



Commercial Heart of Harrogate

Long ago Harrogate consisted of the two separate villages of High and Low Harrogate. Low Harrogate was down in Crescent Gardens where you'll find the Royal Baths. High Harrogate sat a mile to the East of here.

Where we are standing now was open countryside, where seventeenth century visitors delighted in scenes of rural tranquillity.

But in the early 1800s, with visitor numbers to the Spa expanding, the arrival of the railways changed everything, and after the opening of the central railway station in 1862, the country walks disappeared as more and more commercial development occurred.

The current town centre is bounded by the Stray protected by an act of law that prevents any development. We hear more about the Stray later in the tour.

We are now within easy reach of all of the town's most important shopping thoroughfares, most of which lead to the War Memorial. These are the south/north routes of West Park and Parliament Street, and the east/west routes of James, Cambridge and Oxford Streets.

Today's walk takes us to an eclectic number of historic buildings dotted in amongst the shops in streets that

have changed over the years to reflect the trends of the time.

The buildings that I have selected for this walk are all part of Harrogate's story and most are of real How architectural interest.

St Peter's Church which was very richly endowed by the town's people has beautiful stained-glass windows and the Theatre which dates back to 1900 has a very fine arts and crafts foyer.

From the theatre we will walk up to the site of the former Victorian railway station that played such a pivotal role in the booming visitor economy and from here on to see two examples of Victorian philanthropy – the Carnegie library and the Almshouses.

We then come back into the fashionable heart of Harrogate to hear about its oldest surviving department store before finishing at Bettys.

There's no rush... take your time as along the way there are plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy Yorkshire hospitality.