

Artistry from industry



A self-guided walk around Belfast city centre

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**the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks**







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Artistry from industry

Explore how Belfast's international heritage is shaping its future

Welcome to Belfast! Birthplace of the Titanic and known as 'Linenopolis', in the 1900s Belfast was home to the world's largest linen industry and shipyard.

For many years that followed, though, Northern Ireland's capital city was riven by political conflict and violence. Since the end of the Troubles however, Belfast has begun a process of regeneration and renewal.

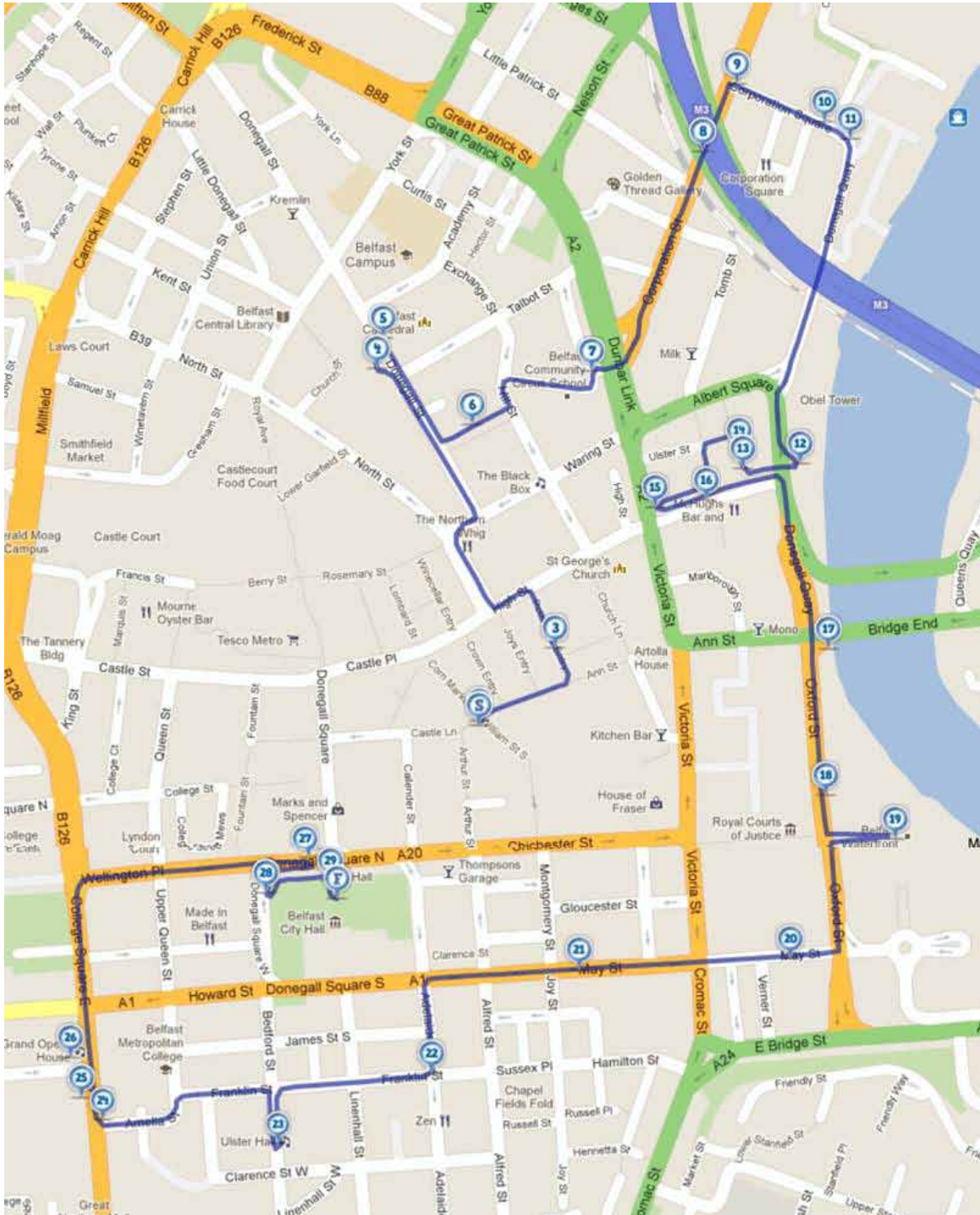
Belfast has been transformed from a city of industry to a centre of culture. This walk explores the stories of Belfast's evolution. The sights include a 300-year old pub, a sinking clock, 'Black Santa' and a giant fish on land!



The Spirit of Harmony sculpture
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This walk was originally created in 2012 as part of a series that explored how our towns and cities have been shaped for many centuries by some of the 206 participating nations in the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Route map



Practical information

Location	Belfast, Northern Ireland
Getting there	<p>Train - The nearest station to the walk route is Belfast Central (between Stops 19 and 20). Great Victoria Street is also nearby (near Stop 24).</p> <p>Bus - There are many local services to the city centre including shuttle buses from both of Belfast's airports</p> <p>Car - Accessible from M2 motorway from the north of the city and the M1 from Dublin and the Republic of Ireland</p>
Start point	Spirit of Belfast sculpture, Arthur Square, BT1 2LB
Directions from railway station to the start	<i>From Belfast Central station</i> - turn right onto East Bridge Street. Continue downhill to the triangular junction and follow the pavement right into Cromac Street. Continue straight ahead into Victoria Street. At the junction with Chichester Street turn left. Keep the shopping centre on your right, then turn right into pedestrianised Montgomery Street. At the end bear left and the sculpture will be at the end of the path.
Finish point	Belfast City Hall, BT1 5GS
Onward journey	To return to Belfast Central station use Directions 30 (
Distance	3 miles
Level	Gentle - a mostly flat city centre walk. Some pedestrianised streets and alleys.

Conditions

The city centre can be very busy, especially at weekends. There are a couple of major roads to cross and a riverside section.

Suitable for

Families - colourful artworks could amuse children. Take care of young children by the River Lagan

Dogs - must be kept on a lead

Wheelchairs - an entirely step-free route

Refreshments

There are plenty of cafés and shops in the city centre. The Belfast Barge (behind Waterfront Hall, Stop 17) has a café for refreshments on the River Lagan.

Facilities

Public toilets are available at:

- Lombard Street (opposite Corn Market near Stop 1)
- Church Lane (behind Belfast Cathedral, Stop 3)
- Custom House Square (Stop 13 to 15)
- Arthur Street and Arthur Lane (after Stop 21)

Other info

Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church is open to visitors on Wednesdays 2-4.30pm. Tours are available by prior appointment (Tel: 028 9071 5997)

