

The Broadstairs Society presents

# The Seven Bays of Broadstairs







## 1. Botany Bay

Commencing at the Margate or northern end Botany Bay is found at the end of Percy Avenue, Kingsgate. This natural bay, with its chalk cliffs, developed over the years an eroded archway whose crown eventually collapsed – a common pattern of erosion along this coast. There is a pleasant walk along the cliff-top to Kingsgate Bay.



## 2. Kingsgate Bay

On passing part of the North Foreland Golf Course strange flint structures will be observed. These are amongst those built locally as “follies” by Lord Holland (Charles James Fox, 1749-1806), who was Paymaster to the Forces during the Seven Years’ War with France, and also the builder of Holland

House overlooking Kingsgate Bay, later becoming a ruin. The façade of the present building dates largely from 1830-1840. Doric columns of the original house were re-erected to form the portico of what was the Sea Bathing Hospital, Margate, founded in 1791 and which remains to this day, now converted to private apartments. The Noble Captain Digby, as the adjacent Public House was once named, was built as a late 18th-century house of entertainment for visitors flocking to see the Follies. Its name commemorates Lord Holland’s nephew and drinking companion who captained HMS Africa at Trafalgar. Most of the original suffered through time due to gales, but part of the house remains within the outwardly 19th century structure with its more modern additions. The Bay, with access only by steps, was earlier known as St. Bartholomew’s Gate since during 1500, the cliff face was “rent asunder” by an earth tremor on the Saint’s Day. Its present name dates from 1683 when Charles II and his brother (later James II) came ashore when their vessel making way to Dover, was struck by a sudden squall. Coastal erosion is taking place here, and the large caves may have been used by smugglers. On the left-hand extremity of the cliff can be seen the effect which, one day, will lead to the collapse of an archway.

Southwards, overlooking the Bay stands Kingsgate Castle, originally built by Lord Holland in the form of a Welsh castle of the 14th century period to house his stables and attendants. Later years saw the castle falling into ruin, the large round tower now being all that remains of the original building. It was rebuilt in the 1860s having been purchased by Lord Avebury and used by his family until 1922, then subsequently for many years a hotel but now serving as private apartments.



## 3. Joss Bay

The third bay, Joss Bay beyond Kingsgate Castle, has a car park. Here the cliffs are much lower and the bay offers a fine expanse of sand. The road inland leads towards Reading Street.

Joss Snelling, 1741-1837, was a famous local smuggler, once presented to Queen Victoria. It is a matter of local argument whether the Bay was named after the celebrity or vice-versa, but more probable, after the nearby named 16th century Joss Farm, now Elmwood Farm. To the south the cliffs rise to greater heights forming the North Foreland with its famous Lighthouse. A warning to mariners has existed here for centuries, with mention in a local deed of 1499 of a beacon at the location. As such, the form of warning to the present day constitutes the oldest working lighthouse in England – from beacon to brazier, coal to oil, the light has been developed to that of today – its height of 25.30m (83 feet) was achieved in 1890 with conversion to electricity during 1930. October 1998 saw its de-manning as the last lighthouse in the United Kingdom to be automated with monitoring and control by Trinity House, Harwich. Seaward of this point, lie the Goodwin Sands, some 13km (8 miles) to the south-east, known as the “Great Ship Swallower”, guarded by varying forms of warning over the years: the lightship at their northern extremity was replaced by a Cardinal Light buoy in 1988.

Passing southward beyond the Lighthouse, the Foreland itself is crowned by a private estate with many large houses. St Cuby on Cliff



Promenade was once the residence of the author John Buchan when writing his famous novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. The steps 78 in all, are said to have provided inspiration for the title, and remain within a private tunnel leading down to the beach. At the junction of North Foreland, Stone and Langthorne Roads stands Stone House, built in 1764 at a cost less than £5000 and during 1830 sold to Sir James Dupre Alexander for £7215, the mansion was also the home of Archbishop Tait of Canterbury (1811-1882). Now private apartments, the House and its bounding flint wall, having been given Grade II listing in 1972, avoided the threat of demolition. Several of the buildings and structures seen en-route have similar protection, having been accepted as of Architectural or Historic interest, among them being the Follies, the Captain Digby, Holland House, Kingsgate Castle and the Lighthouse, also several about the Harbour and Viking Promenade.



## 4. Stone Bay

Stone Bay, a long shallow bay with rocks and sand alternating, is approached by the descending footpath leading from Stone Road, terminating with steps on to the wide lower promenade leading to the Jetty and Viking Bay.

As an alternative, the bay can be reached by taking Park Road to the Eastern Esplanade, thence by a flight of steps or, beyond, a formed ramp. Access to the Main or Viking Bay from this higher level can also be by the footpath leading past Bleak House to either the Jetty or Harbour Street. Bleak House, built in 1801 and then known as Fort House, was with the other properties in the town a favourite place of Charles Dickens when visiting and writing his books. The house, extended to its present appearance in 1901 occasioning bankruptcy to its owner, has no connection with the Dickens novel of the same name.



## 5. Viking Bay

The town's Main Bay, given the name Viking Bay in 1949 to mark the landing that year of a replica ship manned by a crew of cheerful "invaders" – jutes in fact, celebrating the achievements of their ancestors 1500 years earlier. Their craft can be seen mounted on shore at Pegwell Bay, Ramsgate. A deed of 1485 records the existence of the semblance of a Jetty: the profile of the present Jetty dates from Tudor times, often extensively damaged by the sea further renovation took place in the 1960s. The wooden shelter, at its seaward end, follows the general lines of an old wooden shelter, which in its day housed concert parties. The Jetty Store House with

its lapped weather-board construction, now tiled but with a thatched roof until 1843, dates from the 1700s and stands up amazingly well to the ravages of winters storms. Records mention it being almost swept away during 1763 and 1808. Broadstairs, with its proximity to the Goodwin Sands, had a lifeboat station at the Jetty prior to the rescues between 1869 and 1912 recorded upon the Service Boards mounted on the Store House. The White and Culmer families, residents and benefactors of the town, provided two boats; records mention the Mary White in 1850 and the Culmer White of 1857. The advent of faster craft brought about the cessation of the service – the modern lifeboats of Margate and Ramsgate with airborne assistance

when warranted, well serve the dangers of the local waters.

