



The way of the bay

Discover why Weymouth became a popular seaside resort

1. Welcome to Weymouth

Welcome to Walk the World. This walk in Weymouth is one of 20 in different parts of the UK. Each walk explores how the 206 participating nations in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games have been part of the UK's history for many centuries. Along the routes you will discover evidence of how many Olympic and Paralympic countries have shaped our towns and cities.

And welcome to Weymouth! This Dorset town and the neighbouring island of Portland will host all the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic sailing events, with 380 athletes competing in craft ranging from sail boards to large yachts.



Welcome to Weymouth!
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The international attention on Weymouth during the Games provides a great opportunity to discover some of the town's history, in particular how it grew from a fishing village into one of Britain's first seaside resorts. Along the way we will explore some of Weymouth's international connections and also discover the worldwide origins of many British seaside objects.

The walk takes in 21 sights that reveal the links between Weymouth and 63 of the other Olympic and Paralympic Nations. The route is just over 1½ miles long. It begins at the Old Harbour, goes past the marina then cuts through the town to the seafront. It then follows the promenade to finish at Weymouth Tower. The harbour and seafront can be very busy, especially in the summer - so take care, watch out for traffic and look after your valuables. I hope you enjoy the walk.

Directions 1 - If you are facing the front of the Weymouth Pavilion, the bay is to your left and the Old Harbour to your right. Go to the right, across the railway tracks in the road, and onto the harbour quayside. Near a one-storey viewing platform, look for a stone pillar. Stop by this stone and listen to Track 2.

2. A new start

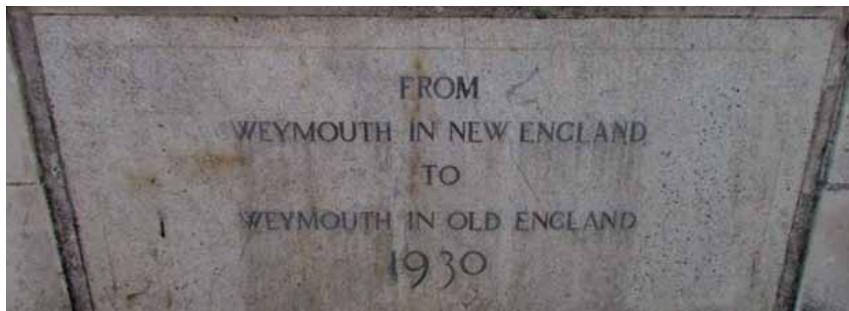
Clark Endicott Memorial

We begin our walk around Weymouth with a memorial to some people who left this place behind. From the sixteenth century Weymouth became a passageway to the New World. The Clark Endicott Memorial is named in honour of Richard Clark and John Endicott. Clark was a ship's captain who left Weymouth in 1583 to help establish the province of Newfoundland in eastern Canada. Meanwhile Endicott left Weymouth in 1628 and helped create the American town of Naumking in Massachusetts. Naumking later changed its name to Salem and became infamous for a series of witch trials.



The Clark Endicott memorial
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Clark and Endicott were not alone in crossing the Atlantic from Weymouth. Over the coming years more of Weymouth's townspeople moved to America for a new start. Some helped to establish the town of Weymouth in Massachusetts and in the late seventeenth century many others moved to Nova Scotia in Canada. As you walk along the Old Harbour, look out for other signs of Weymouth's American pioneers, including a street called Pilgrim's Way and a memorial stone on the Town Bridge "From Weymouth in New England to Weymouth in Old England".



From New England to Old England
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Country links - Canada, United States of America

Directions 2 - Walk along the quayside with the water on your left. Take your time to enjoy the sights, sounds and smells as you go. Look on the right for the Harbour Master's building. There are actually two: go past the first one with Harbour Master carved in stone over the door. At the second one, with Harbour Master painted on the upper wall, stop outside and listen to Track 3.

3. Rivals and rats

Harbour Master's office

The Old Harbour is a fitting place to find out about Weymouth's origins. The original village developed here on the banks of the River Wey. Archaeological evidence has been found of Roman, Norman and Saxon riverside settlements. By the twelfth century there were towns on either side of the river. The original Weymouth village was on the opposite side of the harbour to where you are now. On this side was the fishing port of Melcombe Regis.

By 1252 Weymouth was an established seaport. The streets around the harbour are some of the oldest in Weymouth and you can still visit buildings dating back to the Tudor era.



Weymouth Harbour Master office
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Despite being just across the river, Melcombe Regis developed quite separately and by 1310 it was a licensed wool port. French raiders invaded several times though so in 1433 the license was transferred along the Dorset coast to Poole. For many years Weymouth and Melcombe Regis were trade rivals but in 1571 the towns were united under an Act of Parliament. Afterwards Melcombe Regis became Weymouth's town centre!

