

Southampton Old Town Walk



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'The total circuit of the walls, as taken from Mr Milne's survey of the town in Faden's new map of Hampshire, is two thousand two hundred yards, or one mile and a quarter.'

Henry Englefield, 1805

Follow the line of some of England's best-preserved medieval Town Walls and step back in history to find out more about Southampton's Old Town.

This series of panels guides you around the encircling walls to reveal the events and people who have shaped our city, from the medieval merchant John Wytegod to WFG Spranger, the nineteenth century saviour of Tudor House. We recommend you start the Walk at the Bargate, the historic entrance to the medieval town, but you can begin at any point.

The Old Town has over 90 listed buildings and more than 30 ancient monuments, with medieval wine vaults, an array of medieval churches, and fine Georgian houses and hotels. All this and a view of the waterfront, where ships continue the sea-going tradition of Southampton.

The Old Town Walk is one of several features you can enjoy in this part of Southampton. In addition to Tudor House and Garden (www.tudorhouseandgarden.com) there is also the Medieval Merchant's House at 58 French Street (limited opening; www.english-heritage.co.uk for information).

Holyrood Church (junction of High Street and Bernard Street) is the Merchant Seamen memorial church. Bombed in WW2, this ruin now holds memories you can experience through sound posts.

Other walks you can enjoy include the QE2 Mile, featuring a series of pavement plaques running south from the Bargate to Town Quay, telling the history of Southampton in the words of contemporary authors from the first to the 21st century.

In Hamtun Street you can see a fine 1970s ceramic and concrete mural by Joyce and Henry Collins which celebrates key developments in Southampton's maritime history.



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- WALLS STILL STANDING
- POOR MOBILITY ACCESS
- TUDOR HOUSE AND GARDEN

1 BARGATE

Entering the medieval walled town through the Bargate's grand entrance, you follow in the footsteps of generations of townspeople and visitors, who came to Southampton to trade or sail from its port.



Bargate interior c.1847

2 DEFENCE OF THE TOWN

The Bargate, built about 1180, and extended in 1320, kept out intruders and impressed visitors. A team of gunners defended the town and 3 guns were stationed at the Bargate.



Bargate with trams 1920

3 TOWN WALLS

These huge stone walls were first built to defend the town from attack by land, and then extended to protect it from sea-borne enemies, following the devastating French raid of 1338.



A view of Southampton c.1790

4 A FASHIONABLE RESORT

In the eighteenth century Southampton became a fashionable spa and seaside resort visited by many wealthy and influential people, including royalty. Jane Austen stayed in Castle Square and attended balls at the Dolphin Hotel.



Royal Victoria Spa Assembly Rooms, Philip Brannon c.1840

5 ARUNDEL TOWER

Arundel Tower may be named after Hironnelle, the magical horse of Sir Bevois, one of the mythical founders of Southampton. Legend has it that Hironnelle ('swallow' in French) was so named because he could out-fly swallows. When Sir Bevois died the horse flung himself from the tower in sorrow.



Arundel Tower and Orchard Street 1840

6a FORTY STEPS

150 years ago, visitors could descend these newly constructed steps to reach the beach below, after enjoying the panoramic view across the bay from the walls above.



Walls of Southampton, Philip Brannon c.1847

6b CATCHCOLD TOWER

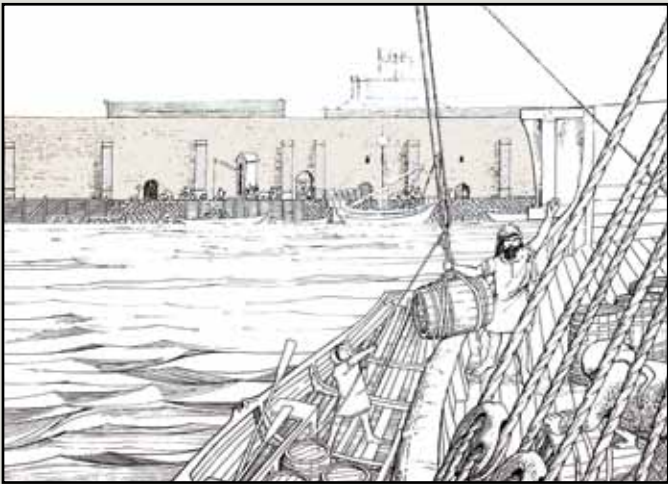
If you were a raider with plans to attack the medieval town, the soldiers posted at Catchcold Tower and armed with guns would “catch you cold”.



Catchcold Tower 1820

7 CASTLE VAULT

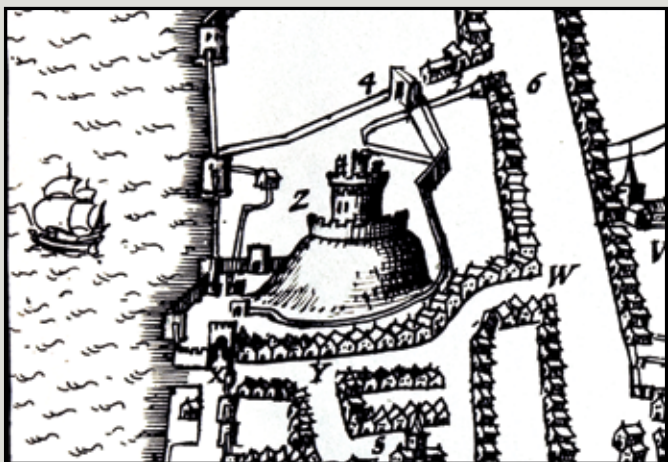
Castle Vault was used to store valuable goods belonging to the King, including wine from Bordeaux. Medieval merchants had to pay the King one in every 10 “tuns” or barrels of wine they imported, as tax.