A small fort once stood on the headland by Bleak House, as did "Chandos Fort" seaward of the Square of that name, overlooking the Bay. Built during Napoleonic times their purpose being to guard the Bay and approach to the town. The defensive gate in Harbour Street, known as York Gate, dates from about 1540, its stout wooden doors and portcullis must have proved a deterrent to privateers and other unwelcome intruders.





## 6. Louisa Bay

Louisa Bay, south of the headland known as "Preacher's Knoll", is said to be named after a daughter of Thomas Russell Crompton (1816-1888), a famous Engineer of his day whose home was that now known as "The Prospect" on Eldon Place, overlooking Viking Bay. He was the designer of the first footbridge to span the gorge, erected in 1850 but subsequently replaced as the years went by,

in 1994 by the present structure. Above the bay stands an apartment building, once the Grand Hotel, but now named Grand Mansions, built in 1882, and then described as "the most charmingly situated hotel in the Isle of Thanet". Adjacent, on what was the location of the town's Grand Ballroom complex stands the modern apartment block, Charleston Court, built in the 1990s.



## 7. Dumpton Gap

From this point the lower promenade or cliff-top level Western Esplanade extends to Dumpton Gap. At low tides cart tracks can be seen worn into the chalk of the shore resultant from the activities of by-gone days in the collecting of seaweed for use as fertiliser. The coastline of France can often be seen from the upper Esplanade, the location of several gun batteries during the second World War.

The lower promenade terminates at Dumpton Gap, the southernmost of Broadstairs bays. From this bay, with its visible evidence of coastal erosion beyond the extent of cliff protection, at very low tides can be seen marine telegraph cables emanating from the Station at cliff-top level, evidence of yet another achievement of Crompton, the design of the World's first successful submarine cable laid between Dover and Calais. Beyond this bay the South Cliff Parade leads towards Ramsgate which can be reached by a pleasant walk through the King George VI Park, once the estate of Sir Moses Montefiore, the Victorian philanthropist.



## General Information

The coastline of the area is of chalk cliffs, with bays formed by the works of nature often with years of erosion by watercourses, providing forms of access by paths or cart-tracks used in the harvesting of seaweed and nature's building materials of sand, chalk and flint. These activities were often a cover for the less legitimate one of smuggling, then sometimes said, after agriculture, to be the chief industry of Thanet. Starting in a modest way smuggling became increasingly popular as Governments increased duty on imports to pay for the wars with France. The extra expense was resented and indeed this "Free Trade" was regarded as a perfectly lawful enterprise. During the 18th century this traffic had reached an unprecedented peak, with all classes from the highest to the lowest, including the clergy and members of Government, being so engaged.

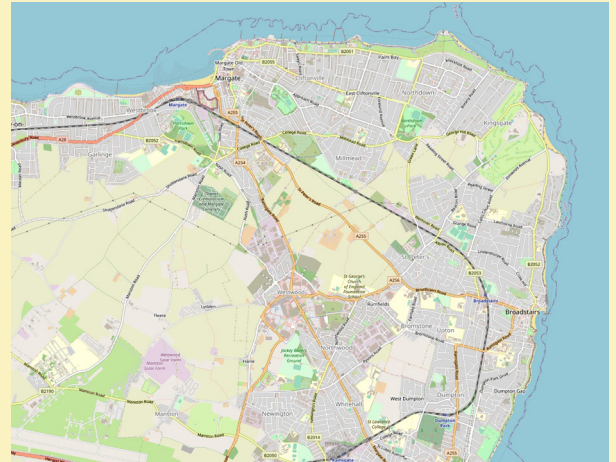
Tales of smuggling have not been lost in the telling and although caves and cellars were undoubtedly used many "smugglers passages" were probably no more than disused wells, for until Crampton built his reservoir and water tower by the Railway Station in 1859, there was no piped water, and households depended on wells. The attempts of the authorities to suppress smuggling gave rise to savage conflicts, though Thanet never experienced the murderous pitched battles recorded in some districts.

While construction of modern sea defences along much of our local coastline has blocked up several caves and destroyed much of the natural beauty of the shores, there remain untouched stretches which may, in time, still suffer the hand of man in seeking to "protect".

Geologists search our shores for fossils, particularly sea urchins. Botanists find a variety of wild plants on the clifftops, plants such as Red Valerian and Silver Ragwort among that which cling to the faces of the cliffs. There is also a remarkable selection of bird life, especially during winter months when migrating birds make a landfall, although the more unusual visitors soon pass to their true destinations. Fulmars have colonized the cliffs but, as yet, do not breed here. In some parts of Thanet, including just inland of the Foreland, brightly coloured and noisy

Parakeets have established themselves, causing amazement to anyone coming across them for the first time.

The Seven Bays span a distance of 7.25km (4.5 miles) and their walking route forms part of the 32.3 km (20 miles) Thanet Coastal Path established during the 1990s now part of the King Charles III England Coast Path. To the user of this publication The Society warns that nature demands respect. The sea can be dangerous, and care must be taken to ensure sufficient time when shore-walking. Making a close approach to cliff-tops can invite danger as can the constant possibility of cliff-face erosion occasioned by the assault of the sea or adverse weather conditions.



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