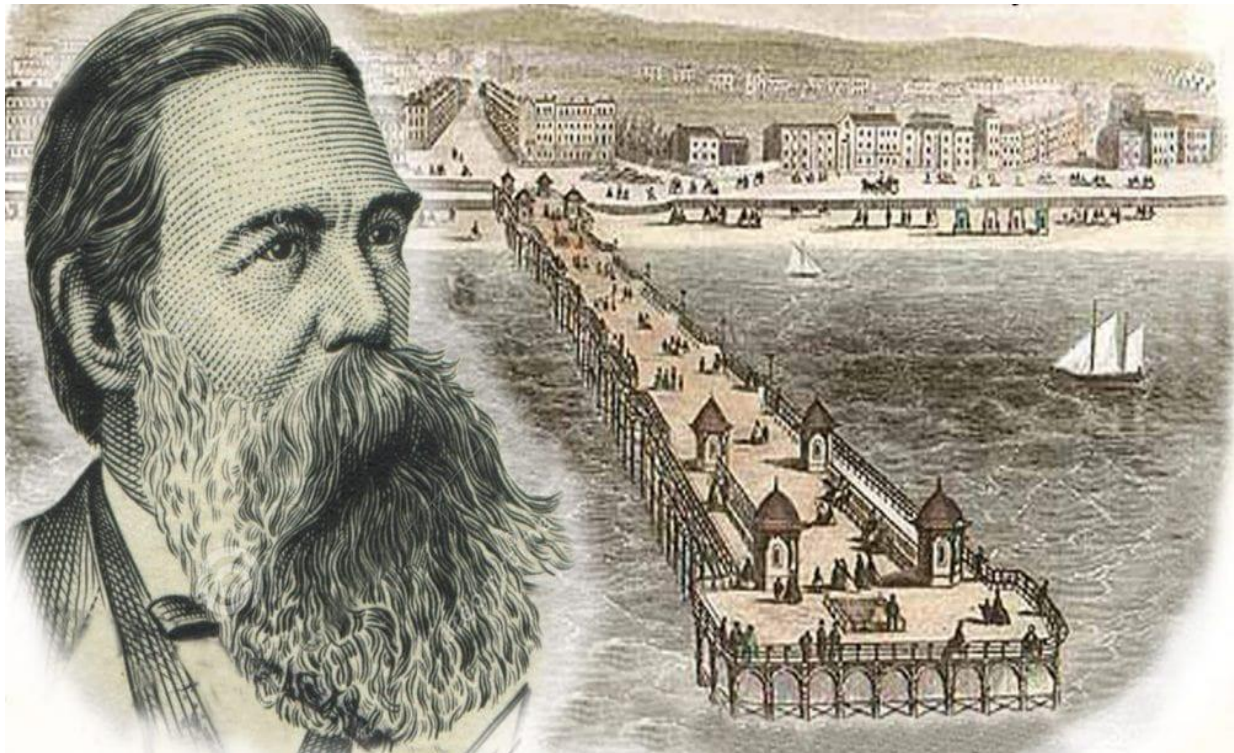


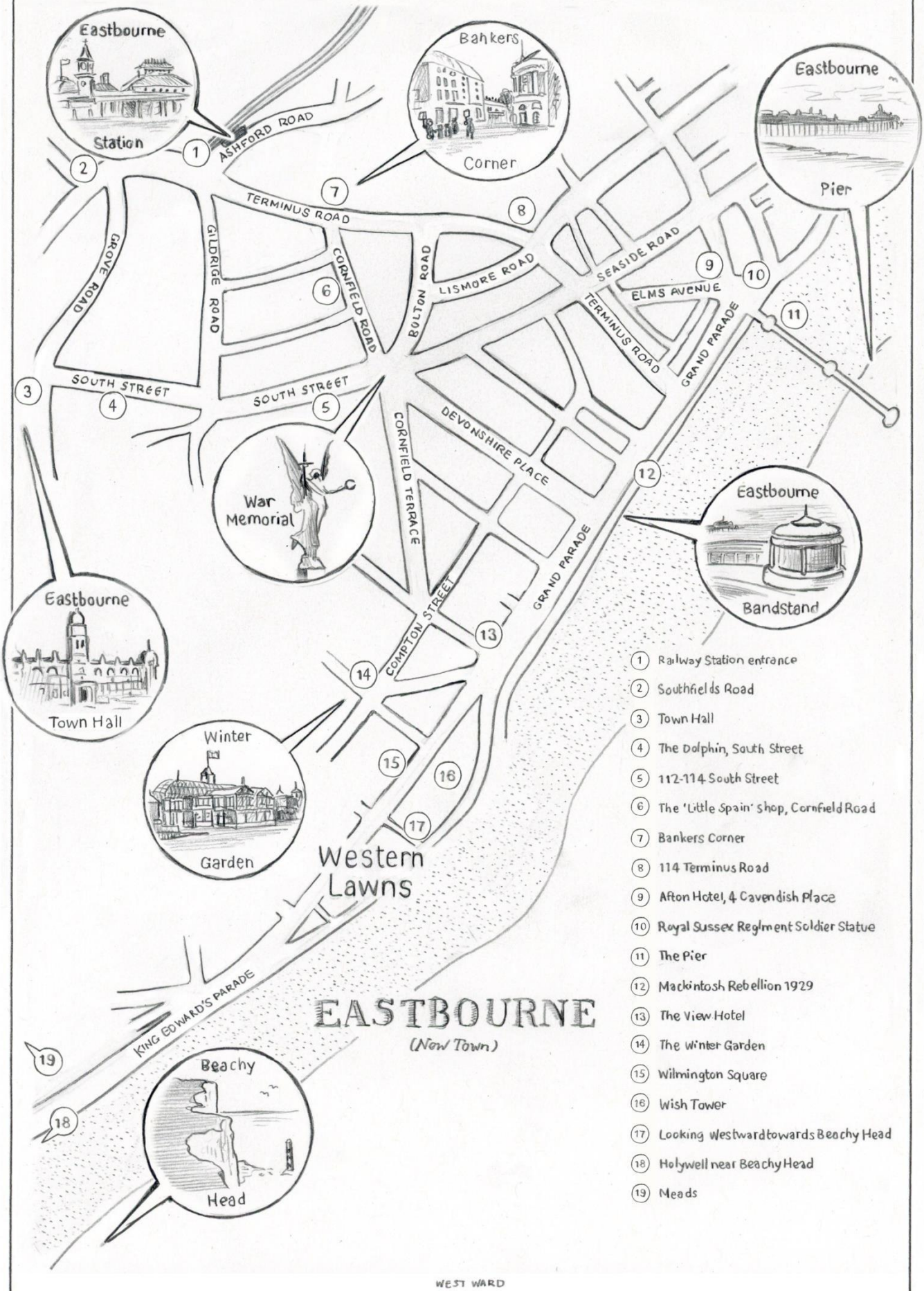
ENGELS AND THE RAGGED TROUSERED PHILANTHROPISTS

Eastbourne's Radical History Tour



“Every generation must fight the same battles again and again. There’s no final victory and there’s no final defeat and therefore a little bit of history may help”.