Melcombe Regis has been identified as the port where bubonic plague first arrived in England, probably in 1348. Also known as the 'Black Death', the plague was one of the worst pandemics in history. It originated in China then swept across Europe in the 1350s. The disease was spread by fleas which lived on rats. Since rats often hid on ships, the disease spread rapidly along trade routes and via port towns. The human cost was an estimated 75 million deaths across Europe. Britain's population was almost halved.

Country links - China, France

Directions 3 - Continue along Custom House Quay until you reach the Custom House, which is a red-brick building with a coat of arms above the doorway. Stop opposite this building and listen to Track 4.

4. Sailors and smugglers

Custom House Quay

You have been walking along Custom House Quay named after this Customs House building. The building dates from the eighteenth century when it was originally a merchant's house.

By then Weymouth was a trading port and many goods passed in and out of the harbour here, including several from foreign countries. Look out for warehouses along the quayside (many now converted into other uses). The job of the Customs officer was to oversee the trade and collect taxes on behalf of the government.



Custom House Quay's sign
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

In order to avoid taxes, gangs of smugglers sneaked many goods into Weymouth harbour, including spirits, sugar, lace, silk, velvet, coffee, cocoa beans and salt. Most of the contraband came via Europe and the Channel Islands. Popular goods included French brandy, American tobacco, tea from India and gin from the Netherlands and Belgium.

Smuggling was so common by the eighteenth century that it was almost seen as a pastime. Even one of Weymouth's mayors was a smuggler! The gangs were ruthless and violent and the job of customs officer was thought to be as dangerous as being a smuggler.

Most of the smuggling on the south coast died out after the Napoleonic Wars in the early 1800s when customs officers were given new powers and their numbers were boosted by soldiers returning from the wars.

Country links - Belgium, France, India, the Netherlands, United States of America

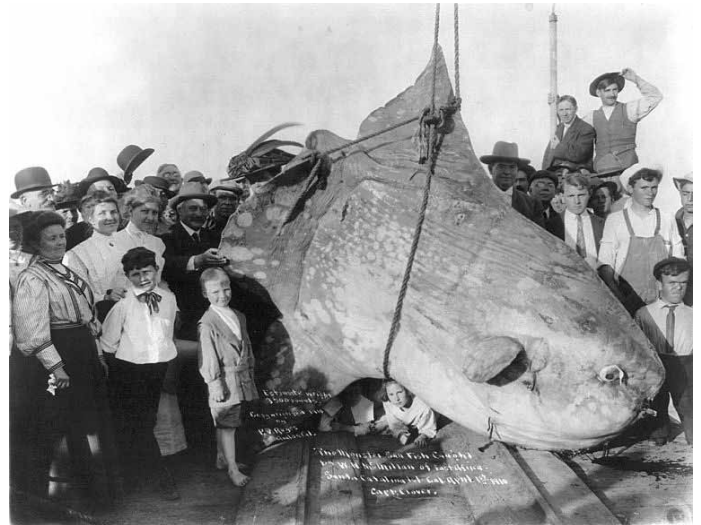
Directions 4 - Continue along Custom House Quay. Shortly before the bridge, look on the right hand side for a stone building with arched windows and doorways, which is the Old Fish Market. Stop opposite this building and listen to Track 5.

5. Fishy tales

The Old Fish Market

The Old Fish Market was built in 1855 and was where fishermen came to sell their daily catches. As you will have noticed there is still a fishing fleet based in Weymouth harbour. You can often see nets, cranes and lobster pots by the quayside. Depending on the time of day many of the boats might be tied up too.

Although some of the fishing is still commercial, some is recreational too. Some fishermen maintain a living by renting out their boats for sea fishing. This is actually nothing new; Weymouth has been a popular site for sea fishing since the 1800s and has held many international competitions.



A huge ocean sunfish caught off California in 1910
Wikimedia Commons

The warm waters of the south coast here attract some interesting fish species. Among the most striking sights are Porbeagle sharks. These scary-looking but harmless creatures are native to many countries worldwide including Bermuda, Morocco and African countries surrounding the Gulf of Guinea. Another unusual sighting is the ocean sunfish. These giant flat fish can grow up to 11 feet long and weigh up to two tonnes. They normally live in warm waters such as the eastern Pacific off Chile and Peru.

