The aim of a heritage trail is to promote awareness of the architectural and historical development of a particular place. This trail focuses on the town of Waterloo in north-west England and the atmosphere and rich variety of building styles which make up its unique character.

To travel to Waterloo visitors would have stepped aboard the daily coach service that ran between here and Liverpool. Alternatively they may have made use of the canal barge known as The Lancashire Witch. The vessel ran three times a day between Liverpool and Crosby with passengers presumably sightseeing on an outing and travelling via road to Waterloo.

Further along Great George’s Road the Town Hall was constructed in 1861. Notice the Local Board. From the earliest days the large room there was frequently hired out for grand forms of entertainment, such as in 1863 when the town’s Christmas Ball. Across the way can be seen some interesting decorative detail that provides some insight into the architecture of the period and the building materials used. The Town Hall is Grade II-listed.

By returning back to the centre of the town notice the impressive five lamps which surround Waterloo’s iconic Canalside. This is a remembrance of canals such as the Leeds Liverpool Canal which is located nearby. The canal was constructed in the early 19th century and commemorates the importance of the water routes for local industry. It is believed that the canal was built to supply coal to the local industries.

The Old Bank is a Grade II listed building situated at the corner of Royal Street and Park Terrace. The building is in a Tudor style and has a distinctive gabled roof. The building was originally constructed in 1841 for the Liverpool merchant William Potter mated later in 1891. They were to be the first in a magnificent plan to build a grand coastal estate but unfortunately business ran into financial difficulties and the project advanced no further.

The religious life of the neighbourhood was encouraged by the building of many churches and chapels throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many large properties had become the homes of mercantile and professional families, a number of which had been built in Waterloo Park, along Crosby Road North and South and also in the neighbourhood of Christ Church. The key access route of South Road must have been a very busy place and quickly developed into a principal thoroughfare. It was where the railway station was sited the banks and shops and of course the public houses. South Road’s heyday may have passed, but there is much to remind us of it.

The area of Waterloo Park was used as a cemetary from 1835. Over the last hundred years it has been designated as a nature reserve.

The key access route of South Road was used by many residents of the town as a means of transportation between Liverpool and Waterloo. The railway line was created in 1849 and ran between Seaforth and Crosby which undoubtedly brought much business to South Road. Bus then a shopper travelling from Southport to the shops would pay a fare of one old penny.

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By the early 1890s Waterloo was evolving into a sizable and prosperous township with architecture to match. Set back further inland in the vicinity of Waterloo Park was the rather Gothic Brampton Lea and the splendid National Bank House. The coloured brickwork and outstanding stained glass windows within Park Terrace are of particular interest.

It is strongly believed that the growing township took its name from the Royal Waterloo Hotel, although an earlier name for the area, Crosby Seabank, continued to be used for some years. The hotel’s clientele were no doubt well-to-do with an interest in fresh air and sea bathing. A fashionable promenade amongst those with means, Waterloo then being little more than a small but stylish seaside resort on the Lancashire coast.

An early glimpse of Waterloo’s growth can be gleaned from an 1824 directory listing a number of businesses including the merchant Thomas Eyre, a grocer, and an agent for the letting of houses. These small but significant clues provide evidence to the idea that Waterloo was becoming quite the tourist trap.

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Most of the present buildings date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the exception of the Liver Hotel on the corner with Crosby Road North. The Victorian era also saw a growth in the number of public houses. Many large properties had become the homes of mercantile and professional families, a number of which had been built in Waterloo Park, along Crosby Road North and South and also in the neighbourhood of Christ Church. The key access route of South Road must have been a very busy place and quickly developed into a principal thoroughfare. It was where the railway station was sited the banks and shops and of course the public houses. South Road’s heyday may have passed, but there is much to remind us of it.

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Above the more modern shop frontages can be seen some interesting decorative detail that provides some insight into Waterloo’s earlier prosperity. Worthwhile examples include the erstwhile Waterloo Constitutional Club on the corner with Curzon Road built in 1894. Curzon Road itself is named after the Conservative statesman George Nathaniel Curzon (1859–1925) who was then the local Member of Parliament. He served as Viceroy of India between 1898 and 1901 and was created Marquess of Curzon of Kedleston.

