



Westward Ho!

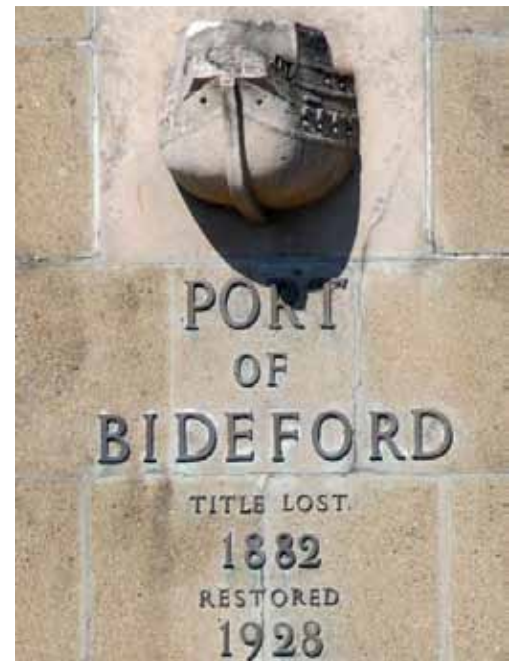
Explore Bideford's seafaring heritage

1. Welcome to Bideford

Burton Art Gallery and Museum

Welcome to Walk the World. This walk in Bideford 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 Olympic and Paralympic countries have shaped our towns and cities.

This walk takes you through the narrow streets of Bideford. This small but attractive town in North Devon has a rich seafaring heritage. Bideford was once one of the great ports of England and its past success can be attributed to a combination of its geographical location, a great Elizabethan adventurer and some entrepreneurial merchants. On the walk you will hear about some of these people and the trades that they were involved in. You will learn about the goods that were carried on the sailing ships of the past as well as those that are carried today.



A sign of Bideford's seafaring history
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This walk has been written to complement the town's excellent Heritage Trail by highlighting how Bideford both influenced and was influenced by countries around the world. Bideford has some obvious international connections but you will also be challenged to think about some more unusual ones. The walk begins and ends at the Burton Art Galley and Museum in Victoria Park. The route is just under a mile and a half long with 18 stops along the way. I hope you enjoy the walk.

Directions 1 - From the front of the museum, walk towards the river and stop by the statue of Charles Kingsley. Listen to Track 2.

2. Westward Ho!

Charles Kingsley statue

We begin at the statue of Victorian writer Charles Kingsley who was born in Devon in 1819. Like his father he was a clergyman while his mother came from a line of Barbadian sugar plantation owners. Kingsley became a prolific novelist and was also a professor of history and a social reformer; both are reflected in his writings. His best-known work is *The Water Babies* but this statue was built here because of the popularity of another of his books, *Westward Ho!*

Westward Ho! is about the adventures of a young man from Bideford who follows sixteenth century explorer Sir Francis Drake to sea. It is a tale of adventure about the "Spanish Main", South America and "The Inquisition". Kingsley dedicated the book to James Brooke, the first White Rajah of Sarawak (part of present-day Malaysia) and George Selwyn, the first Anglican Bishop of New Zealand.



Statue of Charles Kingsley, Bideford Quay
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

In the first sentence of *Westward Ho!* Kingsley describes Bideford as "the little white town, which slopes upwards from its broad tide-river paved with yellow sands, and many-arched old bridge."

The book was very popular and large numbers of tourists came to visit where it was set. When a town developed on the coast nearby it was named *Westward Ho!* after the book. It remains the only town in Britain to have an exclamation mark in its name. It shares this distinction with Saint-Louis-du-Ha! Ha! in Quebec, which has two!

Country links - Barbados, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, Spain

Directions 2 - Walk a few metres to the edge of the Quay. Take care here at the water's edge, especially of children. Listen to Track 3.

3. Stone arches

Bideford Long Bridge



Bideford's historic Long Bridge
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



Pont du Gard, a Roman stone aqueduct in France
Wikimedia Commons

From here you can see the River Torridge. Bideford's attractive Long Bridge has spanned the river for over 700 years. It stands close to the lowest point the river could be crossed by a ford. This ford gave the town its name: Bideford derives from By-the-Ford.