Besides commercial and leisure fishing, we also associate the seaside with eating fish and chips. Fish and chips became popular from the nineteenth century when trawler fishing began in the North Sea. The most popular fish at British seaside resorts is Atlantic cod which breed in Canada, the United States, Iceland, Norway and the Bay of Biscay between Spain and France. There are many fish and chip shops along the walk route and you may wish to stop to enjoy some later!

Country links - Benin, Bermuda, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Iceland, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Togo, United States of America

Directions 5 - Continue along Custom House Quay and under the bridge, taking care to watch for traffic. Follow the quayside as it curves round to the right and becomes Commercial Road. Continue as far as a wide slipway (on the opposite side of the road is a multi-storey car park). Stop overlooking the marina and listen to Track 6.

6. Ships ahoy!

Weymouth Marina

As you have already seen, a fishing fleet is still based in Weymouth but these days the harbour and sea are used more for recreation and sport. You may have seen various signs advertising boat hire, sailing trips and diving excursions. Here in the marina the larger private boats are berthed.

In fact, Weymouth and Portland boast some of the best natural sailing waters in Britain. The bay has reliable wind levels from several directions but is sheltered from large waves and currents.

As a result Weymouth attracts seafarers from far and wide. In the marina look out for boats registered in overseas ports or with exotic foreign names, such as Waikiki or Amazon Plains. In recent decades Weymouth has hosted many international sailing events before being chosen for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.



Sailing off Weymouth bay
© Jack Fraser via flickr (Creative Commons License)

For example, Weymouth is the only town that has hosted the start of the international Tall Ships' Race three times. The first ever Tall Ships Race was held in 1956 and ran from Torbay to Lisbon in Portugal. The race has grown in popularity ever since and the route takes in ports throughout Europe. The last time the event came to Weymouth was in 1994 when it attracted 300,000 spectators. The 2012 race will visit Ireland, France, Spain and Portugal.

Country links - France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain

Directions 6 - Continue along the path with the marina on your left and Commercial Road on your right. Shortly after the Marina office building, turn right opposite the bridge. Use the pedestrian crossing over Commercial Street and continue along Westham Road. At the end, turn left. On a traffic island on your right is a statue. Stop in a position where you have a good view of the statue and listen to Track 7.

7. A royal resort

King George III statue, The Esplanade

This statue commemorates a man who changed the tide of Weymouth's history. King George III was crowned in 1761. Like his father and grandfather who had preceded him as king, he was from the House of Hanover, a German noble family. George III was the first Hanoverian king to be born in England, though his wife Charlotte was born in Mecklenburg-Strelitz in Germany.

George III ruled during a perilous period in Britain's history. He was on the throne during the American War of Independence and there were constant battles with France, including the Napoleonic Wars that culminated in the Battle of Waterloo.



Statue of King George III, Weymouth's royal patron
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

George's health was not very strong and in 1788 he suffered an attack of porphyria, a physical and mental illness. To aid his recovery, physicians suggested he go to the seaside. In the Georgian era, sea bathing wasn't seen as a leisure activity but a medicinal cure.

So in 1789 the king came to Weymouth. He chose Weymouth because his brother, the Duke of Gloucester, had a house on the seafront. We will see this house at the next stop. George enjoyed his visit and in fact returned thirteen times over the next 15 years. His visits helped to popularise Weymouth as a seaside resort. This statue was built in 1810 for his Golden Jubilee. It was funded by public subscription from the "grateful inhabitants" who appreciated the Royal approval.

Country links - France, Germany, United States of America

Directions 7 - Continue along the pavement with seafront buildings on your left and the road and sea on your right. After the first terrace, cross over Gloucester Street to Gloucester Lodge, a large redbrick building. Stop outside it and listen to Track 8.

8. Royal residence

Gloucester Lodge

This large redbrick building is Gloucester Lodge, where King George III used to stay in Weymouth. It belonged to the King's younger brother, the Duke of Gloucester, who first visited Weymouth in 1780. The King eventually bought this grand house himself and so Gloucester Lodge became a royal residence. Whenever the King was at Gloucester Lodge, effectively the British Empire was run from Weymouth!



Gloucester Lodge, George III's seaside seat
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The building is a fine example of Georgian architecture. Georgian architecture was a style that became popular between 1720 and 1840.

The name comes from Britain's four Hanoverian kings who were all called George. Look at the building's façade and you can see many typical Georgian features – square sash windows, pairs of chimney stacks at each end of the roof and symmetrical design.

Georgian architecture spread across the world as British architects used it throughout the Empire. There are examples throughout the United States and surprisingly large numbers in Jamaica, where many public buildings and railway stations were built in the Georgian style. Georgian architecture also experienced a revival in Canada in the 1840s. In Britain the style became popular again in the 1900s when it became known as Neo-Georgian.



