



Community

# Secret St Leonards Walking Trail

David Clarke

The idea of a walk around St Leonards was first mooted towards the end of 2015 and inspiration came from the 'Hidden Hull Walking Trail' promoted as part of Hull's Year of Culture.

Ideally, this 'St Leonards Walk' would explore some of the hidden treasures that are tucked away out of sight and off the beaten track for both visitors and residents alike.

Starting at the new Hastings Pier, the 'Secret St Leonards Walking Trail' will take you away from the seafront to marvel at the history, rummage amongst the antiques shops, be curious in the galleries, browse in bookshops or to just enjoy the walk to King's Road, where the street market is held on the first Saturday of the summer months.

Sidney Little's promenade is walked to the 'fashionable' Burton St Leonards that still reflects the wealth of a golden Victorian age in Maze Hill, Uplands and The Lawns but soon there is the descent into Mercatoria and Lavatoria, built

to service the 'big houses'.

Looking up the side streets to the rows of terraced houses, on the once cobbled roads, and imagine living amongst the densest streets of Central St Leonards. There is a simplicity and linear consistency to the views down the straight streets but one without open space or any green. Many similar Victorian terraces, around the country, have been demolished and rebuilt with all the modern amenities but they have, for the most, lost the community spirit that once thrived in their urban settings. Hopefully these rectilinear Gensing streets will be saved from such 'improvements'.

At first glance, there is nothing to London Road except a mishmash of shop fronts, infills and traffic and that can offend those more used to gleaming shopping centres and pedestrianised streets but you must look further into the character of both the shops and the people who belong to London Road.

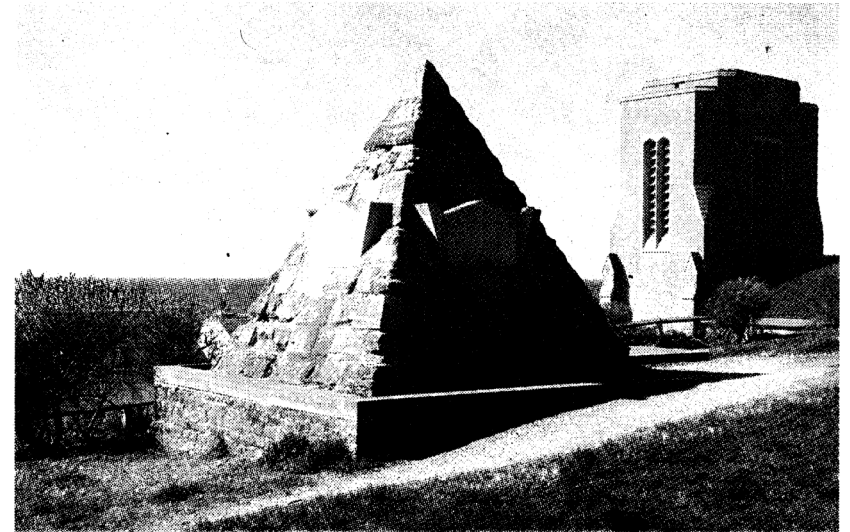
I grew up in Nottingham and remember similar streets, now demolished. St Anns Wells Road,

Alfred Street and Arkwright Street all provided everything that you needed from sweet shops and cake shops, milliners, butchers and bakers, green grocers and grocers, a Home and Colonial, a Dewhurst's, book shops and cafes, a pub on every corner and almost as many churches. To me Norman Road, London Road and Kings Road have the same feel, an eclectic mix of business that will urge you to return.

A walk needs history to bring it alive, and a 'Secret St Leonards Walking Trail' adds interest that encourages discovery and exploration.

The new 'Secret St Leonards Walking Trail' is a companion to 'The Green St Leonards Walk', in the series of 'Short Walks in 1066 Country', written by David Clarke and published by History Walks. They are both an opportunity to share all that is good about St Leonards on Sea.

David lives in St Leonards on Sea and is the author of '1066 Harold's Way', 'Three Castles and an Ironmaster's House' and the soon to be published 'Saxon Times' (August 2016).



PIC: COURTESY OF DAVID CLARKE