The stone Long Bridge is 190 metres long and has 24 arches. Look carefully and you will see that the arches are different widths. It was constructed in the fifteenth century by encasing an original wooden bridge in stone and the arches probably reflect the widths of the original timber spans. As you walk closer you will also see the bridge has been widened using round arches on top of the original pointed ones.

Stone arches have been used in bridge building for thousands of years. The oldest surviving one, in Greece, dates back to 1300 BC. The Romans built stone arch bridges throughout Europe and many of these still survive. The Pont du Gard aqueduct in southern France is a particularly spectacular example. It is built in three tiers from dressed stone without mortar, and the top tier originally had 47 arches.

The longest single span stone bridge is the Danhe Bridge in China which opened in 2000 and is 146 metres long. China also has the world's longest arch bridge which is made of steel. It crosses the Yangtze River. Its main span is 552 metres, almost three times the entire length of Bideford's Long Bridge. Meanwhile the new Bideford Bridge built a mile downstream in 1989 crosses the Torridge in eight spans.

Country links - China, France, Greece, Italy

Directions 3 - Walk along the Quay towards the bridge, and stop just after the Lundy Island Ferry terminal building.

4. Tidal trade

Bideford Quay

Bideford's sheltered harbour opens out into the Bristol Channel just over three miles to the north. To land boats would originally have been grounded on the sloping bed of the river but this limits what and when goods can be uploaded. Thus a quay was built in 1663 and over the years it has been raised, widened and lengthened.

Goods from around the world have been transported here to Bideford Quay. One of the town's early trades was importing wool from Spain and Ireland for the weavers of Devon.



Bideford Quay with the Long Bridge in the distance
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Later there was a big fishing and tobacco trade which we will hear more about later. In addition pottery was sent to Ireland and the United States and timber imported from Canada for shipbuilding. Oak bark was also once sent to tanneries in Ireland and Scotland.

Bideford still operates as a port and you may see cargo ships moored here. Ships arrive and depart on the high tide and because the Bristol Channel has the second highest tidal range in the world Bideford can take vessels with up to five metres draught on spring tides. Shipping is an international business and ships visiting Bideford recently have been registered in Russia, Malta, Gibraltar and Cyprus. They have had masters and crew from Russia, Ukraine, Estonia, Poland and the Philippines.

Ships regularly leave Bideford destined for Spain or Finland with cargos of clay. Devon is one of the few places in the world with deposits of fine plastic "ball clay". This is very valuable in pottery making and over 80 per cent of the ball clay extracted in Devon today is exported. Ships also leave Bideford loaded with spruce logs for Wismar in Germany.

Country links - Canada, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Malta, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Spain, Ukraine, United States of America

Directions 4 - Continue along the Quay and cross over the road to the building with The Rose of Torridge sign. Stop outside and listen to Track 5.

5. Cod and ships

The Rose of Torridge

The Rose of Torridge is named after the heroine in Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* It was originally one of four pubs that lined the Quay. It then became the Newfoundland Hotel and it is now a fish restaurant. Both these later uses hint at Bideford's fishing trade.

At the end of the fifteenth century the Italian navigator John Cabot discovered the great cod fishery we now know as the Grand Banks off Newfoundland in eastern Canada. Fishermen from Portugal, France and Spain were quick to exploit it. They had cheap supplies of salt which they used to process and cure their catch while still at sea.



The Rose of Torridge
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The lack of a ready supply of salt put English fishermen at a disadvantage. They resorted to drying and lightly salting fish on the shore. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 however, Spanish and Portuguese fishing declined. Their trade was taken up by the English and cod became the foundation of Bideford's wealth.

A triangular trade developed with fishing gear, clothes and provisions taken from Devon to Newfoundland; from there dried cod was shipped to European ports in Italy and Spain; in turn their products such as olive oil, wine and dried fruit were brought back to England.

