

MAP LOCATIONS



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- 1** Ilfracombe Museum and Ilfracombe Theatre, (Former Ilfracombe Hotel site)
- 2** George Klee and The Ilfracombe Band Stand, (Runnymede Bandstand)
- 3** Dolly's Café / The Swiss Café, 4 Promenade
- 4** Ilfracombe Pavilion Site, Promenade (base of Capstone)
- 5** St James' Street - location of former Capstone Hotel, (Capstone Hotel, St James' Street)
- 6** Ilfracombe Harbour
- 7** Charles Shadwell, Ilfracombe Harbour
- 8** Rapparee Cove
- 9** Philip Becker, lived at 14 Harne Road then 20 Cambridge Grove.
- 10** Joseph Hahn, lived at 25 Cambridge Grove then Apsley Terrace
- 11** Kate Hahn, lived at 27 Oxford Grove.
- 12** Thornton Thomas, Ilfracombe Football Field
- 13** Tyrrell Hospital
- 14** Luigi Cavallo, Wilder Road
- 15** Holy Trinity Church and Graveyard

13. TYRRELL HOSPITAL Tyrrell Community Hospital

Injured Belgian soldiers were present in Ilfracombe from early on in WWI - the North Devon Journal reported that 50 injured soldiers were sent for care and rehabilitation to Watermouth Castle, The Cliffs Hydro Hotel, Tyrrell Hospital and Westwell Hall in late 1914.

Various locals, including Mrs Hammond, Mrs Burns and Mrs MA Wood of the Tyrrell Hospital, were awarded the Belgian honour, "Palme d'Or de l'Ordre de la Couronne" for their nursing services during the Great War.

Also during WWII, the North Devon Royal Pioneer Corps donated over £300 to the hospital, allowing it to stay open. A plaque was put up in their honour.

14. LUIGI CAVALLO Wilder Road

Cavallo Steam Laundry (and the Cavallo Royal Marine Theatre Group).

Born in Monopoli, Italy, Luigi Cavallo and his wife Emma ran a couple of laundry businesses over the course of their careers. The pair were first recorded together in Sussex in 1891, where they ran the Royal Marine Steam Laundry in Eastbourne. Within ten years they had moved to Ilfracombe, as noted in the 1901 census, where they ran the Steam Laundry.

The pair had eight children, four of whom were born in Ilfracombe, and most of whom were employed in the family business. Interestingly, Luigi also appeared to have a flair for

amateur dramatics and ran "The Cavallo Royal Marine Theatrical Group".

15. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH AND GRAVEYARD

The graves for Emile Josephus Francken and Camille Kerkevoord, Belgian soldiers who died of their injuries in WWI, are here. Part of the church is also (supposedly) the oldest building in Ilfracombe - the Church Spire which was built in the 14th Century, though there has been a church here since at least 1000 AD if not much earlier - as it was one of the two sites that were settled in Ilfracombe early on, the other being the harbour.

Your Self-Guided Tour through Ilfracombe's Multicultural History

1. ILFRACOMBE MUSEUM AND ILFRACOMBE THEATRE (Former Ilfracombe Hotel site)

The Museum opened in 1932, and the Landmark Theatre is in the current location of the former Ilfracombe Hotel.

The Ilfracombe Hotel opened in 1867, shortly followed by the building, extending and opening of the Ilfracombe Railway in 1870 - 1874. Both of these openings made Ilfracombe more accessible to a greater number of people and further enhanced its reputation as a luxury resort.

Thanks to these two openings, the tourism boom really begins for this small stretch of North Devon.

2. GEORGE KLEE AND THE ILFRACOMBE BAND STAND (Runnymede Bandstand)

An 1876 edition of The Ilfracombe Chronicle newspaper goes to great lengths to express significant joy, excitement and anticipation that George Klee would be visiting Ilfracombe for an entire season with his Brass and String Band.

Born in Germany in 1851, George was already an established musician by the time he first began to visit Ilfracombe and it became a regular enough event that he dated and then married Hannah Clark of Barnstaple in 1880, temporarily settling in Bath with her shortly after. By 1881 the pair were living in Ilfracombe, with their first child, Frederick Thomas, being born later that year. This was a permanent move for them and Ilfracombe became George and Hannah's home, with George becoming a frequent performer at the Ilfracombe Pavilion, in addition to the town Bandmaster.

3. DOLLY'S CAFÉ / THE SWISS CAFÉ 4 Promenade

Located on the promenade opposite Capstone Hill and not far from the Ilfracombe Museum, the café was opened in the 1890s by Dominico Semadeni and Alma Semadeni (née Fissler). The couple were originally from the Italian speaking part of Switzerland, Val Poschiavo, which is along the Switzerland-Italian border. Alma and Dominico were economic migrants, hoping to escape abject poverty in England and specifically in the up-and-coming town of Ilfracombe.

4. ILFRACOMBE PAVILION SITE Promenade (base of Capstone)

Now the site of the bottom of Capstone Hill and the crazy golf.

The Ilfracombe Pavilion became a cornerstone cultural venue in the town of Ilfracombe, drawing performers and artists from all over the world. Later, in times of war, it even became one of the most crucial sites of fundraising for the war effort in North Devon.

Ilfracombe's reputation grew as the premier spot for musicians to gather and make a living in.

