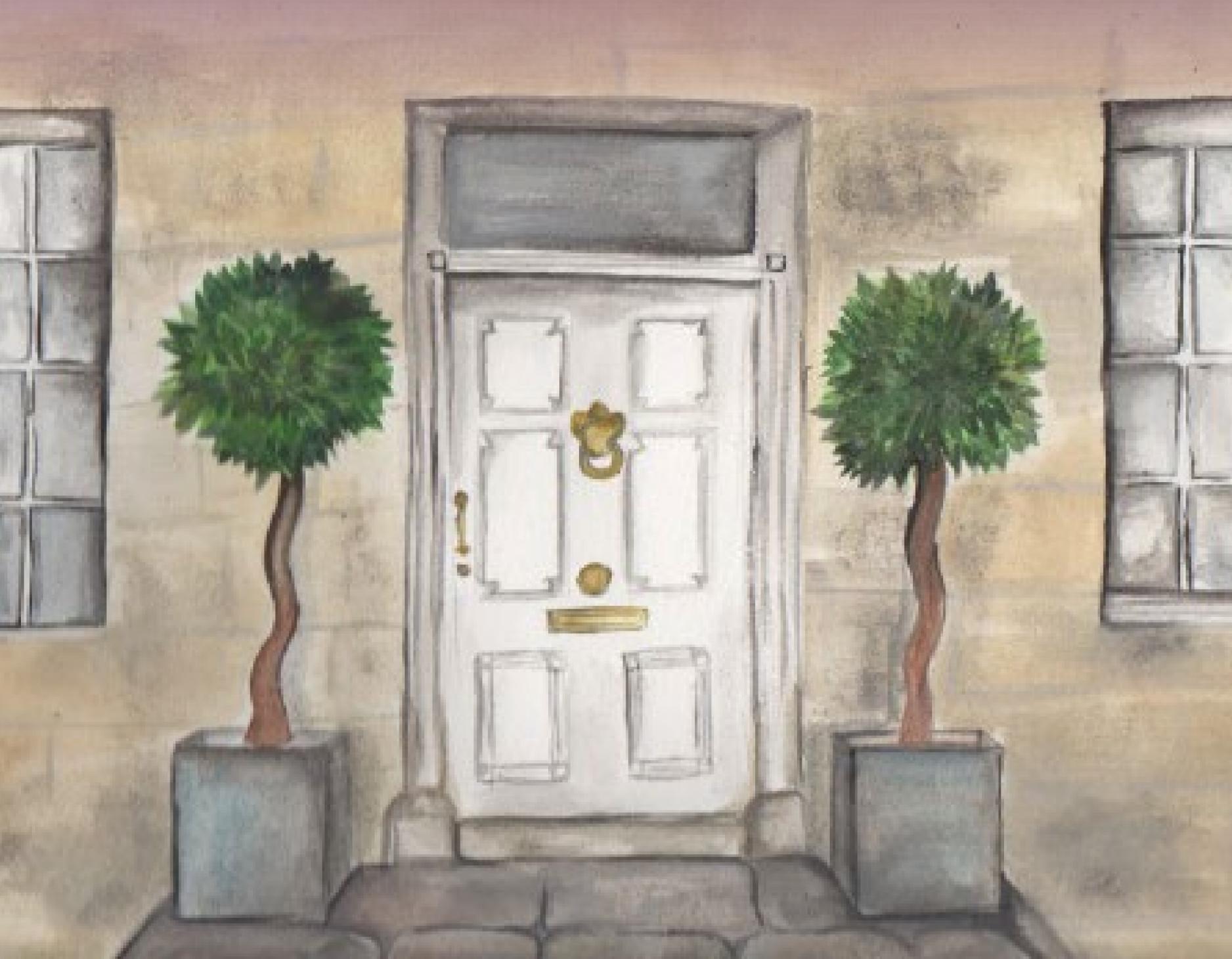


No. 1 | ONE
ROYAL
CRESCENT



IF WALLS COULD TALK
CHRONICLES OF THE CRESCENT:
THE STORIES BEHIND THE
FAÇADE

CLICK THE DOOR TO ENTER!



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Did You Know...?



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IF WALLS COULD TALK

2017 marks the 250th anniversary since the foundation stone of the Royal Crescent, one of the most famous buildings in Bath, was laid.

In association with Bath Preservation Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund, Heritage at Bath Spa University presents:

If Walls Could Talk

Bath Spa University is pleased to be working with Bath Preservation Trust and No. 1 Royal Crescent. If Walls Could Talk is contributing to the Royal Crescent's 250th anniversary events, celebrating the significance of this building as an iconic piece of British heritage.

