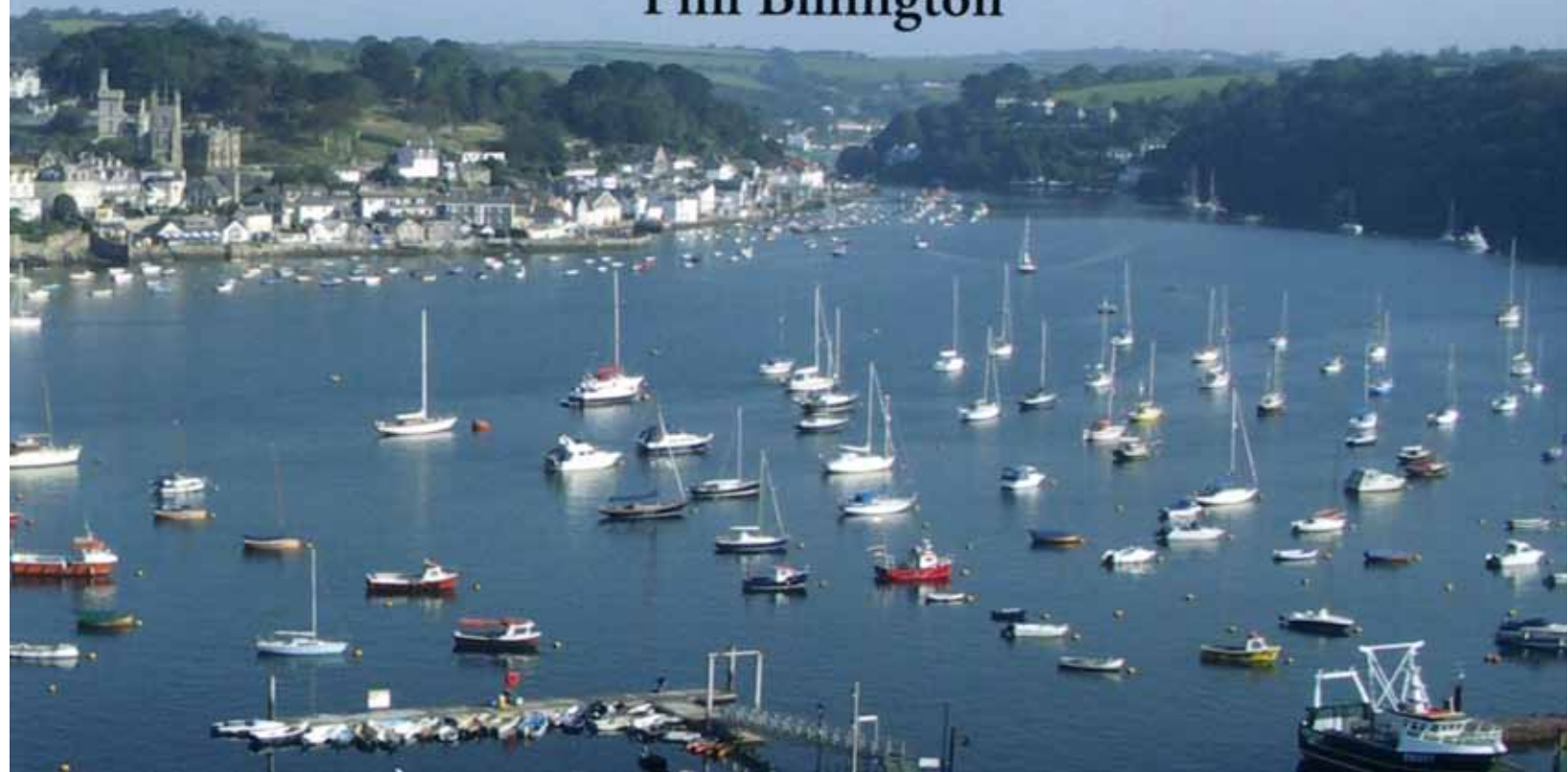


Fabulous Fowey

The Visitor's Guide to Fowey and District

Phil Billington



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INTRODUCTION

Within these pages I have tried to capture the many facets that make Fowey what it is today. It cannot be adequately described in words, nor portrayed by photographs. Fowey speaks for itself. Its outstanding beauty and character will not fail to enchant anyone who experiences it. Those who visit are honoured and upon leaving cannot wait to return.

