Devonport Heritage Trail - section by section

Mount Wise Section

Stonehouse
1. Elvira's - Start of Devonport Heritage Trail
2. Ha penny Toll Bridge

Richmond Walk & Mount Wise
3. Defences - Tunnels & Cold War Bunker
4. Charles Darwin lodged near here
5. Steps to the Admiral's Boathouse - now a ruin
6. Scott of the Antarctic, born Devonport
7. Defences - Fort, Sign Station & Time Ball
7a. Admiralty (formerly Governor's) House
8. Gun Shed & former military presence
9. Mount Wise House
10. Swimming Pools - built on site of small dock
11. Insect drawings by two local sisters, 1850s
12. Site of former Royal Laboratory, circa 1803
13. Over the Dockyard Wall - Rope Making
14. Working harbour, ferry boats & community
15. Swimming Pools - built on site of small dock
16. Swimming Pools - built on site of small dock
17. Army barracks & officers' houses
18. The Shakespeare PH on Theatre Ope
19. Chapel Street
20. Former Crown Hotel, built 1880
21. St Aubyn Manor - former house & office
22. St Aubyn Church & War Memorial
23a. Celebrating the Penblwyf Dock Community
23b. Central Section
24. Cumberland Gardens
25. Army barracks & officers' houses
26. The Shakespeare PH on Theatre Ope
27. Chapel Street
28a. Blake - ARP Warden Mabel Sheard
28b. Blake - bombed and burning building
29. Former Midland Bank, Fore Street
30. Former Midland Bank, Fore Street
31. Former Midland Bank, Fore Street
32. Devonport Market, built 1852
33. Granby Way
34. Trail route marker
35. Trail route marker

Central Devonport:

Stonehouse Bridge - Mount Wise - Mutton Cove
East Stonehouse and Devonport were once separate towns; Stonehouse Bridge, designed by John Smeaton and fully opened by 1773, better connected the two. Displayed on the north west side of the Bridge, a photo artwork by local artist David Harborb is a reminder that the tidal waters of Stonehouse Creek originally ran much further inland.

Walking alongside the Devonport shore, there are glimpses of the large boat building sheds across the water in Stonehouse. This shoreline was once a working quarry. Stone and timber wharves, boat yards, builder's yards and light industry followed, and the waterfront is still busy with boats. There are still a few traces of the old railway to Ocean Quay.

The Trail follows Richmond Walk. This was built in the 1790s and early 1800s to give local people continued access to the waterfront. This was a site at which the military were taking over much of Mount Wise.

Beyond Mayflower Marina and "Poor Man's Corner" is a small beach area. By 1823 this was the site of the Royal Clarence Battery, built on the site of Blyth's Boatyard, which was Victoria Cottages. This was where Charles Darwin lodged before embarking on HMS Beagle in 1831. The Dockyard defences and the military have shaped the shoreline landscapes, with a network of Second World War tunnels and a Cold War nuclear bunker cut into the rock and under Mount Wise.

Mount Wise Park was opened in 1893. Look out for off-route waymarkers in this area. It offers great views to the Royal William Yard, built 1827-34, and across the River Tamar to Cornwall. The surrounding area suffered heavily during the Second World War 'Blitz', and even fewer buildings survive as evidence of these busier times.

The former Devonport Market. Hall building of 1852, and its landmark tower, is one of the most distinctive Devonport buildings to have survived the Blitz and several post War redevelopments.

On Duke Street you will pass the Devonport Mechanics Institute and former library buildings, built in the 1840s, and the short-lived "Old Chapal" of 1790.

Cumberland Gardens mark the site of the Dock Theatre of 1782, with its fine officers' terrace, was built between 1719 and 1724. The Dockyard fly-over road bridge that dominates the waterfront was completed in the early 1960s. The last major redevelopment of North Corner took place in 2005.

Heading inland up Cannon Street, turn left on to Queen Street and continue to Ordinance Street. You will pass the Morice Yard Gate, capped with Victorian mortars. This military complex, with its fine officers' terrace, was built between 1719 and 1724. The Yard was originally a Gun Wharf operated by the Board of Ordnance - hence the nearby street names.

Ardmore Place, dominated by the former Royal Fleet Club building of 1901-2. Some of the original large terraced houses that stood here are incorporated into the facade. Devonport's Royal Albert Hospital of 1862-3 stood alongside modern day St Aubyn Street. The Hospital closed in 1981, but its landmark lime trees survive within the housing development on the site.

Take a detour along Marlborough Street to see several more interesting older buildings. This is a shopping centre that survived the Blitz and has continued to serve a much changed post War Devonport.

The Trail continues down New Passage Hill and into Devonport Park. In 1788-9 this was a new road, cut through the 'Dock Line' defences to serve the growing town. New Passage Hill also provided a connection to the Torpoint Ferry established in 1790. A brief spur detour takes in Pottery Quay and an artwork by David Harbourb. The floating bridge ferries cross regularly to Torpoint and Cornwall.

Devonport Park

New Passage Hill - Devonport Park - Brickfields
Guided drawbridges once controlled access to the town of Plymouth Dock - Devonport, and the security of the Naval Dockyard. These were located on Fore Street, Devonport Hill and at New Passage Hill. This Section of the Trail links all three sites.

At New Passage Hill, there is a stepped entrance to Devonport Park dating from 1857-8. To avoid the steps carry on down on to Ferry Road, climbing uphill towards Park Avenue. The Lower Park, which slopes steeply down to the River Tamar, was left isolated by the construction of Park Avenue in the 1950s. Devonport Park is 'Registered' by English Heritage as a Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest. It is the oldest formal public park in the City Restoration work and major improvements carried out between 2008 and 2011 have created a 'People's Park' for today. The fascinating history of the Park is told on separate 'Park Panels' displayed on route.