The plaque by the porched doorway
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Country links - Canada, Jamaica, United States of America

Directions 8 - Continue along the left hand side of the Esplanade. When you reach the left turn into King Street, use the pedestrian crossing to cross the Esplanade to the clock tower. Stop by the clock tower and listen to Track 9.

9. The sands of time

Jubilee Clock

During their stays in Weymouth, King George III and the royal family took daily walks along the seafront. During a visit in 1799, the King was told that his naval forces had defeated those of the Netherlands. George III was apparently so pleased with the news that during his seafront walk he stopped to tell every passer-by that he met. Such walks, 'promenading' up and down the seafront, were (and still are) an essential seaside activity.

George III is not the only monarch whose Golden Jubilee is celebrated in Weymouth. Within sight of his statue this is the Jubilee Clock.



The Jubilee Clock and the Esplanade
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

It was built in 1887 to mark the fiftieth year of the reign of Queen Victoria. The clock originally stood on the beach but is now in line with the main road. In fact, the clock never moved, rather the promenade and road have widened around it. Queen Victoria appears again later on the route: see if you can spot her.

From the Jubilee Clock you can look left and right to see the full sweep of Weymouth's seafront road which is called the Esplanade. There are examples of Esplanades at coastal resorts around the world including The Esplanade in Singapore, Esplanade at Nova Scotia in Canada, St Clair's Esplanade at Dunedin in New Zealand, and the Redondo Beach Esplanade in California.

Country links - Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, United States of America

Directions 9 - Head back along the Esplanade the way that you came, this time with the beach on your left and the road on your right. Look on the opposite side for the rather grand Royal Hotel. Immediately to the right is the Royal Arcade. At the time of creating this walk, the central part of this building was an amusement arcade and the right hand part was Rossi's Ice Cream Parlour. Stop opposite Rossi's and listen to Track 10.

10. Melt in the mouth

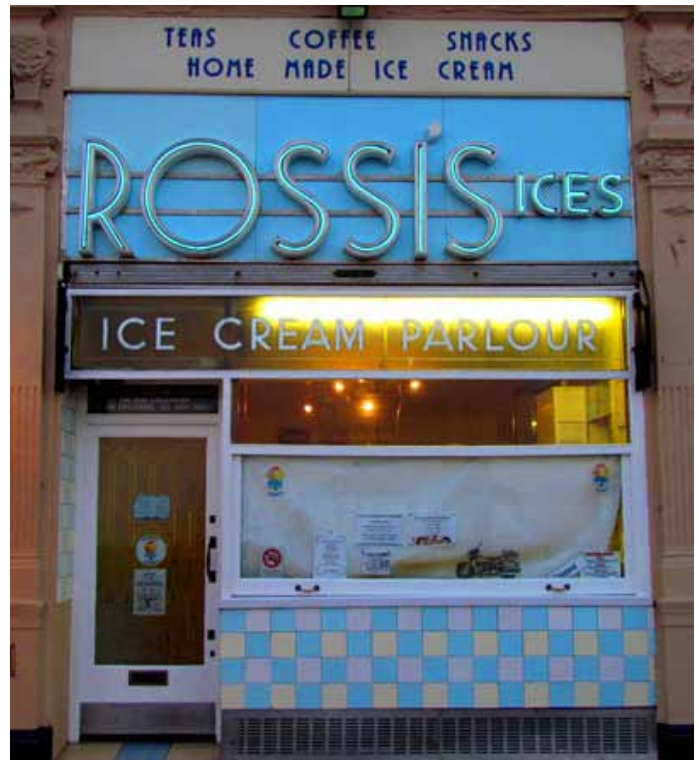
Rossi's Ice Cream Parlour

No trip to the seaside is complete without having an ice cream! The popularity of ice cream in Britain owes everything to the Italians. In 1851 Carlo Gatti, a Swiss-Italian entrepreneur, opened the first ice cream stall in London. It stood outside Charing Cross station and sold scoops of ice cream in shells. Before the mid-Victorian era ice cream was an expensive and rare luxury food. The development of fridges, plus large imports of ice from America and Norway, soon meant that ice cream took off and became a staple at seaside resorts.

The origins of ice cream though are debatable. In ancient Rome and the Persian Empire people made desserts by pouring fruit juices over snow. Snow was either saved in underground chambers or collected from mountains. However ice cream as we know it today – made from frozen milk or cream – has been traced to China.

