Trail starts here

If you choose not to visit Martello Tower No. 25, pick up The Trail at No. 13, The Ocean Inn.

In between the Coastguard Cottages is **18. Martello Tower No. 24**.





Follow the pavement and go up the slope towards the beach. Just past and opposite the slipway is **19. Marine Terrace**.



Just along the road is the sea wall entrance to **20. City of London**. The front entrance is on the main road below.

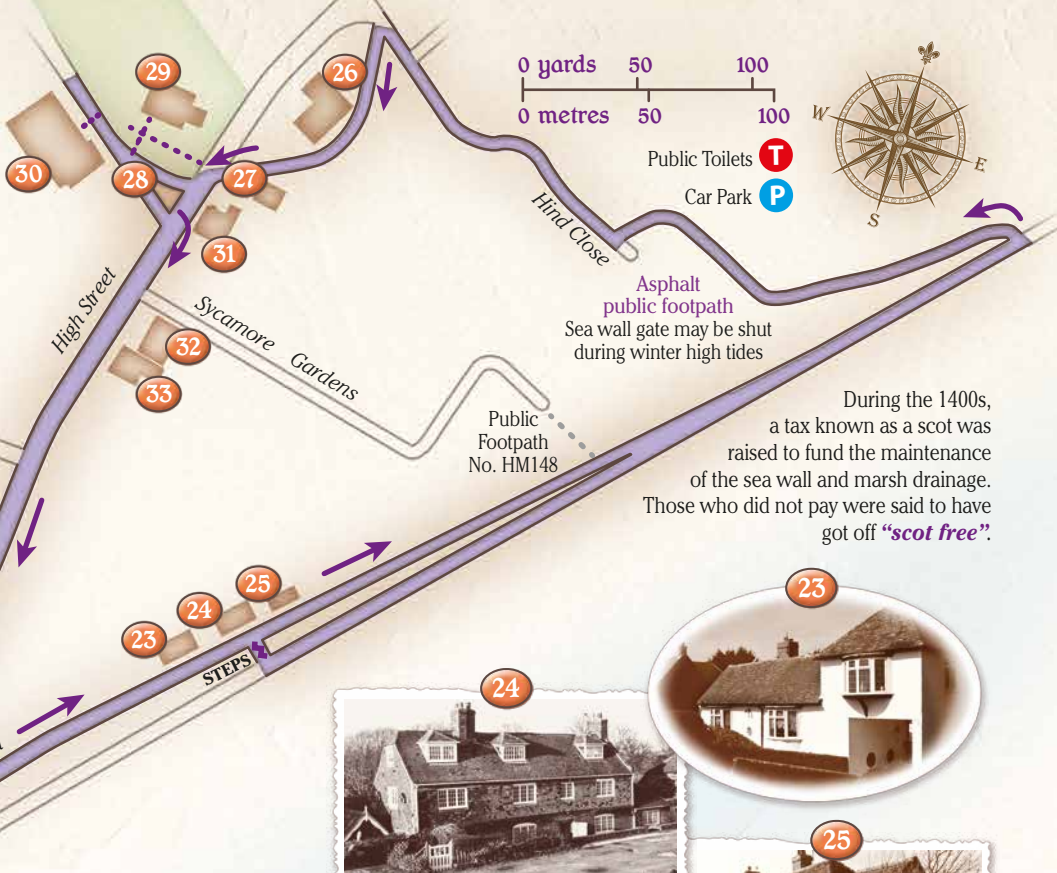


Opposite The City of London is **21. Plater Hall**.

Next door to Plater Hall is **22. Dymchurch Angling Club**, the former Mortuary and Coastguard Rocket Station.



To complete the Village Heritage Trail, walk down the steps by the side of The City of London and cross the road to No. 35, the Methodist Church. If you are unable to use the steps, go back to the High Street, cross the road at the pedestrian crossing and make your way to the church along the High Street.



0 yards 50 100
0 metres 50 100
Public Toilets **T**
Car Park **P**

Asphalt public footpath
Sea wall gate may be shut during winter high tides

Public Footpath No. HM148

During the 1400s, a tax known as a scot was raised to fund the maintenance of the sea wall and marsh drainage. Those who did not pay were said to have got off "**scot free**".



Carry on along Sea Wall Road to a group of three houses, **23. Cluny Cottage**, **24. Tudor Cottage** and **25. Clissold Cottage**.

A different view can be seen if you go up the steps onto the sea wall.

Continue along the sea wall or Sea Wall Road, passing by a public footpath that leads off Sea Wall Road. Turn left at the next sea wall gate, taking the asphalt path through the alley which leads into Hind Close. Follow the road and take the path on your left that runs by the side of **26. The Ship Inn**.



A little further along, just before the corner, is **27. Mary's Tea Room**.

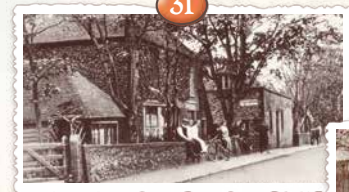


Carefully cross the road to **28. The War Memorial**. This marks the spot where the Village Gallows once stood. On your right is **29. St. Peter & St. Paul's Church**.



Opposite the church, is **30. New Hall and Gaol**.

Carefully cross the road again. Directly opposite the War Memorial is **31. Willowdeck**.



On the right hand corner of Sycamore Gardens is **32. Sycamore House**.

The next house along is **33. The Old Manor House**.



Further along and opposite the garage are **34. Well Cottage & Oak Cottage**.



Continue towards the shops to City of London pub. Opposite is **35. The Methodist Church**.

The Dymchurch Heritage Group has a room at the rear of the church which is open to the public between March - December, every 1st and 3rd Saturday in the month between 2-5pm (2-4pm in March). Come in and see us if you would like to find out more about the history of Dymchurch and the surrounding area.