

Changing forms of Holidaymaking in the 20th century

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- Introduction
- Plotlands
- Holiday camps: Butlin's and Warner's
- Conclusion

This section considers two forms of holidaymaking that had a profound impact upon the resorts of the Tendring District during the twentieth century: plotland holiday homes and the commercial holiday camps. How and why these two distinct forms of holidaymaking came to the district is explored by considering their origins and earliest appearances in a wider context and, more specifically, in and around the resorts in the Tendring District.

Plotlands

'Plotlands' and 'plotland development' are terms originally used by local authorities to describe small plots of land divided off from a larger area of un-developed land, such as former farmland, and sold on. Some plotlands were areas of marginal land or wasteland that were simply occupied, fenced off and used. Plotlands generally held a structure or 'building' that was either pre-fabricated or makeshift, hand-built or adapted from another structure such as an old railway carriage, shed, or bus and was, in many cases, established without any planning consent or building regulation. The 'plotlanders' who established these were either in need of accommodation (temporary or permanent), or as was often the case, seeking to create a second retreat or holiday home. It is this second category of 'retreat' or 'holiday home' plotlands that form the main focus of this study.

Tendring District in north-east Essex, with its key coastal resorts of Clacton-on-Sea, Holland-on-Sea, Jaywick Sands, Frinton, Walton-on-the-Naze, Dovercourt, Harwich, Saint Osyth (and to a lesser extent Wrabness), as discussed in the previous article came to prominence as a holiday location during the late nineteenth century, and saw considerable growth and development during the twentieth, particularly between 1947 and 1989. In order to explore this relationship, the origins of the Tendring plotlands are now described and some key questions are posed: Where did plotland structures occur within the district? What impact

have they had physically and socially? How have they become marginalized? Who were the ‘Plotlanders’? And what impact, if any, has the phenomenon had upon Tendring District’s post-war holiday camp development?

The most concentrated manifestation of holiday plotlands in Tendring occurred at Jaywick Sands; other developments occurred at St Osyth Beach, Point Clear, Lee-over-Sands, Wrabness, Walton, Clacton-on-Sea and Frinton. Lee-over-Sands was targeted for a further ‘Jaywick-type’ development, which did not materialise. The land upon which Tendring’s plotlands originated was largely poor quality agricultural ‘wick’ (marsh) land, with marginal in-fill around St Osyth and Point Clear. Wrabness has a number of weekend or holiday beach chalets on the shingle beach of the River Stour estuary.

There are also areas where plots of land were acquired with bungalows established upon them without formal planning consent, prior to the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. These bungalows were established as residential housing, and therefore should not be mistaken for the plotland developments described thus far. Most examples of this type of development occurred at St Osyth, Clacton and Walton-on-the-Naze.

The Jaywick Sands Estate

‘Jew Wick’ was one of the six Saint Osyth Marsh Wicks (Cocketts Wick, Sea Wick, Wigborough Wick, Lee Wick and Well Wick), to the west of Clacton. A local landowner who farms in the area informs us that during the interwar years land in the area was very cheap. He recalled that his family purchased some of the marsh in the 1930’s for £13 an acre, but even then they doubted the wisdom of the purchase, thinking the price to be too high. He further claims that they felt forced to buy the land as it might get into the hands of people they didn’t want as neighbours!

In January 1928 surveyor and entrepreneur Frank ‘Foff’ Stedman came to view his potential purchase in the least favourable conditions, to see if the land would still look promising for his plans. By October 1928 he had purchased 320 acres of land that comprised Jaywick Farm from Mrs. O. A. Tweedie. A full front-page advertisement in the Clacton Times in 1929 promised a range of housing options at Jaywick, on an estate served with a number of amenities and leisure facilities. ‘Bathing houses’ were also offered for sale. By the following June permission was given for six houses and bungalows at the southern end of the new road

from Clacton. The programme was intended to progress with the blessing of the Clacton Urban District Council (CUDC).

The initial vision was modified as a result of circumstances that Stedman did not foresee. The first obstacle was CUDC's reluctance to grant further planning consent. In this, the first of many tussles with the local authority, the council were concerned that plans submitted did not show any drainage system. Stedman offered to construct one, but CUDC's objection was that as the area was at or below sea level, a conventional drainage system would be unsuitable. This is where the blueprint for the true future of Jaywick established. The initial set back with CUDC and their ambivalent approach to Jaywick Sands Estate would result in a different building programme, and change of emphasis at the new resort.

have been situated, became the Brooklands and Grasslands estates. Permission was given by TUDC for around 800 plots to be developed as holiday accommodation and bathing huts. These were advertised and marketed now as a priority, as CUDC were not prepared to allow further residential developments. Planning permission for holiday accommodation was given on the condition that the structures built there would not be used for overnight accommodation. At this stage the form and layout of the Jaywick Sands Estate began to take shape.