This guide has been designed to not only be read from cover to cover, but also to be dipped into at will. The photographs speak volumes and aid the reader to identify where they are, even if they don't know!

It seems rather fitting really, that to pronounce Fowey, one only needs to remember that it was once spelt 'Foy' and that it rhymes with both joy and enjoy.

So enjoy the joy of 'Fabulous Fowey'.

Phil Billington 2008





FOWEY

There's so much more to Fowey than just pasties, ice cream or being by the seaside. It's historic, quaint, beautiful and most desirable. It has style, natural grace and is totally and utterly stunning. Its streets may be narrow and parking difficult, but oh what a joy to behold. Unique, breathtaking, wonderful and with the added bonus, it's on the Cornish coast.

The harbour is natural, spacious and glorious. The views are fantastic, equal to any, if not superior, and the whole place is overflowing with character and characters. Mere descriptions cannot do Fowey the full justice it deserves. Its beauty does not ebb and flow like the ceaseless tide that visits. Once seen, it will haunt the memory until one's return.

This part of the coastline has been deservedly designated an area of outstanding beauty and much is protected by the National Trust. So, not only is Fowey an estate agents dream, but a tourist one too. Those lucky Cornish Piskies have indeed worked overtime here.

The Cornish for Cornwall is 'Kernow' and the town's Cornish name seems to have been derived from 'fou' meaning 'beech river'. It is still heavily



wooded and this only enhances its charm, especially during autumn when the colours and reflections are magnificent. Its name has been variously spelt such ways as 'Fawi', 'Fauwy', 'Foy' and 'Foye'. A rose by any other name...

The town is restricted by the river and also by the boundaries of Place, the ancient ancestral home of the Treffry family. Most of central Fowey is situated on the level, but there are some steep areas as well.

Fowey has obvious sea connections and has thus been a centre for fishing, shipbuilding, sailing, trading and alike for centuries past. But the glory days of pilchards, tin, and copper are long gone and the main industry now seems to be tourism, which is thriving. Cornwall in general and Fowey in particular, make a dream holiday come true. Just look at the joy in the faces of the visitors.



From the headland, beach and buildings at Readymoney Cove, down through the centre of town and along to Caffa Mill by the Bodinnick car ferry crossing, Fowey is just a total delight.

TOWN QUAY

The Town Quay lies at the very heart of Fowey and is an absolute must to visit. A camera and perhaps a good pair of binoculars are essential here, as the panoramic views are just glorious. This area and parts of nearby streets are liable to very occasional high spring tide flooding. There have been times when people have proceeded along the high street in a rowing boat!

Just soak up the bustling atmosphere for a while. Watch youngsters enthusiastically crabbing. If the tide is out, there is a small exposed beach to walk on. Look out over to the open sea, towards St. Catherine's and St. Saviour's headlands and to the ancient Blockhouse.

Gaze over to Polruan with its shipbuilding yards, to the inlet of Pont Pill and the tree-lined route of the Hall Walk, or over to Prime Cellars, Ferryside and beyond to the car ferry at Bodinnick. Watch the china clay ships arrive and depart, the Polruan passenger ferry plying to and fro along with all the other vessels on the water and you will not be bored. Enjoy this panoramic harbour scene; it's Fowey at its very best.



Looking towards the buildings of the town quay, part of the Galleon public house can be seen and the beautiful mellow coloured brickwork of the Working Men's Institute. High above are the crenulated walls and towers of Place, which look rather like a castle.

