



English Merchant Shipping, Maritime  
Communities and Trade from the Spanish  
Armada to the Seven Years War

Walking Tour One

The Elizabethans  
Discovery & Empire

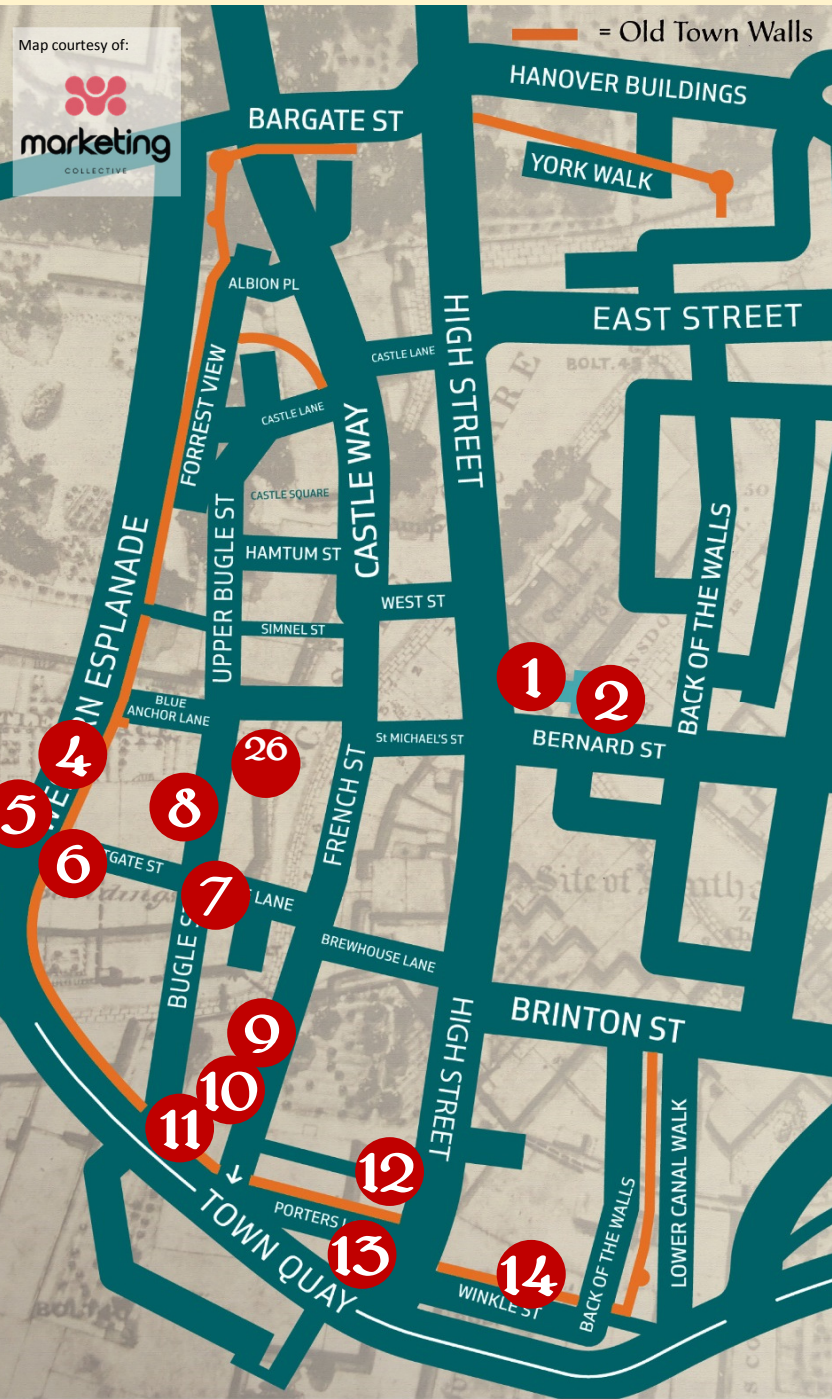


This is a self-guided tour starting from Holy Rood Church, High Street, Southampton, UK, and will take approximately 90 minutes to complete.