Those buying a retreat by the sea were seemingly untroubled by the restrictions placed on their plots if, indeed, they were aware of them. As plans were submitted and passed for structures containing several rooms, it seemed to Stedman that the intentions for use were clear enough. He continued to push for having the estate connected to the main sewer, yet only mains water, gas and electricity connections were achieved by 1931. Stedman's frustration was ultimately vented in the largely in-effective full-page advertisement in the *Clacton Times and East Essex Gazette*, 19th November 1932. The unemployed of Clacton were challenged to lobby local councillors in order not to lose out on work opportunities created by Stedman's scheme.

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TO THE
UNEMPLOYED
 OF CLACTON

THE JAYWICK SANDS ESTATE
 OFFERED TO EMPLOY

100 men on Sewer work during the whole of the Winter
 25 men extra on the Estate
 50 men extra on the Estate next Spring,
 and, consequent on the development, there
 would be 900 BUNGALOWS erected employing
 500 men for Two Whole Years, but--
 Your "Wise" Councillors Rejected the Plan

Therefore you must remain on the objectionable Unemployment
 Benefit, with help from kind people, unless you can
 PERSUADE YOUR "WISE" COUNCILLORS TO RECONSIDER
 THEIR DECISION.

DO NOT LOSE THE WORK
 Insist upon the Council's Acceptance.

(2) Frank Stedman's full-page advertisement in the Clacton Times and East Essex Gazette, 19th November 1932.

Some residents on the estate were politically active working-class East Londoners, working and middle-class people who valued their newfound opportunities for freedom and a pastoral lifestyle. George Lansbury, Labour M.P. for Poplar and former leader of the Labour Party in the Commons, numbered amongst them. A key figure in the promotion of the Land and

Labour League, and of Keir Hardie's view that the state should provide 'home colonies on the idle lands...', he was vociferous in his support for working-class aspirations for a stake in rural and coastal England. Although Jaywick was by design a holiday colony, it was accessible to the East End working classes. Whilst he mentions little of his association with Jaywick in his memoirs, Lansbury's views were clear: 'I just long to see a start made on this job of reclaiming, recreating rural England.'

His nephew Ernest Lansbury worked with the residents, who were now ratepayers. As contributors to the local authority these ratepayers knew that if they organised themselves, they could achieve more. It would have seemed logical that if the local authority charged rates, then they must recognise the residential status of the plots. With politically experienced and well-connected members, the Jaywick Sands Freeholders Association was formed in August 1931. Ernest Lansbury became secretary. Faced with a divided and ambivalent council, the way ahead for Jaywick was given a positive impetus by the partnership that developed between Stedman and the Jaywick Sands Freeholders Association. On 6th August 1932 the *Clacton Times and East Essex Gazette* reported:

'August Bank Holiday was an important time for the residents of Jaywick, for not only were concerts, sports and a religious service held there, but an important meeting of the Freeholders was held and a £16,000 drainage scheme was discussed. It is interesting to note that it is intended to establish a church on the estate, and after the service on Sunday Mr. F.C. Stedman gave a site for a church and headed a subscription list with a cheque for £50.'

Further such reports reveal that St. Osyth parish councillors had joined the Jaywick 'Hut Owners' to protest at county proposals to take an area including the western section of Jaywick Sands from St. Osyth and transfer it to Clacton. Such protests were largely motivated by an anticipated rise in rates. As the freeholders association established itself as a vociferous lobbying organisation, Stedman's commitment was further demonstrated in April 1934 at a meeting to discuss sea defences and water supply. Stedman offered to 'make a present to the association of a £1,000 a year income from the new section.' As he was now a freeholder himself, on the estate he created, he had even more right to campaign with them.

With a well-organised association campaigning for Jaywick, the remaining pre-war years were less troublesome for the estate than they might otherwise have been. The main concern, flooding, was realised in January 1936, when areas of the estate became inaccessible. High tides caused problems again during the following December. The self-help measures that

residents took to ease the situation, including cutting through the sea defences to allow water to drain away, were challenged in court by the Essex Rivers Catchment Board, who had previously ignored letters of protest about flooding.

