

THE HEART OF THE UK'S SUNSHINE COAST

Clacton holds a special place in Britain's nostalgic seaside history. From its long stretch of sandy beaches and vibrant pier, to its scenic gardens, traditional entertainments and exciting history, the town has something for everyone to enjoy.

This trail will guide you to a few of the town's main landmarks, bringing to life its journey from one man's dream to a holiday hotspot teeming with visitors. Terrain: paved routes, some steep slopes, no staircases.



1 NO. 1 NORTH SEA

It was 1865 when Victorian engineer and entrepreneur Peter Bruff bought land where Clacton town now stands, with a vision to transform it into a new seaside resort.

The Pier was built and opened for paddle steamers to use in 1871. A few years later the Pier Pavilion was built at the end. This was later renamed the Jolly Roger and today houses the Circus Fantasia.

Over the years the Pier was home to four theatres: the Ocean, the Jolly Roger, Ramblas and Clown Bertram's Children's Theatre. Bertram's ventriloquist's dummy, Filbert, can now be found at the Clacton Museum in Clacton's Library in Station Road.

Pier favourites included the Steel Stella roller coaster, speedway, the Peter Pan Railway, the Helter Skelter, the Ghost Train and the Blue Lagoon dance hall. The pier had the first swimming pool built on a pier anywhere in the UK.



2 A LITTLE TASTE OF ITALY

In 1914 the Venetian Bridge was built to span the road now known as Pier Gap. The road used to house shops selling all manner of tourist paraphernalia and beach essentials but were cleared away to allow for improvements under the General Beautifying Programme. The Venetian Bridge, in all its splendour, was built and remained strong until a few years ago when repair works were needed to stop the bridge from crumbling.

Next to the Venetian Bridge, you will find the Pavilion entertainment complex, its restaurant, Armstrong's formerly a Band Pavilion, then a Winter Garden, the restaurant remembers Henry Armstrong, an American boxer who used the Pavilion to train for a World Championship fight in 1939.

CREDITS

Walk commissioned by Juliana Vandegrift, Resorting to the Coast. Content supplied by Norman Jacobs & Josie Watson, edited by Vanessa Moon. Walking trail designed by Sara Hayes/Easytignet.

Full content for walks can be downloaded from here: www.trendingcoastalheritage.org.uk (search Trending Coastal Trails)

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3 THE BEGINNINGS OF A COMMUNITY

On Pier Avenue you will find Magic City. Dating from the 1870s, the building was originally a boys' boarding school before it was converted into a hotel and restaurant called the Brunswick, an amusement arcade in the 1930s and Magic City in the 1980s.

Those who know Clacton will know about Christmas Tree Island, better known as Clacton Town Square, where the town's festive tree is erected every year. From here you can spot Clacton's first **Town Hall**, opened in 1894, to the right, and Electric Parade on the left, the first part of Clacton to be lit by electric lighting.



4 CINEMAS & THEATRES GALORE

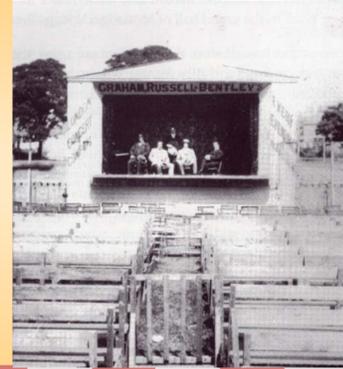
This area was home to some of Clacton's six cinemas, including Kinema Hall (featured), the first purpose-built cinema which ran from 1913 to 1962 and since demolished. Many cinemas were demolished to make way for new development, including the Odeon, housed in an Art Deco building and now the site of shops. Just one cinema remains – **The Century**, on the corner of Pier Avenue and Old Road.

Turning left into Ellis Road is the police station, built to resemble a ship as a nod to the seaside resort. Originally the site of Rigg's Retreat restaurant and entertainment complex, the venue regularly catered for 2,500 at lunch or afternoon tea.



5 FOR THE LOVE OF THEATRE

Passing St James' Church and Hall is **West Cliff Theatre**. In 1894 Bert Graham put a concert party together to perform during the summer season, originally outdoors. The theatre as we see it now was built in 1928 and is a thriving example of a local theatre, which today plays host to some big name stars as well as local amateur groups. It still runs an annual summer season – the longest running continuous summer season the UK, which celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2019.



