

FIVE WALKS

IN FOLKESTONE

PREFACE

LEWIS BIGGS

CURATOR FOLKESTONE TRIENNIAL 2017

As curator of Folkestone Triennial 2017, the process I adopt to generate the exhibition starts with researching Folkestone as a location. The curatorial brief is to place all the artworks in public space, and if you put art in public space then it takes on the context of that space. The history and geography become a part of the artwork; people read the artwork in the context of history and geography, and the artwork in turn gives back to the history and geography of the place. So artwork and place become indelibly enmeshed.

International artists don't have the time to undertake research on Folkestone, so it's my job to do the research and pass it to the artists. As a part of that process, I talked to Diane Dever, Director of Folkestone Fringe, about finding synergy between this research and a project she has initiated called Urban Room Folkestone. It's part of a national network of Urban Rooms, set up after the Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment, published March 2014. The idea of an Urban Room is that it's a public space available for people, let's call them citizens, to think about the place in which they live, its history and its geography and whatever's happening currently in terms of planning permissions and development. And to express how the people who live there feel about

it - how they feel about the past, but also how they feel about the present and the future. So that's the purpose of an Urban Room: it's education but education that might have an outcome in terms of civic energy, or politics, maybe even activity. And an Urban Room needs content - something for the citizens who come there to absorb and react to along with bringing their own impressions. All Urban Rooms are ongoing projects that continue to develop.

A part of the content for Urban Room Folkestone has been provided by Diane and John Letherland (an Independent Masterplanning Consultant from Sandgate) who were funded by the Triennial to research and compile an Urban Analysis of Folkestone. Parts of their research are already on the wall of the Room: historical maps and geological maps, and a Nolli Map that shows the areas of the town that are as yet not built on. The maps show watercourses, roads, the railway, car parks, one way systems, blockages, all those things that affect the way we feel and behave in the urban environment every day. And all of which are the result of a long history, both human history (the made environment) and the natural environment that was there before humans started making their own environment.

John and Diane's work on the Urban Analysis is ongoing and collaborative - part is being contributed through these walks led by Steve Smith and Urban Narrative. He is writing up our experiences of the walk as a contribution to the Urban Analysis. And the depth of knowledge held by people who come on the walks, like Charlie Bayne Smith, is an invaluable part of the process - Charlie has more knowledge than anyone else about the watercourses of the River Pent, and we'll never understand Folkestone without understanding the hidden watercourse around which it was built.

The Urban Analysis, then, is a way of bringing all these different knowledges, subjective and objective, into a document that can be available to feed the concerns and interests of citizens as well as feeding the imagination of artists coming to Folkestone for the Triennial.

Finally, it's clear from the Analysis that Folkestone is full of blockages of one kind or another. The railway that was built across the town parallel to the shore, blocking off all the communications

networks that were there before, was the first and most significant of the blockages. Since then, there have been many other blockages created for what seemed like a good reason at the time, but is no longer a good reason. Like the Harbour. A lot of the traffic system was designed for the benefit of the ferries. The ferries no longer work, but the system hasn't changed, and prevents us using the town in the way we might like to do so if we were able to redesign it.

Originally, I wanted this 2017 Triennial to be about the connectivity between different parts of the town. For various reasons that was not possible, but I still hope this might be the subject of a future Triennial. These walks, then, may contribute to a future triennial along those lines; but they will certainly contribute to the Urban Room Folkestone as it develops in the next months and years. I want to say a big thank you to all of the participants on these walks who have contributed their expertise as citizens to the collective knowledge we share about Folkestone as a place, and to beginning to imagine how it might be in the future.

INTRODUCTION

Over countless millennia the Pent Stream and its tributaries cut through the chalk cliffs of the south coast slowly shaping the topography of the area and creating a sheltered haven for people to come down to the sea. Folkestone was founded and grew over a very long period around this fortuitous carving of geology by water. The human history of Folkestone is of people coming down to the sea from the land; along clifftop coastal paths; along roads and tracks from the farming hinterland of Kent; of more modern roads; of railways defying the topography with engineering to bring trains across the valley and down to the sea.

Folkestone is also a built narrative of boats and shipping connecting to the land with flows of goods and people back along the same tracks, roads and rail lines into the landscape. We might imagine evolving patterns of movement from land to shore and from shore to land whose origins provide the foundation of the town. It is a pattern of movement from edge to centre and centre to edge.

This book records five walks through Folkestone that took place between March and June 2017. The walks were planned to engage local residents and visitors in an exploration of the urban form of Folkestone

by following a series of paths following the historic patterns of movement from edge to centre that have shaped the town.

Each walk started towards the edge of the town, following meandering paths through streets, side paths, steps and parks before eventually arriving at the 'Urban Room, a shipping container building located on the Harbour Arm and run by the Folkestone Triennial Festival. Here, refreshed with welcome mugs of tea and toasted sandwiches the participants were invited to make sketch drawings of their walking experiences, to discuss what they had seen and to make suggestions as to what they would change along the line of the walk.

Each walk produced a small folio of imaginative drawings and diagrams, which provided the agenda for lively and passionate discussions between the participants.

This book is a record of photographs taken by participants during the walks, together with reproductions of the drawings and diagrams made afterwards and notes of the discussions held in the Urban Room.

Five Walks in Folkestone is intended to:

- Provide a visual and written

- record of five memorable days spent in good company in 2017, exploring the town of Folkestone
- Act as a document of reference for artists working on public art projects as part of the Triennial arts festival
- Provide inspiration to Folkestone Town Council members and officers regarding initiatives for positive changes that might be considered in the planning and development of the town.

WALK ONE:

THE LEAS

WALK ONE: THE LEAS

On the 4 March 2017 a group of 19 people and one dog gathered outside the former Metropole Hotel facing The Leas. A flat white sky threatened rain but might equally have brightened to spring sunshine. After salutations, encouragements and preliminary introductions the group set off on the first of the five walks across Folkestone. This first walk was an exploration of The Leas, an area of parks and open spaces facing out to sea along the western

approaches to the town centre. The war memorial at the eastern end of The Leas marks the end of the open space. Our route then descended along the Road of Remembrance to the harbour where the walk ended in a bright orange pavilion run by the Folkestone Triennial. This pavilion, known as the 'Urban Room', serves as a headquarters for the organisation of the diverse programme of arts events that are the stimulus for the regeneration of the harbour and

central Folkestone. Additionally the space is used as a location for the display and discussion of regeneration proposals for the town. On arrival at the room the group of walkers discussed their impressions from the walk over hearty hot cross buns and mugs of hot tea. Personal maps and 'mind maps' of impressions were drawn, and suggestions for changes that could be made to the town along the route of the walk were recorded.



THE WALK

The route for the first walk comprised:

The Metropole
The Pink House
Lower Leas Coastal Park
Baden Powell House
Wilfred Owen recalled
Lord Radnor Estate
Clifton Crescent
Bandstand

The Leas
Lifts
The Leas Pavilion Theatre
War Memorial
Road Of Remembrance
Wartime Shelters
Harbour Approach Road
Grand Burstin Hotel
Harbour Arm
Urban Room



THE WALKERS

The participants were:

People

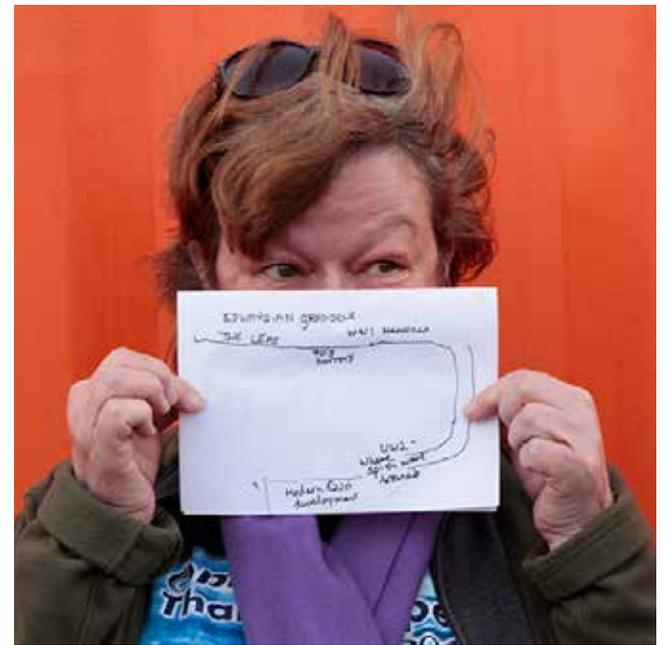
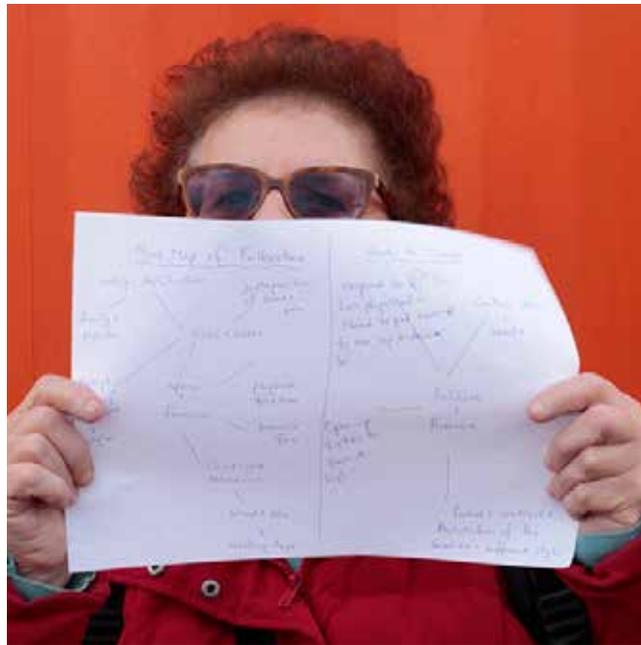
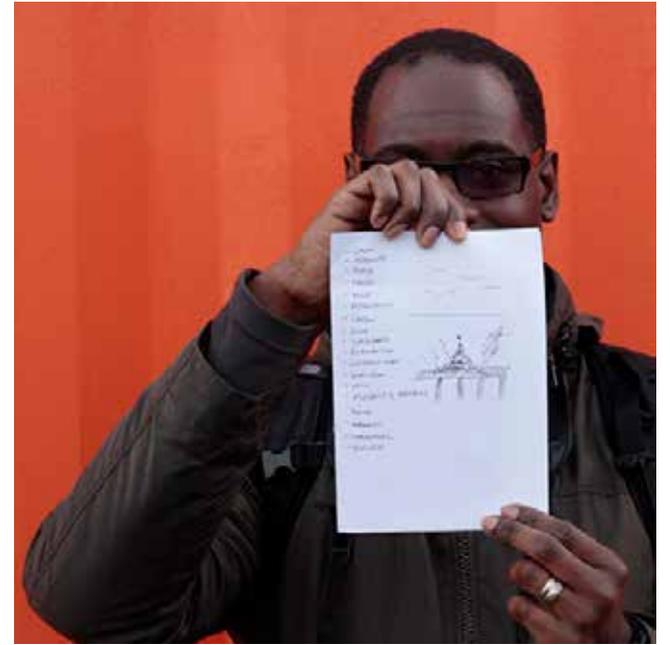
Claire Angel
Linda Bauer
Lewis Biggs
Karen Pamplin Browne
Anthony Browne
Levi Browne
Christopher Houghton Budd