Tony Benn



- ① Railway Station entrance
- ② Southfields Road
- ③ Town Hall
- ④ The Dolphin, South Street
- ⑤ 112-114 South Street
- ⑥ The 'Little Spain' shop, Cornfield Road
- ⑦ Bankers Corner
- ⑧ 114 Terminus Road
- ⑨ Afton Hotel, 4 Cavendish Place
- ⑩ Royal Sussex Regiment Soldier Statue
- ⑪ The Pier
- ⑫ Mackintosh Rebellion 1929
- ⑬ The View Hotel
- ⑭ The Winter Garden
- ⑮ Wilmington Square
- ⑯ Wish Tower
- ⑰ Looking Westward towards Beachy Head
- ⑱ Holywell near Beachy Head
- ⑲ Meads

ENGELS AND THE RAGGED TROUSERED PHILANTHROPISTS – Eastbourne's Radical History Tour

An around-the-town walk, starting at Eastbourne railway station and ending in Meads Village

Welcome

If you have just alighted the train to begin this walk, then **welcome** to Eastbourne. This town was designed and developed by its landowners from the 1850s, built as a new resort for the rich thus greatly expanding the population from less than 4,000 in 1851 to nearly 35,000 by 1891. Many of the higher echelons of society would arrive from London to take up residence for the summer, bringing along their servants of course. Many of those grand houses, built for the elites and the Lords and Ladies, have since been converted into flats for the hoi polloi. I lived in such a flat, in a house converted into 8 flats which was once solely owned by Lady Someone-or-other.

Eastbourne was designed as a new resort built “for gentlemen by gentlemen”. The working classes of the town were kept hidden from the sight of our elite visitors (“don’t go east of the pier, dear”). And so too nowadays has much of our radical history been hidden. So, this walk will give you a flavour of just some of Eastbourne’s radical history. There is much more to uncover, and this walk is one attempt to bring some of this important history back to life.



(1) East Sussex Save the NHS Campaigners

We hope you enjoy.

1) Eastbourne Station

Please start this walk at the station entrance to the left as you alight the train (looking out onto Terminus Road).

The railway first came to Eastbourne on 14th May 1849 when 90% of the town was owned by just 2 families, the Davies-Gilbert family (notably Carew Davies-Gilbert), who owned about a quarter of the town, and the Cavendish family (notably William Cavendish, the seventh Duke of Devonshire), who owned about two thirds of the town. From 1859, plans were laid out to build an entirely new town to attract the higher echelons of society to either live or to holiday here. A new resort built “for gentlemen by gentlemen”. This Eastbourne Station (1) Terminus was the 4th station to be built over a 37-year period. The Davies-Gilbert family paid for the Terminus Road to be built and did not want their estates in the Upperton part of Eastbourne to be cut off by the rail track. So, the railway terminus was re-sited from its previous position at the site where Turkuaz now stands, over the mini roundabout to the right. Before the new road was built there was only a track from the station going across cornfields to the Seahouses area.

You will see Terminus Road ahead of you. It is the partly pedestrianised shopping street leading to the pier. We will re-join this road later via Cornfield Road.

Cross over the road to the estate agents on the corner (with the pub on the opposite corner), then follow round to the right towards the mini roundabout. Navigate your way across the roundabout to a road on the other side of the library called Southfields Road.

2) Southfields Road

The Bath chair stop (2)

A few yards into Southfields Road on the left-hand side, beside the street name sign, is a small metal plate mounted at the base of the wall embossed with BCS. This plate marks the spot where the licensed bath chairmen would have plied for hire.

It took ages to find this bath chair stop as it was hidden by dirt. Looks good now.



George Meek – a bath chair man

George Meek (1868–1921) was a kind of real life, Eastbourne version of Frank Owen, the working-class hero of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* written by Robert Tressell from 1906 to 1910 in Hastings, just 19 miles along the coast east of Eastbourne. George Meek was a key figure in encouraging socialist ideas in the town. He was one of these bath chairmen in our town, a poorly paid, insecure job, reliant on the tourist trade and good weather. He lived on the edge of poverty throughout his life. His two younger brothers, Joe and Arthur, were sent to the workhouse after his mother could no longer care for them.



Bath chair lovingly renovated by Chris Wright (3)

We will be returning to life as a bath chairman later in the walk.

During Meek's lifetime, there were very few accounts of working-class life in Britain written by working class people. There were a number of factual surveys (including, of course, Engels' *Condition of the Working Class in Britain*, published in 1845) There were also several personal accounts, e.g. Robert Tressell's novel, mentioned above, and Jack London's *People of the Abyss*. Meek was encouraged and supported to write about his own experience under the mentorship of H.G. Wells, whom he had met during one of his "walkabouts" looking for work. Meek's autobiography was a great achievement considering he only received brief and inconsistent schooling. He was alone amongst all these writers in being from a working-class background and having remained in poor circumstances throughout his life. This extract gives a flavour of what life was like for a bath chairman.

"If you would know the **horror of black despair**, go out with a bath chair day after day, with the chair-owner or landlord worrying you for rent, food needed at home, and get nothing. Stare till your eyes ache; pray with aching heart to a God whom you ultimately curse for his deafness. And this **not** for a few weeks, but year after year." (*1)

Note: If you were to walk to the end of Southfields Road and on up the hill along The Goffs and ahead onto Church Street, you would see a part of an old wall on the left where Vicarage Road and Letheren Place meet Church Street. This is the last remains of the Workhouse. We are not going that way today. You may be interested in the Eastbourne Society Heritage Walk of this area (there is a total of nine Eastbourne walks in the series, available in leaflet form from the Heritage Centre, 2 Carlisle Road, BN21 4JJ).

Next, walk along Grove Road, which is the shopping street the other side of the library. Proceed to the end of the road.

3) The Town Hall

Why did a crowd of 3,000 working-class Labour supporters gather outside of Eastbourne Town Hall on a cold November evening, eagerly awaiting the results of the 1913 municipal elections? (*2) Well, despite much negative campaigning condemning “Labour extremists” as unfit to hold office, postal worker F.J. Huggett and railway driver A.J. Marshall became the first Labour councillors in the borough’s history. Local Liberal George Chambers had turned to the Eastbourne Chronicle to express his abhorrence that such an eventuality might occur:

“Be it always remembered that a town like Eastbourne depends for its permanent prosperity on capital and capitalists, and, for its local management to fall into the hands of nobodies with nothing to lose would be fatal.”



YouthStrike4Climate Eastbourne Rally at the Town Hall (4),

Well, they did not lose. The Labour victory was celebrated by the newly elected working-class councillors driving along in a horse drawn carriage with the campaigners bursting into the campaign song, “March of the Men of Hardnecks” to the tune of “Men of Harlech”. Victory was theirs. (*3)

Follow round to the left down South Street. Not far down on the right you will see the Dolphin pub.



4) The Dolphin pub, South Street, formerly The Railway Arms (5)

This was the meeting place for many of the early socialist and trade union groups in the town during the Edwardian period.

Carry on to the end of South Street and cross over at the lights, proceeding straight ahead to the other part of South Street, with St Saviour's Church on the right-hand side. Before the end of the road, there is an Italianate four-storey terrace building, where there is a letter box and the bus stop. This is 112 to 114 South Street.

5) 112 to 114 South Street

Before World War II, this address was used as the headquarters for the Trade Association and the Labour Party. A lot of the upper floors were used by Plummer Roddis (later acquired by Debenhams), a very high-class department retailer in the town which used it as a hostel for unmarried female staff (think *Are You Being Served?*). After the war, with Clement Attlee's government, the building was used by the Department of Labour. With the creation of the NHS, the Department of Health moved in. Local families could go there to collect the free cod liver oil and concentrated orange juice for their children. (*4) (6)



Carry on to the end of the road to Memorial roundabout with Victory Angel statue (note this statue faces south for some reason, instead of the usual east). Turn left into Cornfield Road and carry on to Terminus Road at the end. You will find yourself at "Bankers Corner", which locals use for this spot. You will see why when you get there. But before Banker Corner you will pass the site of the "Little Spain" shop.



