



# THE MARGATE SHELL GROTTO



Number of shells: 4.6 million Length: 100ft/30m Date of construction: Unknown

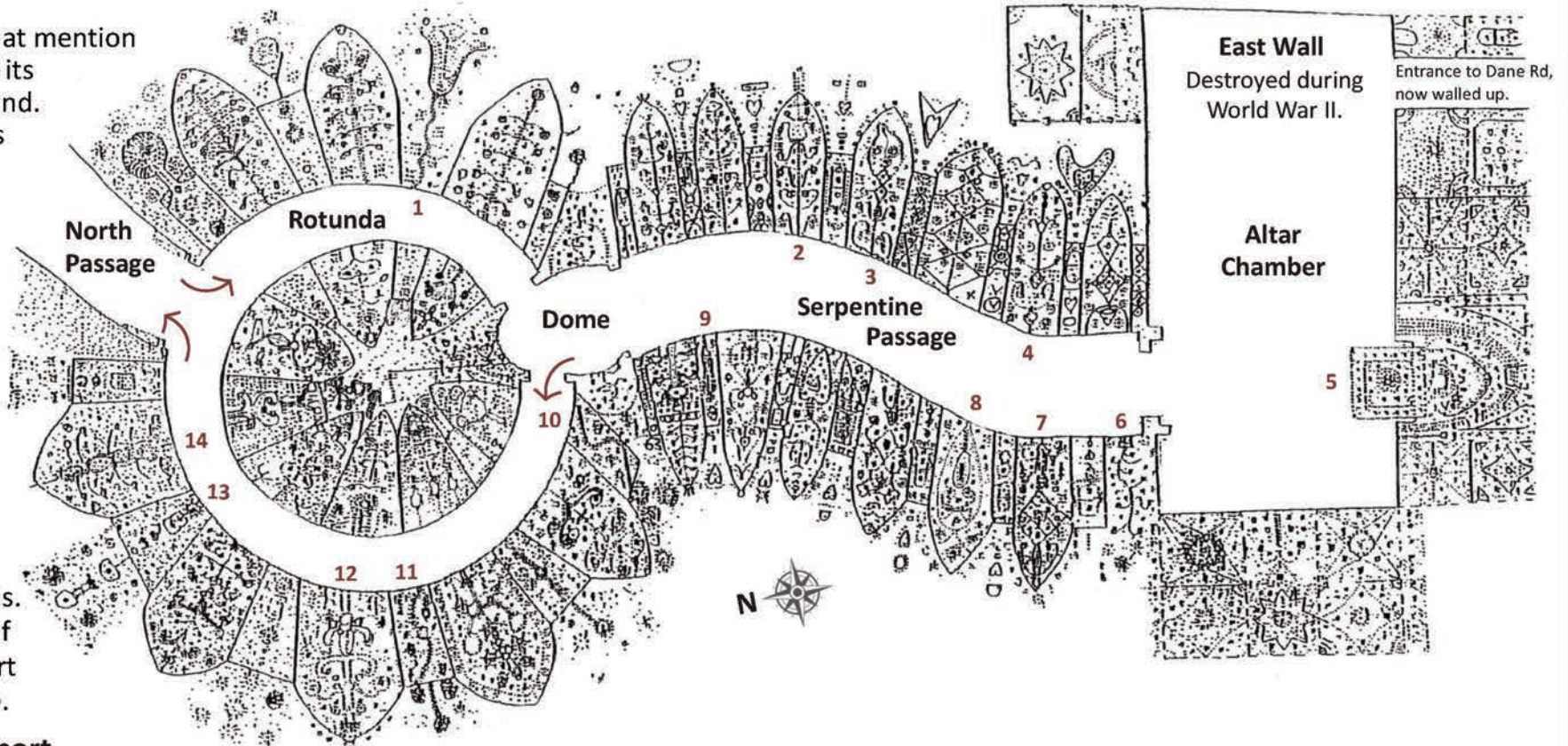
The Grade-I Shell Grotto was discovered by chance in 1835 and opened to the public three years later. It is arguably the most extensive and stunning shell mosaic in Britain and ranks amongst the more intriguing and mysterious structures in the world.

As yet, no documents that mention the Grotto and pre-date its discovery have been found. There are many theories about its origins - who made it, when and why.

There is an ongoing programme to conserve this important site. Our condition study in 2012 identified around 100 small sections missing their shells.

The Friends of the Shell Grotto are raising funds to restore these roundels. Please talk to our team if you would like to support the sponsorship scheme.

[shellgrotto.co.uk/support](http://shellgrotto.co.uk/support)



This drawing is the work of Conan and Nellie Shaw, who published a Grotto guide in 1954. Their definitions, right, are entirely subjective. Some people believe the Grotto to be a devotional space and see symbolism in the shell designs. Others who consider this to be a secular structure may see patterns instead.

- |                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Birth                | 8 Corn Goddess               |
| 2 Spine                | 9 Skeleton (half-size panel) |
| 3 God Ganesha          | 10 Eridanos River            |
| 4 Anchor of Hope       | 11 Serpent                   |
| 5 Altar                | 12 Fleur de Lys              |
| 6 Growing Tree         | 13 Phallus                   |
| 7 God Bacchus Scorpion | 14 Persea Tree               |



You can find more information in our Museum Room, or scan the QR code for a brief tour of the Grotto to accompany your visit.