Tessa Houghton Budd
Angela Conyers
Diane Dever
John Dunn
Charlotte Khan
Mabel Khan
Naveed Khan
David Lay
Liz Mulqueen
Steven Smith

Greg Taylor
Maryanne Traylen

Dogs
Ned





Some of the walkers with their mind maps

SEA FEVER

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over

By John Masefield



Getting started
Discovering hidden artworks



Municipal spring blooms A nostalgic sense of traditional civic pride



A grand Edwardian scene with a foreground of cars

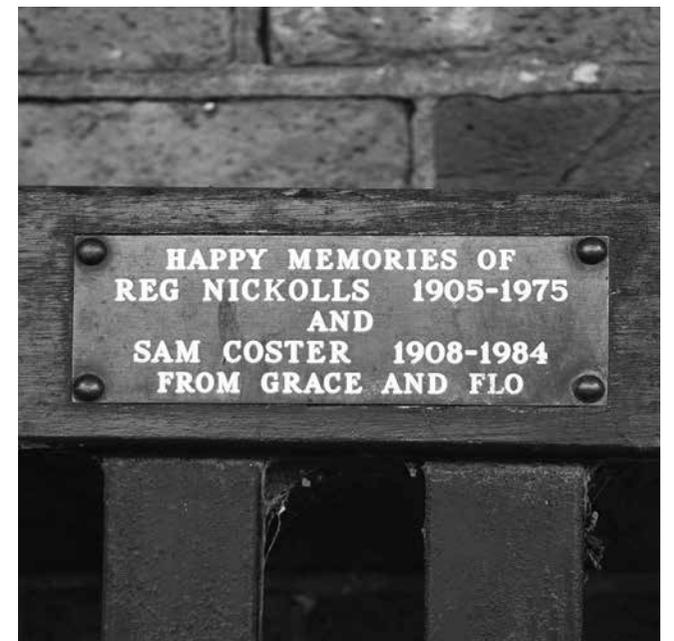


Edwardian grandeur Everyone seems to know the story of royal connections and aristocratic living before the First World War.

A hotel that never quite achieved its ambition and is now a private residential development. Could this building offer a more public face for the arts and the community?



Sense of another time, of memorial, of something lost Perhaps the tragedy of war lingers



Bench memorials The presence of absence. Joyful recollection



Architectural collage Fragments combined
in a building



Memorial to William Harvey



Blocked No view to the sea



Orderly terraces



Ornamental lamp post



Municipal pride Civic emblems and lamp post markers along the route





Everywhere Means Something to Someone
The Leas

The name The Leas suggests that this was once a meadow. When Folkestone was in its heyday as a popular seaside resort, the Leas was the place to be seen and The Grand and Metropole Hotels were the places to stay. Edward VII and his lady friend Alice Keppel (great, great grandmother of the Duchess of Cornwall) were regular visitors to The Grand. On a sunny afternoon take a stroll along The Leas and imagine the ladies and gentlemen promenading along in their fashionable clothes. At one time private policemen were employed by Lord Radnor to ensure that no riff-raff disturbed the peace.

strange
cargo

Folkestone Triennial

A variety of signs: control,
inspiration, memorial





Lamp line



Citizen action Volunteers creating a garden of the senses



House secured within walls and immaculate hedging marking the boundary between public and private worlds

Boundary Walls and immaculate hedging mark the boundary between public and private worlds



Functionalism v romanticism The elegance of the crescent and contrasting 1960s addition (left). The source of much outrage: 'A nice enough building but in completely the wrong place'



Seaside splendour



Baden Powell's House Secure within its strong wall



Order Symmetrical bay fronted brick
elegance vandalised by later additions

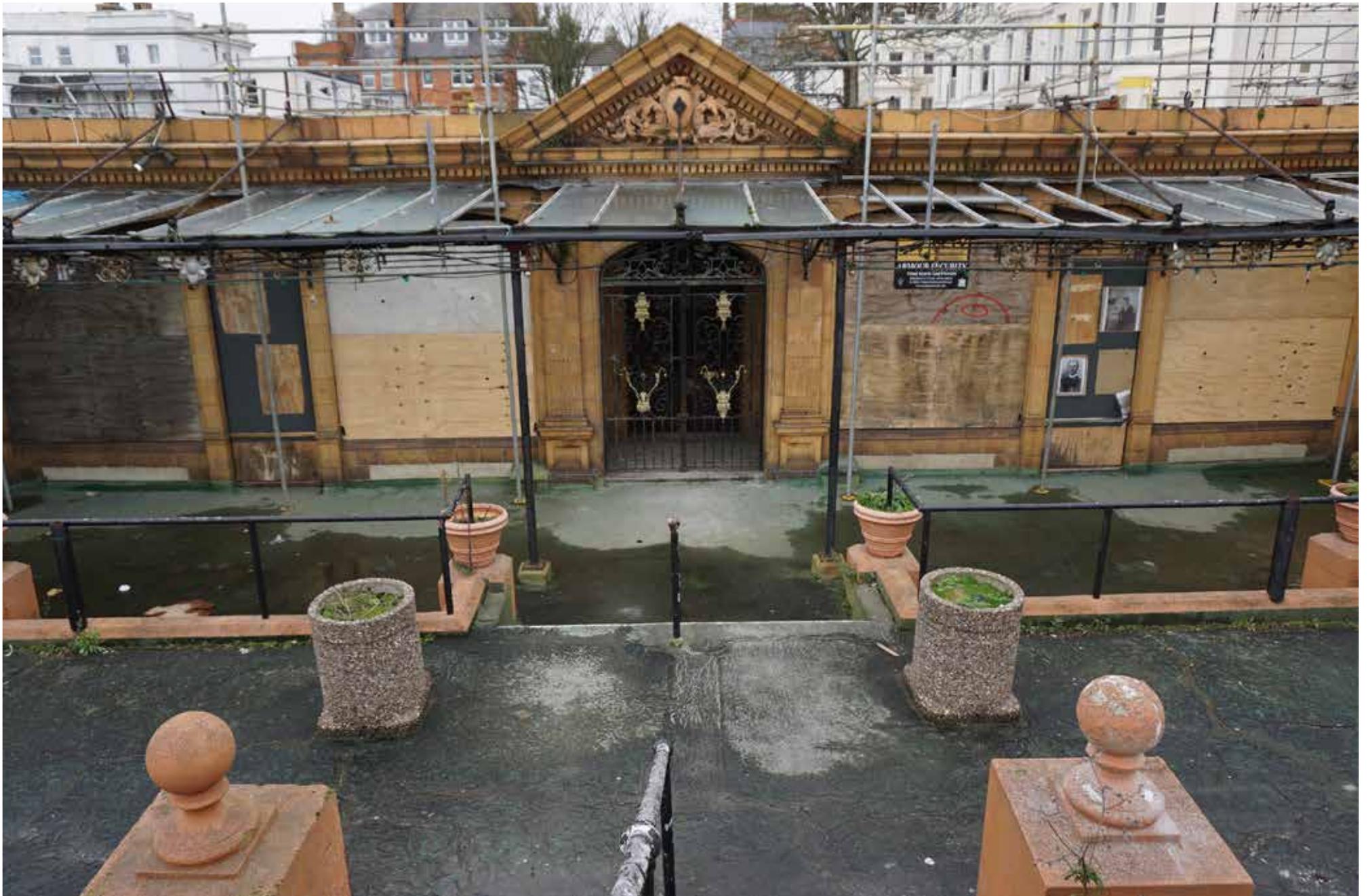


'The typewriter building' A machine for capturing sunshine and views, much disliked by the walkers





Municipal grass Said to be animated with picnickers during the summer months



The Leas Pavilion Theatre This much-loved disused historic theatre is now the focus of a committed community effort to restore the building for public arts use and reopen the theatre