(7)

6) The "Little Spain" shop in Cornfield Road

"In the period of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), Eastbourne had a "Little Spain" shop in Cornfield Road which operated for two weeks to raise funds for Spanish refugees. It was opened by the Carnival Queen and among the local worthies who supported Aid for Spain was Sydney Caffyn. Was this the first charity shop in Eastbourne? A pastor from the Spanish Reform church gave a talk on the Holy Trinity vicarage lawn in support of the Republic which he said had given people freedom from the tyranny of the Catholic Church." (*4a) (7)

Eastbourne's link to the Sussex Brigaders

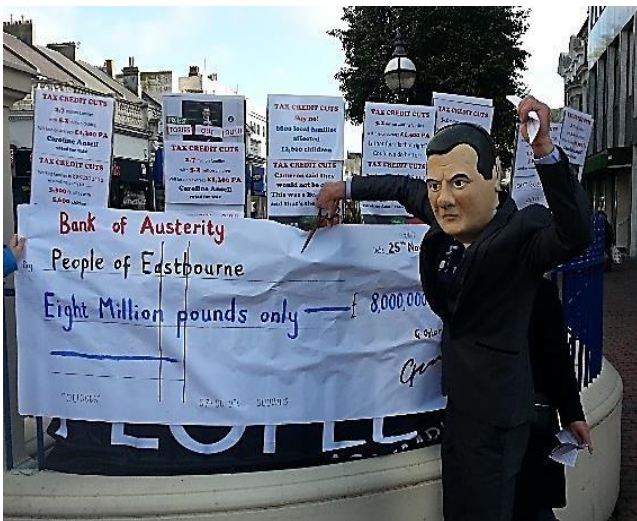
Margaret Finley (1913-2003)

For more information see (7a)

Margaret's stepmother Elizabeth North was living and working in the Haddon Hall Hotel, Devonshire Place, Eastbourne in 1921. Margaret's mother died in 1922 and her father married Elizabeth Hall in 1933 and by 1939 they were living in Hastings. In September 1938 the Eastbourne Chronicle published this letter from 'Margaret', an 'Eastbourne girl in Barcelona' about conditions in Spain...



7) Bankers Corner



(8) This is where many left-wing groups in the town hold their street events. It is not the same since the blue railings were removed ⑦ These railing were wonderful for displaying our many banners. They were a final reminder of days when this section was called Sussex Gardens and was full of grand houses, whose front gardens later became shops. Besides what is now Barclays is the spot where street vendor William Washington King, or "Daddy King", had a pitch. He sold matches and bootlaces and other useful items. He was a committed fundraiser and champion of the poor, holding regular events for local children and giving financial aid to penniless widows and the sick. He was interviewed on BBC radio in 1936 about his contribution to the local community. (*5) Many of the local bars and clubs had a "Kings Cup" on the bar, collecting money for his work. When he died, in 1938, it is reported that 6000 local people attended his funeral.

Walk along the fully pedestrianised section of Terminus Road up to number 114 on your left.



8) The Edinburgh Woollen Mill Shop, 114 Terminus Road, formerly 43 Terminus Road

In July 1881, a few months before Jenny's death, Karl Marx and his wife Jenny both stayed at 43 Terminus Road. The guest house was owned by a widow, Esther Peerless. The road has since been renumbered, but the site is where the Edinburgh Woollen Mill shop now stands – next to Marks and Spencer. Marx's favourite English seaside town was Ramsgate, but Engels preferred Eastbourne. Karl, Jenny, and other members of Marx family would often be invited to join Engels when he visited.

(9)

Next, carry on up along Terminus Road to the second road that crosses, i.e. Seaside Road. Turn left down Seaside Road until you reach the traffic lights. Turn right onto Cavendish Place. Proceed to the top of the road to number 4 which is on the right.

9) Afton Hotel, 4 Cavendish Place, formerly Astor House

Built in 1850, Cavendish Place was one of the first streets to be built as part of the seventh Duke of Devonshire's grand plan for the town.

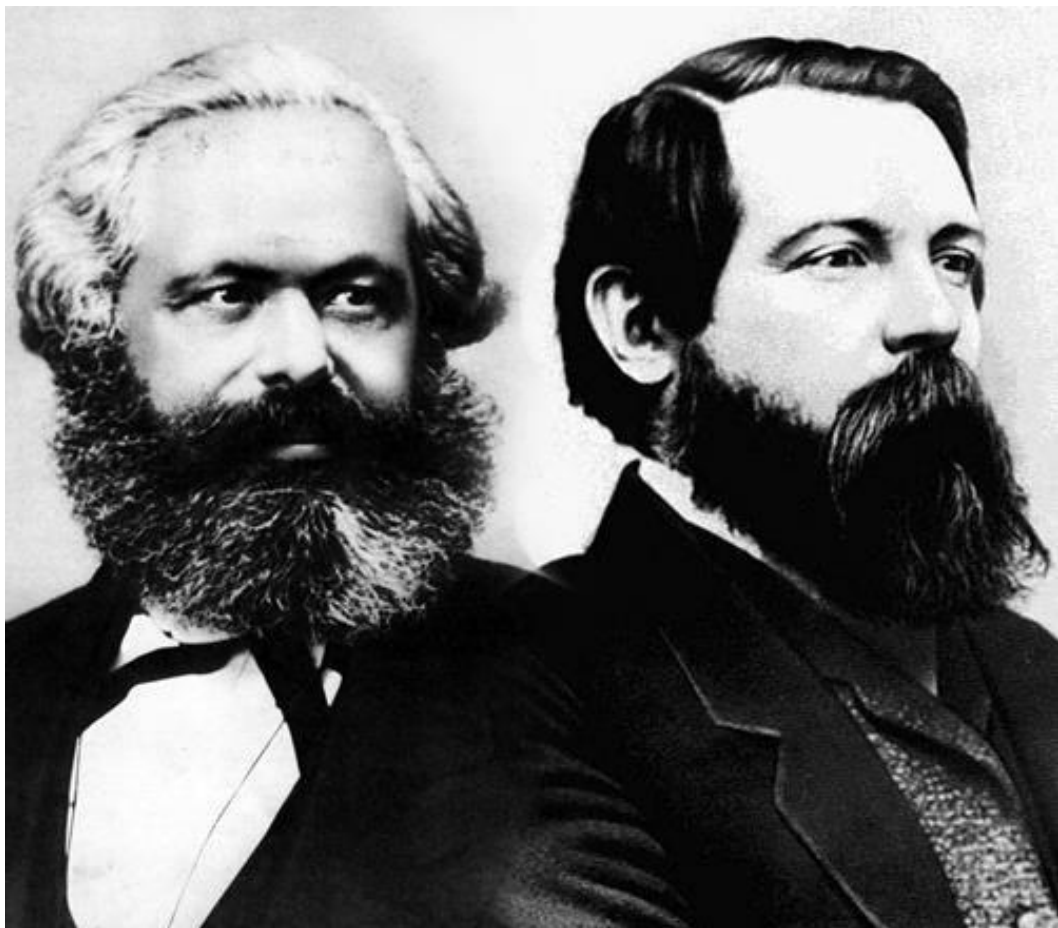
Engels in Eastbourne

During the last 15 years or so of his life, Engels adopted Eastbourne as his favourite "go to" English seaside town. He was so fond of Eastbourne that whenever he had time to spare, he would hurry down, usually accompanied by a member of Marx's family and/or close friends. (*6)