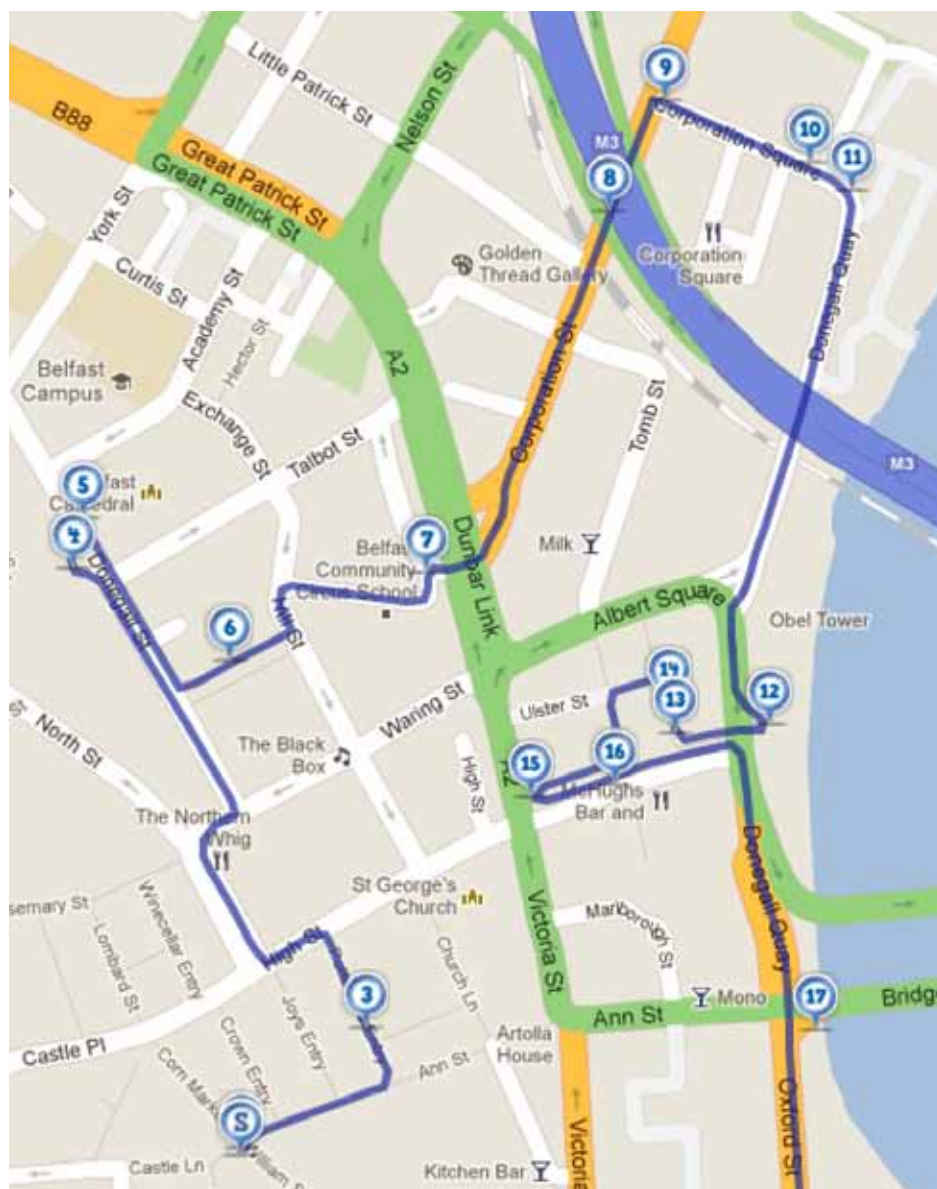
To find out more about the the **Titanic** and Belfast's shipbuilding heritage:

- **Titanic Belfast** museum (Tel: 028 9076 6386, website: www.titanicbelfast.com)
- **Titanic Dock and Pump House** (Tel: 028 9073 7813 website: www.titanicsdock.com)

Tourist Information

Belfast Welcome Centre, 47 Donegall Place, BT1 5AD (Tel: 028 9024 6609) - located 5 mins from the City Hall

Detail of the first half of the route



Stopping points

1. Arthur Square
2. Spirit of Belfast, Arthur Square
3. Pottinger's Entry
4. Spanish Civil War memorial
5. Belfast Cathedral
6. Commercial Court
7. Dunbar Street artworks
8. Wheels of Progress, Corporation Street
9. Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church
10. Harbour Commissioner's Office
11. View of Belfast Docks
12. The Big Fish and Lagan Weir
13. Queen's Square
14. Belfast Custom House
15. Albert Memorial Clock
16. McHugh's Bar
17. Thanksgiving Square

Detail of the second half of the route



Stopping points

- 18.** Dreams mural
- 19.** Waterfront Hall
- 20.** St George's Market
- 21.** John Boyd Dunlop plaque, 38-42 May Street
- 22.** Adelaide Street
- 23.** Ulster Hall
- 24.** The Crown Liquor Saloon
- 25.** Europa Hotel
- 26.** Grand Opera House
- 27.** Linen Hall Library
- 28.** Scottish Provident Building
- 29.** Belfast City Hall
- F.** Belfast City Hall grounds

1. Welcome to Belfast

Arthur Square

Belfast is the capital and largest city of Northern Ireland. This walk takes in nearly 30 sights that reveal the links between Belfast and many countries worldwide. In particular the walk explores how Belfast's international relations have changed from a site of trade and industry to a home for public art.

The route is 3 miles long. We begin at Arthur Square in the city centre, briefly follow the River Lagan and end at the City Hall.

Belfast's streets are much safer today than they once were but this is still a busy capital city, especially at weekends. There are a number of busy roads to cross so please take care and always use pedestrian crossings.

We hope you enjoy the walk!



Some of the sights of Belfast (top to bottom) - Albert Memorial Clock, Jim Larkin statue, detail from the Wheels of Progress artwork
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Directions 1

Remain in Arthur Square and stop by the large metal sculpture.

2. Spirit of the city

The Spirit of Belfast, Arthur Square

Arthur Square is home to one of the modern symbols of the city. This large sculpture is called 'The Spirit of Belfast'. Created by Dan George, it was unveiled in September 2009. It is sometimes known by the nickname 'the Onion Rings'. It is made from steel and at night is lit up in different colours.



The Spirit of Belfast - a symbol of the city's past and future
Nick Stanworth © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

As well as a piece of modern art, The Spirit of Belfast symbolises the city's historic status. The steel in the sculpture is an important reminder of Belfast's heritage. In the nineteenth century steel was used in huge quantities in Belfast for shipbuilding.

Many grand liners were built in Belfast, most famously the ill-fated RMS Titanic, which sank off the coast of Canada in 1912 after hitting an iceberg. Belfast was also a centre of the linen trade. The sculpture's shape with weaving, swirling lines is meant to recall the weaving of linen. By the turn of the twentieth century Belfast produced so much that the city was known as 'Linenopolis'. We will hear more details about both these trades later on.

The Spirit of Belfast is symbolic in another way. Until recently Belfast was in decline and in the grip of 'The Troubles'. The Troubles refers to the political upheaval in Northern Ireland that erupted into violence from the late 1960s. For over thirty years Belfast was at the heart of the conflict.

But take a look around today. Look at the pedestrianised streets and modern shop fronts of this busy, retail-based city. The Spirit of Belfast was installed as the centrepiece of Arthur Square's regeneration. The sculpture epitomizes a city undergoing major redevelopment.

Directions 2

Leave Arthur Square by turning into Ann Street. Continue along Ann Street and look out for the small passageways on the left. Walk past the first two and turn into the third one called Pottinger's Entry. Stop by the Morning Star pub.

3. Entry to the past

Pottinger's Entry

From a symbol of modern Belfast here is an entry into its past. Pottinger's Entry is one of the city's five oldest streets. The Entries, as they are known, are narrow alleys that date back to at least the 1630s. Pottinger's Entry is probably the most famous today. It was once home to several newspapers including one of the world's oldest - The News Letter, founded in 1737. At the other end of the Entry is a tiled mural celebrating the local newspaper trade. Also here is one of Belfast's oldest pubs. The Morning Star dates back to 1854.