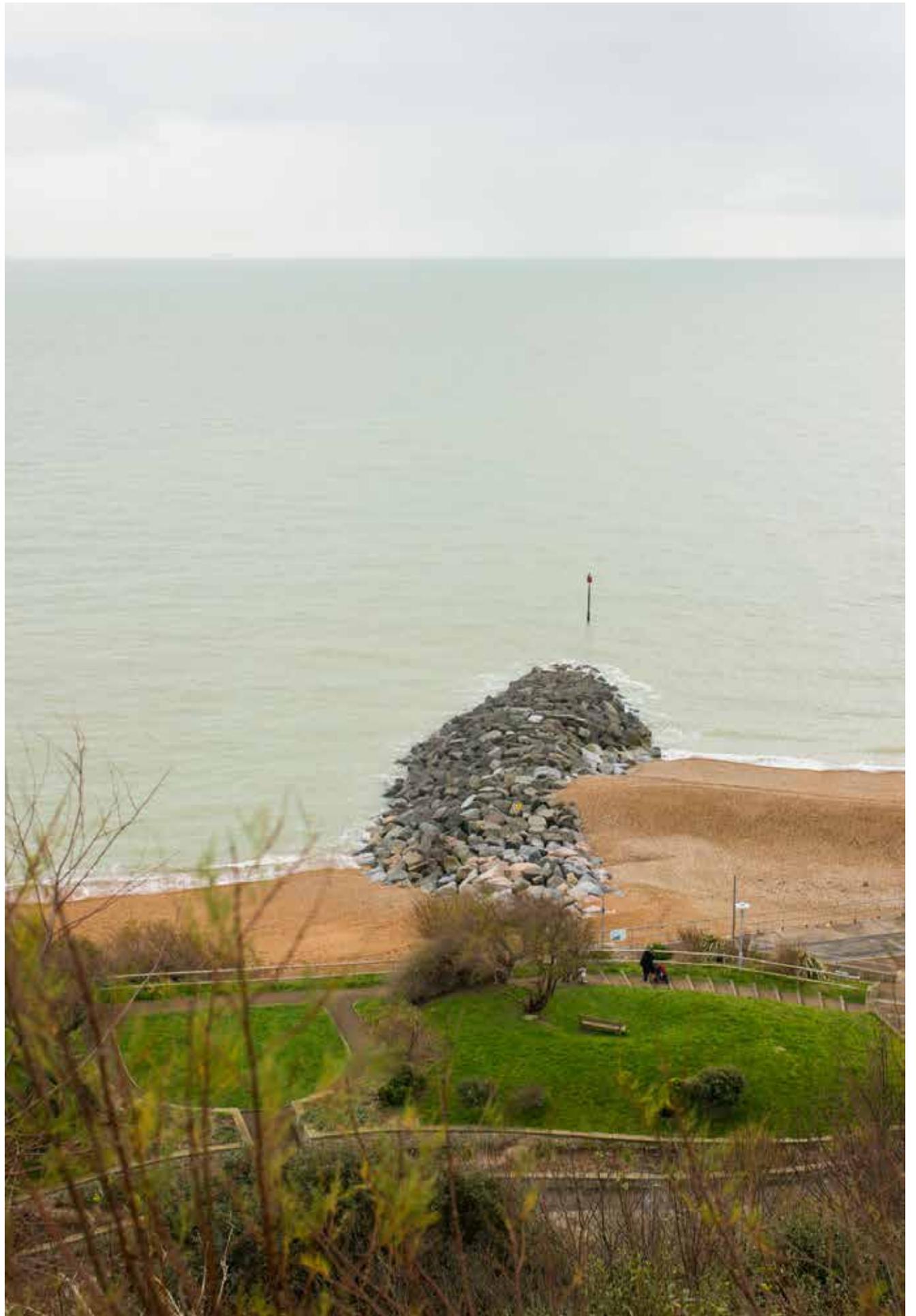


Decaying theatre balustrade



Additions Art deco and tropical appendages to the Edwardian scene

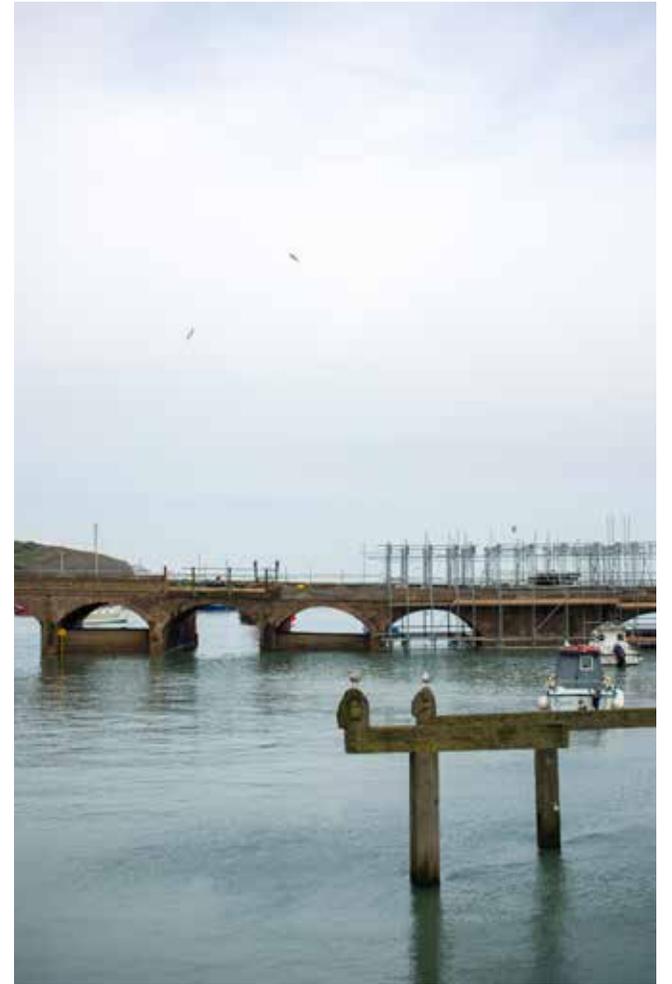




Peaceful places



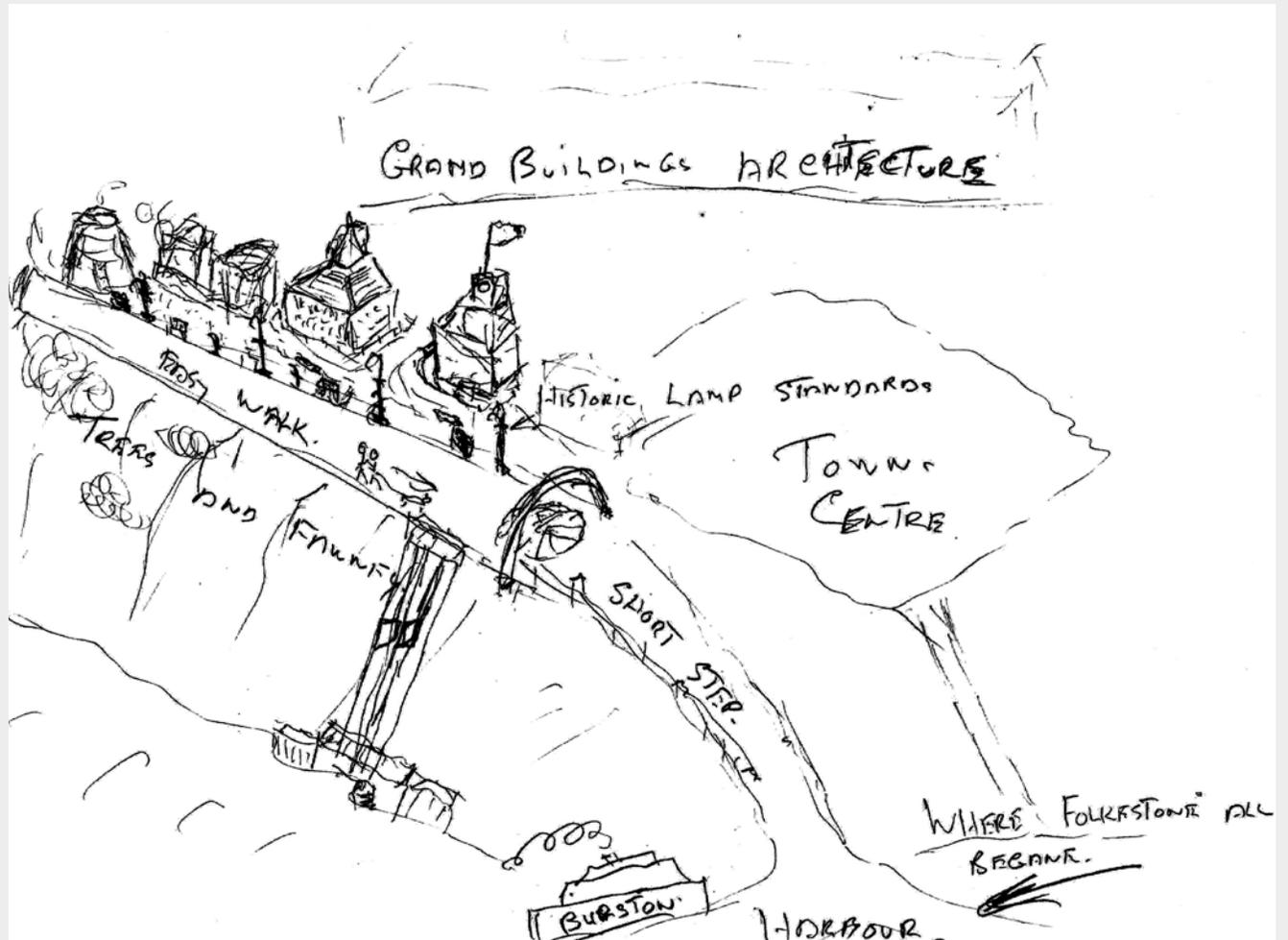
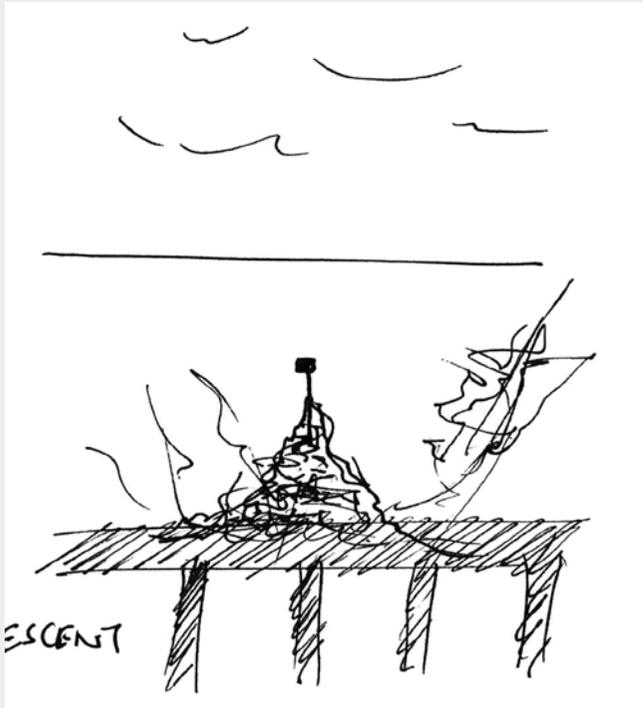
Faint horizon