Despite flooding, poor services and sanitation, and the resentment towards CUDC as a result of little in return for rates, pre-war Jaywick was an otherwise happy place with a real sense of holiday fun. Reflecting growing popularity and visitor numbers the local press during the 1930's would often report upon carnivals, sports-days, gala-evenings and all manner of entertainments there, often sponsored by the Stedman family and the Freeholders Association. By the outbreak of war the Jaywick Sands Estate was firmly established within the coastal landscape of the Tendring District. An effective association of freeholders who would campaign and fund-raise rigorously, the determination of Stedman to spend his time and energy developing Jaywick, and a commitment that as many positive links as possible were made with local councillors, all helped in this pre-war consolidation. But Jaywick was a success simply because it was a fun, carefree place to be.



(3) Holidaymakers at Jaywick seafront during the interwar years. Many of the huts were established very close to the beach, landward of the seafront promenade.

Billy Butlin had also seen the potential of Clacton as a location for his next holiday camp, and had won over support from CUDC for permission to build. Although the same concerns raised by CUDC over Jaywick also applied to Butlins, permission was granted and development went ahead unhindered. This is explored later in this article.

During the war, Jaywick became a restricted area. In 1943 it was the unwitting subject of a survey of the east coast, which informed the post-war Ministry of Town and Country Planning's view of such places. P. Mansfield responded in a ministerial memorandum to the situation at Jaywick:

'I found this extraordinary piece of holiday shack development surprising and rather interesting in a way, though it does leave one perhaps with a feeling of some nausea about it all. There are many hundreds of wooden shacks erected without proper regard for the right use of materials or proper layout but it is an inescapable fact that the colony does provide for many thousands of holiday-makers each year to enjoy a holiday by the sea, under living conditions of some independence'.

There was objection at the haphazard and un-regulated nature of the development, but unlike similar developments in other areas, a clear acknowledgement of the benefit to urban holidaymakers of such places:

'The Jaywick Estate, though it is emphatically not a piece of development which should ever have been allowed to grow up in its present form, is there, and must be accepted, and it does as I say provide admirable holiday facilities for great numbers of people every year, drawn largely from London....But there must, of course, be proper control of all future development, both in the design of the huts and the layout of the land.'

Jaywick demonstrated the demand for (and social benefit of) such holiday accommodation in Tendring, close enough to the capital. But, unlike the new holiday camps such as those planned by Billy Butlin (which under the new planning laws would be controlled and regulated), it was the lack of control amongst the existing plotlands that caused problems.

Post-war Jaywick was characterised by a number of factors: continued problems with flooding, a gradual transition from holiday to attempted residential use, and a continual struggle with the local authority culminating in a failed council attempt to compulsorily purchase the Brooklands and Grasslands areas. The freeholders continued to lobby effectively, but after a brief post-war resurgence in holidaymaking, the estate would begin its gradual decline. Close by, new caravan sites were appearing, offering affordable holiday accommodation to the families that Jaywick and the pre-war plotlands had hitherto catered for.

The problems of flooding culminated in the 1953 disaster, which caused devastation along the east coast. Lives were lost and the invading sea, driven by high winds, caused much structural damage. Unlike other plotland areas Jaywick did not subsequently become totally re-built and ‘suburbanised’. The ratepayers continually lobbied for flood defences to which they would contribute financially (although the same flood defences covering the neighbouring Butlins holiday camp were fully funded by the local authority), and doggedly held out for the right to keep the Brooklands and Grasslands areas as they were, but with facilities funded by the council. Yet they also continually urged for the ‘town-planned’ section of the estate to be fully adopted by CUDC. Newspaper reports and minutes of meetings illustrate the council’s ambivalence in this regard. Amid the wrangling over provision of services, Clacton’s councillors were not always unsympathetic to the Jaywick ratepayers; there were councillors who had good relations with the Stedman family, and who saw Jaywick in a more positive light. The Clacton Urban District Council Improvements and Entertainments Committee minute book for August 1951 records:

‘That, in view of the fact that Jaywick Sands is now a recognised Seaside Holiday Resort with not less than 150,000 visitors annually, the Clacton Urban District Council be asked to consider the question of requisitioning land now available in Jaywick for future development as pleasure gardens, public shelters and similar amenities.’