The 20th century saw far less building activity, although there were many new developments that have contributed to Waterloo’s cultural life ever since. In 1900 an electric tram service began to run between Southport and Crosby which undoubtedly brought much business to South Road. Bus then a shopper travelling from Southport to the shops would pay a fare of one old penny.

By 1910 there were 9,797 residents and 2,052 inhabited houses within Waterloo. Many large properties had become the homes of mercantile and professional families, a number of which had been built in Waterloo Park, along Crosby Road North and South and also in the neighbourhood of Christ Church. The key access route of South Road must have been a very busy place and quickly developed into a principal thoroughfare. It was where the railway station was sited the banks and shops and of course the public houses. South Road’s heyday may have passed, but there is much to remind us of it.

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The town’s Cultural Life

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Standing just around the corner at the junction of Oxford Road and Wellington Street, St John’s School House was built in the 1870s. It stands as a testament to the increasing number of young families settling in Waterloo at that time and the strong Victorian belief in a moral upbringing and good education. (18)

Walking towards East Street the much altered Volunteer Canteen survives from the 1820s. The ‘Volly’, as many locals know it, was originally a private house. The Volunteer (19) was once home to volunteers during the Boer War. No. 7 was a home of Edward Smith, captain of the ill-fated RMS Titanic which was lost on her maiden voyage in 1912. He perished along with over 1500 passengers and crew when the vessel hit an iceberg in the freezing waters of the Atlantic.

Continuing to the end of road the handsome terrace at Beach Lawn was completed in 1878 and No. 13 was home of shopping magnate Thomas Henry Ley (1837-1899). He controlled the famous White Star Line that owned the doomed RMS Titanic and was a very wealthy man. Ley was so proud of his house that he displayed his initials within its fine wrought iron work. (20)

Also amongst Beach Lawn’s varied and interesting residents were George and Anne Goodison. George was a talented civil engineer of some note who was responsible for the laying of a sewage system in the suburbs of Walton. So successful was his undertaking that Goodison Road was named after him, which in turn provided the inspiration for Everton FC’s ground of Goodison Park in 1992. His wife Anne Goodison was a keen collector of antiquities and amassed a vast collection of more than 1,000 Egyptian artefacts. Anne housed many of her antiquities in her own personal museum at the family home, but after her death in 1916, the items were sold to a private buyer who donated them to a local museum. The vast collection is now held by The Atkinson Museum and Art Gallery in Southport.

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Nelson's four charming terraces on the front offer visitors a whistle-stop visual tour of 19th century architectural styles, with typical Georgian, Regency and Victorian properties to be found here, along with a slice of the Gothic in the form of Mockbeggar House on Harbord Road. The majority of these are listed at Grade II and some are adorned with blue plaques.

Waterlooe was catapulted into the world of modern art in 2000, when the artist Anthony Gormley’s ‘Another Place’ landed on the sands. The permanent installation, featuring 100 life-sized cast iron figures, was placed upon the beach and has since become a popular tourist attraction. It could be said that after all these years, the town has returned to its origins as a place people visit for its shores. (22)

Such human intervention to beautify the landscape is nothing new. In the 1920s the four Victorian greens adorning the shore were transformed by the Council into the public gardens we have today: Marine Crescent, Adelaide and Beach Lawn Gardens. Much of the work undertaken during their transformation was carried out by unemployed local men who were taken off the ‘dole’ by the Council during periods of national economic depression. Of exceptional interest are the Inglebrook-sourced limestone rockeries in Marine and Beach Lawn Gardens. These originally had water features powered by pumps.

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Though the figures are long gone, the pavilions, paths and eye-catching stonework still remain from the 1930s plans. (22)

Waterlooe has had a long and fascinating history dating back over two hundred years. Many buildings associated with the town’s history still stand and, despite some alterations here and there, they provide a fascinating insight and understanding of Waterloo’s rich coastal heritage.

Beach Lawn (23)

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