IMPRESSIONS

Public/private

- Great differences along the route of the walk in relationship between public and private space. Houses hidden away and secure behind hedges, fences and walls at beginning of walk. More open to view in later part - perhaps more public display of private wealth and status
- Hotel as semi-public space - but Metropole now closed to public access
- Need for more semi-public space
- Fill hotel with artists
- Transition from Edwardian to 1960s buildings
- Grand and Metropole Hotels at beginning - Burstin Hotel at Harbour
- Would not like to see much change
- Burstin could be transformed with imagination and more balconies - it is a striking local landmark

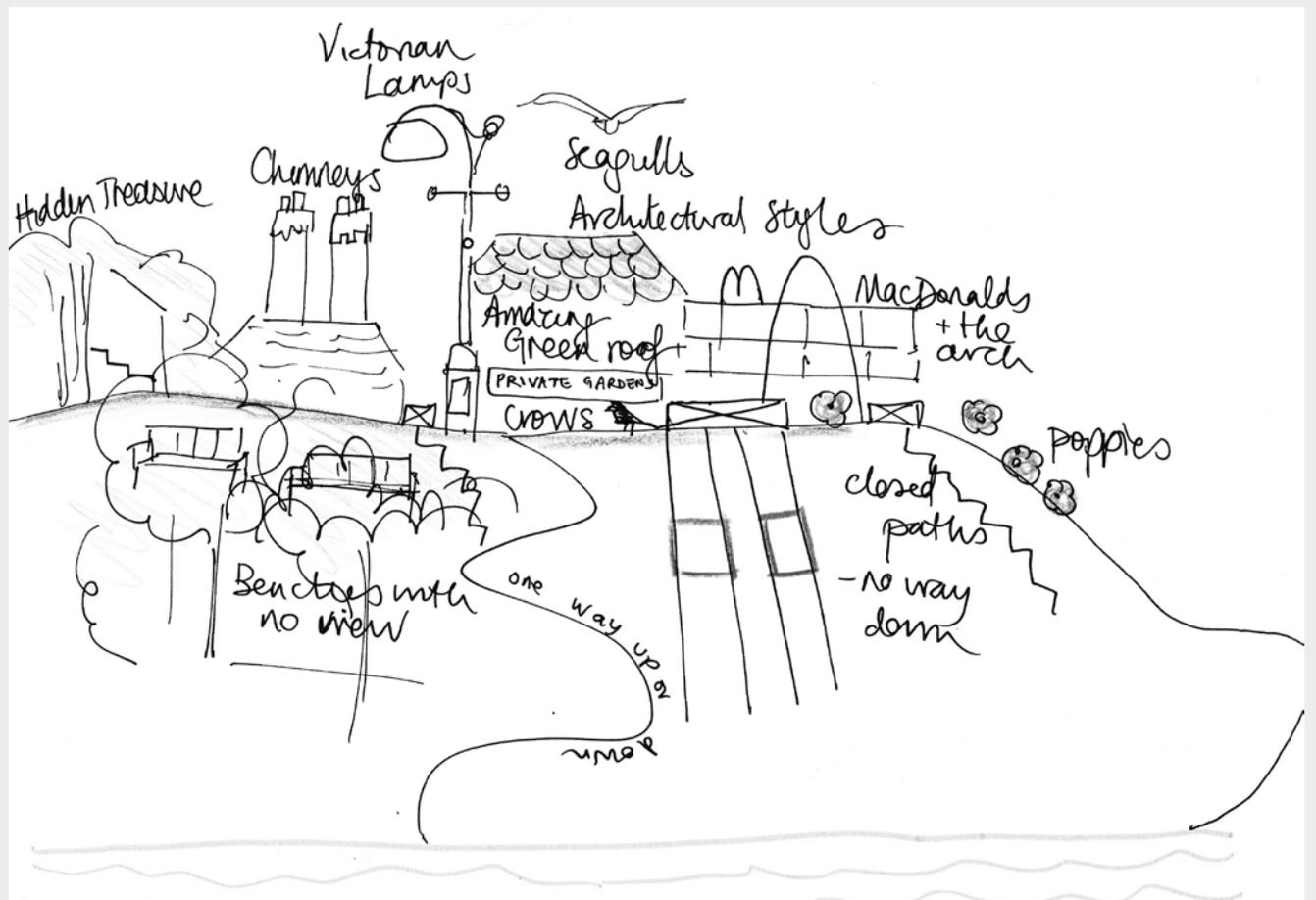
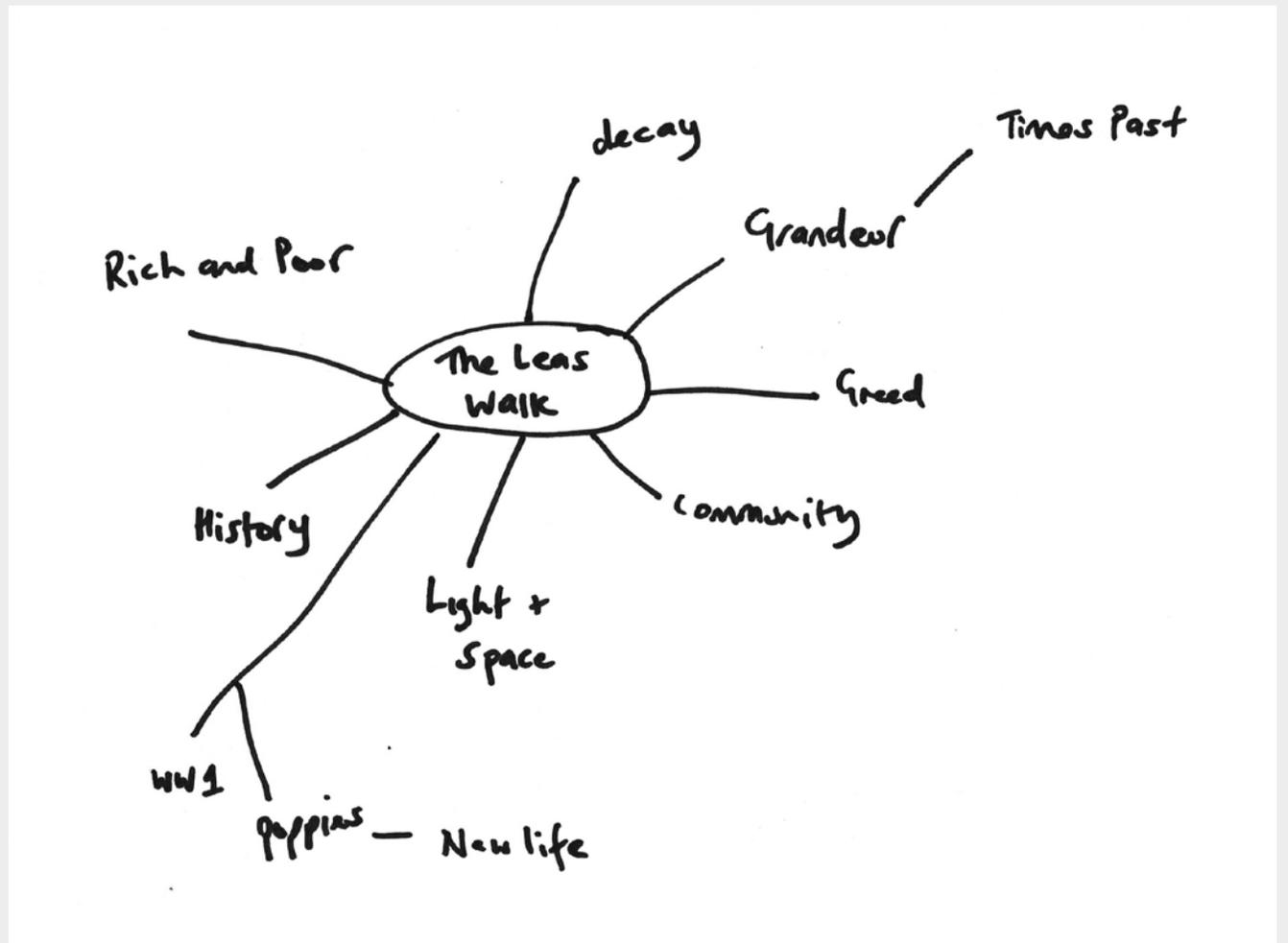