Just one of the many examples was the Hahn family. Joseph and Margeritha Hahn (and their German born teenage son Jacob) were first recorded in a census, as residents of Bath in 1881. All three of them were already working as itinerant musicians and at some point within the next ten years they moved down to Ilfracombe and were found at 25 Cambridge Grove. Evidently an artistically gifted family, they were orchestral musicians, music teachers and conductors, and even had several relatives in the area who had similarly musical careers.

5. ST JAMES' STREET - LOCATION OF FORMER CAPSTONE HOTEL, WHERE THERE WAS A SYNAGOGUE DURING WWII (Capstone Hotel, St James' Street)

Records from the Jewish Year Book for 1945 - 1946 list a synagogue in Ilfracombe that formed during the Second World War. There was no purpose-built building but instead the Jewish population - both civilian and soldier - was able to rent the first floor of the Capstone Hotel on St James' Street. A significant number of those who attended the weekly Sabbath services were American, as with the arrival of the American military from 1942 onwards, so too came American-Jewish soldiers.

6. ILFRACOMBE HARBOUR

Location of Ilfracombe's first (Iron Age) Settlement and the working harbour that so much of its economy relied on.

By the 12th century, Ilfracombe had established itself as an important port, facilitating trade with Wales and other parts of England. This trade gradually spread to become a global connection between this small seaside town and the wider world.

7. CHARLES SHADWELL (Ilfracombe Harbour or Hele Bay)

German Mariner in Ilfracombe, 19th Century.

Charles appears to have moved to Ilfracombe in the 1850s or 1860s. He is recorded as holding the profession of 'Mariner' - which could encompass anything from general sailing to fishing - being married to a woman called Sarah and having children at the time of the 1871 census. Sarah and Charles had four children, all born in Ilfracombe and the oldest was already ten by the time the census was recorded, showing just how long Charles had been present in Ilfracombe despite being one of the 'newer' locals.

Charles settled into his life in Ilfracombe well and lived in Hele with his family until his death in 1892 at 62 years of age. He was buried in the Holy Trinity Church's graveyard under the name Charles Thadwald.

8. RAPPAREE COVE

The location of many shipwrecks, human remains and coins. Location of HMS London shipwreck. Also below the site of an Iron Age fortress.

Rapparee Cove - one of several Ilfracombe coves - is no stranger to shipwrecks and it was during one such wreck that the dangerous cove earned its name. In 1691 a vessel carrying dozens of Irish soldiers (known as Rapparees) floundered against its lethal rocks, possibly mistaking the cove as the opening to the Ilfracombe Harbour, or perhaps being driven into the cliffs by harsh Atlantic winds. Shipwrecks were common off the coast of North Devon and Ilfracombe until recently, though few of them have a legacy as mysterious as that of the HMS London, which sank just off Rapparee Cove on the 9th of October 1796. The vessel had a very significant "cargo" - 106 human beings of Caribbean origin - marked as French Prisoners of War. Chained up in the hold, they were in the process of being transported to Bristol to stand trial and be ransomed back to France.

In 1949 the Spanish vessel, S.S Monte Gurugu, sent out a distress signal as it sank beneath the waves. Twenty five of its thirty seven strong crew were rescued by the Ilfracombe lifeboat - much to the praise and acclaim of the Spanish Government.

9. PHILIP BECKER Lived at 14 Harne Road then 20 Cambridge Grove.

Beloved German Music Teacher and Bandmaster.

10. JOSEPH HAHN Lived at 25 Cambridge Grove

German Musician and Conductor.

11. KATE HAHN Lived at 27 Oxford Grove.

Headmistress and Music Teacher. Daughter of Joseph Hahn.

12. THORNTON THOMAS - ILFRACOMBE FOOTBALL FIELD

Born in 1908 in Swansea, Wales, Thornton Thomas was the mixed race son - half African-American, half Welsh - of a single mother. In 1938, after a dramatic childhood and early adult life of adventures, stowing away on a boat, Thornton made his way to Ilfracombe and became a local footballing legend.

Life was still not without difficulties or discrimination but he became a beloved cornerstone of the Ilfracombe community. Even today, Thornton is remembered as a deeply kind man, one of the group to first bring electricity to North Devon and a star of the local football team. He is buried in Ilfracombe cemetery.

Continued overleaf, with Tour Map...

Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots

DEVON'S MULTICULTURAL HISTORY

ILFRACOMBE

Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots is a community multicultural history project that in 2024 set out to find, share and celebrate Ilfracombe's diverse and multicultural heritage, past and present. The Heritage Trail created as a result of this project showcases some of the hidden histories we uncovered.

The tour begins at the town's museum which opened in 1932 before heading past the bandstand to the harbour. This is the scene of many shipwrecks including that of the HMS London in 1796 and the Spanish vessel SS Monte Gurugu in 1949.

After the extension of the pier in 1820, the town gained a new lease of life. In the next 30 years the town's population had almost trebled to more than 5000 residents. With the opening of The Ilfracombe Hotel in 1867 and the Ilfracombe Railway in 1870, this small stretch along the coast truly came into its own.

With the tourist industry came the need for workers necessary to support it, and individuals from all walks of life moved to Ilfracombe to make their fortune, find a community, perform, entertain and seek safe refuge.

Musicians such as George Klee, Philip Becker and the Hahn family settled in the town. During World War II the refugee musicians of the North Devon Royal Pioneer Corps donated over £300 to the hospital, allowing it to stay open. A plaque was put up in their honour.

For more information and details about each of the location's stories and others unearthed during this project, visit:

www.tellingourstoriesdevon.org.uk

