

# The History of Gibraltar's Street Names



This trail aims to give you a taster of the history of Gibraltar's streets and the events and activities that have led them to be known as they are today.

Street names in Gibraltar became official in the 1870s, when street signs (in English) were first erected by the police. Up until then, streets had no official name and were therefore referred to either by their function or relevance, after some landmark or building on the street, or after an important property owner in the street.

Even after the streets were officially named, their traditional Spanish names continued being used by locals. People arriving in Gibraltar were finding this confusing, so in 1890, Rodolfo Bandury, the Deputy Librarian at the Garrison Library, compiled a list of the official English street names alongside their more common Spanish equivalent. This list is a valuable resource in recovering old place names, however, the process of street naming is in many ways an intangible part of heritage and evolves as community life progresses, places often having multiple names.

## Extra street information:

**Tuckey's Lane:** It obtained its name from an 18th century property owner who owned a building in the corner of Main Street. In Spanish it is known as 'Callejon del Jarro' meaning *beer mug* on account of there being a wine merchant in that street.

**College Lane:** In the 18th century this lane was known as 'Jenkins' Lane', after the Naval Victualler who had his house here, and was renamed *College* in the 19th century because there was a school here. It was called 'Callejon de Riso' in Spanish.

**Giro's Passage:** In Spanish times it was known as 'Callejuela de Zurita'.

**New Passage:** Used to be known as 'Calle Peligro' as it was notorious for its brothels until they were closed down by Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien in 1922. It was renamed 'New Passage' so that visiting sailors could not find it.

**Boschetti's Steps:** Named after the aforementioned builder. Known for some reason as 'Callejon del Tio Pepe'.

**Main Street:** Gibraltar's main thoroughfare. Was once three separate streets; 'Waterport Street' also known as 'Calle Real', 'Church Street' and 'Southport Street'.

**Crutchett's Ramp:** Also known as 'La Calera' meaning *Lime Kiln* because there were three kilns located here in the mid 18th century owned and operated by a Mr. John Crutchett.

**Lynch's Lane:** Commemorates Peter Lynch, an 18th century merchant, a member of one of the two important Irish Catholic families who had business houses in both Gibraltar and Cadiz. The other family was Butler.

**Turnbull's Lane:** Takes its name from a prominent local merchant and his son, both named John Turnbull. Turnbull, and others, broke the siege cordon and brought supplies for the starving garrison during the Great Siege 1779-83. Also known as 'Tras de los Cuartos' ('behind the rooms'), the true origin of which is uncertain.

**Engineer Lane:** Received its name because the Commander of the Royals Engineers had his residence on this street.

**Bell Lane:** Known originally as 'Callejon de Fonseca'. Bell could have been named after Mr. James Bell who was appointed Police Magistrates in 1859. Establishments with the sign 'Belle' were an indication of a red light bordello.

**Library Ramp:** Known as 'Ball Alley' as there used to be a Fives (described as a type of hand tennis) or Racquets court here, but pronounced locally as 'El Balali'.



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# Gibraltar's Streets

Find out about the urban streetscape





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The suggested trail will take about 1.5 hours. Although most of the route is on flat ground, there are a few steps and some fairly steep hills.

Once you reach the Cathedral of St. Mary the Crowned on the trail, you have the choice of continuing on Main Street, or taking a right down Bomb House Lane. The first option takes you up past the Garrison Library, and into the historic old town. The second option is shorter, and takes you down to the Line Wall Curtain defenses.

If you are feeling adventurous, you can take one route, then back track and take the other.

The following are short descriptions for the main stops on the trail. More detailed information can be found on the red street signs at each stop.

## 1 Castle Street • Calle Comedia

Castle Street, a main access point for Gibraltar's old town, has been a focus for civilian life for centuries. Also known as 'Calle de la Cuesta'.

## 2 Cornwall's Parade • Plaza de la Verdura

'Cornwall's Parade' or 'Plaza de la Verdura' was known for the vegetable market situated here in the 18th century. Cornwall's may also be a variation of Cornwallis, Gibraltar's Governor in the 1760's.

## 3 Governor's Street • Calle Cordoneros

Governor's Street was also known as 'Calle Cordoneros'. This was where the shops carrying the traditional dress of the Penitentes of the Roman Catholic Brotherhood could be bought. The Penitentes wore their outfits in public during Holy Week.

## 4 City Mill Lane • Whirligig Lane

Today known as City Mill Lane. The Whirligig was an instrument of punishment reserved for women. This consisted of a round cage which the offender was put in and spun around. This was situated at the bottom of City Mill Lane.

## 5 Flat Bastion Road • La Cuesta Mr. Bourne

In 1830, a blacksmith named Mr. Bourne owned a forge in this area. Mr Bourne is pronounced locally as 'Mr Von'.

## 6 Line Wall Road • Lover's Lane

As from the second half of the 19th century, this section of Line Wall Road was also known as 'Lover's Lane'.