Pottinger's Entry takes its name from a prominent local family. In 1689 Thomas Pottinger was the first Presbyterian mayor of Belfast. He claimed his family were the first from Belfast to trade extensively internationally.



Sir Henry Pottinger (1845)
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

The most famous member of the family was Sir Henry Pottinger. Henry worked for the British East India Company and became an envoy in China. He helped negotiate the Treaty of Nanking in 1842 which ended the First Opium War between Britain and China and led to Hong Kong becoming a British colony. Henry then became Hong Kong's first governor.

For many years Pottinger's Entry was left to deteriorate. But the alleyway has recently been restored as part of the on-going rejuvenation that has invigorated Belfast's heritage and added new aspects to the city.

Directions 3

At the end of Pottinger's Entry turn left onto the High Street. Cross over at the traffic lights and head up Bridge Street. After a very short distance turn right onto Waring Street and then almost immediately cross the road at the traffic lights and walk up Donegall Street. Opposite the cathedral is a small park. Stop when you find a small statue among a few trees.

4. They shall not pass

Spanish Civil War memorial

This area of the city is the Cathedral Quarter, named after Belfast Cathedral across the road. For now let's concentrate on this small statue of a soldier's head. This is a Spanish Civil War memorial.

The Civil War was fought between 1936 and 1939 and ended with the overthrow of the Spanish republican government. A nationalist dictatorship was established under General Francisco Franco who would govern Spain for another 36 years. This memorial is to the 21 Northern Irish soldiers who died in the war fighting for the International Brigades.



Spanish Civil War memorial
Nick Stanworth © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The International Brigades were military units made up of volunteers from different countries who travelled to Spain to fight for the Republicans. Alongside Northern Irish troops men from at least 20 other nations volunteered to support the Spanish Republican forces.

Look at the bottom of the statue and you can see the inscription 'No Pasaran!' This Spanish phrase means 'They shall not pass'. The phrase was used by Spanish Republicans as a slogan of resistance. It has since become a political slogan and has been adopted at various times by soldiers and political groups around the world.

Directions 4

Cross over the road to Belfast Cathedral. Go inside if it is open or stop outside the front entrance.

5. Black Santa

Belfast Cathedral

The focal point of the Cathedral Quarter, Belfast Cathedral is not actually a cathedral in the truest sense as it isn't linked to a bishop. It was completed in 1904 although a church stood on this site from the late eighteenth century.

One of the most Cathedral's famous traditions is the annual 'Black Santa' collection each Christmas. It started in 1976 when the then Dean, Sammy Crooks, decided to raise money for charitable causes by collecting outside the Cathedral. With a small barrel for donations and dressed in his black Anglican robes, Dean Crooks sat outside the Cathedral all week before Christmas. The local press described him as "Belfast's Black Santa" and the name stuck.



The impressive Cathedral doorway
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

It also set a tradition. Every Christmas the Dean begs outside the Cathedral for a week. Money raised usually goes towards local charities, though sometimes funds are donated to international causes. Examples include aid for the victims of the Boxing Day 2004 tsunami.

Inside the Cathedral the Military Chapel of Remembrance features memorials to those who fought in both World Wars. One of the main plaques honours the Royal Irish Fusiliers. The military chapel also honours those servicemen who were awarded the Victoria Cross. You can also see an unusual prayer book written on rice paper by a prisoner of war in Korea.

Directions 5

From the Cathedral entrance turn left. Walk back down the left side of Donegall Street. Pass an alleyway on your left then stop by the entrance to a second alleyway with a murals on the walls. Turn into this alley.

6. Commerce and art

Commerical Court

We have now reached Commercial Court. The first things to notice are the murals at the entrance. Look for the mural which contains many landmarks of Belfast city centre. We will visit many of these along the walk.

The mural is painted in the style of the Spanish artist, Salvador Dali. Dali was a Surrealist, his paintings full of bizarre imagery such as melting clocks and floating shapes. Dali turned heads through his eccentric behaviour. He combed his trademark moustache into strange shapes, had dinner with total strangers and once arrived at an exhibition in a limousine full of turnips!



Detail from the Dali mural
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Commercial Court gets its name from once being the commercial heart of Belfast. Today it is lined with colourful period signs and hanging baskets of flowers. This area once had a very different feel. When you walk down the Court try and imagine what would have been an extremely busy street. There would have been a constant hum from craftsmen working and traders bargaining with customers. The air was filled with smoke from an iron foundry and at the end of the court was a cock-fighting pit.

Also look out for several bronze plaques which record pottery firms, whiskey merchants and the iron foundry that once occupied this district. Over the years newspapers have also made their home here. To this day the area is regarded as Belfast's Fleet Street. The Belfast Telegraph, The Irish News and Sunday World are still based close by. The Duke of York bar is a regular watering hole for journalists, lawyers, politicians and trade unionists.

Directions 6

After walking through Commercial Court turn left onto Hill Street. See how many plaques and period signs you can spot. Turn right onto Gordon Street. Stop at the end in front of the row of silver bollards.

7. Penny for your thoughts

Dunbar Street

At this stop are more artistic contributions to Belfast's cityscape. Look closely at the car park bollards. They are shaped like stacks of coins. These stacks are part of a public art piece called 'Penny For Your Thoughts'. This artwork by Peter Rooney was unveiled in 2003. In the last two decades a series of Art Trails have been created along Belfast's River Lagan. We will visit some of the artworks today.

Take your time and look at the top of each bollard. The top coin on each stack contains a picture related to the development of Belfast and the Cathedral Quarter.



One of the 'Penny For Your Thoughts' columns
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

They include foodstuffs that were imported and traded in Belfast docks - look for bananas, grapes, wheat, barley and tobacco. There are also traditional Irish images. Look for the Gaelic Harp and a whiskey distiller with 'Uisce beatha', the Irish term for whiskey, underneath.

Also look for portraits of Sir Arthur Chichester. He founded and expanded modern Belfast from the early seventeenth century. He arrived in Belfast in 1611. He had fought against the Spanish Armada in 1588 and travelled with Sir Francis Drake on his voyages to Puerto Rico and Panama. Given the title Baron Chichester of Belfast, he built a castle that helped to establish Belfast as a town.

Nearby we can't miss another art piece - the two purple pylons with figures standing on chairs. Named 'The Calling' it is based on the theme of better communication between people since the end of the Troubles. These pieces are good examples of how Belfast has promoted itself internationally in recent years as a city of culture.

Directions 7

Cross over at the three sets of traffic lights slightly to the left. This is a very busy main road so take extra care. Turn onto Corporation Street which heads towards an overhead bridge. Stop underneath the bridge with the car park on your right. Look for a large envelope sculpture on one of the bridge columns.

8. Hidden journeys

Corporation Street

Drivers and pedestrians travelling under this bridge can see a series of large black and white photographs on the left hand columns. These old pictures, inside frames shaped like car mirrors, show various people who have left Belfast over the years. This is part of another public art piece by Peter Rooney. Called 'Wheels of Progress' it explores the history of migration to and from Belfast.

On the other side of the road some of the columns in the car park are decorated with passport and luggage stamps from around the world. The stamps contrast with the old photographs in an attempt to illustrate the transfer from old to new. Where one side of the road marks people who have left the city the other represents where they went. During the Troubles many people left Belfast for countries around the world.