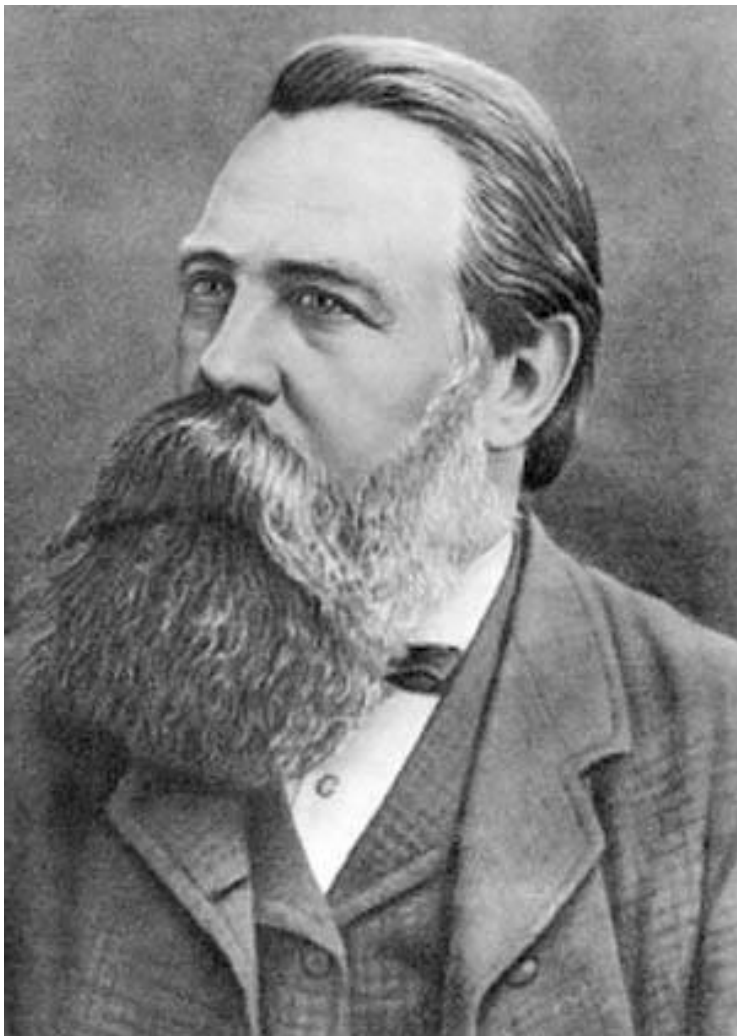
Engels regularly visited Eastbourne in the summer and sometimes other months, particularly after he took early retirement from the family business. He often stayed at Astor House, which is here, where the Afton Hotel now stands. ("...Near to the promenade and opposite the pier" – Letter to Laura Lafargue, second daughter of Marx, dated 19th August 1883).

Engels' favourite walk (as it is for many of us in Eastbourne today) was along the seafront and over the downs to Beachy Head. (10)





(10a)



(11)

On 18th March 1893, Engels wrote to Sorge that he had spent two weeks in Eastbourne and “had splendid weather”, coming back “very refreshed”.

(*7) As this letter suggests, it is most likely that Engels’ time in Eastbourne was his down time, for relaxation. But you never know; after Marx’s death on 14th March 1883, Engels may have worked at this address on the completion of volumes 2 and 3 of *Das Kapital*. (Long shot here!)

As Engels became sick with throat cancer, he sought the peace of Eastbourne more frequently. It was on his doctor’s orders that he stayed at 4 Cavendish Place during the last weeks of his life. He wrote his last letter from this address dated 23rd July 1895, addressed to Laura Lafargue. The letter ended, “I do not have the strength to write long letters, so keep well”. The next day he returned to London and died on August 5th, having added to his will a codicil that his ashes be scattered in the sea off Beachy Head.

The 1976 Engels Plaque at 4 Cavendish Place (*8)

On May Day 1976 an Engels plaque was unveiled here at 4 Cavendish Place. This occasion was celebrated with the brass band first playing at the bandstand then marching down to

Cavendish Place, where they played extracts from “Hello Dolly” before the unveiling at 3pm. The unveiling was attended by: Mayor Clifford Scott; the Cuban Ambassador, Lionel Sotto; Len Caine, who was the Labour Party prospective parliamentary candidate for the 1974 and 1979 elections (he was a prominent trade unionist in the town); and finally, and most importantly, the German Democratic Republic Charge d’Affaires, Herr Heinz Birch, who did the actual unveiling. Many dignitaries and visitors from both the German Democratic Republic and the Cuban embassies came to town for the ceremony, along with their families and friends. Locals complained about the number of embassy cars parked on double yellow lines. Apparently, the fines were not paid as diplomatic immunity was claimed. This probably annoyed some locals even more. I am also told the after-party in the basement of Astor House was a very fine affair.

(12)



Sammy the revolutionary dog being introduced to Eastbourne's radical history. (11a)

Lionel Sotto had been imprisoned during the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, released in 1959. He held positions within the Communist Party of Cuba and the Cuban Government. The Conservative and Liberal politicians in Eastbourne were unhappy about the Cubans and the Communist Party coming to town. Remember, this was before the fall of the Berlin Wall in the days of the Cold War. But the plans for who would do the unveiling and who would be invited had already been settled by members of the Communist Party (associated with the National Museum of Labour History in Limehouse – opened by Harold Wilson in 1975), before Eastbourne Trade Council was ever approached. So, the town was presented with a fait accompli and they went along with it despite their reservations. (“Build it and the people will come”). And, perhaps there was good cause for some degree of reservation considering what happened next.

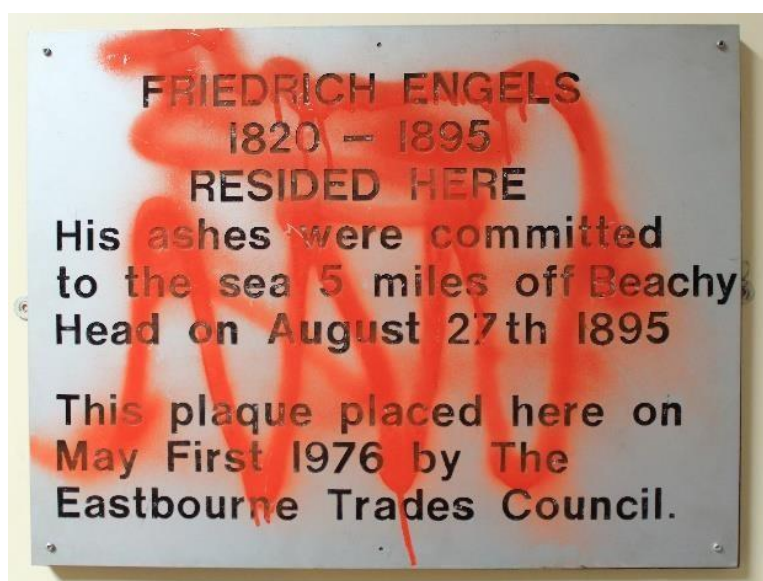
Herr Heinz Birch, Mayor Clifford Scott, Mike MacCarthy, Cuban Revolutionary Lionel Sotto (National Museum of Labour History)



There was quite a crowd for the unveiling ceremony. But also present were a large group of members of the National Front ("from Brighton and Hastings", according to the local newspaper report). (13) They came to demonstrate. They were kept apart from the unveiling by a line of police. Their threats to damage the plaque were taken seriously and the plaque was taken down for the night. In fact, the plaque did not remain in place for long. Due to the owner's concerns over the ongoing threats of criminal damage, it was only up about 6 months. The plaque is currently in the archives of the Pump House People's Museum in Manchester, complete with red paint vandalism. (14) So, we have unfinished business with the fascists here in Eastbourne. The good people of Lewisham may have seen off the National Front at the Battle of Lewisham, 1977, but they got the better of us. We must put this right. We must get the plaque re-installed. (*9) (*10)

Note: For a full account of the story of the Engels plaque and plenty more it is worth visiting the Engels in Eastbourne website.