A Chinese mixture of frozen milk and rice was documented in around 200 BC. It has been suggested ice cream arrived in Italy after explorer Marco Polo brought the recipe back from China in the late thirteenth century. Some 300 years earlier, frozen milk desserts were also widespread in the Middle East including in Iraq, Syria and Egypt.

Weymouth boasts one of the oldest ice cream parlours in Britain. Rossi's ice cream was established in 1937 by Italian businessman Fioravanti Figliolini. The shop has been family owned ever since and the current third generation have been running it for thirty-five years. Ice cream is freshly made on the site, including a natural variety with no flavouring.



The chrome and neon of Rossi's ice cream parlour
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Country links - China, Egypt, Iraq, Italy, Norway, Syria, United States of America

Directions 10 - Continue a short way along the promenade until you are opposite Gloucester Lodge. There should be a fortune-teller booth and a flower bed with palm trees. Stop beside these and listen to Track 11

11. Palm to palm

Palm trees and palmistry booth, The Esplanade

Like Redondo Beach Esplanade in California, Weymouth's Esplanade is lined with palm trees. These trees became popular in English seaside resorts for their association with Florida, California and the French Riviera. The south coast of Devon, with beaches such as Torquay lined with palm trees, is even described as the 'English Riviera'.

The palm trees in Weymouth are rather small by comparison to ones found in hotter countries but they still complement the golden sands of the beach.



Palms go hand in hand at The Esplanade
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

There are over 2,000 species of palm tree and they live in hot climates ranging from rainforests to deserts. As a result many Olympic and Paralympic nations are associated with them. For example the wax palm is the national tree of Colombia. Palms also feature on the flags of Haiti, Guam and the Samoan navy.

We can also find another kind of palm here. The colourful booth belongs to 'Zara – A Renowned Palmist'. Palm reading, or palmistry, is thought to come from Hindu astrology in India. It became popular in ancient Greece and gained popularity in Western Europe in the nineteenth century and is something often found at fairgrounds and the seaside.

Zara's booth emphasises her credentials as the daughter of "a true Romany gypsy". The term 'Romany' describes people from many different ethnic groups who are members or descendants of the Romani. The Romani people live throughout the world especially in Spain, Brazil, Romania, Turkey, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Russia. The English term Gypsy comes from the Greek word for "Egyptian" in the belief that the Romani originated from Egypt.

Country links - Brazil, Bulgaria, Columbia, Egypt, France, Guam, Haiti, India, Greece, Romania, Russia, Samoa, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, United States of America

Directions 11 - Continue a little further along the promenade. Look on the opposite side of the road for a light blue-painted building with the name Bluebird Coaches (it is to the left of Gloucester Street). Stop opposite this building and listen to Track 12.

12. Wings and wheels

Bluebird Coaches

As seaside resorts became more popular a whole transport industry grew to help visitors get to them. By the early 1920s many resorts were accessible by charabanc.

Charabancs were open-top buses, often converted trucks. The word comes from the French 'char à bancs' (carriage with benches). With railway travel expensive, charabancs offered many people affordable trips to the coast for the first time.



A 1920s motor charabanc - passengers were guaranteed some fresh sea air!
Wikimedia Commons

Over time, many of the charabanc routes developed into fully fledged coach companies. Bluebird Coaches can trace their history back to 1924 when local entrepreneur Frederick Hoare began a charabanc route in Portland. The company is still owned by the Hoare family today. Subsequently Bluebird grew to offer coach tours across Britain. Like many coach operators they have expanded into overseas routes in recent years. You can now take a Bluebird coach trip to the Netherlands, Ireland and Italy. There are also Christmas trips to Germany and Switzerland plus routes to newer destinations including Croatia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina – all from here in Weymouth.

Country links - Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Switzerland

Directions 12 - Continue along the promenade. When you are just about level with the side of the statue of King George III, look on the beach for a booth painted in red and white stripes. If you are visiting out of season, a small picket fence stands in its place. Stop by the booth and listen to Track 13.

13. That's the way to do it!

Punch and Judy booth, Weymouth beach

This small booth hosts another classic seaside activity: Punch and Judy shows. The origins of the Punch and Judy show come from Italy. The story of Mister Punch can be traced to the sixteenth-century Italian theatre style called *commedia dell'arte* or 'comedy of craft'. Mister Punch derives from an Italian jester character called Pulcinella.

Punch and Judy shows in Britain can be traced back to the 1660s. The first written account comes from diarist Samuel Pepys, who saw a show in May 1662. Although Punch and Judy shows are now seen as entertainment for children, they were initially very popular with adults.

By the 1880s most of Britain's fashionable seaside resorts had a Punch and Judy show. The puppet operator, traditionally called a Professor, effectively busked on the beach and made money from a live audience.