This digital trail that you have downloaded will take you on a tour through history, introducing you to a few of the characters who have lived behind the doors of the Royal Crescent since it was first erected in 1775.

From yellow bikini protests and radical Feminists, to Roman skeletons and beheaded princesses, this trail brings to life the stories of the Royal Crescent residents, showcasing one of Bath's most historical buildings as not only the stage for grandeur, but also for everyday life.

Follow the trail as you walk around the Royal Crescent, discovering the unique stories that make up the rich history of the building's past residents.





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CHRISTOPHER ANSTEY

1793 - NO. 4



'Twas a glorious Sight to behold the Fair Sex
All wading with Gentlemen up to their Necks,
And view them so prettily tumble and sprawl
In a great smoaking Kettle as big as our Hall:
And to-Day many persons of Rank & Condition
Were boil'd by Command of an able Physician'



Born in 1724, Christopher Anstey was a land-owner from Brinkley in Cambridgeshire, but he was best known for his work in Bath, and was a well-known resident at No. 4 Royal Crescent. He famously wrote *The New Bath Guide* following a visit to Bath in 1766. The book was not a guide as the title may suggest, but was a satirical review and commentary about fashionable society in Bath in the eighteenth century. Thanks to its broad humour, it found a delighted audience in both Bath and London and was an immediate best-seller.

As a result of its initial success, ten editions were released throughout the following decades, and it remains an important part of Bath's literary heritage today.

Following the book's success, Anstey later moved to Bath with his wife and 13 children, where he settled into the fashionable Royal Crescent. The bronze plaque outside No. 5 suggests that this is the house he lived in, but he actually resided at No. 4.

Anstey wrote nothing else that equalled the popularity of *The New Bath Guide*. The book is his memorial and is still recognised today as a significant piece of writing for both historians and poets. There is a tablet in Poets Corner in Westminster Abbey that is dedicated to him based on his literary success.



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ELIZABETH LINLEY

1776 - NO. II

No.11 Royal Crescent was home to the Linleys and their 13 children. Thomas Linley, the father, was a well-known composer and his children were all talented musicians: his daughter Elizabeth Linley was one of the most popular soprano singers of her day. As beautiful as she was talented, Elizabeth attracted many suitors. At only 16 she was engaged to a much older man but the engagement was called off the day before the wedding after she managed to convince him that the age difference made her unhappy.

Unfortunately she was then pursued by a married friend of the family, Captain Thomas Matthews. In order to escape his advances, Elizabeth, now aged 17, crept out of No.11 Royal Crescent one evening in March 1776 along with her friend, Richard Brinsley Sheridan. The original plan was that Sheridan would accompany Elizabeth to France, and escort her to a convent. However, during their travels, the pair fell in love and they were married in Calais only a few weeks later.

Upon their return to Bath, their marriage still a secret, Sheridan asked Elizabeth's father for permission to marry her officially, but was declined. Shortly after, Elizabeth and her family moved to Wells, and Sheridan moved to Essex.

It was only when Sheridan had come of age that the pair were officially married at St Marylebone Church in London and they had a son two years later. Sadly after such a romantic start to their married life, their marriage was not a happy one. Sheridan did not approve of Elizabeth singing publicly, as he felt it could harm his growing reputation as a playwright. Yet, due to her soprano voice being considered one of the best, she continued to perform against her husband's wishes, ultimately performing for Queen Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz.

They remained unhappily married for over twenty years until Elizabeth's death from tuberculosis aged 36.



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FOSSE WAY ROMANS 2002 - NO. 12

Looking at the Royal Crescent, it is hard to imagine what this area may have looked like before this magnificent structure was built, however there are centuries of history buried just beneath the surface. In 2002, TV's Time Team programme conducted an archaeological dig at the Royal Crescent, excavating both the front lawn and an area at the back of the Royal Crescent. They were looking for the Fosse Way, a Roman road used as a frontier connecting Lincoln to Exeter, which is regarded as one of the most important Roman roads in the country.

The excavations yielded exciting results: a Roman building behind the Royal Crescent and three skeletons buried on the front lawn, beside the remains of the Fosse Way, which runs under No. 12.

The skeletons were all male and were buried north to south in a pagan fashion (rather than east to west in the Christian way).