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## 1 Holy Rood Church, High Street, Southampton

Holy Rood Church is also known as the sailors' church, where sailors went to say their prayers for safe voyages and returns. Bombed during the Second World War, it was not rebuilt, but left in its ruined state as a memorial garden commemorating the Merchant Navy. The church weathercock survives in the form of a gilded ship. In the late 16th century, the quarter-jacks on the clock tower were installed, depicting the legendary founder of Southampton, Sir Bevis, and his squire, the giant Ascupart.



*Holy Rood Church*

In 1554, Philip of Spain had Mass celebrated here when he arrived in Southampton on his way to marry Mary I. One of the benefits the town received from that visit was to be granted the monopoly of the sweet wine trade from the Levant, which was an important source of income in the second half of the 16th century. The monopoly was usually rented out to a leading noble, such as Queen Elizabeth's favourites, the Earl of Leicester and the Earl of Essex.

*To the north of the church are the remains of a house*

## 2 The house of Lawrence Drowse

If you walk around to Holy Rood Place, to the north of the Church, you can see the diaper brickwork of a Tudor mansion, built on the site of the original vicarage.

In 1588 Southampton found itself on the front line as the Spanish Armada bore down on England. The town was asked to supply two ships to aid the defence of the country but pleaded poverty and only provided one ship. The *Angel* was a 120-ton merchant ship owned by the merchant and mayor,





*The remains of the house of Lawrence Prowse*

Richard Goddard, and captained by Lawrence Prowse. The *Angel* became one of the eight English ships that Francis Drake used as fireships to break up the Armada. Goddard had traded with Spain, importing wine, figs and

raisins and exporting kerseys, long cloth and baizes to both Spain and France. Goddard received £450 in compensation for the loss of his ship. Prowse, who made a living as a privateer, later captained the *Elizabeth* which was involved in the sack of Cadiz in 1596. Prowse became mayor in 1618 despite being illiterate.

*Cross the High Street, go up St Michael's Street, cross Castle Way and proceed along Church Lane to St Michael's Square*

### 3 St Michael's Square

St Michael's Church is the oldest building within the walled town of Southampton, dating from 1070. In the 16th century the town's fish market was held in the square. Much of the fish at this time came from Newfoundland; local merchants and fishermen had been making the journey since the first quarter of the 16th century. St Michael's parish was where most mariners lived as they wanted to be near the quays – West Quay and Town Quay – so they were available to take any opportunities for work. Voyages ranged from short coastal trips to longer ones across the Atlantic. Many of the sailors were also called upon to serve in the ships battling the Spanish Armada. After the Armada was defeated – more by the weather than by battle – wounded soldiers and sailors would not have pensions they could call upon. However, chests were put into local churches to collect alms for the men. One such chest can be found in St Michael's Church and is known as 'Philip of Spain's chest'.



*St Michael's Church*

*Cross the square and go down Blue Anchor Lane. At the bottom turn left and proceed along to the area of the walls which now forms part of the carpark for the Pig in the Wall. This building was formerly known as the Ronceval*

## **4** The Ronceval Warehouse

The Ronceval was the largest of the warehouses owned by the town; it had been left to Southampton by the medieval merchant Dame Claramunda. By the second half of the 16th century, Southampton's trade was declining and new sources of income had to be found. Southampton was one of the first towns to get involved in privateering, by preying on ships belonging to enemy states, usually Spain or France. Merchants would be granted a licence from the Crown and at their own expense would rig out a ship to take on the 'adventure'. Ships and goods seized in this way would be bought back to the town where the mayor, in his position as admiral of the port,

would adjudicate any disputes and see that all interested parties received their cut, including the Queen. The town warehouses were leased out to a leading privateer. The Ronceval was leased by George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, known as the privateering earl, who also rented the Wool House and the Tin House. Between 1589 and 1592 he used Southampton for a number of his voyages and he was made a burgess in 1589. His most successful expeditions involved taking Portuguese and Spanish prizes off the Azores and his privateered goods



*The Ronceval*

included large quantities of ginger and sugar. The Southampton Records for 1592 note that a local ship, the barque *Berry*, met with the victorious Cumberland after the Battle of Flores where he had captured the Portuguese ship, the *Madre de Deus*. They hailed him with trumpets and drums and entertained him on their ship. Clifford was later involved with the formation of the East India Company.

