

Victorian Town Walk

Route

From the Museum walk onto the Weighbridge Square to look over Liberation Square, then turn right into Mulcaster Street crossing by the Pedestrian Crossing. Turn left into Bond Street and walk through the Church yard into the Royal Square From the Royal Square return to the Museum via Broad Street.



The Weighbridge, St Helier, 1832 by George S Shepherd (1784 – 1858) No 9 Pier Road (The Merchant's House) is the pink/red building on the right with three chimneys.

"The Town lies fronting the sea, and is backed by a range of heights: but betwixt these heights and the town, there is a level, varying from a quarter of a mile, to a mile and a half, in breadth. This level forms a semi-circular suburb, the arch of which is not less than three miles; and the whole of this space is occupied by villas and cottage residences, with their gardens and orchards ..."

H.D. Inglis, "The Channel Islands", 1834

In the 19th century St Helier grew dramatically - the low lying area between King Street and the bottom of Mont de la Pouquelaye was infilled quickly with working class housing on the lowest lying areas and the better off middle class housing and those villas for the English residents being built on the surrounding slopes. Jersey had its own Irish quarter around Clare Street. Town gas was available from the late 1830s, by the middle of the century work was beginning on a modern drainage system and from the 1870s onwards piped water was brought into Town.

Development of the harbour

Jersey's prosperity through the 19th century was dependant upon the development of the harbour here in St Helier. Originally the sea virtually extended up to the St Helier Church yard wall and the only harbour was down in the area of South Pier and La Folie. Gradually new piers were built and the harbour was enclosed.

- Old North Pier was built between the 1790s and 1821 and was widened to create the New North Quay 1887-97
- Albert Pier was built between 1847 and 1853. Originally named the West Pier it was named after the Prince Consort in 1859 during the Second Royal Visit.

- Victoria Pier was built between 1841 and 1846. It was named by the Queen during the first Royal Visit to the Island in 1846.
- Commercial Buildings (Quai des Marchands) was built between 1814 and 1818 on reclaimed land. It was created to build warehousing and storage yards on.

Liberation Square area

Originally the site of the Weighbridge on which produce was weighed before being loaded on to the ships in the harbour. The Island Site was the St Helier terminal of the Jersey Railway Company 1870-1936

- The old Tourist office was rebuilt in 1901 as the terminus of the Jersey Railway Company.
- Harbour Office was built in 1863
- Abattoir was built in 1888
- Southampton Hotel was built 1899 - typical 'seaside' architecture.
- Wharfe Street lead down to the harbour and the wharfe (in front of what is now the Royal Yacht Hotel and the Museum.
- Royal Yacht Hotel was built in the 1820s but was largely rebuilt in the 1870s. It was on the roof of this building that the island's first photography studio was set up in the summer of 1841.
- The Lamplighter was originally built in 1877 as Daly's Hotel and was known as "The Grapes" / "La Grappe de Verjus". A local sculptor Jean Philippe "**Turnkey**" **Giffard** (1826-1892) created the statue of Britannia on the roof and carved the garlands of fruit which covered the front of the building, originally coming right down to the ground.
- Bond Street was largely occupied by shipping agents, and offices associated with Jersey's shipping industry during the mid-19th century.
- The Town Church railings topped by the Gothic spires were designed by the Jersey artist John Le Capelain (1812 - 1848) and forged by Joseph Le Rossignol of Grandin's Iron foundry in 1845. The section at the end of the wall look totally different because they were originally in the Gloucester Street Prison and were part of the screen that separated the male and female prisoners.



Royal Square

Initially called the market place. Best described as the most offensive part of town (because of the animal muck) until 1803 when the market was moved to Halkett Place. Nearby streets are called le Coin des Anes and Le Coin des Cochons; Church Street was known as La rue Trousse Cotillons – Pick up your petticoats road – because of this.

Local writers described the square in a number of ways. In 1834 Inglis wrote that it was "*the resort only of the male lounge*". While 40 years later Hill recounts that it was "*generally used . . . (for) business and gossip*."