It is thought that these men were aged approximately 35 - 45 when they died but the cause of their death remains a mystery. Did they travel to Bath to bathe in the healing spa waters without success? Or were they regular travellers along the Fosse Way, buried beside the road according to Roman tradition? We will never know their story, just as we will never know how many other bodies lie buried under the Royal Crescent along the Fosse Way. They shall remain undisturbed, and their tales will continue to be a part of Bath's undiscovered history.



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ELIZABETH MONTAGU

1760 - NO. 16

No. 16 Royal Crescent was home to Elizabeth Montagu during the 18th century. Elizabeth was born in 1718 to a very wealthy family in Yorkshire and her comfortable life of luxury continued when she moved south with her husband, coal baron William Montagu. Together they owned two properties, one in London and the other at the Royal Crescent. Her home at the Royal Crescent was regularly full of guests, Elizabeth being a great socialite of Bath. She organised literary breakfasts which evolved into evening entertainments in the 1760s, where card games and strong drinks were banned to encourage intelligent conversation.

These evening entertainments began the establishment of the Blue Stocking Society; a group of like-minded men and women who were devoted to learning and were against superficiality. They were committed to the belief that both men and women had the right to education, holding principles that were part of the early Feminist movement.

The name 'Blue Stocking Society' is rumoured to have been coined as publisher Benjamin Stillingfleet attended Elizabeth's gatherings in blue worsted stockings, unable to afford the correct formal dress of black stockings. The group then used the name to show their aversion to popular fashion - wearing blue stockings instead of the more socially acceptable black ones.

No.16 became the headquarters for the Blue Stockings, where famous members such as Joshua Reynolds, Fanny Burney, William Pulteney and Elizabeth Carter would meet. The women of the group would support each other's intellectual endeavours such as reading, writing, and art, with Elizabeth herself publishing two works.

After her husband's untimely death, Elizabeth spent most of her time in London and left the Blue Stocking Society of Bath. The group continued to meet but had waned in popularity by the end of the 18th century.



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© Rhianna Craig

AMABEL WELLESLEY-COLLEY

1972 - NO. 22

The infamous yellow door of No. 22 was painted by Miss Amabel Wellesley-Colley in 1972. Not only did she paint her door yellow, but she also painted her sash windows primrose yellow, and put up matching blinds!

The new colours on the Royal Crescent disrupted the desired look of uniformity in the building, and soon Bath City Council and Bath Preservation Trust intervened. They believed Amabel should paint her door white again, along with her sash windows. However, Amabel stated that the house was hers, and that she could do whatever she pleased with it: she wanted to paint her door yellow because it was the favourite colour of her ancestor, the Duke of Wellington. Bath Preservation Trust persisted, claiming her colour choice was 'most regrettable' and that it had generated 'a large number of adverse comments from visitors'. Amabel protested by sunbathing in a yellow bikini on her balcony.

The dispute led to a legal battle, with the intervention of the Secretary of State for the Environment and a six-hour long public enquiry, which Amabel attended in a bright yellow suit. After several weeks, Amabel surprisingly won the case and was permitted to keep her yellow door. She no longer lives on the Royal Crescent, but the door has remained yellow ever since.



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DID YOU KNOW...?

Did you know that during the 1780s, No.2 saw the most riotous parties held by the notorious Mrs MacCartney, otherwise known as Old Mother Mac? Loud and scandalous, with young men invited to drink and dance, Old Mother Mac hosted gatherings that left other residents in uproar over broken glass and such indecent behaviour from an older woman.

Did you know that fictional literary character Sir Percy Blakeney, better known as The Scarlet Pimpernel, resided at No. 15, fighting duels in and around the Royal Crescent?

Did you know that in 1973, No. 10 belonged to Charles Fabian Ware, nicknamed Champagne Charlie, who was famous for throwing wild parties that the police were regularly called to shut down? Some of Champagne Charlie's parties drew over 500 guests! Serious damage was rarely done, although on one occasion the ceiling under the dance-floor crumbled.

Did you know that the first resident of No. 9, Captain Phillip Thicknesse, is rumoured to have been the inspiration for J.K. Rowling's Minister of Magic character in the final two Harry Potter books?

Did you know that Italian princess, lady in waiting to Marie Antoinette, Princess Marie de Lamballe, briefly lived at No.1 in 1792, attempting to rally support among the British nobility for the failing French monarchy during the French Revolution? Shortly after her return to France, she was brutally murdered by revolutionaries for failing to denounce the monarchy.

