

Old Portsmouth Audio Walk

This walk is about the area known as Old Portsmouth. The walk starts at the hot walls in Old Portsmouth. These are located at the bottom of the High Street between the square and round towers. Find a convenient place to stop here and then resume the audio.

In 1704 royal permission was given for people to build houses near to the dockyard and so a new suburb called Portsmouth Common grew, this changed its name to Portsea in 1792. This new suburb soon outgrew the original town, which became known as Old Portsmouth. The area called Old Portsmouth is located on the south western tip of the island.

The area of Old Portsmouth is also known as Spice Island which is where all the spices used to enter the city. The area features many historical buildings and features. The old defences are still in place and you can walk along the hot walls, part of the fortifications for the harbour entrance. The area of Old Portsmouth is these days home to the fishermen of Portsmouth.

The Spur Redoubt is the point where Nelson left Portsmouth to join Victory for the Battle Of Trafalgar in 1805. Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson would have left the George Hotel in the High Street by the back door to avoid the crowds that had gathered to bid him farewell and headed along Pembroke Road before cutting across Governors Green in front of the Garrison Church and going through the tunnel in the ramparts to join Victory.

The hot walls are used by many people to wave goodbye to Naval personnel as they embark on a tour of duty or to welcome a ship back. King James' Gate stood in Broad Street and was the entrance to the town. The gate would have had a huge stone arch and would have been manned by soldiers. There would have been a moat with a drawbridge that soldiers would have raised to closed off the part of the town known as spice island in the evenings. The gate is now the entrance to the United Services Recreation Ground.

So lets now have a look at some of the attractions in Old Portsmouth in a bit more detail. Now walk towards the square tower and find a convenient place to stop and then resume the audio.

The Square Tower at the bottom of the High Street is believed to date from the time of Edward III, who first ordered the town enclosed. In the early Tudor days it served as a residence for the Governor, and after that the Governor was provided quarters in the old "Domus Dei" and the tower was then converted into a powder magazine. In the early 1800s there was an introduction of a semaphore on top of the square tower, but with the introduction of the electric telegraph the semaphore was no longer needed and was demolished in 1848. The Royal Yacht Squadron then tried to secure the Tower for a Club House but without success.

Who ever controlled the point controlled Portsmouth Harbour so it was here that the first permanent defences were erected, in 1418 the Round Tower was erected but on plans of the time it is seen as King Edwards Tower. The long vaulted casemates that

today face the parade were known as Eighteen Gun Battery. Henry VIII first established a battery here during the invasion crisis of 1545. The outer wall which can be seen today dates from the late 1680s and is the work of King Charles II's chief engineer Sir Bernard de Gomme.

Originally the 18-gun battery was a single story building and much narrower than it is today, backing on to a row of houses where the parade ground now is. To gain access to the beach de Gomme built a small "s" shaped sally port in the wall at the south end of the battery, where the moat ran across the road.

Between 1847 and 1850 the buildings between the battery and Broad Street were demolished and the ground used to build Point Artillery Barracks. The Round Tower was heightened and another tier added to the flanking battery to house 32 pounder cannons, while the rest of the battery was rearmed with 68pdr carronades on traversing mounts. In the early 1960s Point Battery and Barracks were sold to the City when the Coast Artillery was abolished.

Now during the summer there are local artists who sell their paintings under the arches. There is a monument called The Bonds of Friendship by Australian sculptor John Robinson. It is there to show the bonds between Portsmouth and Australia. It was from Portsmouth in May 1787 the first ship set sail to Australia. The Fleet sailed from Portsmouth to Botany Bay. The Bonds of Friendship monument is similar to one that can be found in Australia and was unveiled by the Queen in July 1980.

Now walk down Broad Street and as you do so you will start to see the Spinnaker Tower ahead of you. When you reach the end of the road take a seat in one of the seats to your left and then resume the audio.

To your right you will see the Spinnaker Tower and to your left is the mouth to Portsmouth Harbour and the Solent.

The spinnaker tower is situated at the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour within the Gunwharf Quays development. It is 170 metres tall and consists of three viewing decks the bottom of which has a section of glass floor. On a clear day you can see for 23 miles. The high-speed lift will whisk you to the top of the tower at a speed of 4 metres per second, taking just 30 seconds to reach the top of the tower.

The Spinnaker tower was opened to the public in October 2005 and the towers distinct design can be seen for miles around and at night the tower is illuminated.