Salt cod influenced the cuisine of many countries around the Atlantic. In Portugal it is known as Bacalhau which is eaten on special days. It is also the basis of the Jamaican national dish, ackee and saltfish. You can order cod and chips at the Rose of Torridge but you will have to add your own salt!

Country links - Canada, France, Italy, Jamaica, Portugal, Spain

Directions 5 - Take the narrow passage between the Rose of Torridge and the Kings Arms next door and turn left into Allhalland Street. Stop in a few metres by the passageway into Chapel Street on your right. Listen to Track 6.

6. Refugees

Chapel Street

Before the quay was extended the gardens of the houses on the east side of Allhalland Street stretched down to the river. This narrow street was therefore the main thoroughfare from the bridge to the High Street.

You should be able to see a cul-de-sac here called Chapel Street which passes under one of the houses. A French Huguenot congregation was set up in Bideford in 1695 and this lane lead to their church. The Huguenots were French Protestants inspired by John Calvin in the sixteenth century.



Chapel Street, the site of a former Huguenot church
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Huguenots suffered religious persecution which caused about 200,000 of them to leave France. They settled in non-Catholic European countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark and even as far as Russia. Many went to settle in the colonies on the East coast of America and the Dutch East India Company sent a few hundred to the Cape to develop the vineyards in South Africa.

An estimated 50,000 Huguenots came to England with perhaps 10,000 later moving on to Ireland. They settled in London and across the South and West of England. They were the first group of people to be called 'refugees' – the word comes from the French *refugier*, which means 'to take shelter'. The Huguenots brought skills with them, in particular silk and cloth weaving, lace making and tapestry.

The famous English diarist Samuel Pepys may once have visited Bideford. He married Elisabeth de St Michel who was born here and was the daughter of a Huguenot exile.

Country links - Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Russia, South Africa, Switzerland, United States of America

Directions 6 - Continue to the end of Allhalland Street and stop at the junction with Bridge Street. Look across the road at the Town Hall and listen to Track 7.

7. Grenville's legacy

Bideford Town Hall

The Town Hall across the road was built in Tudor style to commemorate the Elizabethan era when Bideford grew into a major port as we heard about earlier. Here is also where Bideford's most famous and influential resident, Sir Richard Grenville, is thought to have had a town house.

Bideford was a small fishing town until the sixteenth century when Grenville obtained a new charter that gave Bideford borough status. Grenville was a great adventurer and went to Hungary to fight the Turks. He later fought in Ireland where he owned an estate with his father-in-law but it was Grenville's involvement in America which was to have the biggest impact on Bideford.



Portrait of Sir Richard Grenville
Wikimedia Commons

Grenville's cousin, Walter Raleigh, had obtained a charter from Queen Elizabeth to colonise North America. On Raleigh's behalf, Grenville sailed to Virginia where he established a small garrison on Roanoke Island in modern-day North Carolina. A year later he returned with supplies only to find the men had gone. Sir Francis Drake had stopped by on his return from a voyage to South America just a few days earlier and the men had decided to return to England with him.

Grenville left another 15 men to keep a claim to a colony alive but when merchant John White arrived the following year he found no trace of them. Nevertheless White left around 115 settlers on Roanoke to form a colony. Grenville prepared to send supply ships but these were requisitioned to fight the Spanish Armada. It was three years before anyone returned to Virginia and there was no sign of the 'Lost colony of Roanoke'.

Grenville went on to command the ship 'Revenge' which plundered Spanish treasure ships off the Azores. He was wounded in a gallant fight at the Battle of Flores and died a few days later.

Country links - Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United States of America

Directions 7 - Cross over Bridge Street and follow Church Walk up to St Mary's Church. Stop outside the church and listen to Track 8.

8. Death and disease

St Mary's Church

The tower of St Mary's Church dates back to the thirteenth century but the rest of what you see today was rebuilt by Bideford's wealthy merchants in the 1860s. Inside is the tomb of Richard Grenville's great grandfather and monuments to many of Bideford's merchants. These include John Strange who helped the town during the plague before succumbing himself.