Detail from 'Wheels of Progress'
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The change from the old to the new is a recurring theme in the Laganside Art Trails. Where the photos in rear view mirrors suggest loss the colourful passport stamps suggest gain from a new life in a new home. The exotic locations on some of the stamps also show how much easier it is to go across the world since the development of air travel.

Try and read as many of the stamps as you can. How many countries can you find? Some of the more obscure stamps include Benin, the Maldives, Guyana, Togo, St Lucia and Cuba.

Directions 8

When you are ready continue under the bridge. Turn right on Corporation Square. Stop outside the church with the square tower. The church is open on Wednesday afternoons, in which case go in. If the church is not open remain outside.

9. The Seamen's church

Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church

We are now approaching Belfast's port and this church is our first reminder of this vast industry. It dates from 1856 and was built by and for the Seamen's Friendly Society. This society was founded in 1832 to promote the religious improvement of sailors. The church is named after Belfast businessman John Sinclair who was one of the Society's major benefactors. Today this is probably one of the most charming and unusual churches in Britain.



The Italian church tower
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

It was built as a place of worship for families working on the docks. Inside 50 seats were reserved for visiting sailors. During the late nineteenth century the congregation prospered as the docks thrived.

By the 1940s over 1,000 families worshipped here. Rows of dock workers' terraced houses stood nearby. They were demolished in the 1970s to make way for Cross-Harbour Bridge that we have just walked under. Some 250 church families were relocated and the church was left isolated.

The spirit of the Seaman's Friendly Society prevailed however and the church was refurbished. It has become a tourist attraction for its large collection of seafaring artefacts. Many have been donated over the years by the seafaring congregation and visitors from throughout the world. There are far too many to list. As examples, though, here are four to look for.



This ship's wheel came from Chicago
Nick Stanworth © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



The church is dedicated to John Sinclair
Nick Stanworth © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The church pulpit features the prow of a former Guinness barge that carried the drink up the River Liffey in Ireland. It is below the organ with port and starboard mast lights either side.

Nearby look for a ship's wheel from a vessel built in Chicago in the United States. This ship sank off the Scottish coast during World War One and was salvaged by two members of the congregation.

In the back corner of the church the Pearl Memorial Window depicts the MV Pearl, a ship that sank with some crew from the Philippines.



The church pulpit - complete with a Guinness barge prow!
Nick Stanworth © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Finally, look up at the ceiling for a model plane hanging from the roof. The model is of a Shorts Singapore Flying Boat. These planes were used worldwide by the Royal Air Force before the Second World War. Shorts were founded in Belfast in 1908 and were the first company in the world to produce passenger aircraft.

Overall the church is a virtual museum of naval and seafaring history - a visit is highly recommended. The Sinclair Seamen's Church is very unusual but it does show how religious buildings can be very good places to find links with nations overseas. So why not see what is in your local church or religious building. You may be surprised!

Directions 9

If you went into the church leave when you are ready. From the church door turn left. Stop in front of the building next door; the Harbour Commissioner's Office.

10. A shipping palace

Harbour Commissioner's Office

We are now outside the Harbour Commissioner's Office. The Harbour Commission looks after the operation, maintenance and development of the Port of Belfast.

Belfast's docks were formed from a natural channel to the sea. But in early years they suffered from shallow water and awkward bends that were difficult for ships to use. After a new channel was built in 1837 the port grew rapidly. Ships brought products from all over the world: port from Lisbon; sherry from Spain; tobacco from America; fruit from southern Europe and the West Indies.



Neptune in the Harbour Commission window
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This grand building first opened in 1854 and is designed in the style of an Italian palazzo, or palace. The clock tower was used to regulate ship arrivals and departures from the docks. Inside the lobby of the Harbour Commissioner's Office is a superb stained glass window that illustrates this period of international prestige. Do go inside to have a look but please ask for permission at the office desk.

The window shows Neptune, the Roman god of the sea, holding the world in his hand. By his side a cornucopia (a horn of plenty) symbolises prosperity. Around Neptune are four images that symbolise Belfast's major industries at the time the Harbour Office was built. A nautilus shell represents Navigation, a spider's web is for linen spinning and a bird building a nest represents weaving. The Canadian beaver represents engineering. It also records that most of the timber used for shipbuilding in Belfast was imported from Canada.

Directions 10

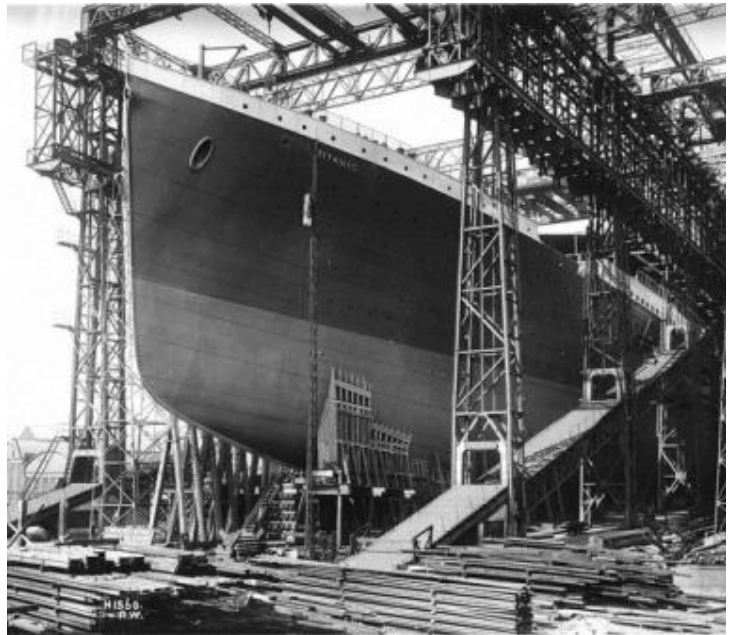
When you are ready head to the corner of Corporation Square as the road sweeps right. Stop by the set of railings. Look through them to the large yellow cranes.

11. Samson, Goliath and Titanic

Belfast docks

Through the railings we should be able to see two of the icons of Belfast. The huge yellow cranes, affectionately known as Samson and Goliath, are used to unload ships. They were made by a German firm, Krupp, and belong to the Harland and Wolff Company. Harland and Wolff were formed in 1861 by Edward James Harland and Hamburg-born Gustav Wilhelm Wolff.

Harland and Wolff became synonymous with Belfast's development. The company built many famous ships here in the early twentieth century - including the Titanic and HMS Belfast. At the company's height it employed 35,000 people. By the turn of the twentieth century Belfast was the biggest shipbuilding site in the world.



The Titanic at Harland & Wolff shipyard, 1911
Wikimedia Commons

The Titanic remains probably the most famous ship built in Belfast. This huge liner was built in a specially constructed dry dock which is still the biggest one ever made. On completion the Titanic was the height of luxury travel and the largest passenger steamship in the world. Supposedly unsinkable, on April 14th 1912 it hit an iceberg off Nova Scotia in Canada. By the following morning it had sunk resulting in the deaths of 1,517 people in one of the worst peacetime maritime disasters in history.

Despite the disaster the Titanic remains a source of enduring pride in Belfast. The Titanic dry dock and pump house are now a museum. In 2012 Belfast celebrated the Titanic's centenary year with the opening of the Belfast Titanic museum and interactive visitor centre. You should be able to see it next to the cranes – look for the distinctive grey, square building. The museum is becoming a new icon of the city as Belfast continues to develop from its international industrial past.