John Hodgson 1985

8 SOUTHAMPTON CASTLE

Rising high above the town walls stood Southampton Castle. Built after the Norman conquest of 1066, the King and his court would stay here on their way to France. After gradually falling into disrepair the castle was rebuilt in 1805, but demolished 10 years later.



Detail from John Speed's map of Southampton 1611

9a SIMNEL STREET

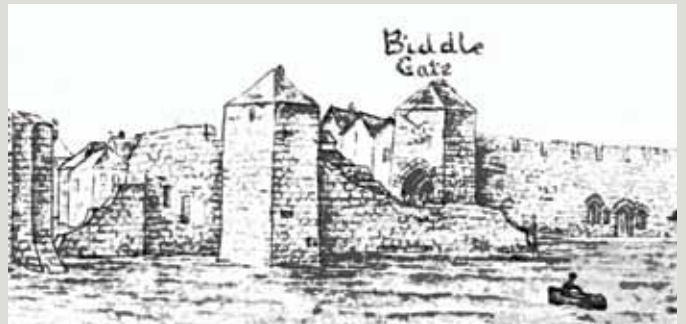
In the mid 1700s, doctors prescribed salt water bathing as a cure for many illnesses, and Southampton became a fashionable place to visit. This area was home to Mr Martin's Baths and the Assembly Rooms.



Ladies bathing c.1800

9b WEST HYTHE QUAY AND BIDDLE'S GATE

In medieval times, this was a bustling waterfront lined with the houses of wealthy merchants. After the French Raid in 1338, the merchants were forced to move and the walls of their houses were blocked up to create the town walls. You can still see the outlines of the medieval doorways and windows.



Artist's sketch late 1800s

10 THE ARCADES

In October 1338, 50 ships brought French and Genoese raiders to storm the town. They attacked and killed residents, looted possessions and set fire to buildings. King Edward III was furious about the raid and the loss of his wine and commanded a wall to be built against future attacks. Merchants like John Wytegod were forced to block up the entrances to their quayside warehouses to build the defensive arcades we see today.



Old Town Walls, The Graphic 14th July 1883

11 BLUE ANCHOR LANE

Blue Anchor Lane led from the medieval quayside into the town and the market in St Michael's Square. The stone arch forms part of the town walls. The portcullis slot is still visible.



Blue Anchor Lane, Frank McFadden 1891

12 ST. MICHAEL'S SQUARE

Now dominated by the iconic Tudor House, this square was once the location of Westgate Hall. Wool was stored upstairs, and a fish market was held beneath. In 1634 the hall was dismantled and rebuilt next to Westgate. Paving slabs show where it once stood.



Digital impression of the Cloth Hall, which now stands at Westgate

13 WESTGATE

The Westgate was built following the French Raid of 1338. In 1415 Henry V and his army departed through here on their way to victory at Agincourt. The sailors and passengers of the Mayflower and the Speedwell passed through Westgate on their way to America in 1620.



Westgate and West Quay 1910

14 CUCKOO LANE

Wealthy merchants lived in Cuckoo Lane during the 1200s. After the French raid of 1338 their waterfront properties were demolished to make way for the town wall. Over two hundred years later, William Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton, lived here.



Cuckoo Lane Orchard 1920

15 TOWN QUAY

During the 1400s, wool was the single largest export from the town. The Wool House was built to store wool right on the quayside. The town mayor, Thomas Middleton, built a large crane next to it for moving heavy cargo.



The Wool House early 1900s

16 WATERGATE

In 1476, Italian ships tied up at Town Quay to unload wines, dried fruits, spices and silks from the Mediterranean. The Watergate resonated with the voices of foreign sailors passing through the main entrance into the town.



Customs House and Town Quay 1820

17 GOD'S HOUSE TOWER

God's House Tower provided formidable defence for the medieval town. The town gunner lived here and the town's armoury of guns, powder and shot was stored at ground level. The guns were hauled up through the tower when needed. Keyhole shaped gun ports are visible around the building.



God's House Tower 1850

18 FRIARY GATE

Franciscan friars settled in this part of Southampton in 1224. The Greyfriars, as they were known, were a regular sight in the medieval town, preaching and caring for the poor, infirm, aged and outcast. They were also responsible for introducing a piped water supply to the town.



The Friary, John Hodgson 1986

19 TOWN DITCH

Beyond the wall you can still see where the town ditch ran down to the shore near God's House Tower. A sluice gate there allowed the ditch to fill with water at high tide, to help defend the town.



The culvert at God's House Tower 1817

20 BACK OF THE WALLS

Walk along Back of The Walls toward East Street and the Bargate, looking out for remains of the town walls and Polymond Tower. Or turn left toward the High Street and visit the church of Holyrood, now a memorial to merchant seamen.



Polymond Tower, Edward Dayes 1794

21 YORK GATE

In 1202, King John gave £100 to "close the town" and build a line of defences to protect its people. The North Wall was the first to be built and links Bargate to Eastgate and Polymond Tower. York Gate was cut into the wall in 1769.



York Gate 1920

GUIDED WALKS

Southampton Tourist Guides Association offer Blue Badge guided walks on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the year, starting from the Bargate at 11 am, £3, under 16s free.

Call **023 80571858** (9 am to 5 pm only) to book special paid-for tours for groups over 8.

ACCESS

We can provide this leaflet in a large print format. Please note that at some of these ancient locations we are unable to provide disabled access; these points are shown on the map.

For more information please contact the Tourist Information Centre on **023 8083 3333**.