<https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/engelsineastbourne/>



Carry on to the very end of Cavendish Place to the Pier. It is not far ahead, but before reaching the pier you may wish to stop at the Grade II listed statue of the Royal Sussex Regiment Soldier.

10) Statue of the Royal Sussex Regiment Soldier



Sussex Regiment Soldier

(14a) It is an interesting juxtaposition of history that the Engels plaque (to come) and a grand marker of the Empire are geographically sited together in this town. There is information about the Regiment at the site.

The formation of the Royal Sussex Regiment has links with The Empire. The 3rd Bengal (European) Light Infantry was raised by the East India Company. They fought in the Indian Mutiny of 1857–59. They became the 107th Regiment of Foot (Bengal Infantry) based in India until 1875, when they moved back to Britain, then Guernsey, then Ireland, where the Infantry was amalgamated with the 35th (Royal Sussex) Regiment of Foot to form the Royal Sussex Regiment.

11) The Pier

The bath chair ranks at the Pier. (12) Beside the Carpet of Flowers. (15)

You were first introduced to George Meek, the bath chairman, at No. 3 above. Meek wrote about what life was like for bath chairmen. It was grim.



“Among the chair-men I have known since I first began to work at the calling seven have gone mad, many have taken to drink, others have died in the workhouse or are still there. The work demoralises everyone in some way. It sets man against man. Some will do the meanest things to get work away from others. For instance, men have gone to my customers and told them that I could not see, or that I

was a Socialist, or that I drink. It is quite a common thing for me to get passengers and then suddenly lose them.” (*11)

“Don’t go east of the pier, dear”.

Standing with the pier behind you, if you look east, you will see the Queens Hotel. Opening in 1880, it was the last of the grand hotels to be built in the town. It is thought it was deliberately positioned to provide a visual marker of the end of the Grand Parade to the west. The rich visitors to Eastbourne were warned, “don’t go east of the pier, dear”. This was where the working classes lived. The conditions they lived in were deplorable. Poverty and disease and all else associated with oppression. There is a whole lot of radical history I could dedicate to this alone. (If only I had more time to write this second Radical History Tour). For now, I will reference that Eastbourne was not built with workers in mind. It was an afterthought almost that they would need to be accommodated; and this only as it became apparent that the servants of the elite classes (that Eastbourne **was** built for) would not be able to service all their need.

There were “special tours” set up for the more curious amongst the upper-class visitors. A bit like the Bedlam Tours when the elites were shown around Bethlem Hospital, gawping in horror at the inmates as some sort of macabre entertainment. Image the indignity of this. Anyway. Let’s continue.

To the east of the Queens Hotel there were smaller hotels and boarding houses built largely between 1790 and 1840. There was no road along the seafront on this side of the pier. When he could not get rooms at Astor House, Engels stayed in one of these smaller hotels, namely Regency Villa:

“Tomorrow, Louise (*divorced wife of Karl Kautsky, famous German Social-Democrat*) and I are going for a week to Eastbourne (address as before, 28 Marine Parade) as I need to regain a little strength before my journey to Germany”. (*Letter to Lafargue, Marx’s son-in-law, 20th July 1893*).

Note: 27 and 28 Marine Parade are Grade II listed and stand on the site of an earlier building where the “Society of the People Called Methodists” was founded in 1803. The present buildings were built in 1840.

We are not going east of the pier today, but there is some fabulous history that I urge you to check out. There are many information boards around the area, and you can also download a dedicated heritage trail map from Visit Eastbourne.

(*11) <https://www.visiteastbourne.com/information/product-catch-all/east-of-the-pier-heritage-trailp1256381> **Engels's ashes.**

Before the formation of the seafront, the beach directly east of the pier was the loading point of the early coal barges. A little further along is where the fishermen beached their vessels. Gradually some of the vessels were turned to use in tourism. It is likely the boat that took Engels's ashes out to sea was hired from east of the pier. And so, on 27th August 1895, on a very stormy day, four set off in a boat carrying the urn containing Friedrich Engels' ashes. The four were Eleanor Marx (the youngest daughter of Karl Marx) and her 'cad' partner Edward Aveling, Eduard Bernstein and Frederick Lessner. According to the wording on the 1976 plaque, they dropped the ashes into the sea 5 miles off Beachy Head. However, it is more likely to have been 2 miles out to sea as written in an article by Frederick Lessner, (*12) A moot point, you may think, but before coming across this article it had long baffled many of us as to how anyone could endure 5 miles in a small boat on a very stormy day – whereas hugging the coast for 2 miles up to Beachy Head and back would have been bearable.



(16)

But anyway, back to Eleanor Marx, to whom we simply must dedicate a few words. She was the youngest daughter of Karl Marx, she and her sister Helen were often invited to join Engels in Eastbourne. Marx once said of his daughters, "Laura is like me, Eleanor IS me". This tribute from Marx was well deserved. She was a determined political agitator, organiser and writer who threw herself into the struggles of her time against imperialism, racism, and sexism. She was a champion of the oppressed. She had a resolute recognition of the importance of workers' unity. Whilst Eleanor supported the women's movement's call for reforms (e.g. women's suffrage, higher education for women and so on) she was a revolutionary socialist. She contributed to a Marxist understanding of woman's oppression with class central to women's liberation. She believed that working women's struggles had more to do with working men than the middle-class leaders of the woman's rights movement. (*13)

Proceed along the promenade west towards Beachy Head (clearly visible from all along the seafront). Stop before the bandstand and look out to sea.

12) The Mackintosh Rebellion 1929



*Note the following is taken from extracts from Charlie Connelly Coastal Stories Podcast (*14)*

(17) It was a long hot summer in 1929 and there was a late heatwave. The 1920s saw the seaside opening up to the working-classes thanks to improved working conditions, paid

holidays, and an affordable railway network. No longer was Eastbourne the sole preserve of the elites. The heyday of bathing carriages and servants had drawn to an end. Many resorts had already done away with imposing charges to enjoy sea bathing. In Eastbourne, though, the bathing cabins and bathing tents were still retained. The working classes no longer had to keep to paddling with their hankies on their heads as they could not afford the charges, which included 8p per half hour for the carriage and 2 pence for a towel, plus tip. That was nearly a shilling a dip. For a family of 4 for a week, this amounted to over £1 or about £70 in today's money! Instead, a new working-class bathing habit had arrived in the resorts – the mackintosh bathers. Visitors would arrive on the beach straight from their guest houses already clad in their bathing gear, covered by their long mackintoshes. By 1929 most resorts were resigned to the changes and had abandoned the charges, but Eastbourne was not having it. Those in charge resisted the vulgarity of free bathing. Eastbourne was determined to hang on to its “elite resort” status for as long as possible. Council officials patrolled the pebbles issuing stern warnings about the bylaws. Eastbourne could not be doing with the common people. And besides, 1928 had seen £5,300 profit for the Corporation – that is £300,000 in today's money, double the profit of 1927. So, which was it to be? Profits or people? Time for a showdown.

13th September 1929 was the day class war came to Eastbourne. The “Bolsheviks of bathing” had their sights set on action. An act of civil disobedience saw 150 mackintoshed men and women march their way to the shore, with puzzled onlookers not knowing what to make of it. The beach patrollers rallied upon the protesters, demanding their names and addresses so that official letters of reprimand could be correctly executed. The ultimate sanction.

The Eastbourne Mackintosh Rebellion hit national headline news for some full 5 days. The country was on the side of the people. One reporter asserted “the name of Eastbourne should stink in the nostrils of holiday makers until Eastbourne's governors are changed!” The response? “We do not mean to be vindictive, but we will not have our authority flouted!”