*Proceed south to the West Gate*

## **5** West Quay

On the quay in front of the gate there was a large crane which used a treadmill to lift cargo out of the ships. The town had a paid official who looked after the crane and received a town livery. These cranes were so important they appear on 16th-century town maps. On the south side of the quay was the town's main toilet. The town toilets all had descriptive names, such as the Jakes, the Little House of Easement and the House of Sighs; there were constant complaints about the stench and piling up of dung. Nearby was a salt-works where the polluted seawater was boiled down to make salt. The locals complained about the smoke from that, too.



*Site of West Quay with West Gate on the right*

## 6 West Gate

The West Gate was one of the most important gates in the town and led out onto the West Quay. It was well defended with a double portcullis and later gun ports were added to the tower over the gate. Vessels from France, the Low Countries and Spain would use the quays and were mostly involved in traditional trade, but some of the ships and cargo were privateered goods. Both types of trade needed men who could assist the conduct of business and speak a range of languages. The townspeople of Southampton were multi-cultural and included French Protestant refugees, economic migrants from the Low Countries, as well as locally born merchants who, as part of their training, would often spend time abroad working and learning Spanish and Portuguese.

John Delisle was a migrant French Protestant, a clothier and merchant with links to Guernsey. He lived in St Lawrence parish and took on a number of minor corporation offices such as constable, discreet of the market and broker in which post he informed the burgesses of any bargains in the town. He could board ships in the harbour to arrange purchases and sales on behalf of townspeople. He got into trouble for saying that the official coal measure of the town was a disgrace and had to pay a fine as a result. He acted as French interpreter and was also used as a translator by Elizabeth I.





*West Gate*

The Bremes were Flemish migrants from the Low Countries, brewers, gunners and official town glaziers; they requested this privilege because of the arrival of several Huguenot glass makers into the town at this period, which threatened the monopoly of the Flemish glaziers. Peter Breme was a fife player and assisted with training at the town musters. In 1593 his translation skills were employed during a case relating to the taking of a prize ship sailing under the colours of the king of Spain but with a very disgruntled Dutch crew.

Nicholas Cotton acted as Spanish interpreter. The Cotton family were important merchants and Edward Cotton was well known for his efforts in trying to gain the release of English prisoners captured in Spain. He also attempted to secure the release of mariners held as 'Turkey slaves' in Algiers for which he was commended by the Council in a letter to the mayor of Southampton.

*Proceed through the gate and head up towards the Duke of Wellington*

In 1602 dwellers on this street were admonished for:

*"throwing downe ther water into the streets whereby they do decay the paving. And in tyme of winter in open weather do Cawsse the streets to be filthy and dirty And in frost to be so glassy with Ice that no man is able to travel that way without danger"*



## 7 The Duke of Wellington



*The Duke of Wellington*

In the 16th century the Duke of Wellington pub was known as the Beer House. It had been an important corner tenement and previously home to the first mayor of Southampton, Benedict Ace, but now it was owned by a Fleming migrant family who dominated the production of beer in the town. Beer was a staple commodity and it was also important for ships going on long voyages because it was stable and did not go off easily. The Beer House was big enough to produce

the large quantities of beer needed, which would then be put in barrels and rolled down the street to West Quay and loaded onto the waiting ships.

*Turn left up Bugle Street; on the west side of the street is a timber -framed house with square-shaped bow windows called Normandie House*

## 8 Normandie House



In the late 16th century Normandie House was the home of William Ghost, privateer and mariner, and his wife Joan, who was a lodging-house keeper and unlicensed tippler. As a mariner Ghost was master of the *Jonas*, which shipped to ports such as Bordeaux. He also voyaged to Newfoundland on the *Archangel* and at Cape Bonavista fought a Spanish ship and captured its cable and anchor. He was paid £2 13s 4d for providing a ship's kettle for the *Elizabeth*, in preparation for a voyage which resulted in the burning of Cadiz. Among the lodgers who stayed at his house was 'a blackamoor' whose death there in 1598 was recorded in St Michael's parish register.

