

SOUTHPORT HERITAGE TRAIL

Southport owes its existence to the growing popularity of sea bathing along the Lancashire coast in the late eighteenth century. One of the most popular bathing locations was South Hawes, an area of sand dunes and scattered fishermen's cottages. Here in 1792 William Sutton provided the first summer lodging house for visitors, then in 1798 he built the South Port Hotel, which gave the future town its name. From this small beginning at what is now the south end of Lord Street the resort began to emerge, as Sutton was joined by others catering for the growing number of visitors.

Lord Street dates from the 1820s when the joint Lords of the Manor, the Bold-Houghton and Fleetwood-Hesketh families, laid out a spacious street and began the policy of granting building leases which stipulated that development should not be of an industrial or offensive nature. It was first called Lords' Street after the founding families.

The character of Lord Street and the resort however was established during and after the 1840's with the policy of the new landlords, especially Charles Scarisbrick, of encouraging planned residential development. This policy, continued by the town's leading citizens, was accompanied by a deliberate attempt to develop the town as a seaside resort for the 'refined' and 'well to do'.

Lord Street is famously believed to be one of the first boulevards in the world. The young exiled Prince Louis Napoleon took lodgings just off Lord Street for a season in 1838. Much later, when he had become Emperor Napoleon III of France, he ordered his architect Hausman to rebuild the capital. The great boulevards which traverse Paris today are believed to have originated from the Emperor's memories of Lord Street – tree-lined boulevards, wide pavements and shops on the west side. The Paris boulevards in turn inspired those now found in many American cities.

By the end of the nineteenth century Southport was well established in its dual role of select residential town and high-class resort. Nowhere was this more evident than in Lord Street with its substantial hotels and public buildings, its exclusive shops and dignified public gardens.

The trail begins at the centre of Lord Street in the magnificent London Square. The architectural style of this imposing centrepiece is essentially classical, yet with the exception of the National Westminster Bank, the buildings are all twentieth century.



The **War Memorial** was built in 1923 and is dedicated to those who gave their lives in the First World War. It comprises a central obelisk over twenty metres high, flanked by two pavilions of Roman Doric colonnades. Reflective pools in the two adjacent gardens complete the design. The architects were Grayson and Barnish of Liverpool whose design was selected as the best entry in a national competition. Southport was one of the first towns to embark upon a scheme for a Memorial. The cost, about £30,000, was met by subscriptions from the public after an appeal was launched in 1919. The names of the dead from the Second World War and subsequent conflicts were added to the Colonnades in 1992. (1)

The imposing character of London Square is complemented by its four corner buildings, two of which are particularly notable bank buildings. On the left, looking from the obelisk towards London Street, is the **National Westminster Bank**. Designed by William



and Segar Owen of Warrington in an Italian Renaissance style, this yellow sandstone building is a fine example of Victorian architecture. (2)

Diagonally opposite on the corner of Lord Street and Nevill Street the former **National and Provincial Bank** of 1925-27 was built in a neoclassical style appropriate to the War Memorial nearby. (3)



Leave London Square and walk along St George's Place towards the north end of Lord Street. On the right is a row of Victorian buildings including the former **Post Office**. (4) The gardens on the left form part of the War Memorial and contain some interesting pieces of garden architecture, notably the bronze fountain and the free standing Ionic columns leading on to Lord Street. From this point one gains an excellent view of the



verandahs running the length of the west side of Lord Street. The Victorians were noted for their use of iron and glass in buildings. The Lord Street verandahs reflect many different styles and, along with the broad gardens and avenue of trees on the east side, are the most distinctive feature of Southport's shopping boulevard. Continue northwards down the east side of Lord Street crossing Hill Street. (5)



This brings you to a row of old Regency houses. The best preserved is **The Cottage, No 156** (6) which still retains its Tudor-style windows. And **No 158** has an unusual and intricate shell-shaped canopy over the front door: (7)



The long front gardens still serve as a reminder of the reason for the generous width of Lord Street. The original intention was to build well back from a chain of pools which, in time of heavy rain, used to flood. Thus at the bottom of the gardens ran an open ditch, the purpose of which was to drain off the surplus water:

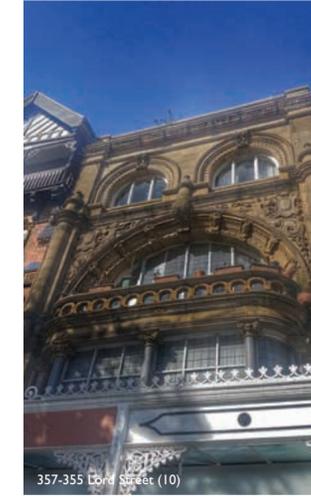


Cross on to the west side of Lord Street and turn back southwards. **The Bold Hotel** was one of Southport's first substantial hotels. The Bold Arms, as it was originally known, was designed by Thomas Mawdesley. The hotel had an excellent view of the surrounding coastline and countryside and was much admired when built in around 1830 when Southport was still a village. The Bold is in classic Regency style and its portico supported by Doric columns was originally built of timber. (8)



Continuing southwards it is worth looking up above the verandahs and noticing the different styles of decoration and ornamentation on each individual building. Some interesting and unusual features can be found along this stretch of verandahs, for example the coloured bricks and terracotta mouldings on **Nos. 479-481**. (9)

Continue along Lord Street and cross Nevill Street. The building numbered **357-355 Lord Street** dates from the turn of the century and still retains the lavish stone sculptures and original round-headed and curved windows. (10)



Next door are the **Albany Buildings** designed by local architect E.W. Johnson and built in 1884. The rather extravagant ornamentation found on these buildings includes Elizabethan-style half-timbered gables combined with heavily carved Early English Gothic-style stone windows. (11)



Further along is the former **Preston Bank, now HSBC** also designed by E.W. Johnson and built in 1889, in the Roman Corinthian style. The bank has a windowless, ornately carved facade which hides its magnificent top-lit interior. The triangular pediment is supported by polished granite Corinthian columns. Surmounting this stands a crowned statue of Neptune. On the facade are panels with the coats of arms of the City of Preston – symbol of Christ, Lamb of God bearing a flag and the initial PP. (Princes Pacis – Prince of Peace). (12)



The next group of buildings, numbers **325-319** are sometimes known as the **Muslim Buildings**. The distinctly Eastern style is displayed in the round headed horseshoe windows. (13)

The entrance to the **Wayfarers Arcade** is marked by an ornate portico with intricate ironwork. (14) **Leyland Arcade**, as it was originally known, was designed by George E. Bolshaw and opened in



1898. The long narrow approach opens out into a broad galleried area which is extensively decorated with moulded panels and friezes, ornate woodwork, stained glass windows and is elegantly enclosed by a glass and iron arched roof.

Walk back on to Lord Street and continue southwards past the former Broadbents and Boothroyds store, founded in 1825. You will now come to a building which looks like a Grecian Temple but which was in fact a bank, built in 1920-1924 from white Portland stone and designed by Francis Jones of Manchester. The giant ionic columns and massive bronze door symbolise the solidity and security of the bank. Next to this is the imposing facade of the **Scarisbrick Hotel**. This was originally



The Hesketh Arms, named after the local Lord of the Manor, Robert Hesketh, and built in 1821. This was the third hotel erected in early Southport and described as being "the only place for the accommodation of genteel visitors." The population of Southport was then around 600 living in some 200 houses. (15)