This was at a time when Jaywick still attracted large numbers of holidaymakers to the Tendring District, whose contribution to the local economy was clear.

Nevertheless by the 1970s the Brooklands and Grasslands sections had entered the ‘stalemate’ situation that persists to the present. An attempt by CUDC in 1971 to compulsorily purchase remaining sections that had not become ‘suburbanised’ on the grounds that they were ‘dilapidated and insanitary [sic]’, failed completely. A Department of the Environment inspection concluded that although the housing was sub-standard, the local authority had no right to force out the community. It went on to criticize the local authority for its failure to provide water and drainage, recommending that the area be upgraded. Since then, although some parts of Jaywick followed the pattern of plotland models such as Canvey and Laindon (and the ‘bungalow town’ models of Peacehaven and Shoreham in Sussex) changing from resort to suburbia as holidaymakers have become residents or retirees’, the Brooklands and Grasslands sections have stubbornly refused to conform. Largely residential now, they uniquely maintain the physical appearance of their former holiday chalet past,

albeit in a dilapidated state. The local authority, now Tendring District Council (TDC), has locked down any further development that does not conform to strict guidelines, including flood protection measures and, via a 'Section 106 Legal Agreement', a contribution toward regeneration. And TDC seems unable to further affect or alter that which remains.

So, if legislative control failed, why did this section of the Jaywick Sands Estate not simply eventually succumb to the sheer inevitability of re-development or sub-urbanisation? Two reasons account for this situation. Firstly, the powerful and well-organised ratepayer's association were never really intimidated by CUDC; they generally seemed to prevail in most of the key issues particularly with the compulsory purchase threat. The tenacity of the ratepayer's association has outweighed that of the local councillors, and has resulted in the stalemate situation described above. Secondly, areas surrounding the estate had firmly established resort status. Unlike Canvey, where resort status had diminished despite the appearance of two caravan sites, these areas now had numerous caravan and holiday camps, and a tourism-based local economy. It is therefore plausible to argue that this helped keep the lobby for the preservation of Jaywick's resort status (although fading and in decline) substantial enough to see it through.

Saint Osyth Beach

Up to the first decade of the twentieth century the land from west Clacton along the coastline to Point Clear, via Lee-Wick, was poor quality, un-populated marshland. The area, which was almost all below sea level, had no formal access save a few tracks with gates to keep livestock in. A number of deep drainage ditches kept the heavy land drained. Some time during the 1920s, the Hutley family acquired Park Farm at Saint Osyth village and the marshland area at the beach, known as Cockett Wick. Harold Hutley was said to be at the beach area one day when someone riding a motorcycle approached him and asked where he might buy a cup of tea. Sensing an opportunity, a tea hut was erected on the beach in due course to provide refreshments for visitors. The beach area became more and more popular with visitors, and the Hutley family were quick to develop the situation. Some areas were set aside for camping and holiday usage. Harold Hutley approached Tendring Rural District Council (TRDC) for permission to continue to develop their activities in 1926 and this was granted; the only conditions being that a dustbin and a toilet were provided. And so as the popularity of the beach area increased, so did demand for overnight facilities.

By the 1920s just a handful of buildings had been erected at St Osyth beach, but by the 1930s the Hutley family were building ready-to-assemble huts to be sold to holidaymakers for use at the beach. These huts were very popular and around 300 were built before the end of the decade. The Hutley family also had plans to build a shop and toilets at the eastern end of the beach, but these plans were refused due to the risk of flooding despite the structures being sited further inland than the existing chalets. However, the increasing popularity of the beach area, and its developing resort status was by now very evident. Applications for over 160 timber-framed buildings submitted between 1928 and 1939 by as many private individuals are held at the Essex Records Office, indicating that the Plotlanders had arrived at St Osyth Beach.



(4) Huts at East Beach, St Osyth during the 1920s. Similar to those at Jaywick, the huts at St Osyth Beach lined the beach just above high water mark.

The 1930s saw the arrival of mains electricity to the area and a borehole which produced only brackish water was superseded by the installation of a mains water supply. Holidaymakers no longer needed to buy water at 1d per bucket from a bowser. Further inland at the western end of the beach more bungalows and a café were built. During the Second World War however, the beach was designated as a restricted area and nearly all the holiday huts were removed. After hostilities ceased, the bungalows and café were offered for sale; the catalogue for the

properties notes that the bungalows now had their occupancy restrictions lifted in order to help ease the post-war housing shortage.