Feelings

Serenity
Peace
Fresh
Mild
Refreshing
Green
Blue
Turquoise
Exploration
Juxtaposition
Horizon
Hill
Ascent And Descent
Fluid
Memory
Memorial
History

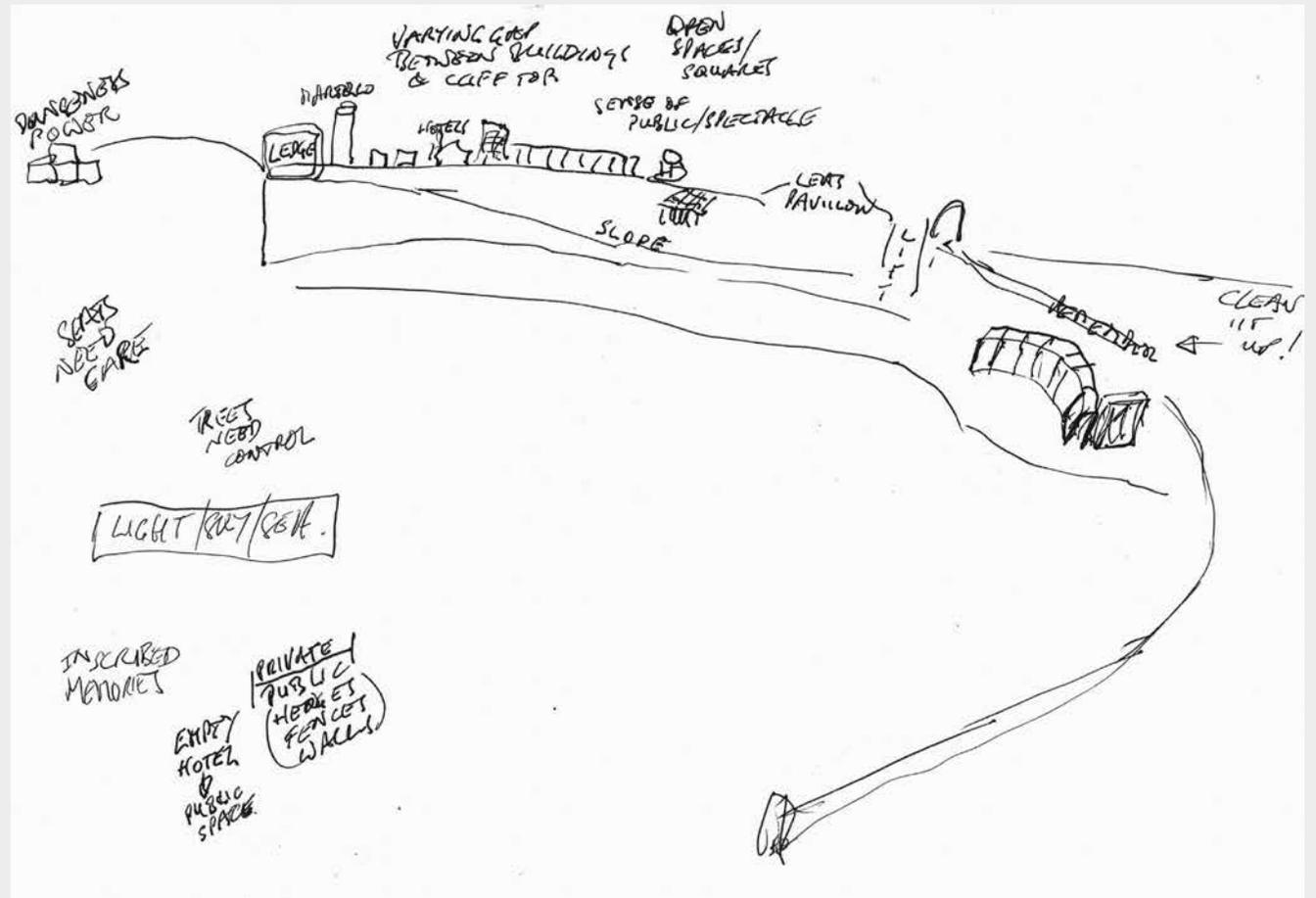
The Leas Walk

Rich And Poor
Decay
Grandeur
Times Past
Greed
Community
Light And Space
History
Ww1
Poppies
New Life



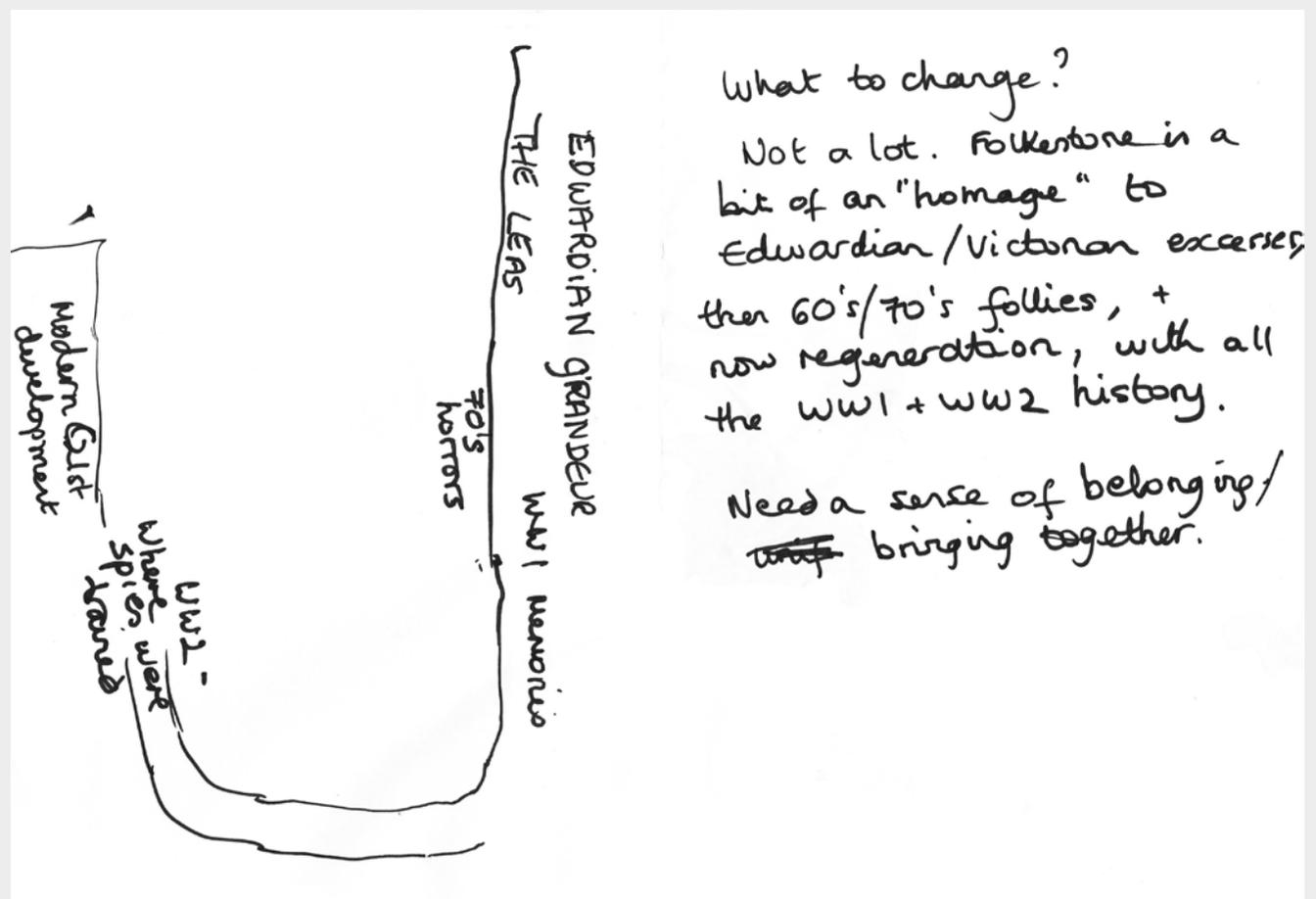
Views

- Two views. One on The Lees the other in the centre
- View one - I love the views of sea and sky
- It changes every day
- The colours, the trees, the light
- So many benches with a view to the sea are blocked by trees
- Strong dislike for the 1960s buildings. Hideous!
- Concern about change
- What's going to happen?
- Folkestone lacks a clear centre
- Strong support for the improvements around the harbour



Links and views

- Need for better connections down to the shore
- Sense that routes are dangerous, particularly at night
- Lack of safe lighting
- Lights have been out for weeks, awaiting repair. Why is this?
- View of the stars over the sea is amazing when it is dark without lights
- Need to manage the planting to allow views out from benches
- Manage the slopes for trees, wildlife, pedestrian connections and people
- Day and night - safety and security
- Darkness and light - a sense of danger



Landscape

- Consider a project to explore all the landscape and links
- Lower beach to upper Leas and all the banks and spaces between
- Landscape and access issues
- Views, nature, planning, wildlife habitats
- Links and connections
- Could there be better links to The Downs?
- It is difficult to access without driving
- Get rid of the motorway severance
- Straighten out the road system
- Get rid of one-way circulation