Directions 11

Follow Donegall Quay round to the right. Continue underneath the bridge and then turn onto the riverside path. Keep the river on your left and continue until you reach a large fish sculpture.

12. Fish out of water

Lagan Weir

We have now arrived at the River Lagan. Although a relatively small river the Lagan played a huge role in Belfast's development. During the Industrial Revolution many trades were located along the riverside.

Besides shipbuilding that we heard about at the previous stop, riverside industries included making tobacco, rope and linen. A large gasworks was also based here though today most signs of the riverside industry have gone.



The Big Fish celebrates the rebirth of the River Lagan
Nick Stanworth © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

In recent years concerted attempts have been made to regenerate the Lagan. In 1989 the government set up the Laganside Corporation which built new houses and the Lagan Weir we can see today. These riverside developments have greatly improved the water quality. Otters, trout and salmon have all been seen in the water and the Lagan is now used for leisure industries like rowing and angling.

To celebrate the rejuvenation of the Lagan this 10-metre long fish sculpture was unveiled in 1999. Named 'The Big Fish', it was created by artist John Kindness. The fish's scales are a mosaic of tiles covered with images of Belfast's history. They include newspaper articles, drawings and photographs. Look out for a period advertisements and photographs, including one of the Titanic being built. See what else you can find!

Before leaving the fish look across the road at the office tower with the colourful window frames. It is called 'The Boat' and the front is shaped like a boat's prow. Once again the design for a modern landmark comes from a historic industry, in this case shipbuilding. Along the riverside are many other new additions to the cityscape. We will visit some more of them soon.

Directions 12

With the river behind you cross over at the traffic lights. Continue towards a square with a clock tower. At the entrance to the square stop by a memorial fountain on the left.

13. Animal and musical harmony

Queen's Square

This water fountain is another piece of Belfast's history. It celebrates Commander Francis Anderson Calder RN. He was the founder of the Belfast Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The fountain was erected in 1859 and doubles as a water trough for cattle and horses.

The Belfast Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals made history in its unprecedented struggle for animal rights. Just a year after its inception the Society successfully lobbied for the Act of Parliament 'relating to the cruel and improper treatment of animals' to be extended to Ireland.



The musical steps in action
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This fountain is a survivor of 10 that were constructed by the Society for the use of Calder's four-legged friends. It's strange to think that among the bustle of people in a growing city there were also cattle roaming around Belfast, possibly going to or from the docks or even to market.

To the right and slightly ahead of the fountain is a small square in the ground split into nine bronze tiles. Go over to it and step on some of the squares and see what happens.

You should hear bells chiming! Under each tile is a small bell, each one makes a different note. These dance chimes were designed in the 1970s by Alfons Van Leggelo for the German company Richter Spielgeräte. They are popular in pedestrianized towns and cities throughout Europe and America.

Directions 13

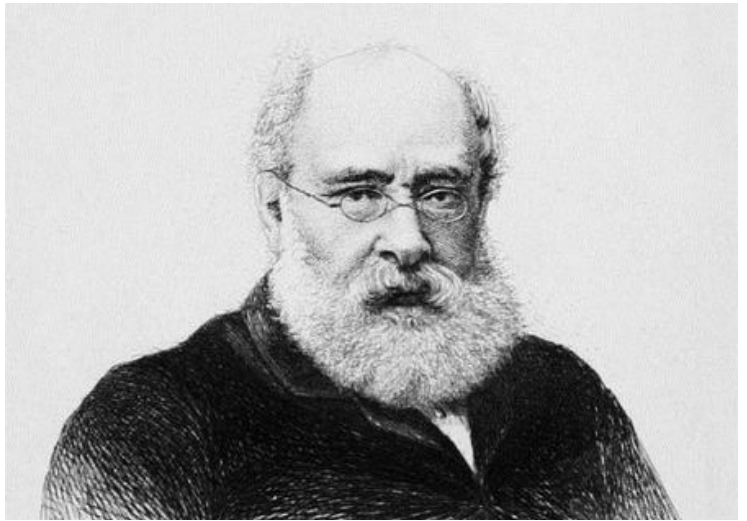
From the dance chimes continue across the square and turn right in front of the Customs House. Stand by the blue plaque on the wall outside.

14. Posted abroad

The Customs House

The old Customs House is another example of Belfast's grand architectural heritage. It was built in 1857 in Italian Renaissance style by the architect Charles Lanyon. He also designed the Sinclair Seamen's Church we visited earlier. The Customs House became very important as Belfast became one of the great Victorian industrial and trading centres.

Suitably, one of the most successful and well-travelled Victorian novelists worked here. In 1853 Anthony Trollope worked in this Customs House for the General Post Office.



Anthony Trollope in the 1870s
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Trollope grew up in London then spent time in America and Belgium before moving to Belfast. It was after working at the Customs House that Trollope returned to London and developed and introduced pillar boxes.

Trollope was one of the most travelled men of his age. His job as a Postal Surveyor meant he travelled across Europe and beyond, including South Asia, the West Indies, South America, Australia, South Africa and Iceland. His travels provided great inspiration for his novels. In an era when few Britons ventured abroad his books were a great source of intrigue.

Before leaving the Customs House have a quick visit to the other side of the building facing the river. Look up and see if you can spot Neptune again carved into the pediment. He appears beside statues of Britannia and Mercury, the Roman messenger god. These figures symbolise Belfast's part in British Empire's rule over the waves in the nineteenth century.

Directions 14

Once you have walked around the Customs House head towards the clock tower at the back of Queen's Square. Walk to the front of the clock tower so you can see a statue on the side and a long road is behind you.

15. Foundations

Albert Memorial Clock

This tower is another Victorian structure, the Albert Memorial Clock. It was made as a memorial to Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband. His life-sized statue faces the High Street.

The tower's design is a mix of French and Italian styles and was chosen after a competition. There was controversy however as the prize was initially given to the design which came second! After public outcry the contract was eventually awarded back to the winner, William Barre.

The clock tower is made in sandstone and was built between 1865 and 1869. You might have noticed it isn't totally straight. In fact it leans to one side by about four feet. The reason is because it was built on a wooden base on marshy land reclaimed from the River Farset.

This river runs in a tunnel underneath the High Street. Look along the High Street for a slight curve in the road. The Farset is a tributary, a smaller river that flows into a larger one - in this case a tributary of the Lagan. Though we cannot see the Farset it was central to Belfast's creation.

In fact Belfast was founded very near the spot we are standing on. The name Belfast comes from the Irish 'Béal Feirste' or 'mouth of the ford'. Belfast's first settlers made their homes at a ford over the Farset. It is incredible to think that Belfast's foundation site is out of sight. But as the near-toppling of the clock tower shows the Farset is unseen but not forgotten!



Albert Memorial Clock, 1897 - already leaning over to the side where it was built on the banks over the River Farset
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Directions 15

Retrace your steps and re-cross the square. Stop outside McHugh's Bar on the right hand side.

16. A broad taste

McHugh's Bar

This bar is the oldest building in Belfast city centre. In 2011 it celebrated its 300th birthday! Although the building has been expanded and restored over time it still has many historic features. Inside are roof beams from the eighteenth century. When the docks were at their busiest in the 1900s this would have been a lively spot. The bar's riverside location made it an ideal watering hole for visiting traders and local dock workers.