6 RED COATS & CHALETs

Past Clacton Hospital is Marine Parade West and the **Martello Tower**, a monument of wars gone by. The Martello Tower, the only surviving moated tower with its drawbridge still intact, dates back to the early 19th century when, during the Napoleonic Wars the British War Office built them to defend the east coast.

Clacton's entertainment theme continued along Marine Parade West with a Palace-by-the-Sea based on London's Earl's Court and a boating lake. Best known will be Butlin's holiday camp, the second in the country which opened in

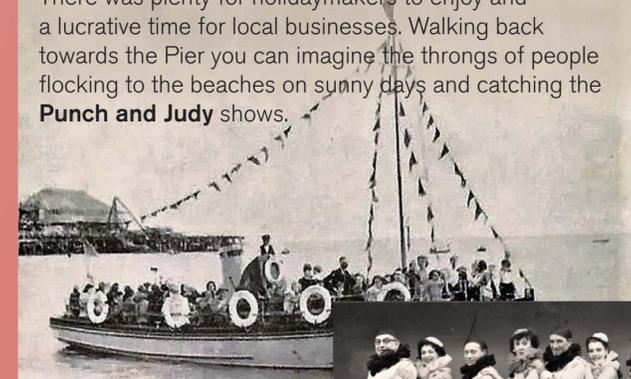
1938. Loved for the freedom it gave children and the relaxation for parents, it was a popular holiday spot for many years.



7 THE PLACE TO BE

After the war Clacton's popularity as a holiday destination grew. It became such a destination that visitors would arrive in their droves by train, coach and steamer from London for a day or a week's holiday. Local schoolboys would earn some tips by carrying visitors' luggage to their accommodation, which was sometimes a long walk away.

There was plenty for holidaymakers to enjoy and a lucrative time for local businesses. Walking back towards the Pier you can imagine the throngs of people flocking to the beaches on sunny days and catching the **Punch and Judy** shows.