In the church porch you can see the records of a Native American of the Wynganditoian tribe. He was brought to Bideford by Sir Richard Grenville who named him Raleigh after his cousin and adventurer but sadly he died of a cold the following year.



St Mary's Church tower
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

There have been many examples of where diseases have spread through settlers to indigenous peoples. The settlers in America unwittingly took smallpox and influenza with them that decimated the American Indian population. Spanish explorers inadvertently spread measles to Cuba and smallpox to Mexico which played a role in the fall of the Aztec empire. The native Aborigines in Australia were affected by smallpox while syphilis is thought to have been brought to Europe by crew on Columbus' voyage to the Americas.

Trade has played its part in the spread of disease too. The Black Death is thought to have come to Europe in the fourteenth century from China on rat fleas through the port of Messina in Sicily. Plague came to Bideford in 1646 most probably in a wool cargo from Spain and records show that 229 people were buried here in the space of just six months.

Country links - Australia, China, Cuba, Italy, Mexico, Spain, United States of America

Directions 8 - Leave the churchyard by the top gate and walk to the top of the steps. Turn left into Buttgarten Street and stop when you reach St Mary's flats on your left. Listen to Track 9. (For a step free route to Buttgarten Street, you can return to Bridge Street and turn left up the hill).

9. Tobacco traders

Buttgarden Street

Buttgarden Street dates from 1670 when Bideford had a large tobacco trade with the settlers who had followed Richard Grenville to Virginia in America. The quayside was too damp to store tobacco and the buildings opposite are thought to have been tobacco warehouses.

Tobacco smoking came to Europe after Christopher Columbus discovered it in Cuba in 1492. Sir Walter Raleigh is said to have taken up smoking and popularised it within the Elizabethan Court in the 1590s.



Tobacco growing on a Virginian plantation
Wikimedia Commons

The settlers in Virginia soon discovered that tobacco would grow well and they found a ready market for it in England. Tobacco soon became a key cash crop and a mainstay of the economy of the Southern States. The United States is still a major tobacco producer but the biggest growers are now China, India and Brazil.

In the first half of the seventeenth century Bideford merchants imported more tobacco in their ships than any other port in England except London. Over the 10 years to 1731 nearly eight and a half million pounds of tobacco landed at Bideford Quay. Great quantities were re-exported to European countries, particularly the Netherlands but also to Ireland, Norway, Spain and Germany.

Port records give us some idea of the goods sent back to Virginia in return. A ship called the 'Dove' owned by Bideford merchant Thomas Smith arrived in June 1714 from Virginia with a cargo of tobacco. It returned in November with mixed merchandise that included rugs, hats, stockings, textiles, haberdashery, books, paper, shoes, nails, ironmongery, wrought pewter, brass work, wool cards, leather chairs, a chest of drawers and even a looking glass.

Country links - Brazil, China, Cuba, Germany, India, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, United States of America

Directions 9 - Retrace your steps along Buttgarden Street and continue until you reach the Pannier Market. Stop here to listen to Track 10.

10. Baskets and boxes

Pannier Market

Bideford's market was originally held at the bottom of the High Street but moved here when the quay got too busy. In Victorian times many towns built indoor markets and this Pannier Market dates from 1884. It was built to house the fish market, butchery stalls and corn exchange. There are Pannier Markets in many Devon and Somerset towns.

The word 'pannier' comes from the French meaning 'a basket' which suggests how local produce was brought to market. People have used grasses and other pliable stems to make baskets for thousands of years. Fragments dating back 12,000 years have been found in Egypt and there is evidence that Sumerians used baskets to bury their dead 4,000 years ago.



Local eggs on sale in the Pannier Market
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Bideford's Pannier Market now contains many craft shops but if you are here on a market day you will also find local produce being sold. The market might look like a very traditional English scene but take a look at the containers that the produce is brought in. Instead of wicker baskets you are far more likely to see modern containers with international connections.