Post-war planning restrictions prevented the re-building of the chalets at the beach, but caravans were allowed as they were mobile and as such did need any form of planning permission. Almost 250 caravans were sited at St. Osyth Beach in the early post-war years. During 1953 terrible flooding occurred along the east coast, virtually destroying the beach accommodation. TRDC were not keen to allow anything to be permanently re-established on the beach in the aftermath of flooding and so the caravans were re-located to the landward side of the sea wall. This became Hutley's Caravan Park.

Lee-over-Sands

Lee-over-Sands, or Lee Wick as it is now known, could have been linked to Point Clear and Saint Osyth Beach in a continuous strip of holiday accommodation and facilities all the way along the southern section of the Tendring peninsular from Clacton. The area was seen as ideal during 1930s for holiday camp and plotland use, but development was slow to occur. Records that exist do show that developers saw Lee Wick as a location for the sort of activity that was already proving very popular at Jaywick, Saint Osyth Beach and Point Clear. The local authority was also happy to allow holiday bungalow and caravan park development. In 1938 plans were submitted by the Lee Wick Development Company Limited for toilet blocks at Lee-over-Sands for a caravan park and these were approved by TRDC.

Nowadays Lee Wick is accessed by a long, single-track road. There the visitor will find a small cluster of houses surrounded by beach, marsh and farmland. The remains of the wartime defences are still visible in places. The access road leads to Wall Street, where most of the properties are situated. By the outbreak of World War Two Lee Wick was not established sufficiently as a resort area in order to have had the momentum to continue its development in peace time. Saint Osyth Beach and Jaywick had established themselves as holiday destinations from the late 1920s but Lee Wick had remained largely un-touched. The restrictions of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act also curtailed further activity there. The land was eventually sold in 1960 back into agricultural use. Wigborough Wick Farm now works the land at Lee Wick. The farmer remembers the plan to create another holiday development on the western side of the marsh during the 1930s and refers an old map in his possession showing 50 acres of development resembling the Jaywick blueprint with a number

of small plots. The map with this proposal on is apparently dated 1939; and so it appears that the holiday homes at Wall Street were the only ones to be developed before the war. The farm bought the land involved in 1960 from “Healthy Lee over Sands Estates”.

Point Clear

Point Clear is in effect a peninsular, formed by Saint Osyth Creek flowing into the River Colne estuary. During the early inter-war years the area was still agricultural; the only buildings there were the Martello Tower, Blockhouse Wick Farm and a couple of houses situated along Point Clear Road, the main access from Saint Osyth. But within a few years Point Clear was being targeted for holiday development. Plans were received by TDRC for the development of the Point Clear Bay Holiday Camp in 1933. Forty-nine records of plans for timber framed buildings, chalets, beach huts, shops and even petrol pumps were submitted to TRDC between 1932 and 1938, many by a company called Beehive Engineering Ltd., showing ‘Point Clear Bay Estates’ as the builders.

Jaywick’s early success as a resort may have given businesses the impetus to seek to exploit the growing popularity of this stretch of coastline. Residential development also began along Point Clear Road at this time, but the bay end of the peninsular retained its holiday resort status. The pre-war plotland type chalets and huts, surrounding the holiday camp were noticeably similar to the holiday huts at Jaywick, and were clearly intended for weekend and holiday use only. Unlike neighbouring Lee Wick, Point Clear continued to be developed as a resort after the war ended. But as the curtailment of plotland type developments under the 1947 Act had begun, caravans began to dominate. A large caravan site was developed in the post-war period and is now a major feature in the area, attracting large numbers of visitors and caravan owners. There are a number of former plotland holiday homes which are now more residential than for holiday use, but are still similar in many ways to the structures at Jaywick.

Wrabness Beach

The 1923 Ordnance Survey 2500 scale map and later OS maps show few changes in this rural part of the Stour Estuary. In the 1923 map, it shows the beach area at Wrabness was without any buildings, but subsequent maps show a line of small, irregular structures along the beach, just above the high water mark. Often incorrectly described as beach huts, these are plotland huts in the real sense. The eighty or so structures are holiday homes with full overnight

accommodation and facilities, built, in general, during the inter-war years. There is disagreement over who built the first hut, but secondary sources claim that its owners built it around 1926, after the landowner, farmer William Garnham, gave permission. Mr. Garnham would, if approached by people whom he considered to be suitable, allow them to build a hut on the foreshore at a ground rent of ten shillings per annum.

