

## Ramsgate Conservation Area

In 2017 Ramsgate was named one of only 10 Heritage Action Zones in England and the first in the South East. Ramsgate is rich in heritage with over 450 listed places, including 443 listed buildings 1 scheduled monument, 1 registered park and a number of shipwrecks off the coast. This includes the *Rooswijk* whose finds, as part of a major international project, are currently being brought ashore to be investigated in Ramsgate.

### Ramsgate's Conservation Areas

The great variety of heritage in Ramsgate is reflected in the different characters of the three main conservation areas within the Heritage Action Zone. These are: Ramsgate Royal Esplanade Conservation Area, Ramsgate Conservation Area and Ramsgate Montefiore Conservation Area.

Ramsgate Royal Esplanade Conservation Area was designated in 2006 and is based around an area designed in the 1920s especially for leisure purposes. The area is described by the Conservation Area Appraisal as having two different character areas – that around the former Bon Secours Nursing Home (a Grade II listed 18<sup>th</sup> Century house) and the other the planned leisure landscape of Royal Esplanade itself which includes a promenade and large open green spaces. The buildings in the area date mainly from the 1920s complete with croquet lawns, bowling greens and a boating lake. The most noticeable buildings highlighted in the appraisal include the former tea pavilion, the club house for the croquet and bowls club and the 18<sup>th</sup> Century House part of the grounds of which were incorporated into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century scheme. You can also still see the cliff lift designed for easy access to the beach, and some beautiful cast iron shelters. The challenges faced by this conservation area include underuse, a large backlog of repairs related to the historic structures and a lack of heritage interpretation - so people are unable to explore and understand the story of this place.

Sitting alongside the Ramsgate Royal Esplanade Conservation Area is the centrally located Ramsgate Conservation Area. This is the largest of the three conservation areas in Ramsgate and the earliest to be designated in 1970 and later extended. The conservation area takes in most of the town centre from the listed buildings near the top of the High Street (including the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Grade II listed Sylvian hotel), to The Grange in the west (designed by Augustus Pugin, one of Britain's most influential architects who also designed interiors of the Houses of Parliament) and stretching as far east as the Pullhamite rock constructed Winterstoke Gardens (another 20<sup>th</sup> Century leisure landscape designed specifically for strolling and contemplation). This conservation area includes the most defining features of Ramsgate – the Royal Harbour. Construction began in 1750 to create a harbour specifically designed to offer refuge for sailing vessels caught from storms in the Channel. Still a working harbour it is a striking monument to the amazing feats of Georgian engineering. Ramsgate's harbour has a wealth of stories to share around the Dunkirk evacuation, the royal connection to George IV, smack boys, maritime rescue and much, much, more. Part of the challenge of this conservation area, and the Harbour in particular, is sharing those stories as there is currently no

interpretation, as well as capitalising on the underused spaces in nearby historic buildings. The Winterstoke Gardens face additional challenges around anti-social behaviour and vandalism as well as some much needed repairs.



Ramsgate's Royal Harbour. © Historic England

The final conservation area in Ramsgate is the Ramsgate Montefiore Conservation Area designated in 2007. Based around the Montefiore Synagogue built in the early 1830s, this conservation area is much smaller in size and lies just north west of Winterstoke Gardens. Excitingly this is the only known example in the country of a synagogue built on a private estate and only the second synagogue to be built for Sephardic Jews. Jewish Heritage UK list it as one of Britain's top ten historic synagogues. Sadly like the Winterstoke gardens the isolated nature of the historic buildings and structures in this area, mean they are often the victim of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.



The Montefiore Synagogue. © Historic England

### **Ramsgate Today**

Once a thriving and prosperous town with an economy based on agriculture, fishing and tourism, large parts of Ramsgate are now in the 10% most deprived in the country according to the Index of Multiple deprivation. Despite of the richness of its historic environment, Ramsgate has a poor self-image, significant socio-economic problems and many of its heritage assets have been neglected because their economic and cultural worth are not fully understood or recognised.

### **Opportunities for the Future**

Some assets, like the extensive network of tunnels under the town, are beginning to develop as tourism and visitor attractions. The Harbour is recognised for its role in the evacuation of Dunkirk but there is much more to the town than just this WWII story. From evidence of a Neolithic causewayed enclosure to the west, to industrial activity from Roman times in the Harbour, and on through the Gothic Revival inspired by Augustus Pugin, Ramsgate has a wealth of architectural and historic stories which the Heritage Action Zone will look to capitalise on so that the benefits and value of Ramsgate's heritage can be maximised for the local population and contribute towards the economic growth of the town.

In particular the Heritage Action Zone in Ramsgate will focus on:

- Enabling the heritage of Ramsgate to be better understood, enjoyed, valued and protected.

- Engaging the local community of Ramsgate and increase participation with the historic environment
- Raising awareness of Ramsgate as a heritage destination
- Developing and improving heritage related capacity and skills in Ramsgate
- Promoting heritage management best practice and raise design standards and quality

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