In 1599 William was boatswain for the *Castle of Hampton* on a privateering voyage. After some initial success, half of the crew became prisoners on the island of Terceira in the Azores.



*Normandie House*

Ghost had remained with the ship and made it back to England. The others eventually returned and wanted to find out what had happened to their cargo including the 600 ducats hidden on the Spanish ship they had captured. Interestingly, on his return to England in 1602, Ghost had enough money to buy a half share in the *Ann of Plymouth*. William probably died in the plague outbreak of 1603/4 and to make ends meet his widow became an unlicensed tippler, a seller of beer, and a huckster selling goods like eggs and peas around the local markets.



*Retrace your steps and carry on down Brew House Lane to the south of the Duke of Wellington; when it meets French Street turn right and carry on down to the Weigh House*

## 9 The Weigh House

The Weigh House, as its name suggests, is where cargoes were weighed to judge how much customs duty should be paid. In earlier centuries it was primarily wool that was weighed here but in the sixteenth century the most prominent commodity was woad. Woad was a natural blue dye and the woad from Southampton would make its way to Salisbury, which was the main market, as the dye was used in the town's cloth industry. The trade was dominated by men such as Angelo Manella, one of a small but important clique of Portuguese merchants living in the town. It was likely that many of these Portuguese merchants were Jewish converts to Christianity – they had converted to save themselves from persecution in their home

country. These merchants also became financiers to Don Antonio, the half-Jewish pretender to the Portuguese throne at a time when Portugal was ruled by the kings of Spain. In 1590-1 Don Antonio was in Southampton en route for a counter armada attack on Lisbon. He was made a free burgess and given a banquet in the Audit House where new rushes were laid in his honour. Southampton sent a ship on this expedition, which was as unsuccessful as the Spanish Armada had been.



*The Weigh House*

*Proceed down French Street; on the west side you will see a large window set into a stone wall - this is the site of the West Hall*

## **10** West Hall

The West Hall, one of the most important and largest properties in the town, was traditionally leased out to domiciled foreign merchants. In the late 16th and early 17th centuries it was let to the de la Motte family, who were Huguenot refugees fleeing religious persecution in France. The Huguenot families had trade connections with England and the Channel Isles, so that trade route also became an escape route.

Judith de la Motte became a leader of that migrant community. She married Philip de la Motte, an elder in the church and had fourteen children but still found time to run the family weaving business and dyeing works at West Hall. It was a large-scale enterprise employing many weavers and





*West Hall*

outworkers and producing a cloth known as ‘Hamton Serge’ which was then traded to the Channel Isles and France. Judith also began the ‘De la motte Year Book’, which made annual notes about key events in the town and was kept up for nearly 200 years.



*Carry on down French Street and, at the end of the street, look to the west side where you will see the Wool House*

## **11** The Wool House

Many of the early English colonies in America were at least part funded by money made by privateering. Walter Raleigh used the money he made to try and establish a colony at Roanoke. Raleigh brought three ships he had seized into Southampton with cargo including elephant’s tusks which were stored in the Wool House.

In 1587 Cowne Jacobson, a very disgruntled merchant from Zeeland and master of a barque called the *Christopher*, gave evidence in the mayor’s court. He states he was at sea, sailing from Bayonne in France, when two other barques approached his vessel. They were, he assured the court, English vessels. One was painted in the stern with the cross of St George. The other ship of some 30 tons was painted all black and had an image of an ape painted on its stern. Jacobson gave a detailed description of the captain of the black ship: he was short, had no beard and was black. The privateers took not only his cargo of Spanish wool and iron but also his ship the *Christopher* and

left him instead with the black barque painted with the image of an ape. The stolen cargo would have brought a tidy sum, hundreds of pounds, possibly even a thousand pounds, when the goods were sold either in Southampton or at Meadhole on the Isle of Wight (a port particularly favoured by the more disreputable privateers). Once sold, the captain would receive one share, the crew one share, while the final share would go to those who had supported the voyage with provisions and so on. It would have been usual for the port of Southampton to receive monies for processing the cargoes and the Crown would also get a cut from customs duties.