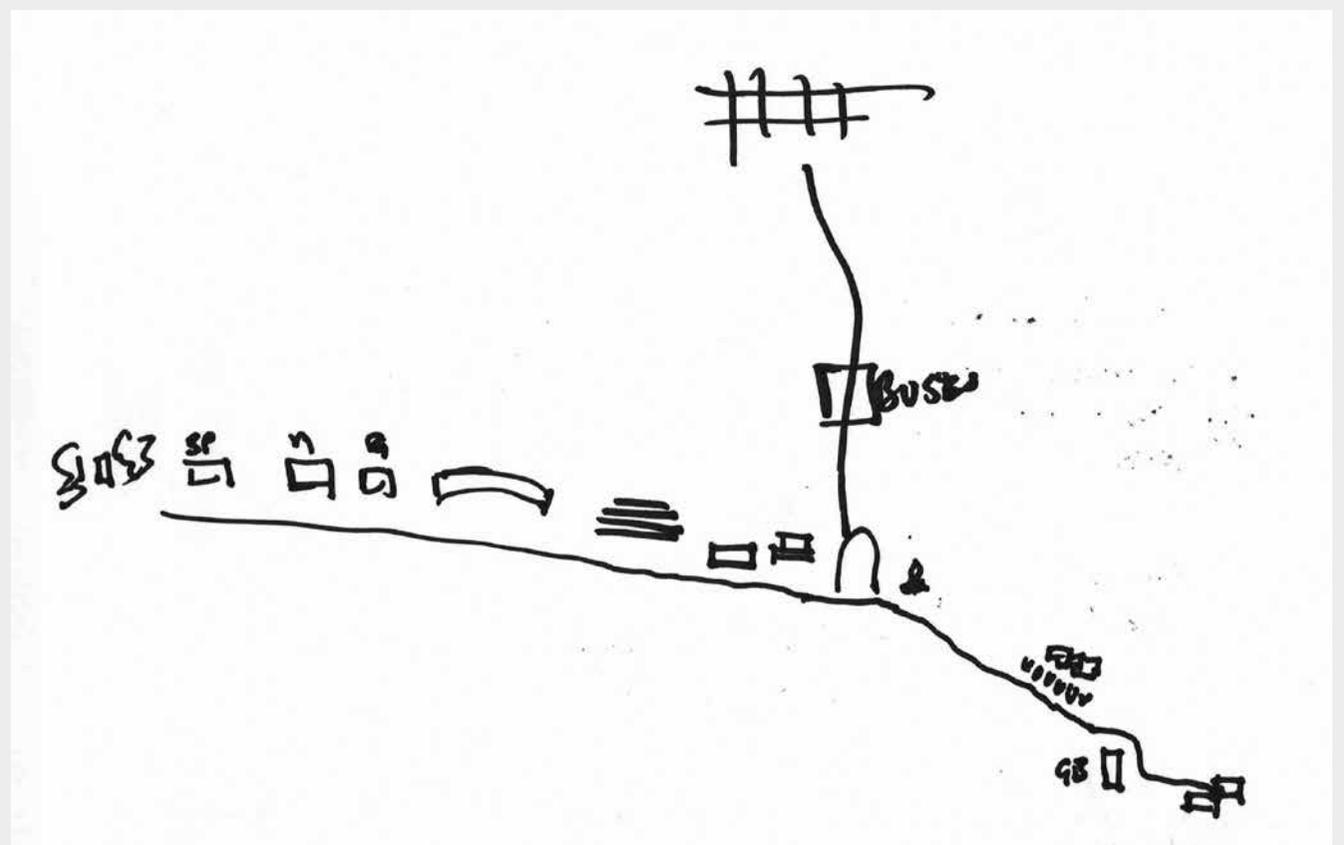
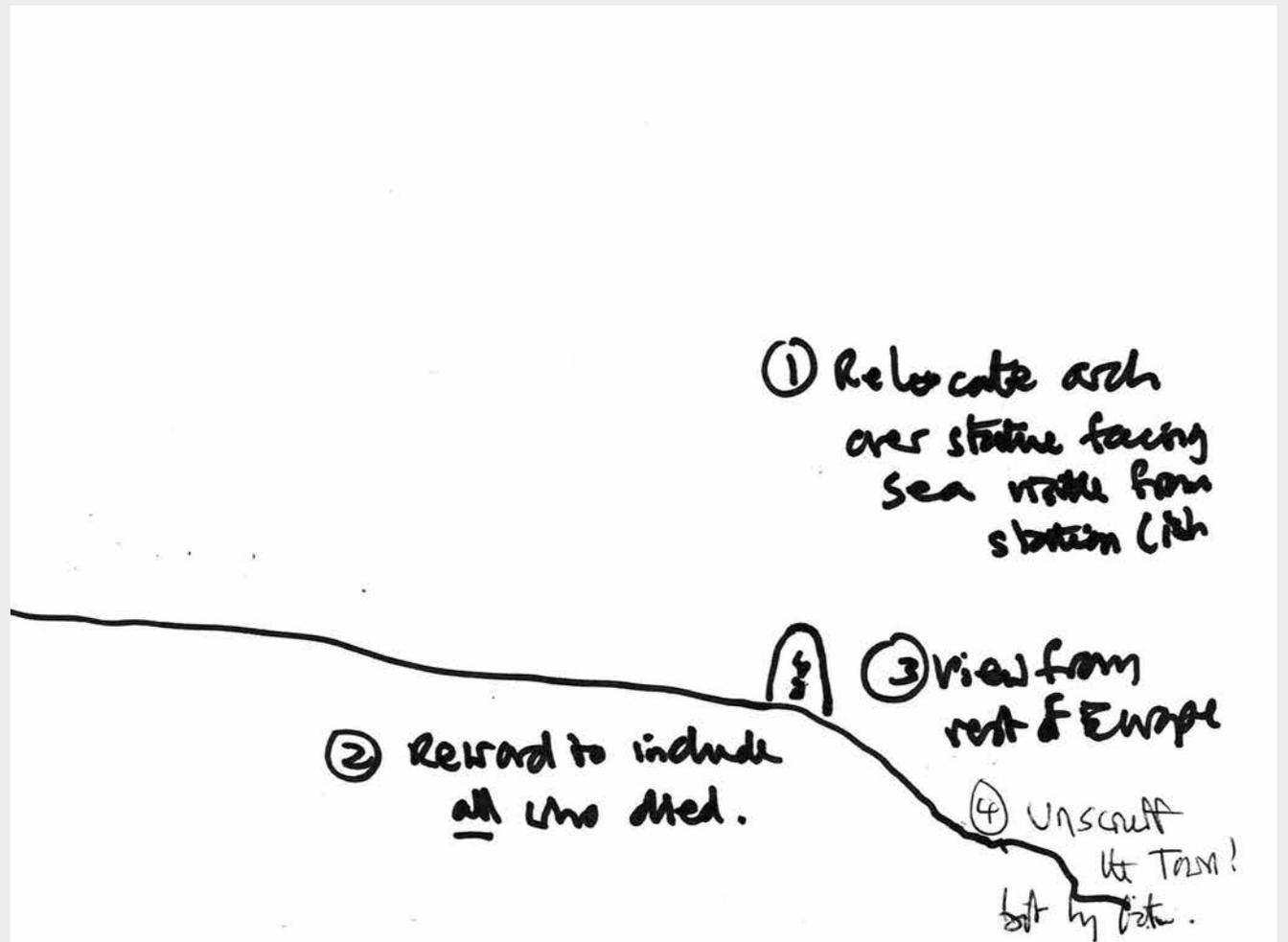


The war memorial

- Should commemorate all the war dead of all nations out of respect for visitors from overseas
- Move arch to go over the memorial
- Turn arch to face outwards to Europe

