

Clarence Pier to the Royal Marines Museum Audio Walk

This audio guide starts at Clarence Pier. Stand on the esplanade looking towards Clarence Pier and then resume the audio.

Clarence Pier was built in 1861 and was opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales who attended a concert. Up until 1873 a tramline ran from Portsmouth Town Railway Station onto the pier and was used for taking passengers to the Isle Of Wight onboard steamers.

In 1905 the Pier was extended to take extra boat traffic into account and still further extensions were made in 1932 when a café, sun deck and hall were added. After being bombed during World War II the pier re-opened in its present form on 1st June 1961.

Clarence Pier offers many different rides including; Disko Ride, Pirate Petes, the twister, wild river, the power tower, dodgems, skyways, waltzer, formula 2000, gallopers, tea cups and toon town express. The pier also offers amusement arcades featuring the latest video games and fruit machines

Now turn round and walk along Clarence Esplanade towards the East. The sea should be on your right. Keep walking until you reach the Blue Reef Aquarium. Then resume the audio.

Moving further along the seafront brings us to the blue reef aquarium. The blue reef aquarium is located in the building that used to hold the sea life centre. The aquarium offers many different exhibits. You have the opportunity to encounter the highly toxic poisonous dart frog of South America or a giant cane toad. The aquarium's fresh water display offers an Asian short claw otter family themed surroundings.

The centrepiece of the aquarium is the Corel Reef housed within a huge ocean display. The reef is home to species like angelfish wrasse, puffer fish and hundreds of other species. You have the opportunity to walk through a tunnel through the centre of the reef.

The aquarium was voted visitor attraction of the year by tourism southeast. Now cross over the road onto Southsea common walk a few steps onto the common so that you are not too close to the road and then resume the audio.

Southsea common is located on the south coast of Portsmouth. Southsea common is used for many events many of which are military and in more recent times has been used for celebrations and commemorations. It was used for the D-Day 50 commemorations held on 5th June 1994, which were held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of d-day. The events were attended by the British Royal family and twelve other heads of state including the President of the United States. The commemorations included a Drum Head Service followed by a fleet review. Then the heads of state reviewed the fleet before heading to Normandy.

On 28th June 2005 just over ten years later Portsmouth again provided a thoroughly entertaining event. Portsmouth helped celebrate Trafalgar 200 by the Queen reviewing the international fleet in the Solent followed by a breathtaking Son Et Lumiere and battle re-enactment in the evening, which culminated in the largest

firework display seen in the UK. Southsea common was an integral part of these events.

Southsea common was initially a military area and was used for assembling armies before battles. The War Memorial is identical to those in Chatham and Plymouth. The military use of Southsea Common continued until 1922, when Portsmouth Corporation purchased it from the War Department.

They planted the Ladies' Mile and built leisure pavilions, some of which were located on what is now the floral clock. The common also offers a skate park and bowls green.

The war memorial located on Southsea common is to commemorate all those lost in action during both world wars. Part of the inscription reads "The Portsmouth Naval Memorial. This memorial commemorates officers ranks and ratings of this port who died at sea during the wars 1914 – 1918 and 1939 – 1945. Action in which they fought are recorded in the registers and on the memorial itself." It later says "Of the 24,588 men and women whose names are on this monument 9,666 died during the First World War and 14,922 including 75 from Newfoundland who served in the Royal Navy during the Second World War. All were buried at sea or were otherwise denied by the fortunes of war, a known and honoured grave.

The war memorial in Southsea was erected as a result of an admiralty committee recommending that the three major ports those of Portsmouth, Chatham and Plymouth should each have an identical memorial of unmistakable naval form. The form used was that of an obelisk. After the second world war it was decided that the naval memorial should be extended to commemorate the naval dead without graves of both wars.

Why not go and have a look at the war memorial while you are here and when you are finished cross back over the road and look out to sea. When you are looking out to sea resume the audio. We now move out to sea where we find Spitbank Fort, St Helens Fort, Horse Sand Fort and No Mans Land Fort.