We all know the phrase 'don't put all your eggs in one basket' but today you are more likely to see eggs being sold in cartons. The egg carton was invented in Canada in 1911 by a newspaper editor Joseph Coyle. Cardboard boxes were first produced commercially in England in 1817 but cardboard itself was invented by the Chinese in the fifteenth century. Plastic is widely used for containers and bottles thanks to German chemist Otto Beyer who discovered how to make polyurethanes in 1937.

Country links - Canada, China, France, Egypt, Germany, Iraq

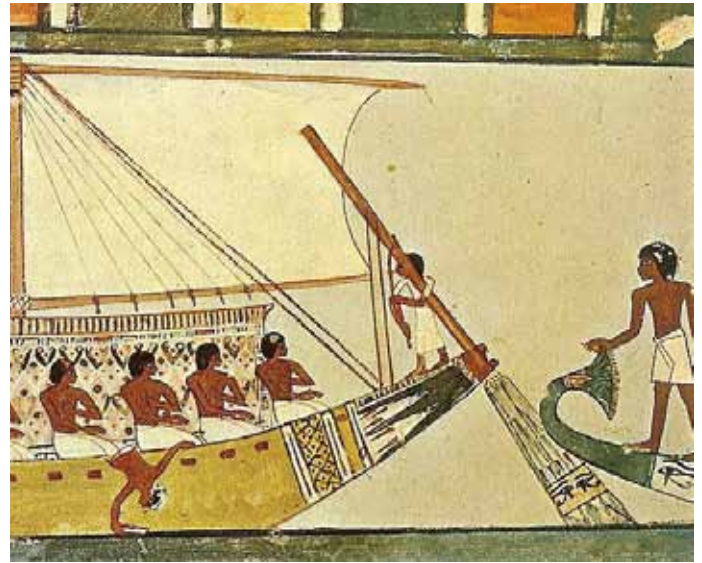
Directions 10 - Continue along Grenville Street to the High Street and turn right. Walk down to the Quay and turn left. Take the narrow passage into King Street immediately on your left and stop by the first stone buildings. Listen to Track 11.

11. Lofty sails

King Street

King Street and Queen Street are narrow streets that mark the edge of an earlier quay. The large windows, doors and entrances of the buildings we can see here would have originally looked out onto the river. You can also see some stone buildings that were once warehouses. Their lofts would have been used to store and repair sails for ships.

The earliest record of people harnessing the power of the wind for boats is a 5,000 year old Egyptian stone carving of a reed boat on the Nile with a small rectangular sail. It is thought that the Arabs were responsible for developing the triangular 'Lateen' sail which first allowed ships to progress against the wind.



A sail boat in the Tomb of Menna, Egypt (1422-1411 BC)
Wikimedia Commons

Until cotton took over in the nineteenth century sails were constructed of linen. Linen is made from flax which grows in Britain but a shortage developed as demand from the Navy and fishing fleets grew rapidly. Laws were introduced that required landowners to grow more but demand still outstripped supply so flax was imported from Poland, Russia and Latvia.

Ships such as the *Tyger*, in which Richard Grenville sailed to America, typically had three masts. The *Golden Hinde*, the ship Sir Francis Drake used to circumnavigate the globe, had three masts which carried five square sails and a lateen sail. A replica of the *Golden Hinde* was built just down the river at Appledore in 1973 and if you go to London you can see it on the Thames in Southwark.

Country links - Egypt, Latvia, Poland, Russia

Directions 11 - Continue to the end of King Street where it meets a square. Stop here and listen to Track 12.

12. Hogsheads

Cooper Street

Opposite the Quay, the cobbled street beside us is Cooper Street. It is one of the narrowest streets in Bideford. The word 'cooper' means barrel maker – a word that comes from the Dutch cuper or cask.

Do you know anyone with the surname Cooper? Or Kuiper in Holland, Tonnelier in France, Tanoeiro in Portugal, Bødker in Denmark, Bodnar in Poland or Bednar in the Czech Republic? All these surnames come from the trade of making barrels.