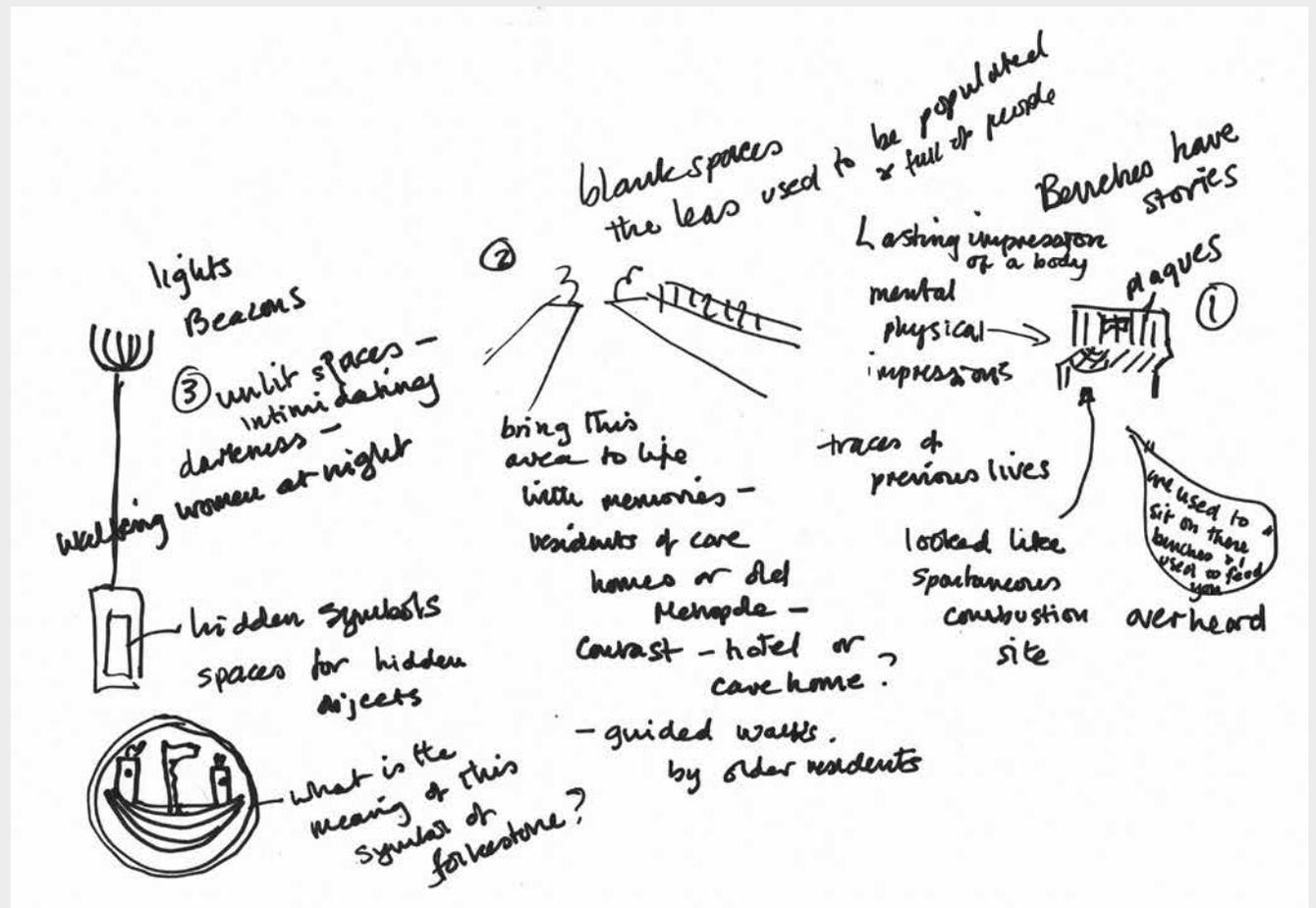
Scruff/unscruff

- The main change that is needed is to unscruff the place
- Remove unsightly walls and obstructions
- Better manage the landscape
- Clear up the litter and mess
- Tidy it up
- Better manage the trees with the right species
- Lift the spirit of the place by 'unscruffing'



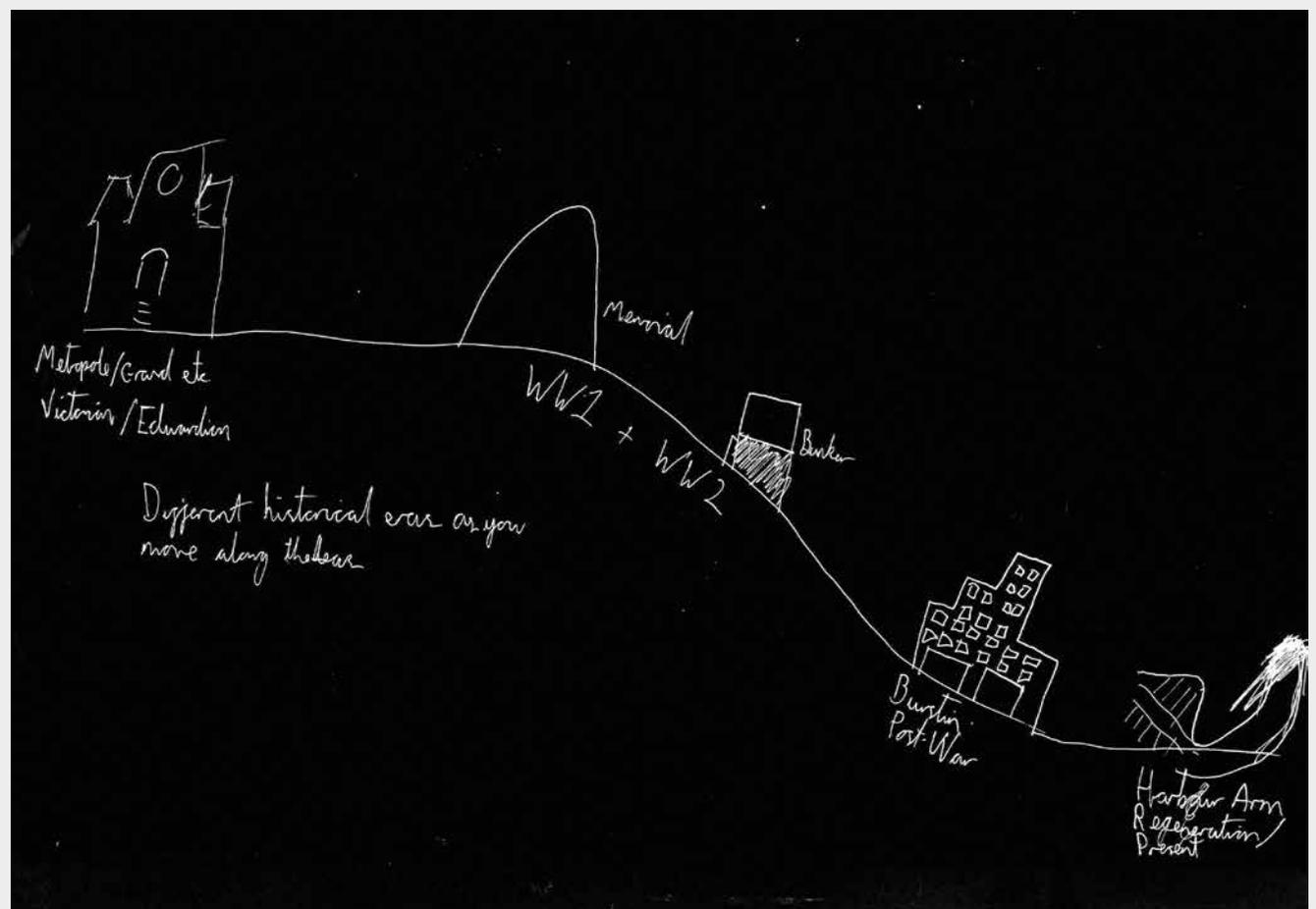
Memories

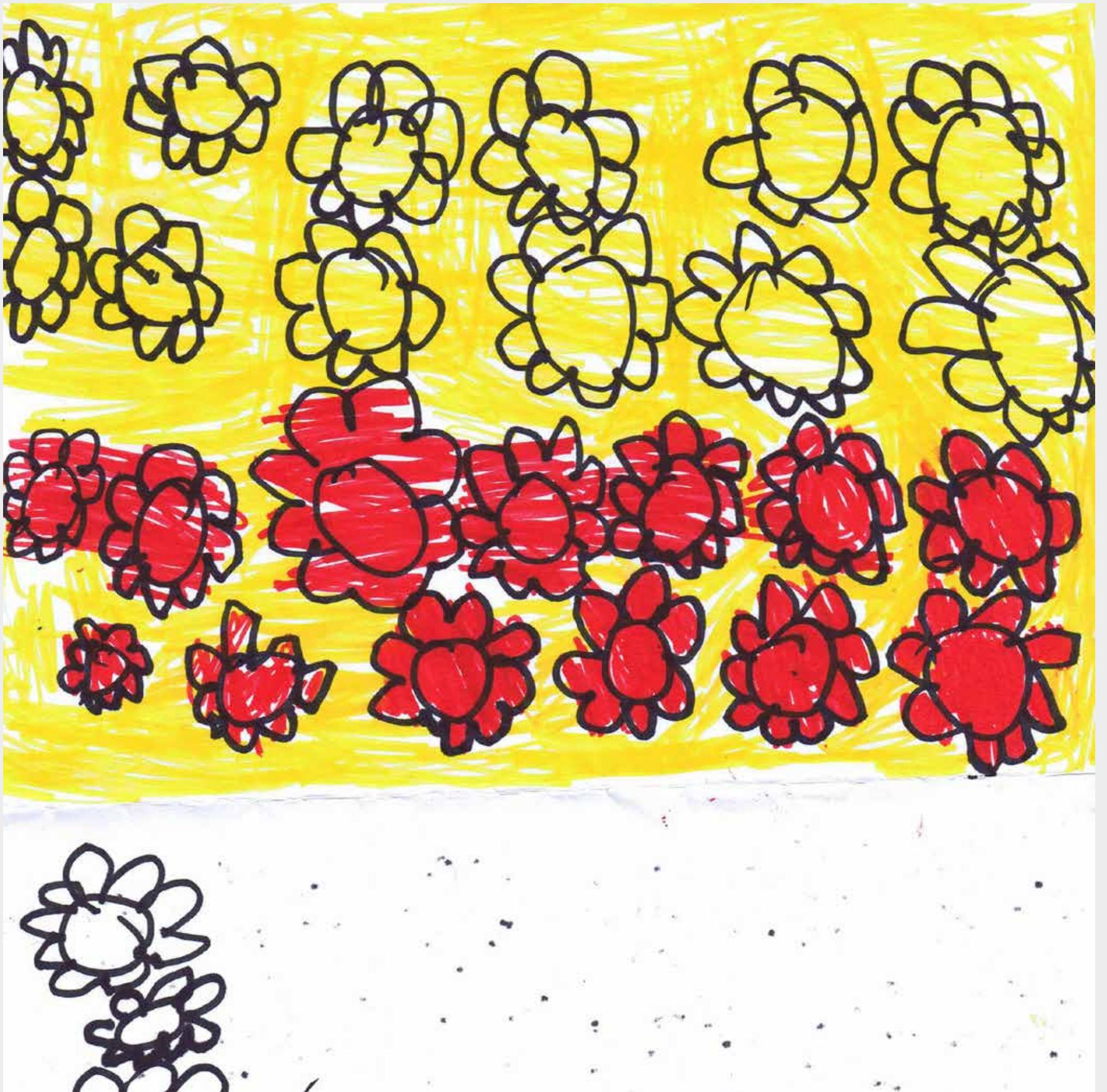
- Benches incorporating memorials
- Impressions as though made by the people commemorated
- Conserving lasting impressions
- 'we used to do a lot of walking here and I used to feed you'
- Discovering the memoirs of the older residents of The Grand
- There is a certain blankness to the grass. Perhaps this is just the time of the year?
- Grass is used for picnics in summer
- Noticed the Beacon of the Cinque Ports
- Noticed the Folkestone Borough symbol on the lamp posts
- I love the small doors in the lamp posts
- The bench memorials recall happiness felt by past generations using the space
- They are joyful memorials