Spitbank fort was designed to provide a defense for Portsmouth Harbour from French Invaders. Work began on Spitbank in 1861 and in June 1878 the fort was completed. It was intended to mount 15 guns looking seaward, and six facing landward. The construction of the fort had cost £117,964.

In 1871 the Defense Committee recommended that the fort be rearmed with more powerful guns. Nine, 12.5-inch, 38-ton guns were installed on the seaward face and seven 7-inch 7-ton guns on the landward side. In 1882, Spitbank Fort was supplied with auxiliary armament in the form of 15 machine guns.

In 1899, the role of the fort was changed to counter light craft instead of heavy warships. Two 4.7-inch guns were fitted on the roof and searchlights were added. In 1956, the Coast defense program was disbanded and the searchlights and generators removed from the fort the following year. The forts never came under attack and in 1952 the fort was sold. Now Spitbank fort is open to the public.

St Helens Fort, Horse Sand Fort and No Mans Land Fort were all built at a similar time and were never attacked. These forts are privately owned and not open to the public.

Now walk eastwards along Clarence Esplanade past the Blue Reef Aquarium and shortly afterwards you will come to the D-Day Museum. When you reach the D-Day museum on your right please resume the audio.

Moving just a bit along the coast brings us to the D-Day Museum. The D-Day Museum is home to the Overlord Embroidery and was specially built to hold the embroidery. The Overlord Embroidery took 5 years to complete and measures 272 feet and is the largest work of its kind in the world.

The Museum also has a film show which includes original footage and is located in the centre of the museum. As well as the film and embroidery there are also vehicles and displays of other material associated with D-Day and the war. In 1984 the D-Day Museum was opened by H.M. Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother and was extended in 1994 to accommodate the Dulverton Wing which provides a multi-purpose space that can be used for lectures, exhibitions or for school use.

The museums displays allow visitors to experience the sights and sounds of Britain at War, you can visit the air raid warden's living room in the Blitz, the factory and troops preparing for D-Day in their forest camp. The climax of the displays is a dawn to dusk reconstruction of the Allied landings on D-Day itself. There is also an exhibition of peoples memories from the time featuring recordings of local people who experienced life on the home front or who took part in d-day.

Now carry on walking past the D-Day museum and past the floral clock on your right. Then turn immediately right and ahead of you is Southsea Castle. Walk down this flower lined path and find a convenient bench to sit on and then resume the audio.

Behind the D-Day museum and on the shoreline is Southsea Castle. Southsea Castle was built in 1544 and took less than six months to build. It was built as one of a series of forts constructed for King Henry VIII and it is said that the King himself designed the fort. It was not long finished when in 1545 the Mary Rose sank in full view of the castle to the horror of the king.

The castle is situated in a key position guarding the entrance to Portsmouth harbour and this meant that whatever danger threatened Portsmouth the castle was in the front line. During Victorian times it was used as a military prison but its guns still had to be ready for action. It was not until 1960 that the castle was withdrawn from active service and purchased by Portsmouth City Council.

Southsea castle has many exhibitions of interest; it includes a 'Story of Portsmouth Exhibition', and in the keep is a history of the castle. If you climb to the top of the keep you can get some good views over the Solent and Portsmouth. You also have the opportunity to enter the Counterscarp gallery which was built between 1813 and 1814 and goes round the moat of the castle. The castle also hosts regular events and re-enactments.

Next to Southsea Castle is castle field, which is an open space with flower gardens leading up to Southsea Castle and the East Battery fortifications, located at the edge of castle field, these fortifications give views across the Solent. Castle field is often used for events and shows such as fares and concerts.

The next part of the walk will take a few minutes, walk back down the flower lined path and turn right. You now need to carry on following the promenade to the East. Keep going until you reach South Parade Pier. Then resume the audio.