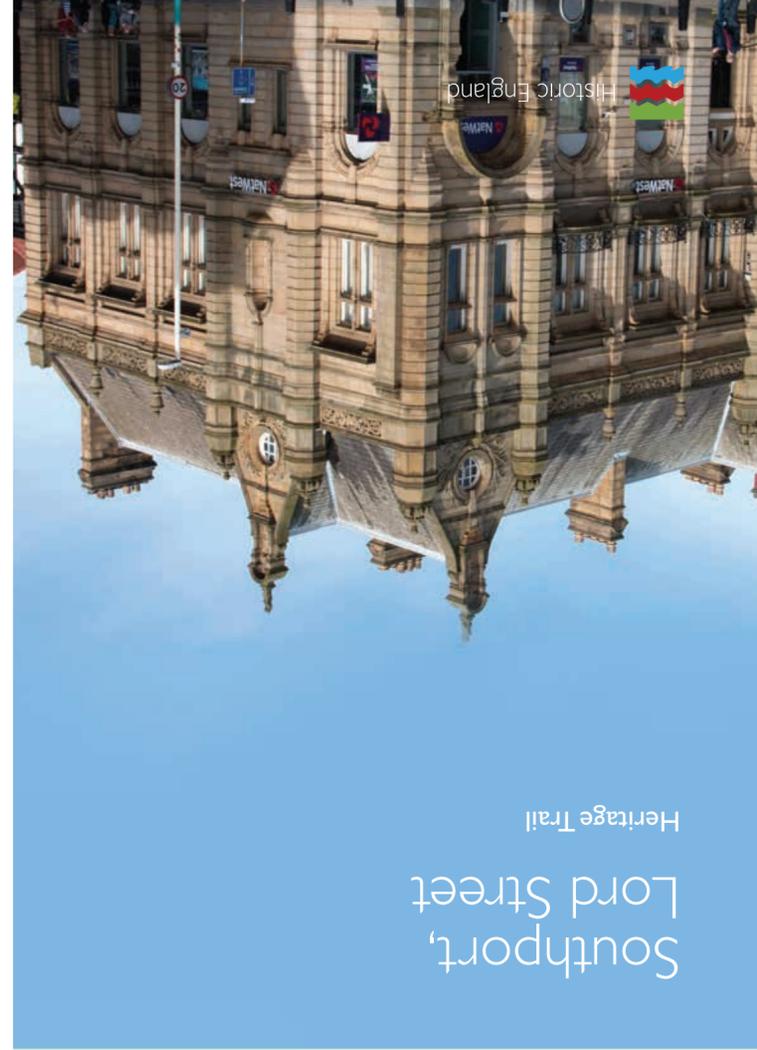
Cross over to the east side of Lord Street to the Municipal Buildings. The **Town Hall** was built in 1852/1853 on the initiative of the Improvement Commissioners. It was designed by local architect Thomas Withnell (and built by local builder, Thomas Stanley). Again essentially classical the building displays Grecian Doric and Roman Ionic columns. The portico is 5.5 metres high and the balcony is surmounted by a pediment, containing a design, representing the figures of Justice, Mercy and Truth. (16)



Next to this is a row of shops in Cambridge Arcade which separates the Town Hall from the Atkinson (formerly the Arts Centre) and this houses an art gallery, museum and library. (17)

This building was designed by Maxwell and Tuke of Manchester and was completed in 1874. The asymmetrical elevation has a central porte-cochere and a lofty clock tower with the original bells intact, which sound the quarters.

The Atkinson Art Gallery, built in 1876-78 also in buff sandstone, was designed by Waddington and Sons of Burnley.



The leaflet has been produced in conjunction with Historic England to promote Lord Street's rich history and built heritage. The architectural importance of Lord Street was officially recognised in 1973 when it was declared a Conservation Area of outstanding importance. Since then much thoughtful and enterprising work has been carried out in respect of restoration and preservation.

Southport Civic Society aims to improve and safeguard the condition and character of Lord Street and Southport as whole. The Society has had several successful campaigns in its 50+ year life. It first highlighted the importance of Southport's shopping verandahs which led to the Government-backed scheme to conserve them, when other towns were losing theirs.

In later years it gave awards to those who best maintained their verandahs. Several tree planting schemes have resulted in nearly 50 trees being planted in Lord Street. The Society was instrumental in first getting the bandstand replaced and then getting the Town Gardens refurbished in an appropriate manner. It raised money to pay for the restoration of the Mermaid Fountain, which led to the restoration of other fountains in Lord Street. It has fought to have Southport Pier restored over many years and more recently has insisted that the Marine Parade Bridge link to the Sea Front must be reinstated. The Society's campaign to have fairy lights restored in the trees in Lord Street had its first phase completed in December 2000, and this 'Boulevard of Light' was finally completed in 2015.

If you are interested in becoming a member please contact David Head, Hon. Sec. at 28 Union Street, Southport PR9 0QE or via email info@southportcivicsociety.org Alternatively make contact through Sefton Planning Conservation team or via Southport Tourist Office, at The Atkinson.

This trail was originally researched and written by David and Elizabeth Smith on behalf of the Southport Civic Society. Maya Ormerod updated the present edition. Images have been provided by Flickr member nyetwbgnhtgfriht and Daniel Longman.