Anyway. By 1932 almost all charges across the country had been abandoned. The end of an era. Even for Eastbourne, that oh so exclusive town “built for gentlemen by gentlemen”.

Proceed westward along the promenade. Keep an eye on the roadside hotels and buildings. On the other side of the bandstand, stop when you see the tall standalone, dark glassed, 1970s-style hotel on the seafront. Make your way to the roadside so you can get a good look. You may even want to stop off for coffee or for lunch here and look at the photographs of some of our Trade Union history on the mezzanine level.

13) The View Hotel *(formerly the Transport and General Workers' Union Convalescence Hotel and Conference Centre)*

The architecture of **The View Hotel** is distinct, the concept of a British architect. News was put about that the design was based on the Communist Party Headquarters. But this was a rumour started by some of the locals who were not impressed and were a bit suspicious, no doubt wondering what was going on behind that plentiful dark glass.



(17a)

(Look out, look out, shady communists about!)

A main theme of the design was that all the materials in the hotel's build and furnishing would be of British origin, thus supporting British industry and workers. Hence the use of ceramics from the Staffordshire Potteries; aluminium windows and framing by British Alcan; and the much maligned but beautiful heather slate on the frontage. The slate quarry was saved from closure by the size of the order, with slate used extensively on the ground floor and first floor both inside and out. Sadly, much of this has been covered over as part of the "modernisation". Even the cutlery was specified as being of British manufacture despite its higher cost.

In September 1974, the first stone was laid by Jack Jones for the TGWU's new purpose-built convalescence holiday hotel and educational centre at Eastbourne. The Eastbourne Centre was then opened by Jack Jones in October 1976. Now called The View Hotel, the Centre was used as a workers' recuperation and holiday centre, and a Conference Centre for the union. The hotel is still owned by Unite the Union. The mezzanine level at The View shows some of the hotel's union history.

Jack Jones left school at 14 and after a few jobs joined his father as a Liverpool Docker. He became an active member of the Transport and General Workers' Union, and later served as General Secretary of this union from 1968 until 1978. He was a great trade unionist, having been converted to socialism by reading *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. Jack once explained how that book "was passed from hand to hand among people in the Labour movement and had a remarkable effect on our thinking".

Note: At the time of its creation in 1922, the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) was the largest and most ambitious amalgamation brought about within trade unionism. Later, following various talks between unions, a merger with Amicus was agreed and Unite the Union was created in 2007.

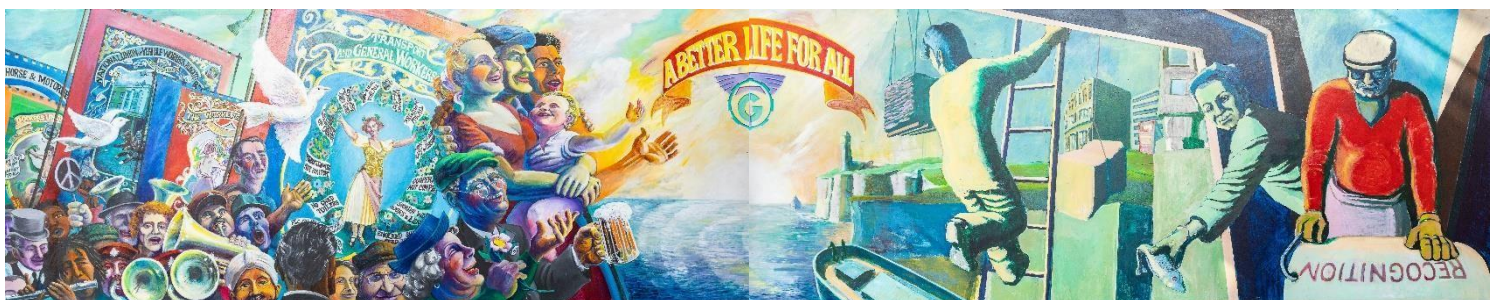
The International Workers' Mural (*15)



(18) In the dining room of the Centre there used to be a full sized and very colourful mural created by the Art Workers Co-operative – Michael (Mick) Jones, Christopher Robinson, and Simon Barber. Mick Jones was the son of Jack Jones. The mural is an artistic tribute to international trade unionism and the importance of solidarity amongst workers. For example, part of the mural illustrates “the union’s struggle through depression and war from which emerges a victorious procession with banners of the amalgamated unions. Support for the Spanish Republic in the 1930s is shown by the inclusion of the graffiti, ‘SOLIDARITY WITH SPAIN’.”

The mural was dismantled during the renovations of The View Hotel. It is stored safely in boxes in Birmingham. The plan was for it to be reassembled in the National Unite Conference Centre and Hotel (Birmingham). But it is difficult to display a mural in a building with so much glass. So, for now, in boxes it remains!

Unite Community Eastbourne are in discussion with the Manager of The View and the Director of The Towner art gallery working on ensuring the story of the mural is not lost from Eastbourne history. Work is in progress for a pull-out brochure showing the mural in all its colourful glory. Also, for an exhibition of the mural at The Towner. The Campaign to bring the mural back to Eastbourne has been a difficult one and is very much ongoing. The aim is for it to be permanently archived safely in Eastbourne and for regular public viewing to be arranged. The quest to find a permanent site in Eastbourne has been marked with disappointment and frustration. 89 foot long of permanent space does not come easy. The mural contains many reference to Eastbourne likely inspired by our Sussex coastline. Certainly, one section of the mural shows the Beachy Head lighthouse. Another panel contains a bus with Eastbourne as the destination. This mural belongs in Eastbourne. Not in boxes in Birmingham.



ONWARD DIRECTIONS. Proceed westwards a little way. Turn right into Carlisle Road and proceed to the end. (You may wish to pop into Favoloso for an ice cream treat – many varieties.) The Winter Garden is opposite the end of Carlisle Road.

14) The Winter Garden – Paul Robeson in Eastbourne



(19)

We simply cannot do justice to Paul Robeson's greatness here. Suffice to say he was magnificently gifted and an incredibly principled, influential civil rights activist and internationalist who spoke out for black and working-class people at every opportunity. Ahead of his time, he was not deterred by the McCarthyism he was subjected to in the USA, including having his passport confiscated for 8 years and not being allowed to travel to places he didn't need a passport for (e.g. Canada). A law was passed especially for this purpose. There is a campaign for Paul Robeson's time in Eastbourne to be commemorated in a truly fitting way. We will keep you posted via the Engels In Eastbourne Campaign and Peoples Eastbourne. In the meantime, please enjoy a selection of reviews of his performances in Eastbourne.

"After his success in the stage production of *Show Boat* in 1928 in London, [Paul Robeson] undertook 'his first provincial tour... he gave a concert in Blackpool... he also sang in Birmingham, Torquay, Brighton, Eastbourne, Folkestone, Margate, Hastings, Southsea, and Douglas.... Robeson returned to perform in the town on 11 August 1935, possibly again in 1936, and again on 7 August 1938 in the Floral Hall at the Winter Garden in Eastbourne. As the *Eastbourne Gazette* reported on 10 August 1938, there were 'remarkable scenes at Winter Garden' as an audience of 1,800 were 'bewitched' by 'the magic' of 'that master of song' – Paul Robeson, with 'hundreds' turned away unable to get seats to listen, as had happened two years before". All in all, Robeson performed in Eastbourne at least 9 if not 10 times. (*16)

(19a)



With the Winter Gardens at your back, you will see Wilmington Square on the opposite side of the road to the right.