States Building

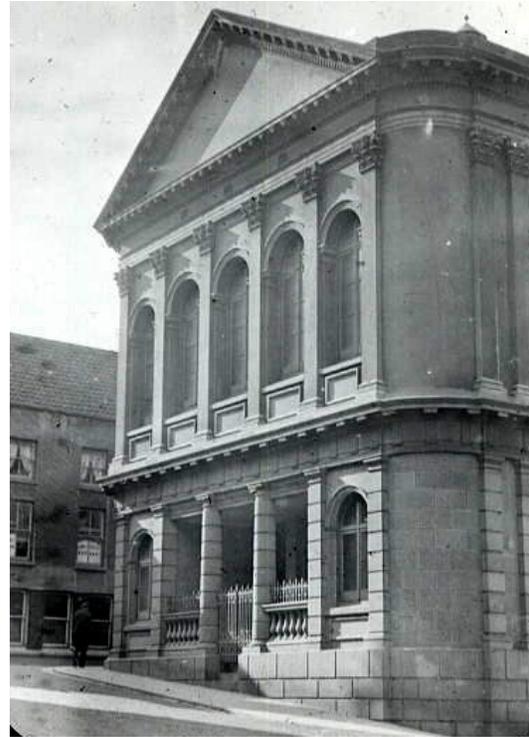
Royal Court, States Chamber, old library. Built throughout the Victorian period, the Royal Court (the central section) was built first in 1866 by architect Thomas Gallichan and remodelled 1877 by Philip Le Sueur & Philip Bree). In 1879 it was extended to the east when the Judicial Greffe was built as a single storey building. Almost immediately it was decided that the States Assembly should have its own

meeting room and so architects Ancell & Orange designed a new Chamber to be built over the Greffe. This new States Chamber was opened in 1887. On the western side of the Royal Court another extension was built also by Ancell & Orange. This contained the States Greffe on the ground floor and a new Library above. This was completed in 1886. (The rounded façade facing the Church was only added in 1931.)

Before the present building appeared, the artist John Le Capelain (1812-1848) had a studio on the top floor of a building in the area of what is now the Royal Court.

Piquet House

Built on the north side of the square in 1803 the Piquet House housed a detachment of soldiers until 1834 and then again between 1887 and 1934 to help the Honorary police in times of trouble. Ironically there were no soldiers on hand to quell the oyster riot of 1837.



Set into its wall is a sundial. The inscription on the sundial encouraged people to set their watches to Jersey time rather than Greenwich-meantime, which is 8 minutes different. Jersey signed up to Greenwich-meantime in 1898. Telling the time accurately only became important with the advent of trains. The speed of trains meant that accurate timetables needed to be drawn up. Railway time (Greenwich mean-time) was devised, which standardised time throughout Britain.

Quick to follow the transport revolution of the steam train was the communication revolution of the telegraph. The wires followed the railway lines and were usually owned by the same company. When Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 it may have taken 20 days for news to reach Edinburgh by horse and cart. When she died in 1901 a courier travelling by train could have been reached Edinburgh in less than a day but the news would already have beaten him there because of the telegraph (1837) and telephone were in use (1876).

1837 riot

In 1837 over 200 oyster fishermen from the Gorey area marched to Royal Square where the States debated a petition containing their demands. The mood was festive until news that the petition had been rejected by one vote, and that one of those who had voted against it, despite having promised to vote for it was their very own chef de police, Elias Gaudin. When Gaudin left the building the mob attacked him and he was only saved by the timely intervention of some friends and police who dragged him back into the building.

A St Helier centener captured one of the ringleaders and dragged him to a nearby French coffee shop, locking the doors to prevent his rescue. The mob stoned the building breaking 13 of the windows but by this time 70 soldiers stationed at Fort Regent had answered the Bailiff's call for assistance and several more ringleaders were arrested. The soldiers brought the situation under control; the mob gradually dispersed and went home.

Broad Street

The bank buildings in this area are all Victorian although varying in style.

- Lloyds Bank 1858
- NatWest 1873

- HSBC 1884 & 1900



Le Sueur Obelisk 1855

The monument commemorates the work of Pierre Le Sueur as constable of St Helier. He was elected five times and was instrumental in wiping out cholera by introducing sewers. The Lion heads were fountains to provide water for the horses - the cab stand was adjacent. The obelisk is aligned to be visible from the George II statue in the Royal Square.

The Cholera - In 1832 with 16,000 of the Island population of 36,000 living in St Helier, the town was somewhat overcrowded in the poorer areas down by the quayside. the drainage

of the low lying areas was rather sluggish with only a 3" to 100 yards drop. The population was boosted by immigrant English and Irish labour who were ineligible for poor relief and malnutrition and drunkenness were common. In this squalid environment the Cholera epidemic broke out in Cabot's Yard in Sand Street.

In 10 weeks 806 cases were reported = 2+% of the total population. 348 died = nearly 1%. This was a 43% fatality rate and 90% of these lived in town. In fact of St Helier's 311 deaths, 267 were in La Vingtaine de la Ville.

The 1849 epidemic which resulted in nearly 300 deaths and the 1867 epidemic both followed the same pattern.

Tasks:

At the end of the walk you will have the opportunity to split up into smaller groups to make some sketches or photograph various features you have seen. These could include

- the façade of the Lamplighter
- the Gothic railings around the Church yard
- the lions heads on the Le Sueur obelisk
- the decorative plasterwork around various windows

You can also copy down the inscriptions that you see

- on the sundial
- the obelisk

Look above the door of the NatWest Bank – what name can you see?

Why do you think it was called La rue Trousse Cotillons?