Remarkably the Wrabness beach colony has endured, unchanged, since its establishment. A number of factors account for its survival. Firstly, Wrabness is a very discrete location that has never had any resort status, either forced or by design. There have been few local holiday amenities. Whereas Jaywick, Point Clear and Saint Osyth Beach are close to the major resort town of Clacton-on-Sea and are natural destinations for holidaymakers, Wrabness sits in quiet isolation some way from the usual holiday destinations within the Tendring District. The parish council recently held the view that:

‘The majority of residents oppose further built tourist development or more tourist attractions in and around the parish such as more holiday huts or static caravans. Residents consider the parish is suited to quieter visitor activities that do not impact adversely on the rural environment such as bird watching, walking, rambling and sailing.’

Further, the chalets at Wrabness Beach were not instigated by a commercial developer, but were built by their occupants on marginal foreshore before the regulation of the 1947 Act. Therefore, commercial pressure to sell more plots has never existed. The strip of foreshore on which the structures sit is narrow and limited in length, and there would never have been any possibility of expansion. Residential development would never have been viable either, given the precarious location of the chalets (many built upon ‘stilts’) on shingle close to the high water line.



(5) Plotland holiday homes at Wrabness, 2014. Close to the high water mark, many of these huts are built on 'stilts' to avoid flooding.

Few people know of the Wrabness Beach plotlands apart from the occupants and the local authorities; they are not to be found mentioned in any of the wider studies of the plotlands phenomenon, and this 'exclusive isolation' has helped the colony maintain a level of exclusivity unprecedented within the Tendring District and beyond. But despite the rural isolation of Wrabness, and the views of the parish council with regard to notions of resort status, there is one other significant factor. At the eastern end of the beach chalets, slightly inland, there is a small but well-maintained caravan site. Once again, it seems, that once an area, large or small, has had some measure of plotland holiday home development it can, and often does, after the 1947 Act attract continued development with caravans either augmenting or replacing the makeshift, self-built plotland holiday homes. Wrabness, despite its isolation and exclusivity, was not immune from this phenomenon.

The Plotlands in Context

The inter-war years were characterised by diversity not just in social and economic conditions, but also in attitudes to leisure and the perception of rural and coastal Britain. As motor transport became more widely accessible, the young middle-class would venture away from urban centres to pursue leisure activities, prompting adverse reaction from traditionalists. The growing disapproval of organisations such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and individuals such as Professor C.E.M. Joad (writing in 1937) raging against ‘hordes of hikers cackling insanely in the woods’ and ‘people, wherever there is water, upon sea shores or upon river banks, lying in every attitude of undressed and inelegant squalor’ is reflected somewhat in the tone of the Steers survey of the East Anglian coast. This was at odds with the aspirations of a considerable proportion of the 1930s modern middle-class, who wanted to motor through Britain, go camping, hiking and above all, visit the seaside. And, better still, own a holiday retreat there as well. These were the first plotlanders at Wrabness, Saint Osyth Beach and Point Clear. Jaywick, marketed directly to Londoners, saw a mixture of upper working-class and middle-class holidaymakers as its first occupants.

Distance from the capital would be a contributory factor here. The plotlands at places like Canvey, Laindon and Dunton were within easy reach of the capital and became the destination for those escaping the bombing of London during the hostilities and for working families after the war. Tendring District was, prior to post-war road improvements, a little further and a more expensive journey, even by train. With Clacton-on-Sea starting to appeal to a wider section of society, however, the district’s popularity as a resort area was growing rapidly. The arrival of Butlins just before the war would confirm this feature.

What little remains, then, of Tendring’s plotlands in the post-war period presents a more mixed picture, and one that does not have too much in common with other areas. The eventual sub-urbanisation process that occurred at former holiday plotlands sites such as Canvey, Laindon, Dunton, Shoreham and Peacehaven only occurs in Tendring at part of the Jaywick Sands Estate. Wrabness, isolated and rural, survives to the present almost completely intact; the Brooklands and Grasslands sections of Jaywick remain, but in a run-down state. The plotland huts and bungalows at Saint Osyth Beach and Point Clear are largely replaced with expansive static caravan sites, with the exception of a handful of structures. In the second half of the twentieth century, with the exception of Wrabness (largely as a result of its

continuity of ownership and usage, and therefore exclusivity), remaining post-war Plotlanders in Tendring were more representative of the working classes, now that the holidays with pay legislation was coming into effect, along with widening availability of transport opportunities.