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Civic Gardens (18)

The corner of this group of buildings which was completed in 1879 was the West Lancashire Bank but is now an extension of the Library. Fronting the Municipal Buildings are the Municipal Gardens. These together with Lord Street's other public gardens were originally privately owned and were taken over by the Improvement Commissioners in the 1860s with the intention of creating a boulevard. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a plan for the gardens was prepared by the architect Thomas H Mawson. Some of the classical stone balustrading incorporated in his designs still exists although perhaps the best feature of the gardens was the bandstand and its paired columns and

domed roof. This bandstand was demolished in 1969. However in 1987 the local branch of Marks and Spencers paid for a new bandstand to celebrate their centenary year and this is now sited in the adjacent gardens. It was not until 1999 that the **Civic Gardens** were eventually remodelled using some details from Thomas Mawson's original scheme. The gardens, including a fountain, were then named Princess Diana Gardens following the tragic death of this popular Princess. (18) Continue southwards along the east side of Lord Street, cross Eastbank Street and walk past the public gardens. Looking towards the west side, the rich architectural mix is again highlighted by

the four storey half-timbered building, number **215-219 Lord Street**, now housing a café on the upper floor. Another Southport architect, James E. Sander designed this neo Tudor-Elizabethan building at the turn of the century. Above this there are some interesting boat-building features which can also be found on other buildings in nearby Scarisbrick Avenue. (19)



215-219 Lord Street (19)

In the 1980s a handsome new Victorian-style cast iron **bandstand** (20) was added and later a cast iron and glass **pavilion** (21) was built as a new Tourist Information Centre for the town (now a bar/ café). In the last year of the twentieth century, a complementary pavilion was built in front of the Town Gardens Café (22) These three buildings were designed by local architect Martin Perry.



Bandstand (20)



Glass Pavilion Bar/Café (21)



Town Gardens Café (22)



Prince of Wales Hotel (23)

Continue along the east side until you reach the **Prince of Wales Hotel** which replaced the Union Inn built in 1805. This is one of the most impressive examples of a late nineteenth century hotel. It was built in 1876-77 as part of a speculative boom in the development of the resort at the time and was named after Prince Edward, later King Edward VII, who had just made a successful visit to the town. Advertised as 'Southport's Leading Hotel' it became one of the first R.A.C. approved hotels in the early twentieth century. In the R.A.C. Official Guide of 1908 the hotel advertised, among other comforts and luxuries, a garage and a pit. (23)

Across the street at No. 37 is a sombre stone building with a central pediment and paired arched windows on the two upper floors. This was known as **Royal Buildings** and contained one of Southport's early churches, in this case Methodist and ecclesiastical windows are still present in the interior of the building. Later the building became T.R. Highton, high class house furnishers who added and subsequently restored the handsome glass canopy. Hightons traded from this position for nearly a century. (24)



Royal Buildings (24)



Wellington Terrace (25)

Cross Portland Street and walk southwards to the next area of public gardens. Some of the original balustrading from the old bandstand area found a second home in these gardens which form an admirable frontage to the neat row of houses known as **Wellington Terrace**. This terrace of houses has a range of original fishermen's cottages behind and was re-fronted in 1818 in the Regency style of the day. These are the oldest buildings on Lord Street. (25)

Finally walk to the end of the balustrade. Inset onto the wall here is an inscription commemorating the original site of the first hotel in Southport:

The second tablet, erected at a later date, reads: 'This column was erected A.D. 1860 by the Improvement Commissioners as a tribute of respect to the late WILLIAM SUTTON commonly known as the Old Duke The Founder of Southport. He erected almost upon this spot A.D. 1792 the first house in what is now the flourishing town of Southport, then a wilderness of sandhills.' Looking back along Lord Street now, it is perhaps difficult to imagine this wilderness of sandhills as it must have appeared to Southport's first visitors. And yet how rapidly the scene was to



Balustrade Inscription (26)

The inscription reads: 'In the year of Our Lord 1792 THIS HOUSE WAS BUILT in memory of D.W. SUTTON of NORTH MEOLS, who was the first Founder and Executor of South Port, which was called his Folly for many Years, and it proves that his Foresight and his Wisdom which should be remembered with Gratitude by the LORDS of the Manor and the inhabitants of this PLACE ALSO.' (26)

change, by the 1860's Southport was already recognised as the North's premier resort and described in Greens Official Directory of 1869 in the following terms: 'Its delightful sea-girt position and the extreme salubrity of its climate, have produced an almost unparalleled change in transforming it in a few years from a small and almost unknown village... into an extensive and prosperous town chiefly composed of villa residences of elegant structure, so that it has since been styled with great appropriateness 'The Montpelier of the North.'