South Parade Pier was opened in 1879 by Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimer. The pier was intended to be used by passengers travelling to and from the Isle Of Wight. This pier was short lived when in 1904 a fire destroyed the structure. The pier was at this point taken over by Portsmouth Corporation and was rebuilt opening in 1908. It was 600ft long and was intended to be a pleasure pier rather than as before a landing jetty.

The rebuilt pier included a large pavilion near the shoreward end that housed two halls, one was a 1,200 seat theatre and the other was a smaller hall. At the seaward end there was a small pavilion that incorporated a bar and lounge.

In 1967 a fire severely damaged the theatre, which due to that blaze had to be removed. Another fire occurred on 11th June 1974 during the filming of the rock-opera Tommy. It is believed to have started when a spotlight set light to some drapes, this fire led to a much less grand pavilion being built in place of the destroyed pavilion. It now houses the standard seaside amusement arcades.

On the other side of the road and just slightly to the East and next to the bus terminus is the Canoe Lake. On the far side of the Canoe Lake is Cumberland House Natural History Museum.

Cumberland House Natural History Museum located in Eastern Parade in Southsea allows you to find out about life, the universe and almost everything. You can join Mole and Ratty by the river and take a fish's eye view of the life on the riverbank.

There is a display, which allows you to watch the advance and retreat of the Ice Ages in the Ice Cave and to see a Polar Bear, which lived here almost 70,000 years ago. A newer addition to the museum is their butterfly house, which allows you to walk amongst butterflies.

There is also a life size model of a dinosaur inside as well as many other displays all housed in a large house dating from approximately 1830 to 1840 which is a grade 2 listed building. The museum tells the story of the wildlife of the riverbank, marshes, woods and urban areas of Portsmouth. Have a look for the heron stalking its prey and the brent geese coming into land after their flight from the arctic. You can also learn about Portsmouth's geology and take a look at the Victorian Museum exhibition.

Behind Cumberland House located close to the Canoe Lake and The Rose Gardens is Portsmouth's model village. It includes a working miniature railway and a variety of different buildings and is located on the site of an old fort.

Now carry on walking to the East, this part of the walk is quite long without any stops for information. Keep on the promenade and you will after walking for a few minutes see the Royal Marine Yomper at the entrance to the Royal Marines Museum on the opposite side of the road. When it is safe cross the road and go through the entrance and follow the road into the museum grounds past the car park on your right and then bear to the right at the end of the road. Ahead of you is the Royal Marines Museum. When you reach this point why not have a seat on the grass and resume the audio.

We now move to the eastward end of the seafront where we come to the Royal Marines Museum. The Royal Marines were formed in 1664 and have a colourful history the museum charts this history and is housed in the Victorian (grade II listed building) formerly Eastney Barracks on the seafront in Eastney. The museum is in the original officers quarters of the barracks with the Marines quarters now being private apartments.

The museum includes a Falklands video display telling the marines story during the Falklands War. The museum is the guardian of all ten Victoria Crosses awarded to the Royal Marines. Along with these there is a display of many of the other medals awarded to the Royal Marines. There is a video show on the D-Day landings along with many new sections and other videos.

The displays include the story of Hannah Snell a woman who ran off to sea in 1745 disguised as a male marine and is brought to life by a 3D state-of-the-art display. There is also a section about the Royal Marine Band who are still based in Portsmouth.

Not only do the displays tell the history of the Royal Marines but the buildings too have a story to tell. Work started on the construction of the barracks to house the Royal Marine Artillery in 1862. In the move to Eastney, the musketry and gunnery training fields were retained while the large parade ground and eventually a gymnasium, theatre and drill shed, made the division self contained. It was not until 1867 that the whole division was in the barracks and not until 1868 that the officer's quarters were completed.

When in 1923 the Royal Marine Light Infantry and Royal Marine Artillery amalgamated Eastney became home of the Portsmouth Division. The barracks are now apartments with the officers quarters being the Royal Marines Museum, the marines have now moved to Whale Island.

You have now reached the end of this audio guide. Thank you for listening and while you are at the Royal Marines Museum why not take a few minutes to explore it a bit further or have a cup of tea in its 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.