As we would expect of a Belfast bar Guinness has a strong presence. On the back wall of McHugh's is a colourful Guinness mural.



Detail of the McHugh's mural
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Please be careful if you walk round to see it as the single-lane road beside the bar is an access point for Belfast bus station. The pavement is narrow too so please take extra care to watch for cars and buses.

Guinness is one of the world's most renowned brands. Nearly 2 billion pints are sold every year. The firm was established in 1759 making it over 250 years old – that's still over 50 years younger than McHugh's Bar. Guinness originates in Dublin from the brewery at St James's Gate established by Arthur Guinness. Today Guinness is brewed in nearly 50 countries worldwide.

Guinness has a particularly strong history in Africa. From 1827 it was sold in Sierra Leone and soon spread throughout the continent. From the 1940s Guinness adverts featured African animals - lions, ostriches and, most famously, toucans. Nigeria became the first African country to brew Guinness and is now the third largest Guinness consumer in the world. Cameroon is the fifth largest. Overall about 40% of worldwide Guinness volume is brewed and sold in Africa.

Directions 16

When you are ready, return to the front of McHugh's and turn right. Cross back over the zebra crossing. Follow the riverside path with the Lagan on your left. Cross over the first bridge. At the second bridge stop by the metal sculpture of a woman holding a hoop.

17. Beacon of hope

Thanksgiving Square

As we have already heard the Lagan riverside has been transformed in the last two decades. Public art has played a key role. This sculpture is another example. Since it was built in 2007 it has become a symbol of modern Belfast.

It was made by Andy Scott and is officially called the Thanksgiving Statue - though it is known by many nicknames including 'the Beacon of Hope', 'the Thing With the Ring' and even 'Nuala With the Hula'!

The impressive 20-foot sculpture shows a female figure standing on a globe. The figure borrows imagery from Classical and Celtic myths and holds a hoop called "the ring of thanksgiving".



The Beacon of Hope
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The globe below represents international peace and harmony. The statue's location next to Queen's Bridge represents bridges being built across divides in the community.

Suitably the statue has an international background. This site is called Thanksgiving Square after the designers were inspired by a visit to Thanksgiving Square in Dallas, Texas. The charity that raised the funds to build the statue is chaired by Baron Diljit Rana. Born in India, Baron Rana came to Belfast in 1966 and is now one of the city's leading businessmen.

Directions 17

Continue along the riverside road now called Oxford Street. Keep going until you see a mural of childrens' faces painted on a building on your left.

18. Dreams for the future

Dreams mural

We are now facing another artwork in the Laganside Art Trails. This piece by Rita Duffy is called 'Dreams'. It comprises four metal panels showing portraits of children. You should also be able to see the word 'dream' written in many different languages. They include Sanskrit, Japanese, Russian, Tagalog (the language of the Philippines), Mandarin and many more. See how many you can identify.

The word 'dream' in many languages and the portraits of the children symbolise harmony worldwide. Children around the world are able to dream - no matter what language they speak.



Detail from the Dreams mural
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The artwork also presents an international vision of the future and shows how Belfast has become an increasingly international city. The metal panels themselves are symbolic of Belfast's shipbuilding past. Like many of the artworks we have seen, 'Dreams' reflects the international scope of Belfast's industrial history and potential future.

Directions 18

Continue along Oxford Street with the mural on your left. Head towards the round shaped building by the river. Stop on the steps outside this building.

19. The shape of things to come

Waterfront Hall

We are now in front of Waterfront Hall. Completed in 1997 this multi-purpose building was the first major example of the Lagan side's redevelopment. Buildings such as this came about on the back of the IRA Ceasefire in 1994 and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Both helped to end sectarian violence in the country.

The Agreement was brokered by the major political parties in Northern Ireland with help from the British and American governments. Since the Agreement investors have had the confidence to fund new developments such as this Hall.



Waterfront Hall by the River Lagan
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Since it opened the Hall has welcomed over 5 million visitors, staged almost 4,000 concerts and art events, and hosted over 2,400 business conferences. The design of the Waterfront Hall is based on the Berlin Philharmonic Hall in Germany. The dome at the top of the building is coated in copper which will turn green as it ages. As a result the domed roof will match the Victorian buildings in the city centre.

Many of these buildings – including the Customs House and Sinclair Seamen's Church – were designed by architect Charles Lanyon. In his honour the Waterfront Hall's address is Lanyon Place. As we have seen many times on our walk today, modern Belfast reflects the city's heritage.

Directions 19

Walk back to Oxford Street and turn left. At the first junction cross over at the traffic lights and turn right on to May Street. Stop outside the market building on the left hand side.

20. Market forces

St George's Market

Our next stop takes us back in time once again. St George's Market is Belfast's last surviving covered market. There has been a market here since 1604 when it would probably have included a slaughterhouse and meat market.

The building we can see today dates from the 1890s. The design includes Roman-style arches and a Latin inscription above the entrance. The motto, 'pro tanto quid retribuamus', translates as 'so much what shall we give in return?' - a sign of the amount of goods for sale.



Flowers outside St George's Market
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The market originally sold local dairy produce, poultry and fruit. Over time it developed to include foods, antiques, books and clothes - a mixture which still attracts thousands of visitors every week. Besides offering shoppers some of the finest produce the market has become one of the city's most popular visitor attractions - especially since a £4.5 million refurbishment in 1997.

Markets are held Fridays to Sundays. The Friday Variety market is famous for fish, while Saturday sees traders offering speciality foods from around the world. The Sunday market focuses on arts and crafts complete with live music. The market is a good example of how some of Belfast's local industry sites have developed into vibrant and colourful visitor destinations. If you are around during the market's opening hours take time to explore.

Directions 20

Continue along the left hand side of May Street. Stop when you reach a red bricked building with a round blue plaque on the wall. The building is next to a tall white office block with a large glass front. Stop by the plaque.

21. The road ahead

38-42 May Street

Our next two stops are about Belfast's roads. This blue plaque celebrates John Boyd Dunlop, one of the inventors of modern tyres.

Born in 1840 in Scotland Dunlop studied as a veterinary surgeon. He moved to Belfast in 1867. Like many cities at the time Belfast's cobbled roads were extremely rough. Most vehicles, horse-drawn or motorised, had solid wheels made of iron or even wood. Few journeys were comfortable.

After seeing his young son painfully trying to ride a tricycle along Belfast's streets, Dunlop realised that the bike's solid tyres were a problem. He wrapped the wheels in thin sheets of rubber and glued them together at the edges. Dunlop inflated the rubber and created a cushion of air between the road surface and the wheel. He had invented the pneumatic tyre! In 1888 he patented the design and set about production.



John Boyd Dunlop, inventor of the pneumatic tyre
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

As with many great ideas Dunlop's design was not unique. Forty years earlier, Scottish engineer Robert William Thompson had patented rubber tyres in France and the United States. Dunlop's patent was declared invalid. But Thompson never developed his patent commercially and Dunlop was allowed to expand. Within a decade virtually all vehicles used pneumatic tyres.

