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Our first plaque is on No.9 Old Steine, a Georgian house with an imposing door case. Here a Brighton Corporation slate roundel, its lettering carefully coloured, celebrates the stay of **Prince Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord** (1754-1835) in Brighton in 1831. A diplomat and a statesman with a talent for survival, he served both Napoleon and the restored French monarchy. He was his country's ambassador to London from 1830 to 1834.

Walk towards the sea, crossing St. James' Street. Make for No.20, where you'll find a plaque beneath the ground-floor window. This sorry sight, which was unveiled in 1930, was designed by Eric Gill. It commemorates **Gideon Algernon Mantell** (1790-1852), a pioneer of the then new science of geology. Today most people remember him as the man who discovered the iguanodon. Further along, at No.30 is a much later plaque, a round slate one, marking the birthplace of **Sir Edward Marshall Hall** (1858-1927), one of the most celebrated lawyers of his day. He earned the nickname 'The Great Defender'. The house is now solicitors' offices.

Cross the Steine by the two pedestrian crossings to the Royal Albion Hotel, built on the site of Russell House, home of a man who put Brighton on the map! Walk round the corner to the seaward side and there you'll find a modern slate copy of an earlier stone tablet unveiled in 1925. It commemorates **Dr. Richard Russell** (1687-1759). A Lewes-based doctor, he advocated the medicinal use of sea water, not merely to bath in, but also to drink! The treatment proved so popular that he built himself a house in Brighton and lived here from 1754 to 1759.

Further along, on what has now become part of the Royal Albion, near the doorway with the semi-circular portico, is another copy of a stone original. This one remembers **William Ewart Gladstone** (1809-1898) four times Prime Minister and frequent visitor to Brighton.

Turn the corner and skirt Pool Valley, coming back in the Old Steine by a square building. This is Lace House, once a car showroom. If you want to see which make they specialised in, look at the left-hand corner of the building. The black cat-like creature about halfway up is a jaguar.

We continue round the Steine, past the boarded-up Royal York Buildings which, until recently, had a plaque commemorating **King William IV** (1765-1837) and **Queen Adelaide** (1792-1849). The King gave his name to a pub in Church Street, but his

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consort is remembered by Queen's Park in Brighton and Adelaide Crescent in Hove. The statue on the other side of the road is of **Sir John Cordy Burrows** (1813-1876). three times Mayor of Brighton and until recently the only private individual to be celebrated by a statue. He has now been joined by the athlete Steve Ovett in Preston Park.

We're approaching Marlborough House. As it's being restored the Regency Society plaque has been removed. It was built in 1765 and acquired in 1771 by the fourth **Duke of Marlborough** (1739-1817) who gave the house the name by which it is still known. It was bought in 1786 by William Hamilton MP. Known as 'Single Speech' Hamilton, he employed Robert Adam to re-model the house, both inside and out, thus creating the only Adam house in Brighton.

Next door, No.55 is the much-altered home of **Maria Fitzherbert** (1756-1837) who married as husband number three, George, Prince of Wales. She became very popular with the ordinary people of Brighton and was genuinely mourned when she died. Her tomb is in St. John the Baptist Church, Bristol Road. Her plaque, designed by Eric Gill and unveiled in 1925, was on the Steine Lane side of the building but was moved to its present site on the front in 1956. We leave you to make you mind up about the paintwork!

Cut along Steine Lane into East Street and turn left. Just across the road you will see Al Forno, No.36. The cottage was the home of **Martha Gunn** (1726-1815), the most famous of the 'dippers' who dunked you in the sea. Unfortunately, her plaque is totally obscured by the glassed-in area in the front of the restaurant so to see it you will have to invade the restaurant.

Carry on along East Street to Bartholomews, the turning by Crabtree and Evelyn. On the left hand side is Brighton Town Hall and on the north-west corner of the building is a Regency Society ceramic roundel which replaces a stone tablet unveiled in 1955. It marks the site of **St. Bartholomew's Chantry**, which was the local branch of the Cluniac Priory of St. Pancras in Lewes. It was burned down by the French in 1514. The street curving round to the right is Prince Albert Street but instead of following it we're going to turn right into Market Street and the left into Nile Street. Make for the Big & Tall Clothing Company. On the pillar to the right of the entrance is a plain, elegant plaque put up by the friends and family of **Sam Gumbiner** (1912-1985) about whom we can tell you nothing.

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At the end of Nile Street you come into Prince Albert Street where it is joined by Black Lion Street. Make for 'The Black Lion' just over the road. There was once a brewery attached and here you will find one of the finest pieces of work by Eric Gill in Brighton. It honours **Deryk Carver** (d. 1555). A Fleming by birth, he is believed to have come to Brighton in about 1546. He was burned at Lewes during the reign of Mary I. The inscription was paid for by private subscription and unveiled in 1926,

Running along by the pub is a 'twitten', a narrow lane between buildings. This is Black Lion Lane, the scene of a rather bizarre race in 1790. Go along here, cross over Ship Street and go through the twitten opposite. This is Ship Street Gardens. Notice as you pass it, a very handsome fig tree hanging over a garden wall.

You come out into Middle Street and you want the building almost opposite you. It's called, for the moment at least, 'The Backpacker's Rest'. This is No.20b. Middle Street, where **William Friese-Greene** (1855-1921) carried out cinematographical experiments in the back garden. His handsome plaque is by the bay window. It was unveiled in 1951 during the Festival of Britain to coincide with the release of the film 'The Magic Box' starring Robert Donat as William Friese-Greene.