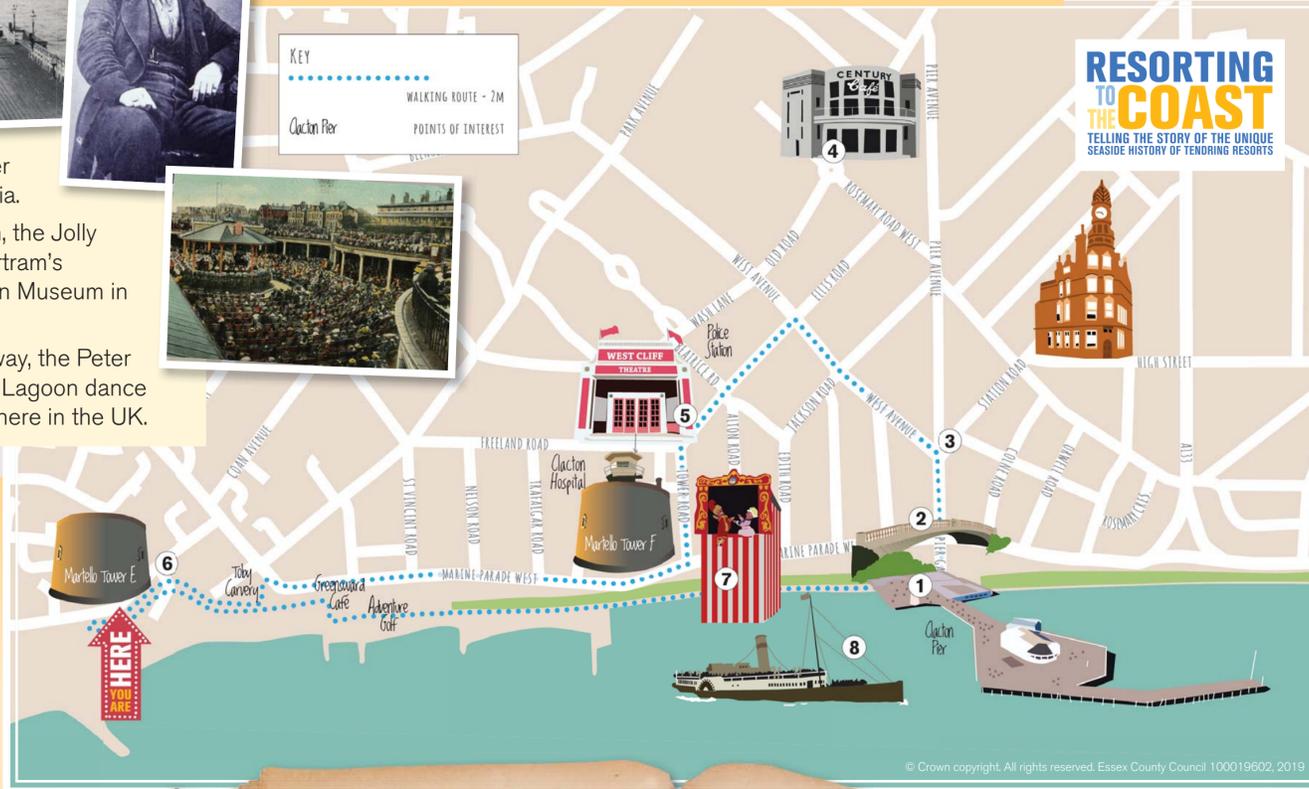


8 GOLDEN SANDS & CHAMPAGNE AIR

Trending's coastal resorts played a key role in the establishment of the nostalgic British seaside holiday. From the late Victorian era visitors would flock here by rail, coach or even **paddle steamers** from Tower Pier, London.

Posters enticed tourists with the promise of 'Golden Sands and Champagne Air'. Pierrot troupes and the Ramblas Concert Party would head to the area, performing on Clacton Pier and the beach with audiences seated on deck chairs.

We are proud of our seaside heritage and invite you to enjoy it too!



WHY IS FRINTON SPECIAL?

Enveloped in old world charm, Frinton-on-Sea holds a unique place in visitors' hearts. Prominent businessmen and celebrities bought holiday homes in Frinton to enjoy its casino, dance halls, beautiful beach and relaxation.

Filled with stunning architecture, wartime history and a famed 'Nursery of the Stars', this walk around Frinton, along flat paved areas with some grass options, is a walk through time, experience its rich past and appreciate its present beauty.



1 YOU HAVE NOW ARRIVED IN FRINTON-ON-SEA

Peter Schuyler Bruff opened the new railway station in 1888, on the line from Kirby to Walton-on-the-Naze for his new venture, the resort town of Frinton-on-Sea. There is only one way in to Frinton – through the gates! Living 'inside the gates' of Frinton was seen as a matter of status.

Nearby, Crossings Cottage, headquarters of the Frinton & Walton Heritage Trust, is home to the Frinton and Trevor Bright Railway Museums. A short walk away is Marconia where Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company established the world's first wireless school, the Marconi School for Managers, between 1901 and 1903 and is marked by a Blue Plaque.



2 GAME, SET & MATCH TO FRINTON!

Frinton **Lawn Tennis Club** was founded in 1899. In post-Victorian Britain the Frinton Tennis Croquet and Bowls Club flourished. A hub of entertainment, the club was frequented by actors and Royalty, including Douglas Fairbanks, Gladys Cooper, Edward VIII and his brother, George VI. Wimbledon champions competed in the annual tennis week there.



3 FRINTON GOLF CLUB

Frinton Golf Club was founded in 1895 as a nine hole course, originally located on the land where homes are now built in Second and Third Avenues. It relocated to its current site in 1904 as an eighteen hole course. Golfing celebrities including Harry Vardon, James Braid and John Henry Taylor, who won sixteen Open Championships, have played here. The Club was one of the first golf clubs in the country to open its doors to women, taking the lead in the fight for gender equality.



4 LUXURY ACCOMMODATION WITH A VIEW

Frinton 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 Beach House Hotel, The Grand Hotel and The Hotel Esplanade. Built in 1896, The Grand Hotel was once the hub of social life in 1920s and 1930s Frinton. The hotel counted King George VI among its guests and closed in 1991.

Celebrated Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw was a frequent guest at The Hotel Esplanade which closed in 1949. It was demolished in 1961 and today, it is the site of Frinton Court block 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.



6 NURSERY TO THE STARS

Frinton Summer Theatre, based at McGrigor Hall, is a much-loved repertory theatre. Still popular, the annual season has seen actors including David Suchet, Vanessa Redgrave, Lynda Bellingham, Jane Asher and Julie Christie perform there. July and August are alive with the Arts drawing people from far and wide.

Originally built for Frinton Women's Institute in 1934, it was known as the WI Hall and renamed after Dorothy McGrigor, a member of the Frinton WI, who championed the fundraising efforts to build the hall.



