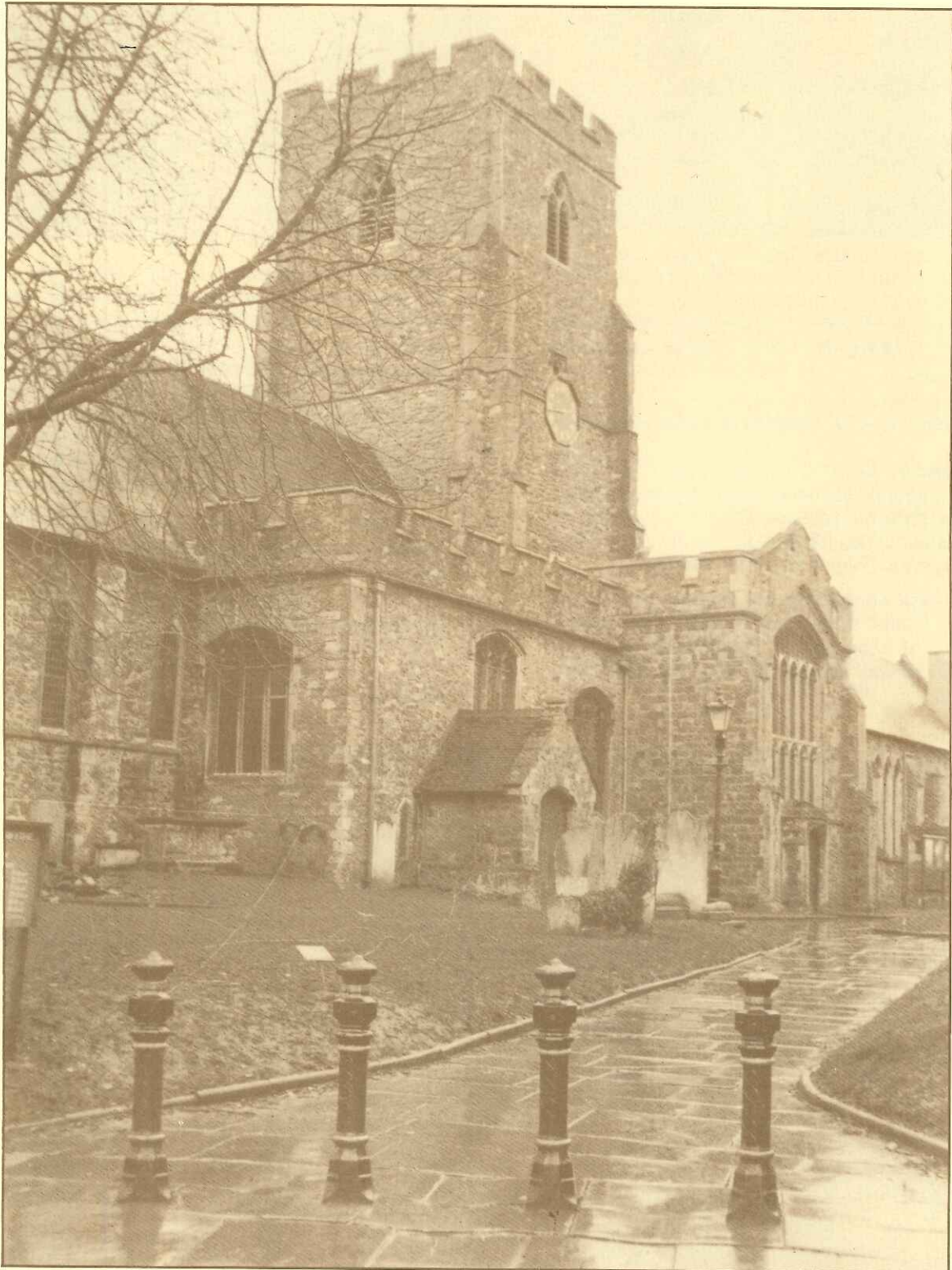


# FOLKESTONE HISTORICAL WALKS

## THE BAYLE AND THE OLD HIGH STREET



SHEPWAY DISTRICT COUNCIL



## THE BAYLE AND THE OLD HIGH STREET

This walk visits two of Folkestone's oldest areas, the Bayle and The Old High Street. The Bayle retains a village-like atmosphere and is the setting for the 13th century church of St. Mary and St. Eanswythe, which still holds the relics of St. Eanswythe.

The Old High Street is an ancient route connecting the Bayle with the harbour and the Stade and contains many interesting buildings dating from the 18th century.

The walk returns through Rendezvous Street and Church Street formerly Butchers Row and Mercery Lane respectively.

### START: The Road of Remembrance

*From the Road of Remembrance walk towards the church with Albion Villas on your left . . .*

**Albion Villas** – Built 1843-4, 1-6 Albion Villas are listed buildings with number 3 carrying a plaque commemorating Charles Dickens residence during the summer of 1855. While here Dickens wrote part of "Little Dorrit", a monthly article for a magazine called "Household Words" and also gave a public reading of "A Christmas Carol", one of his earliest performances.

*Enter St. Mary and St. Eanswythe's churchyard . . .*

**St. Mary and St. Eanswythe's Church** – The church was largely rebuilt in the 19th century but the font and arcade of the chancel are 13th century, while the arches of the central Tower, the Lady Chapel and St. Eanswythe's Chapel are 15th century.