Space

- Freedom
- Barrier free
- Need to better celebrate the history of fishing
- Living history of fishing in Folkestone
- Harbour needs more development but must keep its character
- Harbour is where it all started - the most important part of the town
- 21st century life
- History is very interesting and I appreciate the historic buildings
- Need to celebrate the seaside in a 21st century way
- Need to protect and enjoy the peace of the seaside
- Need to better connect Leas to the coast
- Make links and connections



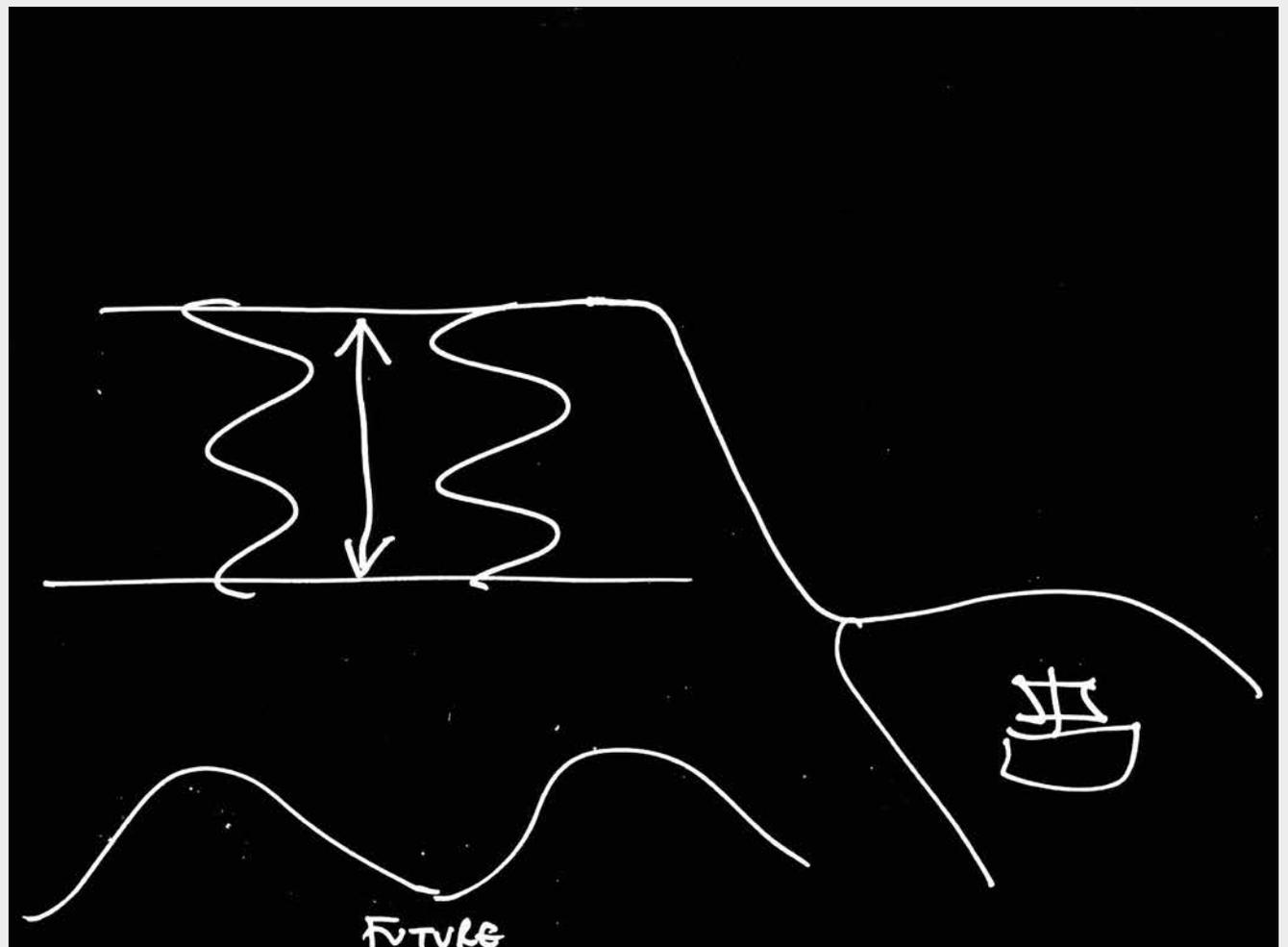
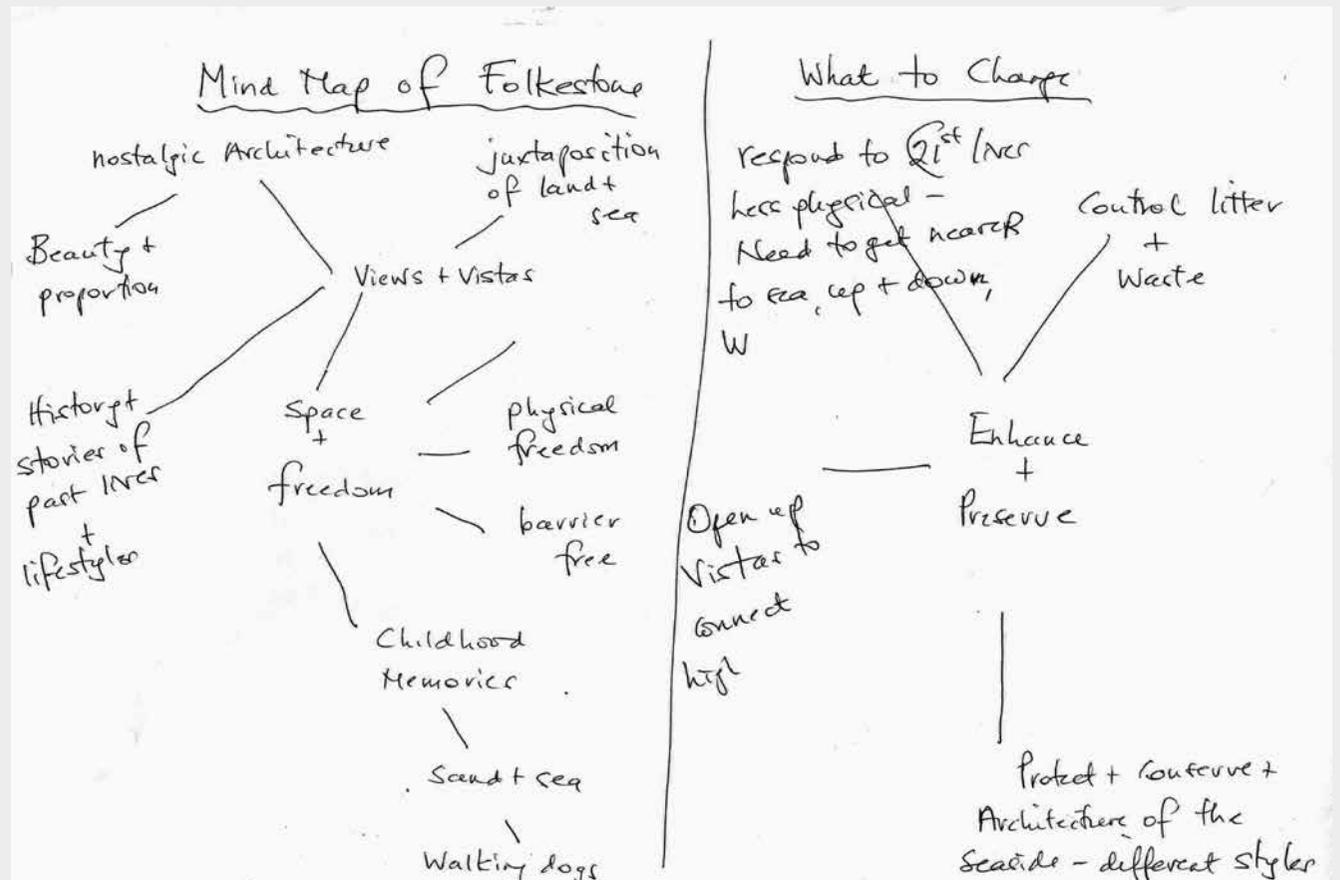


Leas Pavilion Theatre

- Friends trying to save the building
- Strong support from theatre profession
- Would add greatly to the quality of the walk
- Major contribution to the town
- A new semi-public space
- Hope to get lease soon
- Begin restoration with competition for design of window hoardings
- Congratulations for all the efforts

Signs

- Need to improve information and signage
- Get rid of old ones that are no longer legible
- Get rid of redundant signs
- Recalling sign on bandstand stating that the stand was not licenced for playing music!



Architecture

- Pevsner strongly disliked the Metropole and Grand Hotel buildings
- I would get rid of the horrible arch next to McDonalds
- I quite like the 1960s buildings, they are just in the wrong place

Diversity

- Appreciate the variety of places
- Different styles of architecture
- Places for different people - richer and poorer
- Diversity and richness
- Appreciate the grandeur of times past
- Celebrate the history but certain sadness of always thinking of the past
- Enjoy the sense of change and life going on
- Sense of new optimism
- Would get rid of the 1960s blocks
- Need better tourist information