By following the Trail markers you will get to see many of the Park's unique historic buildings, monuments and memorials. Look carefully, and you will even discover the earth mounds that mark the sites of underground air raid shelters built during the Second World War.

However, feel free to detour off the Trail route and enjoy all the Park has to offer. (Look out for off-route waymarkers). Make sure to visit the new Park Pavilion building and cafe. Here you will see a glass and textile artwork by Carole Waller and another photo-razzle by David Harbourb. The Devonport Memorial to the soldiers, sailors and airmen who lost their lives in the Great War of 1914-18 stands close by. Alongside are two stone benches by artist Michael Disley, carved by the Friends of the Park and City College students.

Leave the Park via the main Fore Street gates, passing the Swiss style Lower Park Lodge, dating from 1858. Make sure to visit the three Victorian memorials nearby.

To complete the Trail, follow the old military road, now Raglan Road and Madden Road, past the Garage to Raglan Barracks, built in the 1850s. On descending Devonport Hill - the Napoleonic Guardhouse of 1811, the drawbridge 'cutting' and Bluff Battery, built 1779-80 to guard Stonehouse Bridge, are further reminders of Devonport's heritage and defensive histories.
Devonport Heritage Trail

The Heritage Trail links historic and cultural points of interest in Devonport. It is a great way to explore the local area, once an important town in its own right. The Trail also offers a way-marked detour from the popular South West Coastal Footpath; starting at Admiral’s Hard in Stonehouse to connect with the Plymouth Waterfront Walkway and the Cremyll Ferry.

Crossing into Devonport via the 18th century Stonehouse Creek Bridge, the route first follows Richmond Walk, exploring Mount Wise and Mutton Cove. It then takes in Ker Street, the one time civic heart of the community - centred on the newly restored Guildhall, the Devonport Column and the Egyptian House. The Heritage Trail then returns to the waterfront at North Corner, the birthplace of the original town of ‘Dock’.

At New Passage Hill, there is a link spur to the Torpoint Ferry and the chance to cross back to Cornwall. The Trail itself continues through Devonport Park and returns towards Stonehouse by way of the Brickfields and Devonport Hill.

Looking overleaf to find a section by section description of the Trail route, and a full list of the way-markers.

The list also includes the off-route Plaques. They are shown in sequence and are identified in italics, but you will have to detour to discover them.

The four main Trail sections are colour coded to correspond with the Trail Map.

Following the Trail

The Heritage Trail is way-marked by over 70 numbered and themed Devonport Plaques, designed by Cornish artists Gary and Thomas Thrussell.

On route, there are four Heritage Trail Panels - each focussing on a different part of the route. These Panels can be found at Mount Wise, Cumberland Gardens, North Corner and in Devonport Park. Look out too for the specially commissioned art works by local and national artists who worked in the area during 2009/10.

If you venture off-trail, there are additional way-markers to be discovered - some already in place and some planned. Look out for these around Mount Wise, at Pembroke Street, within the central Vision Development and in Devonport Park.

The Devonport Heritage Trail is about 7.5km (4 miles) long, but it can be easily explored bit by bit. The way-marked route follows public highways and byways and involves walking alongside and crossing several busy roads - so please take great care. The Trail is mostly fully accessible to all - with just a short detour to avoid steps into Devonport Park at New Passage Hill. Stay safe, and enjoy discovering Devonport.

Devonport Heritage Trail was created by Plymouth City Council working in partnership with the Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership and the local community. Thanks must also go to the professional artists who have interpreted the special qualities of Devonport and local historians who have contributed 'along the way'. With special thanks to Lizzy Cook.

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cover image: 'Devonport and the Hamoaze from Mount Edgcumbe', c.1850
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The Artists

Michael Disley - sculpture carver artist, Huddersfield
The “School Of Rock” gave the opportunity to first time stone carvers of all ages to create a bench for the heritage trail. Michael worked with 5 groups on 5 large stones over 5 months. With a little encouragement, each group produced a design, picked up their chisels and carved. Michael was genuinely amazed at the commitment and the real quality of the benches produced. They will hopefully be enjoyed for years to come.

David Harbott - artist, based in Torbay
His twelve works are found alongside the scenery they depict. Using digital collage techniques, David’s compositions of past and present make visible the presence of change both within the locations and for the people that, over time and to this day, have lived and worked in the local area.

Thrussell and Thrussell - artists metalsmiths, from Bodmin Moor
Gary and Thomas produced the distinctive Heritage Trail way-markers. “Creating community heritage artwork is a passion for us. After researching the town’s history and meeting the community, we were astonished by the amount of history in Devonport. It was a great pleasure creating the heritage trail Panels. We will forever have a great respect for the town of Devonport - with its rich history, its astounding contributions to the county and the world beyond”.

Carole Waller - painter, working just outside Bath
Carole makes large scale paintings which are connected to specific locations through ideas and images. Her installation at Devonport Pavilion is a painting on cloth - laminated in glass and illuminated from behind. “I hope the installation will inspire happiness in the present tense - in the pleasure of moving through this lovely park with its lights, its growth, renovation, the loving care with which its friends and volunteers develop it, its history and its present - in its dog and people friendly loneliness.”

Cover image: 'Devonport and the Hamoaze from Mount Edgcumbe', c.1850
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