Weymouth's is one of the few professional seaside Punch and Judy shows still operating. Since 2005, the 'Professor' in Weymouth has been Mark Poulton. Shows are held daily during the Easter break and summer season. As part of the celebrations for the Olympics arriving in Weymouth, a two-day Punch and Judy festival will be held here in August. Called the Big Grin, the festival will include a parade along the seafront, a show at the Pavilion and a giant sand sculpture of Mister Punch.



Weymouth's Punch and Judy in action
© Colin Park via geograph (Creative Commons License)

Country links - Italy

Directions 13 - Continue a few metres further along the promenade and look for shops on the opposite side of the road selling seaside paraphernalia. Stop opposite these and listen to Track 14.

14. Tools for the tide

Stalls and shops, The Esplanade & Weymouth beach

We've heard about a range of things that are synonymous with the seaside – ice creams, fish and chips, promenading and Punch and Judy shows. In the shops across the road plus in stalls on the sand you can buy a range of seaside toys and objects. Many of these items have surprisingly international connections.

If you buy a bucket and spade today, like many modern toys, they are probably plastic and made in China. Plastic hula hoops meanwhile were developed in the 1950s by the American toy company Wham-O. Toy hoops have existed for thousands of years, often made from dried grass or vines. The name 'hula hoop' refers to Hawaiian hula dancing; the body movements of the dance and playing with the hoop are very similar.



Seaside toys for sale on The Esplanade
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The Wham-O company also developed the Frisbee. These plastic discs have their origins in 1930s California. Designer Walter Morrison got the idea after playing with a cake tin on Santa Monica beach. The name came from the Frisbie Pie Company. Their pies came in disc-shaped metal tins. Children kept them to play with and shouted 'Frisbie' with each throw - in the way golfers shout 'fore' as a warning before a shot.

In the shops and stalls you can also buy flip-flops. Worn throughout the world, their origins as beach wear have been traced to 1920s Japan. After World War Two they were popularised by returning soldiers in Australia, New Zealand and the United States. They are also very common in India and Pakistan where they are the cheapest form of footwear.

Country links - Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Pakistan, United States of America

Directions 14 - Continue along the promenade and look for one of the many viewing telescopes. Stand by one and listen to Track 15.

15. Sea sightings

Seafront telescopes

As you continue along the seafront you can see the gentle sweeping curve of Weymouth's bay. When King George III and his family first came to Weymouth in 1789 they were accompanied by writer Fanny Burney. She kept a diary of the visit and described the beach: "The bay here is most beautiful – the sea never rough, generally calm and gentle and the sands perfectly smooth and pleasant".

These attributes have earned Weymouth the nickname the 'English Bay of Naples'. The name is very fitting as Naples was used for the sailing events at the 1960 Olympics in Rome.



One of Weymouth's seafront telescopes
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

For the 2012 Games, two giant screens on the beach will allow people to watch the action. Many of the boats will be too far out to see with the naked eye – though you could possibly try to use one of the telescopes dotted along the promenade. The earliest astronomical telescopes were made in the Netherlands in the 1600s. These devices were improved by Italian astronomer and physicist Galileo Galilei. The name 'telescope' comes from the Greek for 'far-seeing'. They became popular at the seaside in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Intended for people to look at the sea views, young men also used them to catch a glimpse of ladies descending into the water from their bathing machines!

Country links - Italy, the Netherlands

Directions 15 - Continue a little further along the promenade. Stop opposite the statue where the road forks and look onto the sand. In the summer season there should be a sand sculpture hut here. Stop here and listen to Track 16.

16. The sandman

Sculptures in Sand pitch, Weymouth beach

Each summer season a pitch on the beach becomes a showcase for the skills of Mark Anderson, who since 1988 has been Weymouth's sand sculptor. Sand sculptures are made by mixing sand with water to make a sort of dough. This mix can be carved into large and intricate shapes, which dry out to preserve the sculpture.

The sand at Weymouth is ideal for sculpting as its granules are very fine. Sand sculpting has been a pastime in Weymouth for many years. Mark Anderson's grandfather, Fred Darrington made sculptures on the beach from the early 1920s.



The Cheshire Cat in sand
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Other sand sculptors based at Weymouth included Swift Vincent and Jack Hayward. Another Dorset sand sculptor of the time was John Suchomlin who came to Britain in the 1930s after sand sculpting in Australia.

Mark Anderson also creates sculptures at the International Sand Sculpture Festival, Sculture di Sabbia. This competition takes place each June and December at Jesolo on the Adriatic coast of Italy. Twenty sand sculptors attend and have twelve weeks to create a sculpture. The summer festivals have a different annual theme; past ones have included Africa, Hollywood, ancient Egypt and ancient Rome.