Walk to the bottom of Middle Street, past the synagogue, to the sea front and turn right. Our next plaque is in West Street. No.77 is now The Creation Club and it stands on the site of a house owned by the Thrales. **Henry Thrale** (1728-1781) was the son of a wealthy London brewer, his wife **Hester Thrale** (later Piozzi) (1741-1821) was Welsh. She became a great friend of Dr. Samuel Johnson who, at one time, practically took up residence in the Thrales' London home. He stayed with them in Brighton, as did the diarist Fanny Burney. The Regency Society's blue roundel is by the club's fire exit. The iron post in the pavement is all that remains of the Thrales' house.

Come back to the sea front and continue walking towards Hove. If you are lucky enough to find the Brighton Centre open, pop in. On a column in the foyer is a plaque commemorating the last public performance given by **Bing Crosby** (1904-1977). Pass the Grand Hotel, cross the bottom of Cannon Place, pass the Metropole and the ruins of the West Pier and make for Regency Square. It's where the Royal Sussex Regiment war memorial stands. Turn up the right-hand side of the square, cross Queensbury Mews to No.65/66. Here Brighton Corporation has placed a slate roundel honouring **Sir Edwin Landseer** (1802-1873). If you peer at the plaque you will see that he is rather

disparagingly described as a Victorian painter of animals, quite ignoring the fact that he designed the lions at the foot of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square.

Cross the green in the middle of the square and make for the bottom of the other side. Two neighbouring houses have plaques to two very different people. No. 2 bears a neat stone tablet dedicated to **Dr William King** (1786-1865), social reformer, founder of The Co-operator. His plaque was funded by the Co-operative Party. Next door, at No. 1, lived a remarkable woman. **Harriet Mellon** (1777?-1837), was an actress. She married twice. Her first husband was an elderly banker who left her an extremely rich widow and her second husband made her a duchess.

Go round the corner past the Regency Restaurant, No. 131 Kings Road, to the Melrose Restaurant, No. 132 Kings Road. On the left of the wooden façade is a Centenary of Cinema plaque.

**The Pandora Gallery** once stood here and it is where films were shown for the first time outside London. The plaque was unveiled on March 25, 1996, exactly 100 years after that first showing.

Continue along Kings Road, cross Preston Street and pass the Hilton West Pier Hotel. This replaced the Bedford Hotel, destroyed by fire in 1964, together with the plaque to **Charles Dickens**.

Our last port-of-call is Cavendish Place and there are two plaques to find, almost opposite one another. On the right is No. 12 where **Horace Smith** (1779-1849) lived. A poet and novelist, it was he who first called Brighton 'Queen of Watering Places' and 'Old Ocean's Bauble'. Almost opposite at No. 6 lived **Dion Boucicault** (1820?-1890).

His plaque recalls that he was a favourite of Queen Victoria and his play 'London Assurance' is still occasionally performed.

We've now come to the end of our walk and we hope you enjoyed it. In our three trails we have concentrated on the sea front area of Brighton and Hove but there are more plaques to see. We hope to publish a complete list which will give you the opportunity of plaque-spotting with the aid of a map and a Bus Saver ticket.

If you would like to read about the area we suggest you get hold of Clifford Musgrave's 'Life in Brighton' or Timothy Carder's 'The Encyclopaedia of Brighton'. If you are interested in the Regency period then 'Brighton' by Osbert Sitwell and Margaret Barton, unfortunately long out-of-print, is particularly good.



# The Regency Society

CONSIDERING THE PAST  
FRAMING THE FUTURE

[www.regencysociety.org](http://www.regencysociety.org)

The Regency Society is the oldest conservation and amenity society in Brighton and Hove. The Society is for everybody who cares about preserving the heritage of the city and ensuring that new developments improve the quality of life here. It is also for anybody who would like to learn more about the beautiful buildings we have inherited and how best to live in and use them today.

The Society was formed in 1945 to fight the proposed demolition and redevelopment of the terraces and squares of the seafront. It is a registered charity which campaigns for the preservation of the historic architecture of Brighton and Hove and promotes Georgian, Regency, Victorian and 20th and 21st century art and architecture.

The Society also works with Brighton and Hove Council and other bodies on planning matters such as new roads, buildings and the use of open spaces.

Leading authorities from around the country come to Brighton to share their experience and expertise with members of the Society through a programme of lectures - details of the current series are on our website.

The Society also organises study trips for members, which have included a day trip to Greenwich, and week-long study tours to the North-East and to the South-West, as well as East Anglia.

The Regency Society worked for the establishment of conservation areas in Brighton and Hove and expects to be represented on the Design Panel which advises the Council on planning applications. It has made financial contributions to the restoration of several important buildings in the town. It maintains an archive of items of local interest and also loans a number of items of furniture to the Royal Pavilion.

Visit our web site for membership details,  
or telephone 01273 732234



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## PLAQUE TRAIL

# 3

### THE OLD TOWN OF BRIGHTON

We invite you to join us on a walk to look at some of the interesting commemorative plaques in the City of Brighton and Hove. We're taking you from Old Steine to Cavendish Place, via some of the oldest streets in Brighton, showing you a wide variety of plaques on the way. Allow an hour or so for the plaques, plus some time for the shops and restaurants

We begin at the top right-hand corner of Old Steine, just north of St. James' street. Look first at the two houses facing you, one a doctor's surgery, the other propped up with scaffolding. These are 'The Blue and Buffs', all that remain of a group of houses painted in the colours of the Whig Party, supported by the Prince Regent.