So Cooper Street was where barrels were once made. Barrels have been used for centuries to transport goods. The Greeks and Romans originally carried goods in pottery amphora. The Gauls are sometimes credited with developing barrels but it was the Romans that adopted them and put them to widespread use.



'Cooper Tightening Staves on a Barrel'
by Jean-Francois Millet (c1848-52)
Wikimedia Commons

Barrels were the most convenient shipping container for almost 2,000 years. On long sea voyages barrels would have been used to hold drinking water, beer, wine and spirits as well as provisions such as dried peas, flour, salt meat and fish. Some of the wooden barrels made here would also have been used for transporting and storing tobacco because they were watertight. These large barrels were called Hogsheads and weighed up to 1000 pounds when filled.

It was not until the twentieth century when pallets and containers appeared that barrels declined in importance. Wooden barrels are still used in wine and spirit making though while wooden barrels and metal casks are used to transport beer.

Country links - Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, United States of America

Directions 12 - Cross the square and follow Queen Street until you reach Bridgeland Street. Turn left and stop by the red house, number 26. Listen outside to Track 13.

13. Wealth of nations

26 Bridgeland Street

Bridgeland Street is very wide and has some grand houses which were the homes of the wealthiest merchants of Bideford. These merchants capitalised on trade with the American colonies and brought wealth to Bideford. Some also acquired land there. New colonists were entitled to 50 acres of land each and by offering free passage in exchange for their land, Bideford merchants developed great estates in the New World. Ironically the wealth built on trade with the American Colonies was taxed to pay for the wars against them.



The tiled mansion, Bridgeland Street
MIke Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

These houses were built after the quay was extended in the 1690s. One of the grandest buildings in the street is the Masonic Lodge at Number 12 which housed the Library until 1906.

Some merchants tried to maximise their wealth by avoiding tax – and these houses include interesting examples. Look at the red house at number 26. It is faced with tiles to avoid paying a 'brick tax' introduced in 1784. At the top of the street you will also see an example of bricked up windows to avoid a 'window tax'.

Property taxes like these are not just a British feature. The French introduced a Windows and Doors Tax in 1798. In the Netherlands houses were taxed according to width from the seventeenth century, which led to some very narrow houses in Dutch cities. Amsterdam claims to feature the world's narrowest house; number 7 at the Singel canal is only one metre wide!

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

Directions 13 - Continue to the top of Bridgeland Street, turn right and right again into Willet Street. Stop at the end of Willet Street where it joins The Strand. Listen to Track 14.

14. Pots and pipes

Willet Street

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries pottery was one of Bideford's most important industries. There were 20 or 30 kilns in the town and a huge pottery trade with Ireland. Bideford had developed links to Ireland in the sixteenth century through Sir Richard Grenville who we heard about earlier who was also the Sheriff of Cork. Pottery was also sent from Bideford to the New World as ballast on the tobacco ships.

Unfortunately there is no sign today of the potteries that once stood here. There are still good deposits of clay nearby though and as we heard earlier Bideford still exports it to Finland and Spain.



Devon pottery in Burton Museum and Gallery
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Devon clay is prized because it is extremely fine and plastic plus it becomes white with firing. It is called 'ball clay' because it is extracted by cutting the clay into cubes but with handling it quickly takes on the shape of a ball.

After Sir Walter Raleigh made pipe smoking fashionable ball clay was found to be the ideal material for making pipes. Tobacco was expensive to start with so only small quantities were smoked in small pipes with short stems. Later, as more tobacco was imported into Britain, it became cheaper and pipe bowls became larger. Stems also became longer to cool the hot smoke.

Most of the pottery produced in Bideford was plain earthenware such as jars, pots and jugs. Devon is also known for its 'sgraffito' ware created when a slip of white clay is applied and then scratched off to make decorative pictures and patterns.

Country links - Finland, Ireland, Spain, United States of America

Directions 14 - Turn right into Rope Walk and stop when you reach the entrance to Blackmores Depository. Listen to Track 15.