Back in Weymouth you can also visit Mark Anderson's new project, Sandworld International Sand Sculpture Park. Open from March to November, Sandworld contains sculptures up to 5 metres high by sculptors from around the world. The themes for 2012 include ancient Greece and the Olympics. Sandworld is located in Lodmoor Country Park just a mile from Weymouth beach. During your visit you can even have a go at making your own sand sculpture!

Country links - Australia, Greece, Italy

Directions 16 - Continue along the promenade for a short distance. Stop in a convenient place, look out over the flat sand and listen to Track 17.

17. Seaside classics

Weymouth beach

The harbour end of Weymouth beach is the widest part and the sand is especially flat. These features make it ideal for hosting the Weymouth Beach Volleyball Classic. Each July this international tournament attracts over 100 teams from across Europe and the United States. Players include Olympic competitors and a team from Weymouth's twin town of Holzwickede in Germany.

Despite the sport's association with Weymouth, the 2012 Olympic beach volleyball competition will not be held here but at Horse Guards Parade in London.



Some of Weymouth's pedalos
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Rather different seaside classics are Weymouth's donkeys. Donkey rides have been a favourite at British seaside resorts for generations. Donkeys originate from a similar species called the African Wild Ass which came from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia. Used as working animals for over 5,000 years donkeys were probably first domesticated in ancient Egypt. There are an estimated 40 million donkeys worldwide with 96 per cent living in developing countries as working animals.

You may also be able to spot people enjoying another classic out in the bay. Pedalos have been traced to Italy after a Leonardo da Vinci drawing of a pedal-powered boat. Weymouth's pedalos have a name rather than a number. Some are named after local landmarks and the others are named after the NATO spelling alphabet, which is used worldwide in aviation and naval communication. Look out for place names such as Quebec, India and Lima (the capital of Peru). Lima also means 'five' in the Malay and Indonesian languages so it isn't used in the NATO alphabet in Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei or Singapore.

Country links - Brunei Darussalam, Germany, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, Peru, Singapore, Somalia, Sudan, United States of America

Directions 17 - Remain on the promenade looking out to sea and listen to Track 18.

18. Making waves

Weymouth beach

Whether the tide is in or out, there are bound to be people paddling at the water's edge. During his visits King George III certainly got his toes wet. He didn't walk across the sand though; instead he made use of an early 'bathing machine'.

These machines were huts on wheels that could be towed across the sand and then into the water. They allowed for privacy to change into bathing clothes and meant that the King could make a dramatic entrance on the beach. As George III stepped into the sea a band hidden inside another bathing machine played 'God Save the King'.



Swimmers at the 1908 London Olympics
Wikimedia Commons

Early British holiday makers tended to be bathers rather than swimmers. Swimming as a pastime only became popular in the late Victorian era after the exploits of Cross-Channel swimmers, such as the fittingly-named Captain Matthew Webb. In 1875 he became the first recorded person to swim unaided from Dover to Calais.

The first book on swimming was written by a German, Nikolaus Wynmann, who published *The Swimmer or A Dialogue on the Art of Swimming* as far back as 1538. Swimming as a sport was popularised in the 1800s. In fact, swimming was a founder event at the first modern Olympics in Athens in 1896 and has featured in every Olympics since. The international swimming federation, FINA, was founded after the 1908 Olympics. Based in Switzerland, FINA includes 202 federations from around the world.

Many popular swimming strokes also have connections to the Olympic and Paralympic nations. The front crawl was first introduced to the West by John Trudgen. He was an English competitive swimmer who learnt the style from Native Americans after a visit to Argentina in the 1870s. Meanwhile the butterfly stroke was developed by Australian Frederick Cavill in the 1930s especially for swimming competitions.

Country links - Argentina, Australia, Germany, Greece, Switzerland

Directions 18 - Follow the promenade as it starts to bend round to the left. Look on the right hand side for the triangle of Alexandra Gardens which contains a small fairground. Stop opposite the fairground and listen to Track 19.

19. War and peace

Alexandra Gardens

In the summer children are never short of something to do at Weymouth. You may have already seen swing boats and trampolines on the beach. The first modern trampolines were developed in the United States in the 1930s while the earliest swing boat rides date from the 1880s. And here in Alexandra Gardens are various fairground rides and amusements.

The centrepiece is the carousel. Amazingly the origins of these popular amusement rides are from war. The word 'carousel' comes from the Italian garosello and Spanish carosella which mean "little battle".