John Dunlop retired in 1896 after selling the company for 1,500 shares. This meant he made surprisingly little money from his idea. By his death in 1921 the company that bore his name had manufacturing bases in France, Japan and the United States - using rubber sourced from present-day India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Directions 21

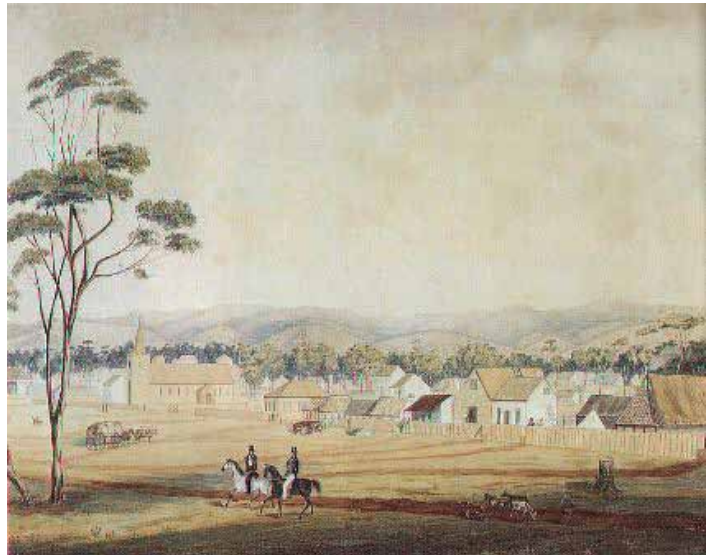
Continue along May Street and take the third left on to Adelaide Street. Continue to the junction of Franklin Street then stop.

22. Streets around the world

Adelaide Street

The next feature of Belfast's roads we are going to look at is their names. We are currently on Adelaide Street named after the city of Adelaide in Australia. International street names often reflect a relationship with countries overseas or tell us when the street was built.

Belfast has several streets with international names that reflect the city's importance as a port and trade hub. As well as Adelaide Street, Belfast contains a Cairo Street, Damascus Street, Jerusalem Street, Palestine Street and Delhi Street. Besides is also twinned with places worldwide, including Nashville in the United States, Bonn in Germany, Hefei in China and Wanju in South Korea.



North Terrace, Adelaide in 1839
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Town twinning is a way to create economic and social links with other countries. Often a twinning relationship is based on something shared – such as a common trade, a similar geographical feature, or a sporting connection. Town twinning also helps to promote international understanding at a local level particularly through business partnerships and school exchange visits.

Directions 22

Turn right and into Franklin Street. After a short while turn left into Bedford Street. Stop part way along outside the Ulster Hall.

23. A varied programme

Ulster Hall

We are now at another Victorian building at the heart of Belfast's cultural life. This is the Ulster Hall which opened in 1862. It was designed by William Barre who, as we heard, designed the Albert Memorial Clock tower but nearly didn't receive his prize.

From the outset the Ulster Hall was a multi-purpose venue and hosted many famous figures of the age including opera singer Jenny Lind, tenors Enrico Caruso and John McCormack and readings by novelist Charles Dickens.



The Ulster Hall
Nick Stanworth © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

During the Second World War the Hall was popular with American soldiers who were posted in Belfast. Apparently a shipment of American oak arrived in the city in mysterious circumstances to resurface the dance floor! Other people who have appeared at the Hall since range from Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, to rock bands The Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin, who played their song 'Stairway To Heaven' live for the very first time here.

Other attractions include the Mulholland Grand Organ. Built in the 1860s it is one of the oldest pipe organs still working. The Hall also contains thirteen paintings on the history of Belfast made in 1902 by artist Joseph W Carey. As we can see there have been a real variety of performances over the years. This diverse programme keeps the Hall a well-respected and popular attraction. Why not see who has appeared at your local town hall when you look for links with the competing nations.

Directions 23

Retrace your steps and turn left back onto Franklin Street. Continue until you reach Amelia Street. At the end of Amelia Street is a colourful pub on the right hand side. Continue round the corner and stop in front of this pub.

24. Crown jewel

The Crown Liquor Saloon

This colourful Victorian bar really lives up to its Americanised name – with its wooden swing doors, bright coloured tiles and gas lighting it looks like a watering hole from the Wild West.

It was built in 1826 as the Railway Tavern in a much plainer style. The changes came in 1885 when the bar's then owner, Patrick Flanagan, persuaded skilled Italian craftsmen who drank there to redecorate it after hours. There were a high number of Italian workers in Belfast in the 1880s as they were recruited to build and decorate new churches in the city.

The results of the makeover are spectacular. Just look at the tiled walls and stained glass windows. Take your time and see if you can spot international images: pictures of exotic shells, pineapples, and fleurs-de-lis motifs. There are also some clowns!

There are interesting flourishes inside too including ten booths or 'snugs', each one a different shape. They were built to offer privacy to more reserved Victorian customers. They all retain their original gunmetal plates for striking matches and a bell for alerting staff.

Probably the most famous bar in Belfast during the Troubles, the Crown survived 42 bombs. These days it is busier than ever. Long owned by the National Trust, the Crown has featured in films and television series and is one of the real landmarks of the city.



Some of the Crown's detailed facade and the 'snugs' inside
Nick Stanworth © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Directions 24

Continue a short distance along Great Victoria Street and stop opposite the Europa Hotel on the other side of the road.

25. The hardboard hotel

Europa Hotel

The four-star Europa is a fairly modern development compared with some of our recent stops. It was built in 1971 and is Belfast's biggest hotel. During the Troubles most journalists covering the news stayed here.

The Europa became Europe's most bombed hotel earning the name "the Hardboard Hotel" because windows were almost always boarded up. High profile journalists, were regularly evacuated. Though the hotel was bombed 33 times it never closed. The Europa became a symbol of resilience to the violence.



The Europa Hotel
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Since the attacks ceased the Europa has welcomed many international visitors, such as presidents, film stars and musicians. Most famously American President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hilary Clinton stayed here during visits to Belfast in 1995 and 1998. Their rooms were renamed the Clinton Suite.

In 2011 the Europa Hotel was one of the official venues for the MTV Europe music awards and welcomed pop stars from around the world. The hotel provides a stark reminder of the hostilities in Belfast during the Troubles but also provides a symbol of the peace and international harmony since.

Directions 25

Continue a short distance and stop across the road from the Grand Opera House.

26. A grand design

Grand Opera House

Next door to the Europa Hotel we can see a rather different building, the Grand Opera House. It opened in 1895 and has played host to some of the greatest names in theatre and music. They include Italian tenor Luciano Pavarotti who made his British stage debut here in 1963.

The theatre was a huge success from the outset hosting a vibrant programme of opera, drama, pantomime and musicals. At the end of the Second of World War the venue was at the centre of the celebrations. The American general, later President, Dwight D Eisenhower was a guest at a gala performance attended by Allied military leaders.



Elaborate decoration at the Grand Opera House
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

With the introduction of television the theatre suffered significantly and became a cinema. In 1972 it closed. But with demolition looking a certainty the Grand Opera House became the first listed building in Belfast. It was saved by its design. The Theatres Trust described the Grand Opera House as probably Britain's best surviving example of oriental style theatre architecture.

The Grand Opera House was one of almost 150 theatres designed by architect Frank Matcham. Matcham was inspired by the oriental architecture of China and India. If we look at the Grand Opera House today we can see why it has been called 'the Matcham Masterpiece.' Look at the minarets or domes on the roof by the name plate. You may have seen similar ones on mosques or other Eastern religious buildings. Also notice the round windows with flower leaf patterns, another Oriental motif.

After a massive restoration project the Grand's doors re-opened in 1980. The theatre became a catalyst for the regeneration we have seen in much of Belfast city centre. Today it is once again one of Belfast's major entertainment venues.