The towers first illumination was coincided to take place as part of the Trafalgar 200 celebration on the 28th June 2005. The tower is built in the sea and employed many state of the art engineering techniques to construct it. The tower offers viewing decks at 100m, 105m and 110m and is two and a half times the height of Nelson's column.

The design is of a sail billowing in the wind. Work began on the tower in 2001 with it slowly growing over the years until in October 2005 it was opened to the public and cost a total of over £35 million to build.

Portsmouth harbour is located on the west side of Portsmouth and with a narrow harbour entrance of only 200 yards provides a safe and defensible harbour for shipping. The first to recognise the importance of Portsmouth's potential as a port for shipping was Marcus Aurelius Carausius who in approximately 285AD commissioned Portchester Castle to be built at the top of the harbour to repel attacks harrying trade with Rome.

In 1495 King Henry VII built the world's first dry dock in Portsmouth. During subsequent years the Royal Navy grew and so too did Portsmouth's dockyard. With the increase in size of the dockyard and the fleet Portsmouth became vulnerable to attack and hence fortifications were built these included the Round Tower, Square Tower and Southsea Castle. Regular wars with the French in the 18th century meant the dockyard flourished.

Portsmouth Harbour is a lively waterway with Gosport on one side and Portsmouth on the other. At the top of the harbour is Portchester castle and Portsdown hill. The harbour not only caters for the Royal Navy but also has a thriving commercial ferry port with ferries serving many places including Spain and France.

On the Gosport side of the harbour Hasler Marina is home to many smaller pleasure craft of varying types and sizes.

As you leave Portsmouth Harbours mouth you emerge into the Solent which is a busy shipping water way. On a clear day you can see across the Solent to the Isle of Wight. You may also notice four forts within the solent these are Horse Sands Fort, No Mans Land Fort, St Helens Fort and Spitbank Fort. All were designed in the 1860's to protect Portsmouth against a suspected invasion but were in fact never needed.

The royal naval base located within Portsmouth Harbour is nearly 300 acres in size with three miles of waterfront. Portsmouth Harbour sees around 35 continental ferry movements per day as well as all the naval and pleasure crafts. Portsmouth is home to 60% of the Royal Navy's surface fleet

From where you are seated you get a very good view of the shipping movements of both Portsmouth's Naval and Ferry Ports. When you are ready turn round and walk back down Broad Street past the round tower to the right and past the square tower also on your right. You will walk into a small car park and ahead to the left is the Royal Garrison Church. When you reach this point please resume the audio.

You are now looking towards the Royal Garrison Church also known as the Domus Dei. The Domus Dei, Gods House, was founded in Old Portsmouth by Bishop de Rupibus in 1212 as a Hospice, to shelter and help pilgrims from overseas bound for the Shrine at Canterbury, Chichester and Winchester. Originally it was a long, vaulted hall, divided on either side into bays to house patients, with the Chapel at one end. In the hall the aged, sick and homeless were tended. As the importance of Portsmouth grew as a Garrison Town, so did the importance of the Domus Dei.

In 1449 Henry VI sent the Bishop of Chichester to the Church in order to pay the sailors and soldiers of the Garrison. Due to the disagreement in the amount of pay, the

Bishop was murdered. For this the town was excommunicated and remained so for fifty years.

The Church was closed in 1540 when the religious houses were dissolved by Henry VIII, the buildings were then used for a brief time as an Armoury. Later the south side of Domus Dei was converted into residence for the Governor of Portsmouth and was called Government House.

In 1826 Government House was demolished and the Church restoration was completed in 1868. On the night of 10th January 1941 a fire bomb raid on Portsmouth gutted the Nave of the church but the Chancel was saved by the Verger who was assisted by soldiers and airman.

When you are ready why not climb the steps to your right and have a look over the Solent. You will be able to get glimpses of some of Portsmouth's sea forts and also an elevated view of some of Old Portsmouth. When you are ready walk back towards the Square Tower on ground level and turn to your right and walk down the high street until you are opposite Portsmouth Cathedral. Then at a safe point cross the road. When you are next to Portsmouth Cathedral resume the audio.

Portsmouth Cathedral is located in the High Street very close to the Square Tower and was originally called St Thomas' Church. As with most places within Portsmouth it is surrounded in history. In about 1180 Jean de Gisor, the founder of Portsmouth, granted land to build a chapel, in 1188 the chancel and nave were consecrated and in 1196 the transepts, altars and churchyard were consecrated. In 1642 during the Civil War the church was bombarded by Parliamentary forces and in 1693 a new nave and west tower were completed.

