



## Frinton – introduction

Enveloped in old world charm, Frinton-on-Sea holds a unique place in Essex's heart. Prominent businessmen and celebrities bought holiday homes in Frinton to enjoy its casino, dance halls, beautiful beach and relaxation. More than a century after the town became a holiday hotspot for royalty and the rich and famous of the day, Frinton is still a popular seaside getaway for people looking for a quiet and calm of years gone by.

Filled with stunning architecture, wartime history and a famed 'Nursery of the Stars', a walk around Frinton is to walk through time, experience its rich past and appreciate its present beauty.

## You have now arrived in Frinton (Frinton Railway Station)

Visitors first walked onto a platform in Frinton in 1867 when Peter Schuyler Bruff brought in the link from the town to Walton-on-the-Naze. The station area isn't just a place to pass through. Crossing Cottage, headquarters of the Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust, is home to the Cottage and Railway Museums and a short walk away is Marconia, 34 Upper Third Avenue, where Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company established the world's first wireless school, the Marconi School for Managers, between 1901 and 1903.

## Game, set, match to Frinton! (Frinton Lawn Tennis Club)

Holland Road takes you down to Frinton Lawn Tennis Club, founded in 1899. As you approach the club look out for Maryland, a house rented for a holiday by Clementine and Winston Churchill in 1922.

In post-Victorian Britain the Frinton Tennis, Croquet and Bowls Club flourished. A hub of entertainment and thrills, the club was frequented by famous actors and Royalty, including Douglas Fairbanks, Gladys Cooper, Edward VIII and his brother, George VI.

The members club was a major exclusive venue in the British tennis calendar and for four decades it held its annual tennis week straight after Wimbledon. Today it is open to a wider membership and has 22 grass courts, squash courts and a swimming pool. It also hosts Frinton Literary Festival and some concerts of the Frinton Music Festival.

## Frinton Golf Club

As old as the town itself, Frinton Golf Club has a vibrant history. The Club was founded in 1895 as a nine-hole course, it was originally located on the land where homes are now in Second and Third Avenues. An 18-hole course was designed on the current site by two-times Open Champion Willie Park Jnr in 1904. The clubhouse was built in 1905 with extensions in the 1930s. The course was visited by many famous golfing celebrities of their day, including Harry Vardon, James Braid and John Henry Taylor who won 16 of the first 21 Open Championships.



The Club can claim the title for being one of the first golf clubs in the country to open its doors to women, taking the lead in the fight for gender equality.

#### Luxury accommodation with a view (Frinton's hotels – The Former Grand Hotel/ The Hotel Esplanade)

Frinton's hotels were a force to be reckoned with, a playground of the rich and famous and visited by some prestigious guests over the years. Among the places to be seen were the former Grand Hotel and The Hotel Esplanade.

Built in 1896, the former Grand Hotel was once the hub of social life in 1920s and 1930s Frinton. The hotel counted King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II among its guests and closed in 1991. The building now houses flats for residents aged over 55.

Celebrated Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw was a frequent guest at The Esplanade but the hotel closed in 1949 and stayed empty until 1955. The building was demolished in 1961. Today, it is the site of Frinton Court and The Willows blocks of flats.

Many large private houses were converted into hotels after World War Two but as air travel became cheaper and British seaside resorts fell out of favour, many of the hotels were sold and converted into holiday or permanent rental homes, or demolished altogether to make way for flats.

#### Spiritual calm (St Mary the Virgin Church)

Essex's smallest parish church can be found in Frinton. St Mary the Virgin Church on Old Road is open most days until sunset. The beautiful church was restored to its original footprint in 1929 when the larger St Mary Magdalene Parish Church opened on the same road. St Mary the Virgin Church was gifted a window, designed by Edward Burne Jones, in the 1950s to replace the original window that was destroyed in a bombing raid in 1943.

#### Nursery to the Stars (McGrigor Hall and Frinton Summer Theatre)

The much-loved Frinton Summer Theatre is one of the very few surviving repertory theatres in the country. Still hugely popular across the area, the annual seven-week theatre season has seen well-known actors including David Suchet, Vanessa Redgrave, Lynda Bellingham, Jane Asher and Julie Christie perform there. July and August are alive with arts and theatre shows, drawing people from far and wide.

Frinton Summer Theatre is based at McGrigor Hall. Originally built for Frinton Women's Institute (WI) in 1934, it was known as the Women's Institute Hall and renamed after Dorothy McGrigor, a founder member of the Frinton WI, who drove the fundraising efforts to have the hall built.

#### Cliff-top swimming (Frinton Lido and Concert Hall)



The exciting launch of the Frinton Lido, a canvas swimming pool built halfway down the cliff on Cliff Way, saw the Bathing Belles parade at its opening in 1925.

Frinton Lido and Concert Hall, with oriental gardens and a miniature golf course, drew residents and visitors alike for rest, refreshment and entertainment. There were plans to expand Frinton Lido to include a concert hall and an exclusive club with a 'Salon Privee', which was popular on the continent. It was hoped the extended Lido would be opened in 1933 in a fanfare of a variety show, live music, open air dancing and a firework display. However, after several postponements the Lido was auctioned the same year and demolished by its new owners in 1936.

#### Protected architecture (Frinton Park Estate)

Nestled in a conservation area is Frinton Park Estate, designed by Oliver Hill in 1934 and now considered a beacon of Modernist architecture. The homes did not capture homebuyers' imaginations and of the 40 homes built, not many homes were sold and only 15 remain. The shopping centre was never finished and has since been demolished.

What remains of Oliver Hill's vision are a small collection art deco style, flat roofed homes which are now a tourist spot for students of modernism.

The estate is just one example of the architecture that makes Frinton much-loved among the people of Essex and there are moves to refurbish some of Oliver Hill's homes.

Wherever you walk, you will see an example of architectural periods of Frinton's past and each tells the story of Frinton's lively and much-loved journey.

*This walking trail would not have been possible without the hard work and support of Frinton & Walton Heritage Trust.*

*The Frinton Heritage Walking Trail has been developed in conjunction with Essex County Council, National Lottery Fund and Tendring District Council for the Resorting to the Coast heritage project.*

Expanded content edited by Vanessa Moon.