Directions 26

Continue along Great Victoria Street. Cross over Howard Street and Wellington Street. Then turn right into Wellington Place. Walk along the left hand side and stop when you reach the Linen Hall Library.

27. Linenopolis

Linen Hall Library

We are now outside the Linen Hall Library. Founded in 1788 as the Belfast Reading Society it is the oldest subscribing library in Northern Ireland. Its unique book collection has become the centre of Irish historical and cultural studies.

The Library got its name in 1802 when it moved into a former linen factory, the White Linen Hall. It used to stand across the road where Belfast City Hall is today. The Library's current home was also a former linen warehouse. Linen production was one of one of Belfast's major trades.



The Linen Hall Library entrance
© Man Vyi via Wikimedia Commons

Linen was first produced commercially in ancient Greece and Spain. In Belfast the trade was first recorded in the twelfth century. Belfast's first Linen Hall opened in 1739 and the trade grew rapidly after industrialisation in the eighteenth century. Besides industrialisation Belfast linen boomed from the 1860s because of the American Civil War. The United States were a major cotton producer but the War disrupted cotton supplies into Europe. This 'Cotton Famine' led to the linen industry filling demand and many Belfast linen mill owners made enormous profits.

The momentum was maintained and by 1900 there were 35,000 linen looms in Ulster, compared to 22,000 in the rest of Western Europe. Some 900,000 spindles ran in Belfast alone - more than in any other country in the world. Belfast became known as "Linenopolis". The grand buildings that line Donegall Square today were nearly all built from the wealth of the linen industry.

Directions 27

With the Library behind you cross the traffic lights to the left. Turn right and stop across the road from the ornate building on the corner of the square with 'Scottish Provident' written high up on the wall.

28. Wondrous walls

Scottish Provident Building

As we heard previously Belfast's linen trade means Donegall Square is lined with grand historic buildings. The Scottish Provident Building is one of the most impressive. Opened in 1902 it was designed in a Greek style for the Scottish Providence Life Assurance company. Today it is home to shops and offices.

The building is made from sandstone which is quite soft and easy to cut. Sandstone became a popular building material from the Victorian era as it was possible to create elaborate carvings. We can see some very good examples around this building's doorways and windows. Many are symbols of Belfast's wealth and industrial prestige.

To begin, look above the first row of windows for a series of stylised heads. They represent countries from the British colonies - including India, Canada and Sudan. Now look up at the top of the building and find the words 'Scottish Provident Institution'. They are below a large coat of arms near the roof and feature various animals from around the world.



Elaborate carving on the Scottish Provident Building
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Either side of the company name are a pair of copper sphinxes. Sphinxes were mythical creatures from ancient Egypt that were part lion and part human. These winged examples have turned green as the copper has aged. Below them are four copper dolphins and further down the walls are some sixteen African lion heads.

At the bottom of the building's columns are four panels that depict cherubs working in Belfast industries. Look for rope making, ship building, printing and linen spinning. These panels are a proud reminder of Belfast's heritage. When the building opened they would also have been symbols of the city's international status.

Directions 28

Take your time to look at the wealth of detail on the Scottish Provident Building. Feel free to cross over the road for a closer look. When you are ready enter the grounds of Belfast City Hall. Stop when you have a good view of the front of the building.

29. Civic pride

Belfast City Hall

We are now outside Belfast City Hall. This impressive building is literally a symbol of the city as it was built to commemorate Belfast being awarded city status in 1888. Belfast was awarded city status in recognition of its thriving industries. As industries boomed migrants arrived from overseas as labour was required on a massive scale. When the Hall was completed in 1906 Belfast briefly overtook Dublin as the most populous city in the whole of Ireland.

The Hall was designed in a style called Baroque Revival. This term describes buildings that imitate the Baroque style of the seventeenth century.



Belfast City Hall
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Baroque developed in Rome from around 1600 and spread across Europe. It became especially popular in Germany, Austria and Hungary. Typical baroque features include domed roofs, lines of columns and combinations of light and dark colours. Belfast City Hall has many of these features, for example the large domes on the tops of the towers. Like the sphinxes on the Scottish Provident Building they have turned green as the copper has aged.

In front of the doorway is a porch-like canopy called a porte-cochère. This French term means 'coach gate'. It allowed visitors to enter the building from a horse-drawn coach while protected from the weather. Inside the Hall the Grand Staircase is lined in Carrara, Pavonazzo and Brescia marble from Italy.

As well as a symbol of Belfast the City Hall proved an inspiration to other public buildings. The Port of Liverpool Building has a similar layout but in South Africa, Durban City Hall is an almost exact copy of the building we can see now. That was built in 1910 after its architect Stanley G. Hudson was inspired by the Belfast design.

Directions 29

Stay at the front of the City Hall grounds. Stop by the statue of Queen Victoria.

30. From a Queen to a President

Belfast City Hall grounds

As we can see the grounds of the City Hall contain quite a few statues and memorials. Many tell interesting stories about Belfast's international status.

They include Frederick Temple, the 1st Marquess of Dufferin. He was an important diplomat who worked in Syria, Canada, Russia, Turkey and India. James Magennis, meanwhile, was awarded the Victoria Cross medal during an attack on a Japanese cruiser in Singapore. The Imjin River Memorial commemorates Irish troops lost during the Korean War. The Titanic Memorial records those lost on the famous ship that sank off Canada.



The James Magennis and Imjin River memorials
Nick Stanworth © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



Queen Victoria statue
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The memorials here are symbols of civic pride and show how Belfast's residents have shaped the world. For now we are going to concentrate on two on the front lawn. The statue of Queen Victoria symbolises her role in Belfast's history. Queen Victoria was an international figure. From 1876, she took the title 'Empress of India' as Britain consolidated its interests on the Indian subcontinent. At the time this comprised present-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. It was Queen Victoria who awarded Belfast city status in 1888. The statue shows Belfast's industrial wealth and prestige.

Beside Queen Victoria is a stone column with an eagle on the side. It records the American Expeditionary Force. Soldiers from this army unit were based in Belfast prior to the D-Day landings on Normandy beach in 1944. Look for the plaque beside it with a re-dedication by President Clinton. Though many of the memorials in Belfast record conflict and loss this one also records peace and gain.

These two memorials are a fitting place to end our walk. They show Belfast's international status and bookend the city's development. Queen Victoria's statue records how Belfast became a city through people and trades that spanned the world. The President Clinton plaque shows how Belfast is a modern international city rejuvenated after the Troubles. Despite an illustrious yet turbulent history Belfast remains a city looking to the future.

During this walk we have seen how Belfast grew through shipbuilding, rope making and linen production. We saw how the city developed internationally because of these trades and also the effects of their decline. But we have also seen how the city has reinvented itself through the arts and leisure industries. Many of our stops today encapsulate this change - such as the Dali murals in Commercial Court, the Big Fish by the River Lagan or the dance chimes by the Custom House. And people from around the world have played a key role including politicians, business magnates and artists.



A city looking to the future...
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Directions 30

Feel free to explore the grounds of City Hall or head into Belfast city centre. To return to Belfast Central station go behind the City Hall and turn left onto May Street. When you reach St George's Market turn right to access East Bridge Street. Turn left onto East Bridge Street and the station is a short distance on the left hand side.

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Walk the World walk:

- **Nick Stanworth** for creating and researching the walk and taking photographs
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