Tendring's resort towns of Clacton-on-Sea, Frinton, Walton-on-Naze and Dovercourt did not directly experience the sort of plotland developments that had developed close by. Some informal holiday bungalow development did occur within their immediate environs, but this was quickly established into formal residential development.

The beaches at these towns did witness the growth of beach-huts, however, evolving from bathing machines, to something of a thorn in the side for local authorities and traders. As public morality with regard to sea bathing and the consequent exposure of flesh relaxed through the 20th century, so the bathing machine became obsolete, first to be replaced by changing tents and pavilions, and then the beach hut became ascendant. Frinton was the last to relinquish the bathing machine but then embraced the beach hut.

Clacton witnessed the growth and spread of beach huts and 'mackintosh bathers', but did not always welcome them. Street and beach traders, centred in Pier Gap, saw a loss in income as beach hut owners and occupiers became increasingly independent and had all their needs provided for in their hut. The local authority was also increasingly denied the income from the hire of costumes, towels, deck chairs and a place to change.

The beach hut as a significant aspect of the seaside environment, at odds with the commercial aspects of the seafront, has much in common, then, with plotland holiday 'huts'. There are clearly important distinctions between the casual day-tripper or short-term visitor, and the returning, independent family or group who have gained a stake in the culture and environment of the seaside resort. The beach hut users had found a private space where a form of domesticity could be enjoyed in the holiday environment. This observation may also apply in some respects to the inter-war holiday Plotlanders in areas such as St Osyth Beach and Wrabness, but this would be a temporary situation.

The 1930s saw the launch of new campaigns aimed at marketing goods and services directly to working-class households, including the concept of home ownership, via sophisticated mortgage schemes. Such was the success of this particular campaign, the 1930s witnessed the fastest rate of growth in working-class owner-occupation during the twentieth century. This

would also further promote the general growth of marketing-led consumerism, particularly among the working class. As has been discussed, the marketing of holiday plots and the concept of domestic holiday home ownership would at first (in Tendring at least) appeal to the middle-classes. But with working-class consumerism in growth, it would simply be a matter of time before the concept of an affordable, private holiday home by the sea would form a major part of the post-war pattern of mass-leisure.

Holiday Camps: Butlin's and Warner's

William 'Billy' Butlin claimed in his memoirs that when he began work on the construction of the first Butlin's Luxury Holiday Camp at Skegness in October 1935 'none of us knew anything about holiday camps'. But what he and his friend and business associate Harry Warner soon realised was that it was an ideal time to offer a new form of 'upgraded' holiday camp: a model that would alleviate the problems that had now become associated with the earlier established forms of pioneer campsite. Disadvantages such as poor sanitation, irregular water supplies, limited facilities and often very basic accommodation characterised many of these existing holiday camps. Butlin's vision at Skegness was to provide a holiday camp that had modern facilities, accommodating up to 1,000 visitors in 600 purpose-built chalets that had the advantages of electricity and running water supplied to each unit. In addition to this, the camp would be augmented with a theatre, dining and recreation halls, a gymnasium, tennis courts, swimming pool, and landscaped gardens complete with bowling, golf and cricket areas. Butlin's venture was at first fraught with practical difficulties, but these were soon overcome and the camp successfully opened on Easter Saturday the following year.

Butlin's at Skegness established a new model of domestic holiday provision: one that offered comfort, cleanliness and, critically, a fully-catered experience at a moderate cost. Warner's Holiday Camp opened at Dovercourt Bay in the Tendring District with the help of Butlin in 1937 and the second Butlin's camp was opened at Clacton in June 1938. Visitors to this new commercial holiday camp did not have to buy and prepare their own food, make their own entertainment or indeed endure poor sanitation or fetch and carry fresh water. Everything was taken care of in an 'all-inclusive price'. Thus, visitors to the new commercial camps prior to the enactment of holidays with pay legislation in 1938 were able to testify that this new form would soon offer a real alternative to boarding house accommodation, pioneer holiday camps and camping for the working-classes. Expensive and, therefore, exclusive hotels and a

sizeable proportion of holiday plotland colonies were still very much the preserve of the mainly middle-class holidaymaker. The seaside boarding houses had, despite the comic, stereotype image of the seaside landlady ‘charging for use of the cruet’, provided a valuable service by offering relatively affordable accommodation to working-class holidaymakers (especially in the north), particularly during the inter-war years. In Blackpool, for example, prices scarcely rose after 1920. But as far as commercial holiday camps were concerned, the hotel and boarding house trades along with the residents and local authorities of many of England’s seaside resorts were generally opposed to this new form of holiday provision. This could have proved highly problematical to the further expansion of commercial holiday camps in England, but for two factors which proved advantageous to Butlin and Warner in particular.