15) Wilmington Square

The Heritage Walk No 3 will tell you about the “anonymous” pillar box on the corner, anonymous because it does not carry the VR cipher. You will not be told about how George Meek had plied all day for fares here without any success before he was granted a rare act of charity from one of our elite visitors. Purely by chance this visitor became aware of the plight of the bath chairmen as follows:

“On one Sunday at the turn of the century Meek had been waiting on the corner of Wilmington Square for twelve hours from 8am onwards without a single fare. He was just moving off home when a gentleman hailed him and not as it turned out for the hire of his chair but merely to ask him for a light. “Very busy?” he asked Meek whereupon the latter told him how he had spent the day. “That’s hard lines, here’s half a crown”, and on learning that Meek had a family he added, “Here’s another five shillings.” (*17)

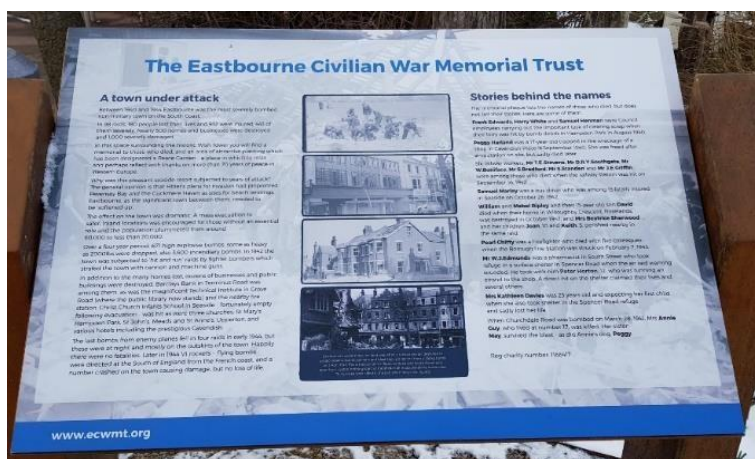
Bear in mind here that George Meek paid rent for the bath chair, No fare equals debt to the rentier classes.

Opposite, the Wish Tower Slopes lead up to the Wish Tower, one of the 74 Martello towers built along the south coast to defend against Napoleon in the early 1880s. The Wish Tower Slopes are the final rallying point of many of our local marches and demonstrations e.g., the Trades Council May Day Rallies, Youth Climate Day Strikes etc



Eastbourne YS4J march ending for a rally at the Wish Tower Slopes (*20)

16) The Wish Tower, and The Civilian War Memorial (*21, *22)



“Between 1940 and 1944 Eastbourne was the most severely bombed non-military town on the south coast. In 98 raids, 180 people lost their lives, and 932 people were injured 443 of them severely. Nearly 500 homes and businesses were destroyed and 1,000 severely damaged”. Please see the information board in the walled Peace Garden at the Wish Tower for fuller information. Here you will also find the memorial stone. (*18)

YOU MAY WISH TO END THIS WALK HERE; *perhaps stop off for lunch at Bistrot Pierre. It has fantastic sea views looking out towards Beachy Head.*

Note: If you do decide to stop here, then please read **17 and 18** below at your leisure. This last section of the text is information which I do not want you to miss, as it gives the walk a sense of completion.

ONWARDS. *Alternatively, or for another day, you may wish to re-join the promenade and make your way westward, with views of Beachy Head. At the end of the promenade, at Holywell, there is a café where you may wish to stop for coffee or lunch.*

17) Beachy Head

It is fitting to round off this walk with a word about Beachy Head. Engels so loved Eastbourne that one of his final acts was to write a codicil into his will to ensure his ashes were scattered off Beachy Head. It is worth taking a hike up to Beachy Head, a real beauty spot that marks the end of the South Downs Way. We are lucky that the area is so unspoilt, but it could have been very different. Twice in our history, Beachy Head has been in danger of falling prey to developers. PEOPLE POWER prevented this from happening on both occasions. In 1926 a “mysterious group of property developers” wanted to build a new town on the Seven Sisters cliffs, where Beachy Head sits. Opposing them was a group of early environmentalists, including poet Rudyard Kipling. There followed the Eastbourne Corporation Act 1926 and in 1929 the compulsory purchase of 4,100 acres was completed. The Corporation became the owners of the whole of Beachy Head, and the 4,100 acres northwards and westwards of it, at a cost to the town of nearly £100,000 (an absolute bargain!).

Note: At the 1926 Parliamentary Select Committee, the Mayor of Eastbourne, Charles Knight, was asked:

“Is it the deliberate intention of the Corporation, in promoting this clause, to secure the public the free and open use of the Downs in perpetuity?”

The mayor replied: **“Absolutely.”**

90 years later, Eastbourne Borough Council tried to sneakily backtrack on this assertion, when early in 2016 they decided to sell the four farms in the South Downs National Park, without most residents being aware. But the people were having none of it. The Keep Our Downs Public Campaign was set up, launching a crossparty fight for a reversal of this decision. We won. The decision was abandoned, and our much-loved downland remains in public ownership. And long may it last. It may have not been a revolution of the Marx and Engels sort, but we were proud of our efforts, and I am fairly sure Engels would have been delighted, too. (*19,*20,*21)

Power to the people; in Eastbourne, no less!

You may wish to make your way up the slope besides the café and carry on walking up around to the left behind the café until you re-join the seafront road. You can make your way from here into Meads Village where there are 2 pubs, The Pilot Inn, and The Ship. A well-deserved pint might go down well.

18) Meads

I am unsure of the exact address, but I am told Sidney and Beatrice Webb (23) either stayed or lived for a time in Meads. While this husband-and-wife team cannot exactly be described as radical, they were notable reformists. Sometimes described as “socialist economists”, they were early members of the Fabian Society, and co-founders of the London School of Economics and Political Science. Sidney Webb also helped reorganise the University of London into a federation of teaching institutions, and also served in the government as a Labour Party MP. They were pioneers in social and economic reforms as well as distinguished historians, and they deeply affected social thought and institutions in England. They had a hand in formulating Clause 4 – Labour’s original commitment to ending capitalism

and bringing about the socialist transformation of society. Clause 4 recognised that “The people are the real source of wealth”, as Tony Benn put it.

It reads in full:



“To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.” (*Pre-1995 Constitution of the Labour Party – Clause 4, part 4*). (*22)

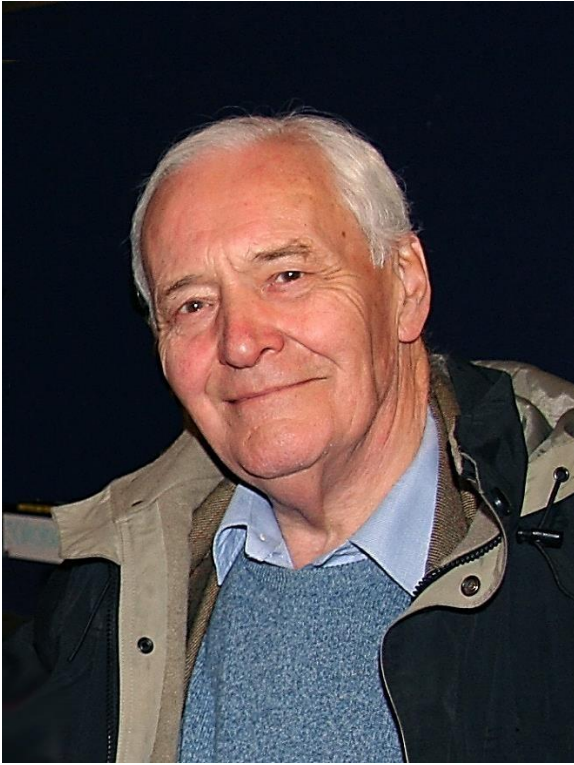
The Webbs had little faith in the working classes possessing the right kind of “brain” for the job of working out how to obtain the best system of administration. No. Far too whingy for that.

