

# First Tower to the Elizabeth Castle Ferry

**DISTANCE:** 0.9 MILES / 1.5 KILOMETRES

**TIME:** 0.5 HOUR

**THIS WALK IS ENTIRELY ON PAVEMENT**



This short walk brings together a huge slice of social history. Within a mile, we will go from the serenity of sailing ships to the immediacy of air travel, and the revolutionary steps that took place in between.

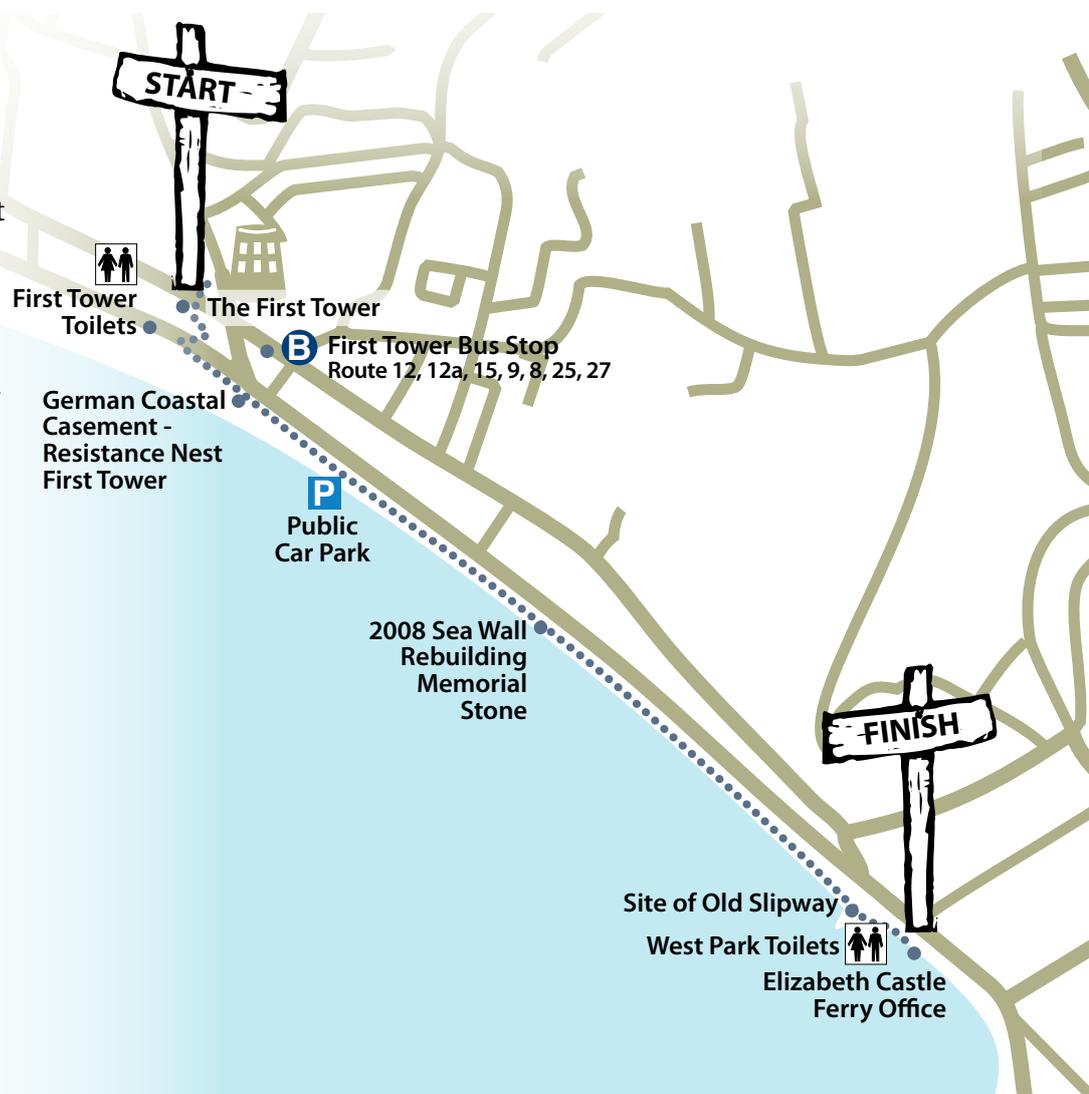
We start beside the Jersey Round Tower at First Tower which gives its name to this area, not because it was the first tower ever built, but because it was the first in a series of three towers that guarded St Aubin's Bay. It was customary to number towers from one end of a bay to the other, and this was the case on most shorelines apart from St Ouen's Bay, where the towers went in alphabetical order.