The carousel in Alexandra Gardens
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

They describe machines used in the twelfth century by Turkish and Arabian horsemen for battle practice. After the Crusades in the Middle East, the idea of a rotating machine with model horses on spread to Europe. By the seventeenth century in Italy and France these machines replaced jousting at court and wedding festivals. The 'riders' would try to pick up rings on the outside of the machine.

By the early nineteenth century carousels as we know them had developed across Europe. They were rotated by live animals or groups of men pulling a rope. Many of the grandest carousels were built in the United States from the 1850s. Firms often employed German and Italian craftsmen to carve and decorate the horses. In Europe the oldest working carousel is thought to be in Letná Park, Prague in the Czech Republic.

Country links - Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United States of America

Directions 19 - Continue along the promenade to the end of the beach. Follow the promenade up to the large Weymouth Pavilion building. Stop with a view of the Pavilion and listen to Track 20.

20. The butterfly tent

Weymouth Pavilion

The Pavilion Theatre represents yet another example of seaside entertainment. By the Victorian era theatres along the length of Britain's coast put on musicals, variety and comedy acts for large audiences. Weymouth's original Pavilion was built in 1908 as The Ritz theatre. In 1956 it burnt down and was replaced by the building you can see today.

The name 'Pavilion' is French - from papilio the Latin word for 'butterfly' or 'tent'. This reflects how pavilions originated as small decorative structures used to host or provide shelter for leisure activities.



The Ba Ping-In floating pavilion in Ayutthaya, Thailand
© Dan Smith via Wikimedia Commons

Pavilions became popular in 18th century gardens and were often designed to look like temples or follies. These garden pavilions originate from China and Thailand where they are common in parks. Today the name 'pavilion' also describes large entertainment buildings and you will still find examples at many British seaside resorts.

To keep up with demand many seaside theatres now feature international programmes. In 2012 Weymouth hosts the Moscow Ballet, Chinese State Circus and American band The Eagles.

Country links - China, France, Russia, Thailand, United States of America

Directions 20 - Continue a short distance along the promenade. Stop by the anchor and listen to Track 21.

21. Channel hopping

Weymouth Ferry Terminal

This large anchor was placed here in 1980 to celebrate the opening of Weymouth's car ferry terminal. Ferries ran from Weymouth to the Channel Islands and Brittany off northern France, allowing visitors to extend their holiday overseas.

At the time of creating this walk, the service was suspended for maintenance work and the ferries diverted to Poole.

The impact of the ferry is still visible though - look out for road signs in French giving instructions to arriving drivers to keep on the left.



The Weymouth cross-channel ferry before closure
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



The Weymouth boat train weaves through traffic
© John Lucas via geograph (Creative Commons License)

Also, do you remember the railway tracks in the road that you followed in the first part of the walk? Weymouth's railway station was built in 1857 but in 1889 the line was extended to the harbour. This meant that trains could take passengers right to the ferry terminal.

These trains ran until the 1980s. Since they shared the road with traffic, two men walked in front waving red flags to warn car drivers!

Country links - France

Directions 21 - Continue along the promenade and under the Pleasure Pier arch towards the tower. Stop at the corner of the wall looking back towards the beach and listen to Track 22.

22. A towering end

Weymouth Tower

This is the latest seaside attraction in Weymouth. Due to open before the 2012 Olympics, the Weymouth Sea Life Tower will provide up to 70 passengers at a time with stunning panoramic views of Weymouth Bay and the Jurassic Coast beyond – including Chesil Beach and Portland.

The finished tower stands 53 metres above sea level and was built by local firm TG Cruse. During construction parts were transported from France and Hungary.

This is also a fitting place to end our walk. From the Tower you can see both sides of this historic seaside town. On the one side is the historic harbour that put Weymouth on the world map. There we heard about two villages united by trade, fishing and smuggling. On the other side is the royal resort with its sweeping Esplanade, popularised by George III and still popular today. There we heard about seaside activities, entertainments and sports.



Weymouth Tower is the resort's latest landmark
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Exploring this historic Dorset resort is a great way to celebrate London 2012. On the walk we have found evidence of links to 63 of the Olympic and Paralympic participating nations. Maybe you spotted more. If you did, please let us know. And if you enjoyed this walk, look on the Walk the World website and you will find more in different parts of Britain that you can try. Why not think about creating your own walk?

Country links - France, Hungary

Directions 22 - From the Tower you can retrace your steps back to the beach or the Old Harbour where you started the walk.

Credits

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- **Rory Walsh** for creating the walk, taking photographs and providing the commentary
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- **Caroline Millar** for editing the audio files



Visit www.walktheworld.org.uk

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