The “average sensual man” cannot “do much more than describe his grievances, we do not think he can prescribe his remedies... We wish to introduce the professional expert”. *Beatrice Webb*. (*23) No. Working people were not to be trusted to do management. They were to be set firmly in their place of toiling and labouring and cap doffing to the professional classes. We saw another example of this sort of class prejudice at the start of this walk with the 1913 Municipal Elections, when 3,000 working-class gathered for the announcement of the town’s first working class councillors. And we saw on this walk how unjust the lot of the bath chairmen like George Meek was.

And onwards the struggle for liberation from the shackles of social oppression continues.

There could be no more fitting end to our radical history walk than the following quote

by Tony Benn.....



“Every generation must fight the same battles again and again. There’s no final victory and there’s no final defeat and therefore, a little bit of history may help.”

Thank you for supporting active travel in Eastbourne.

Thank you for supporting Radical History in Eastbourne.

Links

Eastbourne Eco Action Network

<https://ecoactioneb.co.uk/>

Eastbourne Pilgrimage Project

[Eastbourne Pilgrimage Project](#)

Walking Festival

<https://www.visiteastbourne.com/walking-festival>

Engels in Eastbourne *Facebook and website*

<https://www.facebook.com/EBEngels>

<http://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/engelsineastbourne/>

Eastbourne Stand Up To Racism

<https://www.facebook.com/ebsutr/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/395070828329263>

<https://www.instagram.com/eastbournesutr/>

Eastbourne People's Assembly

<https://www.facebook.com/peoplesassemblyeb>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/890376414357498>

Eastbourne Trade Council

<https://www.facebook.com/ebtuc>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/eastbourneTUC>

Eastbourne Unite Community

<https://www.facebook.com/Eastbourne-Unite-Community-Group-172511896695404>

Eastbourne Labour Party

<https://www.eastbournelabour.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/EastbourneLabour>

#EastbourneForTheMany

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/493572347917185>

Eastbourne Green Party

<https://www.facebook.com/eastbournegreenparty>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1515377288704512>

Eastbourne Greenpeace

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/eastbournegreenpeace>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1515377288704512>

Eastbourne and District Friends of the Earth

<https://www.facebook.com/Eastbourne-and-district-Friends-of-the-Earth-184566344982806>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/299682143498442>

Eastbourne Extinction Rebellion

<https://www.facebook.com/xreastbourne>

Youth Strike 4 Climate

<https://www.facebook.com/ebn.youthstrike4climate>

Eastbourne Peace in Our Name

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/423666547824484>

Eastbourne Palestine Solidarity Campaign

<https://www.facebook.com/ebpsc>

Eastbourne Socialist Workers Party

<https://www.facebook.com/Eastbourne-Socialist-Workers-Party-100715231652006>

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(*1) George Meek. *Labouring Man: Protégé of H.G.Wells* by Bill Coxall and Clive Griggs. (Out of print.)

(*2) Pages 196 to 209 and (*3) page 198. **Eastbourne 1851–1951. A Social History.** By Clive Griggs. Grosvenor House Publishing Ltd.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVivwV92MGs>

Please see YouTube **Vision for Eastbourne** for the full series of videos on Eastbourne.

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(*5) **Philanthropists – The people who made Eastbourne** – a talk by Alan Wenham.
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L33OH420d0g>

(*6) **Commemorating Engels in Eastbourne** – article on Engels In Eastbourne website
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(*7) **Engels' letter to Sorge, 18th March 1893** – Tristram Hunt, *The Frock-Coated Communist*, Penguin 2010. See article on website:-
<https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/engelsineastbourne/friedrich-engels-in-eastbourne/>

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Photos

- (1) **Eastbourne Railway Station.** *On permission of CM 2021.*
- (2) **Metal bath chair stop sign.** *On permission of CM 2021.*
- (3) **A bath chair.** *On permission of Chris Wright 15.02.21.*
- (4) **Town Hall.** *On permission of CM 2021.*
- (5) **The Dolphin.** *On permission of CM 2021.*
- (6) **112 to 114 South Street.** *On permission of CM 2021.*
- (7) **Little Spain.** <https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/sussexbrigaders/>
(7a) <https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/sussexbrigaders/2022/01/26/the-extraordinary-life-and-times-of-margaret-finley/>
- (8) **The blue railings. Eastbourne People's Assembly protest.** *On permission of CM 2021*
- (9) **Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Marx's daughters: Jenny Caroline (1844–1883), Jenny Julia Eleanor (1855–1898) and Jenny Laura (1845–1911).** *In the public domain.*
1860s (1864?), photographer unknown
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marx%2BFamily_and_Engels.jpg and PD-1976.
- (10) **Engels.** *In the public domain and PD-1996. Engels in Brighton 1877 by William Hall (1826-1898).* <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Engels.jpg> uploaded 2006-01-16 by [w:User:Bronks](#).
- (10a) **Marx and Engels** *In the public domain*
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- (11) **File: Friedrich Engels-1840-cropped.jpg.** *Unknown author, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.*
- (11a) **4 Cavendish Place.** *On permission of Louise Walton 2021.*
- (12) **Heir Heinz Birch unveiling the 1976 plaque** – *reproduced with kind permission from Eastbourne Herald.*
- (13) **Article on the unveiling of the 1976 plaque** – *reproduced with kind permission from Eastbourne Herald.*
- (14) **Engels 1976 plaque with graffiti.** *On permission of the People's Museum Manchester via CM 2021.*
- (15) **Bath chairmen at the pier.** *In the public domain.*

(16) Eleanor Marx

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mrs Eleanor Marx Aveling, daughter of Karl Marx.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mrs_Eleanor_Marx_Aveling_daughter_of_Karl_Marx.jpg) From Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository.

(17) Bathing Scene Eastbourne Information and photo on the permission of **Charlie Connelly** from the podcast brought to you by Charlie Connelly, bestselling author of 'Attention All Shipping'.

[8: The Eastbourne Bathers' Rebellion of 1929 • Coastal Stories - Podcast Addict](#)

(17a) The Eastbourne Recuperation Hotel and Education Centre, before it became The View – Unknown Photographer.

(18) A panel from the International Workers Mural. On permission of CM 2021. Via Wikimedia

(19) Paul Robeson in 1942.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paul Robeson 1942 crop.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_Robeson_1942_crop.jpg)

(19a) Paul Robeson <https://www.layersoflondon.org/map/records/paul-robeson-66c4f5151672-47c9-945b-5c65be4c1451/gallery/1> Via Wikimedia

(20) Youth Climate Strikers 2019 and Eastbourne Trades Council May Day Rally. On permission of CM 2021.

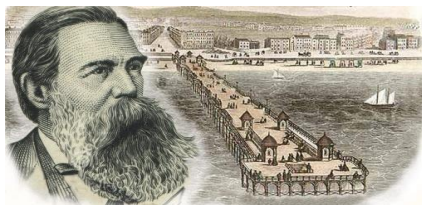
(21) The Eastbourne Civilian Memorial Trust information board. On permission of CM 2021.

(22) Wish Tower at Eastbourne. On permission of CM 2021.

(23) Beatrice & Sidney Webb working together at a table. Published in Beatrice Webb's second volume of autobiography 'Our Partnership' (1948). This image was posted to Flickr by LSE Library at <https://flickr.com/photos/35128489@N07/9259293969>

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For more information on the Radical History of Eastbourne

Engels in Eastbourne website



Peoples Eastbourne Website