Between 1902 and 1904 the church was closed for restoration work to be carried out. In 1927 the Diocese of Portsmouth was created and in 1932 Sir Charles Nicholson published plans to enlarge St Thomas's to become Portsmouth's Cathedral. In 1939 due to the outbreak of World War II work on the extension scheme stopped. This means Portsmouth had the only incomplete Cathedral in England between 1939 and 1991. In 1990 work was started to complete the scheme and in 1991 the completed building was consecrated in the presence of HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

The Cathedral stands as a prominent landmark in Portsmouth and can be spotted easily from the air. It is located in old Portsmouth off of the High Street. When entering or leaving Portsmouth by ship a glimpse of its turrets can be seen. In the Cathedral there is a Navy Aisle where bones recovered from the Mary Rose lay. The stones inscription reads "Here lies a member of the ships company of the Mary Rose", "May they rest in peace 19th July 1984".

There is also a memorial to the crew of the fishing vessel Wilhelmina J. The inscription on the memorial reads "In memory of the members of the Ship's Company of the Wilhelmina J lost at sea 10 April 1991 Michael Bell, Jeffrey Venters, Guy Ransom Davies, Christopher Thomas, Matthew Hodge, Mark Fitz.

When you leave the Cathedral turn to your left and walk down the High Street towards the roundabout with Museum Road. As you do so look to your right as you

pass George Court. This is the location of the old George Hotel where Nelson staid before he boarded HMS Victory to set sail for the battle of Trafalgar. Then on your left as you walk a bit further down the road you will come to a recreation of John Pounds Shop in the grounds of John Pounds Memorial Church. John Pounds was born in 1766 and provided free education to the poor children of Portsmouth, this lead to the formation of the ragged school movement.

On the right shortly before you reach the end of the road is another important landmark number 11 An important landmark in the High Street is number 11 where George Villiers the Duke of Buckingham was assassinated by John Felton on 23rd August 1628. At the time the Navy was in a poor state of repair and neither parliament nor the king was willing to provide the necessary resources to bring the Navy into a good state of repair.

John Mason did the best he could with limited funds but could not find the money to pay the sailors or soldiers and the Duke Of Buckingham was head of the forces which meant he received a lot of criticism for the lack of pay. Then on the 23rd August 1628 John Felton travelled to Portsmouth believing that the situation could not improve while the Duke was alive and he found John Mason's house at 11 High Street where the Duke was staying. The house was very busy that morning and Felton's presence went unnoticed and as the Duke was about to leave the house and exchanged bows with Sir Thomas Fryer Felton stabbed the Duke before disappearing into the crowd. The Duke was later buried in Westminster Abbey.

Carry on walking down the High Street and when you reach the roundabout turn to your right and cross over the road when it is safe to do so and walk down Museum Road. On your right about half way down is Portsmouth City Museum and Records Office. When you reach this point please resume the audio.

We now move to Museum Road where we find the city museum and records office. The City Museum is housed in what used to be a Victorian Barracks. The permanent displays in the city museum include 'The Story of Portsmouth'. The story is introduced in the form of an audiovisual display, which last about 5 - 10 minutes. There is a full size construction of a Stone Age Man along with another audiovisual display.

The museum holds many artifacts from Portsmouth's history, photographs and text. Going up to the first floor there is 'Living in Portsmouth' this display is a set of rooms set up from different eras. There is a 17th century bedchamber, 1871 kitchen, a Victorian parlor, a 1930s kitchen and a 1950s living room. The displays continue with a 'Portsmouth at Play' display featuring Portsmouth at play on the beach, in the cinema and on the football field.

The museum also features an art gallery, which houses many paintings and postcards depicting scenes of Portsmouth's history. The City Records Office is housed in the same building as the museum and contains the Cities archives dating back to the 14th Century.

The City museum hosts many exhibits and displays and in the past has held a reenactment of the Portsmouth 800 charter day where the first royal charter was granted to Portsmouth.

You have now reached the end of this audio guide and thank you for listening. Why not now go into the City Museum and have a look at some of their exhibitions or have a cup of tea in the café.

For other audio walks of Portsmouth or for more information about Portsmouth please go to www.portsmouth-guide.co.uk when you return home.