15. Twisted straight

Blackmore's Depository, Rope Walk

The large building you are standing by was once a furniture depository and before that a factory that made collars. Even earlier this long straight street was used for making ropes. In Elizabethan times a great deal of rope was needed for the rigging, mooring and anchoring of sailing ships.

String ropes have been claimed to be one of the most important human inventions because they were used for so many practical tasks. Fossilized rope fragments have been found in the caves at Lascaux in France dating back some 17,000 years. Early string ropes were twisted by hand.



Rope at Bideford Quay
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

From inscriptions we can trace mechanical rope making to ancient Egypt. The Egyptians tied a weighted strand to a stick and spun it around to create a twist. Three strands would again be twisted together in the opposite direction. This method continued well into medieval times until there was a need for much longer and stronger ropes.

Rope Walks such as this were developed where yarns and twines were stretched out between revolving hooks. The hooks needed to be as much as 1,000 feet apart - hence the long straight street. These hooks twisted the yarns together in increasing numbers to obtain the required thickness.

In Elizabethan times rope was made from hemp which has soft, durable plant fibres. Some hemp was grown in Britain but it was also imported from Egypt, Riga in Latvia and the Netherlands. Later other natural fibres such as cotton, linen, coconut-husk fibre (coir), jute, and sisal were imported from as far away as Kenya, India and the Philippines.

Country links - Egypt, France, India, Kenya, Latvia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Russia

Directions 15 - Continue along Rope Walk and stop when you reach the Quay. Stand outside the former Custom House and listen to Track 16.

16. Anything to declare?

The Old Custom House

This lively Irish bar occupies a building that used to be Bideford's Custom House. It dates back to 1695 and as the name suggests this was the office for checking the import and export of goods.

You are probably familiar with today's customs clearance process at airports and choosing whether to pass through the green or red channels. Collection of customs duties from sailing ships in the past was far more haphazard and bureaucratic. Imagine customs officers rowing out to meet sailing ships to check their cargo and look for contraband.



The Old Custom House pub sign
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

British customs duties and other taxes became especially unpopular in the colonies. In 1773 tax revolts in Boston led to the American War of Independence. Taxes also encouraged the growth of smuggling which became rife in Devon and Cornwall. Coastal traders made good profits by collecting small packages from French ships offshore and landing them on the beaches.

Not all smuggling was small scale. Bideford's most famous smuggler was Tom Benson who was a leading merchant trading with the American colonies. He leased Lundy Island out in the Bristol Channel and used it to land tobacco without paying duty. The law caught up with him when he arranged for a ship called the Nightingale to land on Lundy Island and be scuttled. Benson claimed insurance for the ship's loss but was undone when one of the crew got drunk and spilled the beans. Benson escaped justice by fleeing to Portugal but the ship's captain was hanged.

Country links - France, Ireland, Portugal, United States of America

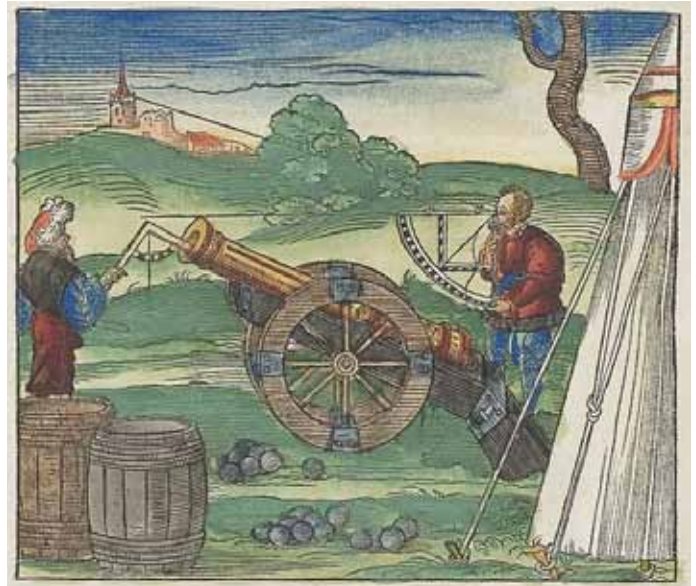
Directions 16 - Turn left along the Quay and cross over at the lights. Continue past the statue of Charles Kingsley and through the gates into Victoria Park. Walk to the bandstand which is surrounded by cannon. Stop here and listen to Track 17.

