Britten's Aldeburgh

Explore Benjamin Britten's legacy in the places where he lived and worked

© Tony Pick

1. Aldeburgh Parish Church
It was the poetry of George Crabbe, a past curate at this Church, that inspired Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*. The opening concert of the first Aldeburgh Festival was held here in 1948. Britten is buried in the Lawn Cemetery, and commemorated by a stained glass window designed by John Piper. *Open daily.*

2. The Moot Hall
The Moot Hall is one of the best-preserved Tudor buildings in Britain. Today it is the home of Aldeburgh Town Council and Aldeburgh Museum. It was in the Moot Hall that Britten received the Freedom of the Borough of Aldeburgh in 1962, and the powerful opening prologue of Britten's opera *Peter Grimes* is set here. *Visit aldeburghmuseum.org.uk.*

3. Crag House
Britten bought Crag House in the summer of 1947. His growing success meant that he could afford a larger property, and Crag House overlooked the sea that was a source of inspiration for his music. The purchase of Crag House, and Britten's move from Snape to Aldeburgh, soon prompted the idea of starting a festival in Aldeburgh. This blue plaque was unveiled on the Crabbe Street side of the house in 1978, two years after Britten's death. *Crag House is not open to the public; please respect the privacy of the owner.*

4. Aldeburgh Jubilee Hall
Aldeburgh Jubilee Hall is only a short walk from Crag House and so it is not surprising that Britten decided to use it for concerts. It was not long before these occasional events developed into the annual Aldeburgh Festival with the Hall as its home and it hosted the first performances of two of Britten's most popular stage productions as well as some important chamber works. Today the Hall presents a range of performances and other events. *Visit aldeburghjubileehall.co.uk*.

5. Peter Pears Gallery
Peter Pears loved collecting art, and spent much time filling the homes that he and Britten shared with hundreds of artworks. When Pears died in 1986, the Festival's exhibition gallery was renamed in his honour. *Opening times vary*.

6. Aldeburgh Baptist Chapel
The Union Baptist Chapel dates from 1922, and was used as a venue for lectures in the early Festivals. The Chapel has hosted a remarkable list of celebrated speakers such as William Plomer and WH Auden. EM Forster spoke at the opening lecture, paying tribute to the poetry of George Crabbe: 'the first in a series of creative events which has produced your Festival.' *Open daily*.

7. Aldeburgh Music Room
Built in the grounds of Aldeburgh Primary School, the Aldeburgh Music Room opened in 2003 but has its origins in a donation Britten made some years earlier. Today, the music room provides priority accommodation for the children of Aldeburgh Primary School to use during term time. *Available to the community on weekend, term-time evenings, and school holidays*.

8. Scallop
This striking tribute to Britten and his music stands on the beach just north of Aldeburgh. Unveiled in November 2003, the 4m high steel sculpture bears a quotation from his opera *Peter Grimes*: 'I hear those voices that will not be drowned.' It was conceived by the Suffolk artist Maggi Hambling and made by Aldeburgh craftsmen Sam and Dennis Pegg.

9. The Red House
This is the house where Britten and Pears lived and worked from 1957-1976, and now part of Britten Pears Arts. Here, you can see inside the house itself, with its cosy interiors, exhibitions, a beautiful Library, and all set within 5 acres of stunning garden. *Visit brittenpears.org.*

10. Snape Maltings Concert Hall and Shops
Six miles inland, connected to Aldeburgh by the River Alde, is Snape Maltings, a 19th-century industrial complex redeveloped in 1967 by Britten and Pears to become the home of the Aldeburgh Festival. Now an international centre for music, Snape Maltings brings together outstanding concerts and distinctive independent shops, cafés, galleries and walks, all set within a breath-taking expanse of reeds, water and sky. *Visit snapemaltings.co.uk*.

BRITTEN PEARS
ARTS

Britten Pears Arts is a pioneering music, arts and heritage charity based on the Suffolk coast at two popular, historic visitor destinations: The Red House and Snape Maltings. It emerged from the creative partnership of Benjamin Britten, one of the greatest composers of the 20th century, and his professional and personal partner, singer Peter Pears. Britten and Pears shared a progressive vision for music and the arts to be useful, helping people enhance and bring joy into their lives. Our founders' vision inspires all our activity, from work with our local communities to our national leadership roles in the fields of talent development and music, health and wellbeing. *brittenpearsarts.org*.

Britten's Aldeburgh Map

9. The Red House
Where Britten lived and worked 1957-76, and now the home of the Britten–Pears Foundation.
- Britten's studio and a new exhibition.
- The house as it was mid-1960s.
- A uniquely comprehensive archive in a major new building.

10. Snape Maltings Concert Hall and Aldeburgh Music
The famous concert hall opened in 1967 and re-opened in 1970 after a disastrous fire. It is now the home of Aldeburgh Music.
- Concert Hall, including Aldeburgh Music's Visitor Centre.
- A 'creative campus' offering a year-round programme of performance, artist development and education.

P Recommended parking
Footpath

1. Aldeburgh Parish Church
The first concert of the first Aldeburgh Festival was held here in 1948, and many more since.
- Graves of Britten and Peter Pears in the Lawn Cemetery.
- Britten memorial window designed by John Piper.
- Bust of George Crabbe, whose poetry inspired Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*.

2. The Moot Hall
The centre of Aldeburgh's civic life for more than four centuries, where Britten received the Freedom of the Borough in 1962. Also the setting for the opening scene of *Peter Grimes*.

3. Crag House
Britten's home 1947-57. Buying the house inspired the idea that led to the first Aldeburgh Festival. Look out for the blue plaque on the Crabbe Street side of the house.

4. Aldeburgh Jubilee Hall
Like the Church, an important Aldeburgh Festival venue. The roof facing the lifeboat station was raised as part of improvements made by the Aldeburgh Festival in 1960.

5. Peter Pears Gallery
The main gallery for Aldeburgh Festival exhibitions since 1977. Renamed in honour of Britten's partner, a passionate art collector, after his death in 1986.

6. Aldeburgh Baptist Chapel
Used in early Aldeburgh Festivals as the venue for lectures by distinguished speakers including EM Forster, WH Auden and Arthur Ransome.

7. Aldeburgh Music Room
Built in the grounds of Aldeburgh Primary School the Music Room opened in 2003 but has its origins in a donation Britten made some thirty years earlier.

8. *Scallop*
Maggi Hambling's 2003 tribute to Britten, made by Aldeburgh craftsmen Sam and Dennis Pegg. The words 'I hear those voices that will not be drowned' are from *Peter Grimes*.