In 1885 a cask containing the remains of a young woman was found in the church walls. The remains are held to be those of St. Eanswythe and were replaced in the wall near to the altar where they rest to this day.

The churchyard itself is full of historic interest. For example, north of the church is a cross erected in 1897 with a carved panel depicting the crucifixion. The cross stands on four steps which are Mediaeval. Under a Charter of Edward III the town's burgesses met at the cross each year on the feast of the Nativity of our Lady (8th September) to elect a Mayor.

A full history is available within the church.

**The Bayle** – Bayle is a short form of the Norman word "Bailey" (castle yard), a castle having been built here in the 11th century. There is evidence of Roman settlement at the Bayle dating from the 1st century A.D. and the 18th century historians Stukeley and Hasted wrote of Roman masonry seen in the remains of walls locally. Roman coins and pottery have been found here and the headland would have presented a good defensive position. There is better evidence of settlement from Saxon times on and in 1850 an Anglo-Saxon cremation burial was discovered dating from the 5th century.

The Bayle is regarded as the site of the Saxon St. Eanswythe's priory established about 630 A.D. Legend has it that Eanswythe, daughter of King Eadbald of Kent, having been educated in a continental convent, rejected her father's plans for her marriage to a Northumbrian King. Instead she asked her father to establish a priory within which she could take up the religious life. The priory appears to have been abandoned and left to ruin following raids by the Danes in the 9th century.

Soon after the Norman castle was built, two Benedictine priories were established here. The first was founded in 1095 by the Lord of the Manor of Folkestone, Nigel de Muneville, apparently on the site of the earlier Saxon priory and within the bailey. The second, built in 1138, was located beyond the bailey at the Benedictines' request but was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1535.



The Bayle at the turn of the century.





Corner of The Old High Street early this century.

After the Reformation the Bayle was vacated but in the 1560's a battery was set up at Prior's Lease just south of the parish church. More defences were added within the Bayle itself until by 1782 the battery comprised gunners' quarters, a magazine and embrasures mounting between 4 and 6 guns. In 1862 the Bayle became the principal station of the Coastal Brigade, Royal Artillery, but in 1888 military functions ceased.

**The British Lion Inn Public House** – This was built in the early 19th Century and may well have been frequented by the soldiers manning the Folkestone Battery. Outside crouches a stone lion guarding the entrance to the bars.

**The Bayle Pond** – The Bayle pond is the terminus of a unique 12/13th century aqueduct which carried drinking water into Folkestone from a spring at Cherry Garden Coombe. The pond covered the whole of the garden area until the 1920's when it was landscaped.

**The Battery** – Built to serve as the Folkestone Battery commander's quarters, the west front chimney stack is dated 1760. An early 19th century gunpowder house is connected to the house.

**The Guildhall Public House** – Designed by Sidney Smirke and built about 1848 the Guildhall was formerly known as the Globe Inn. Like the British Lion the pub may have been popular with the Battery garrison.

Turn left into Bayle Street. Numbers 84 and 86 have 19th century shopfronts, 86 being decorated with pigs' heads, a butcher's sign. Turn right into the Old High Street and descend to the foot of the hill . . .

**The Old High Street** – Connecting the Bayle with the Stade and Harbour the Old High Street contains a number of buildings dating back to the 18th century.

**Rowlands Rock Shop** – The shop has a special shopfront which lets customers watch rock confectionery being made.

A plaque commemorates the street's history and highlights Charles Dickens' associations with the area.

**Mill Bay Steps** – The steps lead towards the site of the old Bradstone Water Mill at Bradstone Road and built by the local Baptist Stace family in the 19th century.

At the foot of the hill pause for breath and retrace steps turning right at the top of the hill and walk into Rendezvous Street, formerly known as Old Butcher's Row. Otherwise you can take up The Stade, Durlocks and East Cliff Walk . . .

**The Baptist Church** – Now a shopping gallery, the Baptist Church was built by Joseph Carpenter in 1873-4 on the site of an earlier church built in 1845. The church has an ornate frontage in Neo-Classical style and was built to accommodate 900 worshippers. The Baptist movement has been present in Folkestone since 1667 and is closely linked with the influential Stace family, owners of the old Bradstone Water Mill. The Staces provided the small cemetery at Bradstone Road for Baptists who at the time were not permitted burial on consecrated ground.

Return along Rendezvous Street turning left into Church Street . . .

**Church Street** – Once known as Mercery Lane, Church Street is the birth place of William Harvey, widely held to be the discoverer of the principle of the circulation of blood. Harvey's statue can be found at The Leas.

Return to the churchyard and then back to the start of the walk . . .



Other "Walks Through Old Folkestone" available are:

- PROMENADING ON THE LEAS
- THE HARBOUR, STADE, AND THE EAST CLIFF

The walks lead into each other, taking you from The Leas to the East Cliff. The walks have been compiled by Shepway District Council Planning Department with the assistance of the Folkestone and District Local History Society, and Kent County Council's Museum and Library at Grace Hill, Folkestone. The museum is close to the old town centre and houses interesting displays featuring the history of the town.