A flight of steps lead up to the King of Prussia public house, with its impressive display of hanging baskets and window boxes. Behind is the tall, solid tower of the church. The inviting signs of the aquarium and a couple of restaurants with a fast food outlet in-between complete the scene. The local seagulls are also rather partial to a 'take-away', so be on guard; it's like *The Birds* all over again! Not just content with that, they treat bin bags as personally wrapped snacks. So much so in fact, that when locals put rubbish out on the mornings of collection, they protect the bags from attack by covering them with blankets and sheets. There is even now a specially designed 'gull guard' sheet for sale! It's the cosiest rubbish in the Duchy! Many of the litterbins bear the message 'please do not feed the seagulls'. Jackdaws also seem to be muscling in on this banquet now and some ducks have even resorted to begging! You have been warned!



The ferry over to Polruan regularly departs from the Town Quay and is an excellent way to view the harbour and its various landmarks. Note however that during the summer months it departs from Whitehouse Slip in the day and from the Town Quay early evening onwards till late. The service is frequent and inexpensive. There is also a water-taxi available, which takes moored visitors from ship to shore.

Self-drive hire boats are great fun and other trips are available and can be booked here in advance. These include sea cruises to places like Polperro, Mevagissey, Charlestown, Polkerris and Lantic Bay. There are also regular river trips upstream to Golant, Lerryn and even Lostwithiel, the old medieval capital of Cornwall. Guided harbour tours, one even in a small steam launch, are a great way of seeing the sights. These journeys are dependent upon tide, weather and water conditions, but if all are suitable, this is an excellent and thoroughly absorbing way to spend some quality time. For an interesting town tour, take the yellow 'train' ride.



WORKING MEN'S INSTITUTE

This elegant building was erected in 1868 and was built on the former site of an old fish market and a public house. The Royal British Legion is now housed here. Bar and hot drinks facilities are open to the public.

Outside, Service Boards once displayed listings of lifeboat rescues. These noted the nature of the rescue, the name of the vessel involved and the number of lives saved or lost. They made poignant reading and are now housed within the R.N.L.I. premises, the shop being located in Passage Street.





KING OF PRUSSIA

This ever-popular pub, rebuilt in 1886, has a similar design to an even earlier one bearing the same name. Beneath it can be seen the granite pillars of an old market.

The name is derived either from John Carter, a Cornish smuggler whose nickname was the 'King of Prussia', or Frederick the Great, one time King of Prussia. Look out for the sign outside; unusually it has different pictures on both sides. Perhaps the artist couldn't decide on the origins of the name either!

Like many of the local public houses this one is owned and supplied by the St. Austell Brewery Company, independent family brewers of St. Austell and founded by William Hicks in 1851. Be sure to look out for Duchy bitter, Black Prince, Tinnors, H.S.D. (Hicks Special Draft) and the ever-popular Tribute ale.



AQUARIUM

The building was originally part of an old market and was converted in 1950. It exhibits weird and wonderful local marine specimens, is cool relief from the summer's heat and has a children's 'touch' pool. Here they can be in contact with the strange, fascinating creatures of the deep. A must for all. Open May to September. An admission fee is charged.

FOWEY MUSEUM

Just round the corner to the left of the aquarium is this rather compact local museum. Many interesting artefacts such as General Garibaldi's cloak, which was worn on his visit of 1864, are on display. The museum is well worth a look inside, as it contains a fascinating insight into the long history of Fowey and its inhabitants. Open May to September. An admission fee is charged.





TOWN HALL

The Town Hall was built in 1793 and contains the museum and former council chambers. Part can be seen between the museum and the aquarium, but is sadly not always open to the public. It retains some of the previous medieval features of the 14th century guild chapel building it replaced, such as the iron barred windows of the old jail.

At the back of the building by the public telephone box and toilets, can be seen the site of the old town water tap, installed in 1787, to the then great delight of all. Nowadays, clean, fresh water is a commodity taken for granted, but back then it was a luxury and rather special. Ironically the tap no longer works although its modern chrome replacement does.



The Guide to Fabulous Fowey is a fully-illustrated guide to Fowey and its neighbourhood. Designed for both visitors and locals alike, it covers the ancient town itself and other scenic parts of the Fowey estuary that have inspired so many writers and artists. Sections include Polruan, Bodinnick and Ferryside where author Daphne du Maurier once lived as well as Fowey harbour, local shops and services.

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