Leave the tower and, using the crossing, walk towards the seawall. Once there, turn left and continue along the promenade towards St Helier.

Until a railway line ran from St Helier to St Aubin, the foreshore was dunes punctuated by boatyards. In the 1860s, Jersey was the fourth most important place in the British Isles for boat building. This was due to the low cost of ships built in Jersey. Boat builder F C Clarke, who built the largest ship in Jersey; the 1100 ton, Helen Heigers, at his yard at West Park, said: 'We can build ships more cheaply than in Liverpool, because Jersey men are sober, frugal and industrious, work six days a week with no unions to cause strike and no idlers to maintain'.

However, once steam ships and iron hulls became popular, it was impossible to remain competitive. It was ironic that a steam train, running along the beach just above the high water mark, effectively cut off the boat yards' route to the sea.

The Jersey Railway Company opened to the public in October 1870, running eight trains daily to St Aubin. By 1884, another line had been created, going from St Aubin's Hospital to La Moye Quarries. It allowed passengers to alight at Don Farm Station, to go to St Peter's Barracks (where the airfield is now) and St Brelade's Bay. The line was joined to the St Helier - St Aubin's line in 1885, and the first through train ran on 5th August 1885. The following year the line was extended beyond La Moye Quarries to The Corbière Pavilion. By the 1920s,



passengers were travelling to the horse racing at Don Farm, the golf course at Blanche Banques and the lighthouse at La Corbière.

The seawall and promenade we are walking on, was ready by 1880. The original plan suggested by Mr E Pickering the railway contractor, proposed a backfilled wall, allowing 30' for the railway and 60' for a road and promenade. By 1873, the railway company felt that the costs were prohibitive and the States Defence Committee had taken the job on.

As the railway struggled against a tide of bus travel and personal transport, yet another new form of transport was beginning to appear in Jersey.



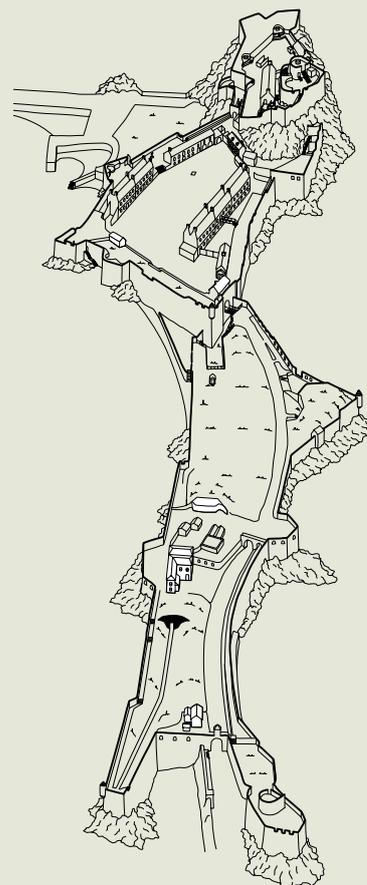
The first commercial flight flew from Jersey to Portsmouth on 18th December 1933. When Jersey Airways began bringing people into the island, it used the beach at West Park as its runway and two buses as a waiting room and ticket office. By 1934, the company was flying from Heston Aerodrome in Middlesex, and Southampton. Despite this basic infrastructure, and an airfield that disappeared under the tide twice a day, business grew steadily. In 1934 the airline carried over 20,000 passengers. Following further investment in

1935, the existing fleet of eight de Havilland Dragons was replaced by two de Havilland Rapides, and six four-engined de Havilland Express aircraft, that were capable of carrying as many as 12 passengers. Jersey Airway's growth and reliability record prompted the Jersey Chamber of Commerce to call for a proper airfield to be built, and in 1937 Jersey Airport in St Peter was opened.

## ELIZABETH CASTLE

Built on a rocky islet in St Aubin's Bay, Elizabeth Castle has watched over Jersey's main seaway for more than 300 years.

At low tide you can walk out along the causeway or, if you want to experience a different way to travel, catch the amphibious Castle Ferry at low or high tide.



For information on visiting the heritage attraction mentioned in this guide, including admission prices and opening times, please visit the Jersey Heritage website [www.jerseyheritage.org](http://www.jerseyheritage.org)

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