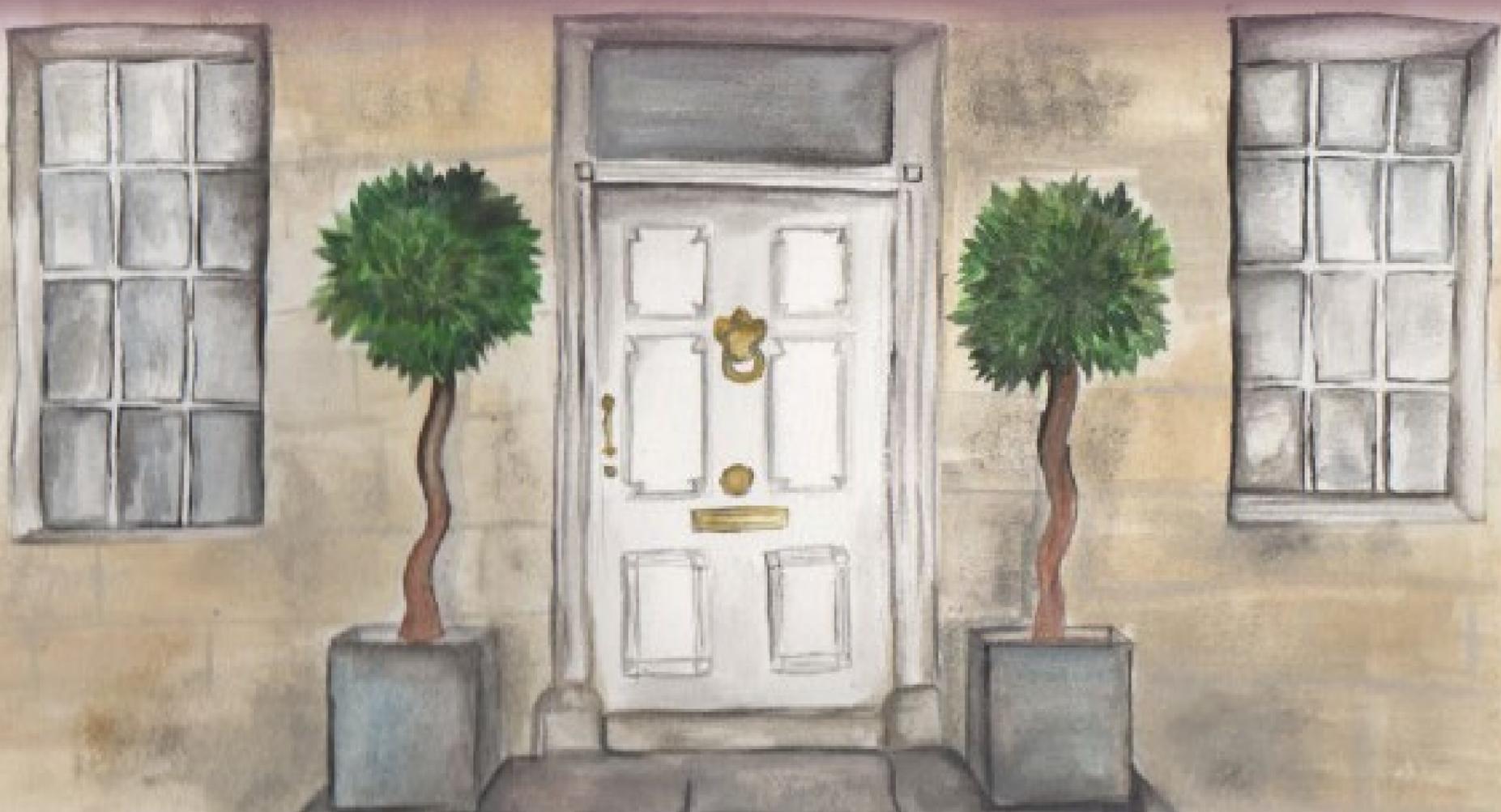
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Bath Spa University Students:

Georgia Bates
Gemma Boreham
Rhianna Craig
Sara-Louise Firminger
Erin Howard
Bryony Lever
Olivia Meeson
Hannah Mills
Amy Mower
Denise Price
Mitheka Slyvian
Joshua Tregaskes





THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING THE 'IF WALLS COULD TALK' TRAIL



For a Changing Places accessible toilet, head to South Gate - 15 minutes from the Royal Crescent. For more information visit this link: [Changing Places](#).

For more information about the Royal Crescent and the No.1 Royal Crescent museum, visit the website below.



Click the logo to visit No.1 Royal Crescent website.

© Front door watercolour:
Olivia Meeson