17. Making a bang

Victoria Park bandstand

The nine cannon that surround this bandstand were discovered in 1890 during work to widen Bideford quay. A sign says that these are Spanish Armada cannons but another possibility is that they came from a Spanish ship, the Santa Maria de Vincenze, which Sir Richard Grenville captured on his return journey from Roanoake in 1585 that we heard about earlier.

The development of cannons altered the course of warfare worldwide including for England. It is generally accepted that gunpowder and cannons were invented by the Chinese possibly as early as the ninth century but some claim that gunpowder was invented in India even earlier.



Engraving showing a 15th century Saxon canon
Wikimedia Commons

The English first used cannon in the fourteenth century at the Battle of Crécy in 1346 during the 100 Years War with France. As smaller cannon were developed these came to be used on ships and changed the course of warfare at sea. The English were particularly skilled at using cannon on ships. Alongside the weather English sea cannons were partly responsible for the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

Wars have played a big part in Bideford's fortunes. As we heard earlier defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 opened up the salt cod trade. The English Civil War and French wars brought periods of depression in the seventeenth century before Bideford entered its most prosperous time. This in turn was ended by the American War of Independence and the Napoleonic Wars from the 1770s to 1815.

Here in Victoria Park you will find reminders of more recent wars including a tree planted by the US Army stationed here during the Second World War and a memorial of the Burma Star Association.

Country links - China, France, India, Myanmar, Spain, United States of America

Directions 17 - From the bandstand make your way to the front of the Burton Art Gallery and Museum where we started the walk. When you are back outside the Gallery listen to Track 18.

18. A heritage to remember

Burton Art Gallery and Museum

We have now returned to Burton Art Gallery and Museum where we started our walk. Inside the Museum you can learn more about Bideford's heritage. There are some excellent displays that will tell you more about the town's social history as well as some excellent collections of pottery.

Outside the Museum look out for a yellow French post box which was fitted here to celebrate Bideford being twinned with Landivisiau in France.



Landivisiau twin town sign
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Bideford is also twinned with Manteo in the USA. Meanwhile Biddeford in Maine, USA and Bideford village on Prince Edward Island in Canada are both named after this Devon town. Ongoing twin town links celebrate many centuries of connections across the North Atlantic.

Throughout this walk we have seen the role that Bideford has played in the development of the wider world. We have learned how a combination of its geographical location at the crossing point of the River Torridge, the actions of Elizabethan adventurer Sir Richard Grenville, and the entrepreneurship of a number of merchants transformed Bideford from a small fishing town into a major international port.

Along the way we have found connections to 43 of the countries that will be competing in the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Maybe you spotted more. If you did, please tell us via the Walk the World website. You can also visit the website to discover other walks throughout Britain that you can try. You can also find tips on how to create a walk of your own. I hope that you have enjoyed this one and that it has helped you to appreciate the worldwide significance of this small North Devon port.

Country links - Canada, France, United States of America

Credits

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

- **Mike Jackson** and **Gary Gray** for researching the walk and taking photographs
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- **Roger A Smith** for additional photographs
- **Caroline Millar** for editing the audio files
- **The Bideford 500 Heritage Group** for inspiring the walk through their Heritage Trail and verifying information



Visit www.walktheworld.org.uk

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Walk the World is part of Discovering Places, the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad campaign to inspire the UK to discover their local environment. Walk the World is delivered in partnership by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) with Discovering Places (The Heritage Alliance) and is principally funded by the National Lottery through the Olympic Lottery Distributor. The digital and print maps used for Walk the World are licensed to RGS-IBG from Ordnance Survey.



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