

# 3 Montpellier Quarter

Walk 1: The Golden Age of the Victorian Spa Walk



With a group of early nineteenth century stables at its core, today's Montpellier Quarter is one of Harrogate's most attractive and vibrant retail areas. It grew around Ashfield House which is now Farrah's sweet shop on Montpellier Parade around the corner.

The house and its gardens were the traditional home of the family who owned the Crown Hotel,

The quaint shops in the buildings to your right were the estate's stables and out-houses.

In the 1860s a developer named George Dawson bought the estate – it was a smart purchase as visitor numbers to Harrogate were growing. He developed Montpellier Parade with its lovely shop frontages which you will see in a moment as you walk towards the Royal Pump Room. Dawson's investment was a success and the Parade became a fashionable shopping street.

The stables behind these new shops were used for storage, including for bath chairs used by the team of bath chair men- private individuals who earned a living by transporting wealthy and often stout visitors up the hill. During his 1900 visit, Winston Churchill arranged for the bath chair men to line up their machines at the top of Parliament Street, and to race down the hill, the winner being whoever could get the furthest up Ripon Road unassisted!

As you leave the cobbled Montpellier Street, on your left, facing the Stray, is the former Crescy Lodge Hotel which dates from 1863. It is one of only a few buildings in Harrogate to be constructed with the once fashionable Pease's white brick- vulgarly known as lavatory brick. It was very fashionable in its time- and promoted as erosion proof.

After the hotel closed in 1883, the building was occupied by the Yorkshire Home for Incurables, a charity who looked after those unfortunate enough to be deemed incurable. It remained there until c.1900.

By the 1980's, the buildings behind Montpellier Parade had become somewhat run down, but following a scheme of sympathetic conversion, it became a centre for quality shopping, with an attractive variety of art galleries, pubs, restaurants, antique shops, fashion outlets, and the world-famous Harrogate Toffee.