7 CLIFF-TOP SWIMMING

The exciting launch of the Frinton Lido Tearooms on Cliff Way with a canvas swimming pool built below, halfway down the cliff, saw the Bathing Belles parade at its opening in 1925. Frinton Lido and Concert Hall, with oriental gardens and miniature golf course, drew residents and visitors alike for rest, refreshment and entertainment. Plans to expand Frinton Lido included an exclusive club with a 'Salon Privée', which was popular on the continent. After a number of development proposals it was demolished in 1936.



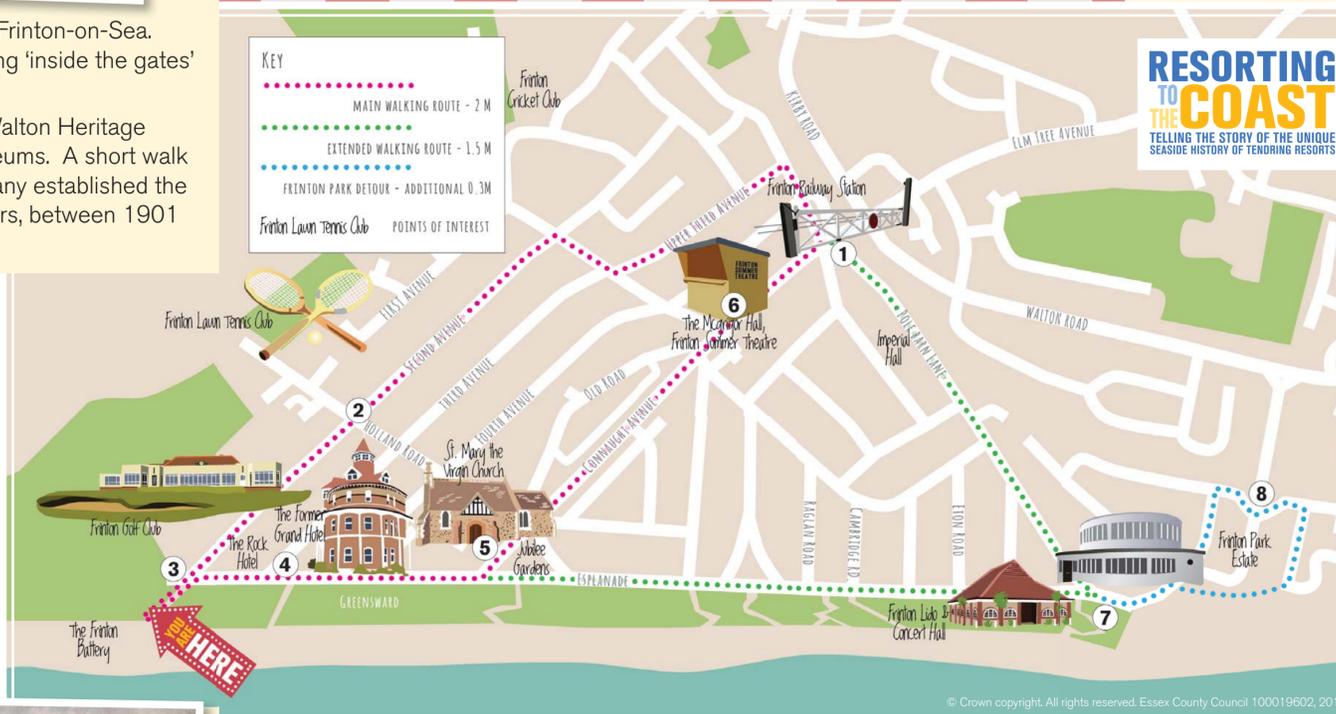
8 1930'S MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE

Nestled in a conservation area is **Frinton Park Estate**, designed by Oliver Hill in 1934 and now considered a beacon of Modernist architecture. Of the planned Estate, 45 houses were built of which 43 still exist together with more recent additions built in the Modernist Style. The shopping centre was never finished and has since been demolished.

What remains of his vision is a small collection of art deco style, flat roofed homes.

The estate is just one example of the architecture that makes Frinton much-loved among the people of Essex, and referred to in the Radical Essex project about iconic architecture in Essex.

<https://www.radicalessex.uk>



5 SPIRITUAL CALM

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. The church was gifted a window, designed by Edward Burne Jones, to replace the original window that was destroyed in a bombing raid in 1943.



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