Although we don't know the privateers' names, there was a mariner called Black Ralph living in Southampton at around this time. It is also possible that in 1588 he, like other privateers, joined the English Fleet to help defeat the Spanish Armada.



*The Wool House*

*Turn left and cross Town Quay Park; ahead is a square stone building, known as Quilter's Vault*

## 12 Quilter's Vault

In the late sixteenth century, Quilter's Vault was part of a building known as the Virginia Inn, named after Elizabeth I the Virgin Queen, as was the colony of Virginia. The proprietor, Olive Addison, was the widow of John Addison, fishmonger and merchant, and sister of the Southampton mayor Peter Stoner. She held land in Romsey and left good legacies to her children including a walnut cupboard, silver salts, goblets, spoons and bowls. It is likely that the walnut wood was from the Americas. The inn was close to the Town Quay at the bottom of High Street where all sorts of new and unusual foodstuffs, including potatoes, were sold. The first reference to a potato in England is in the Southampton mayor's account for 1593/4 when the mayor, John Hopton, gave ten pounds of potatoes as a gift to the Earl of Hertford.



Quilter's Vault

*Carry on walking ahead onto High Street; turn right and proceed down the road to the remains of the Water Gate*



## 13 Water Gate

The Water Gate, when built, was as large as the Bargate and led onto the Town Quay. It is where the town official, known



*The Water Gate*

as the Water Bailiff, was situated and where he collected various customs dues from the goods entering and leaving the port. The Water Gate was also where passengers would congregate, looking to take passage across the seas and was the point of arrival for those travelling back to England. In 1587 John White, map maker, artist and early colonist of Roanoke and of Jamestown and the man who named New England,

arrived back in England along with a Native American companion. White was back to collect provisions for Roanoke, which was not as hospitable a place for a colony as had been hoped. White, however, could not get a ship back to the colony because of the threat of the Spanish Armada, all ships having been ordered to stay in port. By the time he did arrive back in America the colony, including his own daughter and her family, had disappeared without a trace.

*Proceed down to the pedestrian crossing, cross the High Street and then carry on down Winkle Street*

## 14 The Chapel of St Julien

The whole site of the once-prosperous God's House, including the chapel of St Julien, was and is still held by Queen's College, Oxford. This did not prevent Elizabeth I offering the use of the Chapel to French and Walloon Protestant refugees who were fleeing persecution and religious wars in the Low Countries and France in the second half of the sixteenth century. These merchant strangers did much to boost the flagging economy of Southampton during Elizabeth's reign particularly by setting up weaving and cloth making in the town.

The college appointed Francis Mille to be warden of God's House to oversee the collection of its many rents. Mille was a close associate of Francis Walsingham and, like him, contributed to Humphrey Gilbert's voyage of exploration, which was primarily funded by leading Southampton Merchants. This journey, in 1583, is



*Chapel of St Julien*

credited with being a founding event of the British Empire after Gilbert claimed Newfoundland for Elizabeth I. Gilbert's ship the *Squirrel* foundered on its return and Gilbert's licence to explore passed to his half-brother Walter Raleigh. Walsingham had looked on the potential colony as a place to send disgruntled Catholics and several of the Southampton contributors were closet Catholics, although other funders were more puritanical Protestants.

Francis Mille was also responsible for tracking down any Catholics who might be plotting against Queen Elizabeth, most notably the Babington Plotters who sought to put Mary, Queen of Scots, on the throne. One of the leading conspirators was Southampton-born Chidiock Tichborne. The uncovering of the plot led to the execution of Mary, and the traitor's death of Tichborne in 1586. The execution was one of the contributing factors to the launch of the Spanish Armada after Mary willed her claim to the English throne to Philip of Spain.

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