The first of these factors was that the commercial holiday camp model established by Butlin appeared to offer an ideal solution to ministers who would foresee problems of overcrowding by, and lack of affordable accommodation for, the new waves of working-class holidaymakers flocking to seaside resorts as a result of paid holidays. Butlin himself acknowledged that ‘...luck depends mainly on doing the right thing at the right time and this certainly proved to be the case with my holiday camps’. He quickly saw a huge new potential market for his camps if holidays with pay legislation could be enacted, and he actively lobbied Members of Parliament to promote the cause. As the reform became law he embraced the new situation with a bold advertising slogan: ‘Holidays with pay: Holidays with play: A Week’s holiday for a week’s wage.’ Butlin and his subsequent fellow commercial holiday camp entrepreneurs now had their potential market firmly identified, and it would be hard for anyone to argue that these new commercial camps would not appear to provide an ideal solution for the problems of providing new affordable holiday accommodation for working families.

The second factor to aid the further expansion of commercial holiday camps was that as Britain edged closer to war, the government began to foresee the need for accommodation in the form of camps for children, workers and refugees away from urban areas. In fact, the need for camps was seen as an urgent matter by at least January 1939: representatives of Government departments including Health and Labour, Education and the Office of Works were called together to ‘consider the question of the Government constructing or assisting the construction of camps to serve the triple purpose of school camps and camps for adult

holiday-makers in time of peace and camps for refugees in time of war.’ Remarkably, at this time key ministers and government officials seemed to view accommodation for holiday-makers in peacetime as a pressing concern, along with the urgent need for camps as accommodation for school children and refugees during wartime. This was a significant factor for Butlin and the commercial holiday camp entrepreneurs.

This balance of priorities is echoed in the minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at the beginning of February 1939. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain seemed cautious at first, however; taking the view that ‘there was some danger in considering the use of camps in connection with too many purposes.’ He worried that ‘the evacuation of children, the accommodation of persons whose houses had been destroyed, hospital accommodation in emergency and holiday camps had all been mentioned.’ However, Sir John Anderson (Lord Privy Seal) pressed convincingly for multiple uses, arguing that: ‘when we were spending so much money on defence purposes it was attractive to find an item of expenditure which had a peace-time use.’ He also affirmed his certainty that ‘if the Government threw their mantle over this scheme for camps, private enterprise would do a great deal more to help.’ The Prime Minister ultimately conceded that ‘If arrangements could be made for the camps to be used in peace-time, that was all to the good.’ But he also continued to have doubts toward any scheme that would involve subsidising the construction of holiday camps. Anderson’s contribution at this stage was, therefore, clearly an important and far-reaching one.

Chamberlain’s doubts did not, in fact, ultimately hold much sway in this regard. By March of 1939 the Camps Bill was drawn up, and an Act of Parliament quickly followed. Although relatively short and concise, the Camps Bill that went before Parliament secured legislation that effectively cleared the way forward and secured finances for the construction of such camps, importantly, with the principle of peace time usage included. In its preliminary explanatory memorandum, the Bill made it clear that ‘The Government will assume responsibility for a share of the cost in view of the use to which the camps may be put in war-time, while intending that those who use the camps in peace time should make a reasonable contribution in respect of their use.’

Thus, objections from local residents, hoteliers or local officials regarding holiday camp, or indeed any form of camp construction, were overcome. And, in due course, Butlin and Warner were undoubtedly placed, as pioneering camp-builders, in an ideal position to give

advice and ultimately take on the task of overseeing the provision of such camps, with a view to eventual peace time conversion where possible. This whole process was aided by subsequent wartime developments. The report of the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas (The Scott Report) stated that the 'establishment of National Parks in Britain is long overdue.' It further stated: 'As part of a National Parks Scheme we recommend that the coast of England and Wales should be considered as a whole with a view to the prevention of further spoliation.' If this particular recommendation were to be adopted, only facilities approved by the government would be able to establish in coastal areas. As the commercial camps were so approved, this would allow them an unprecedented opportunity to establish in coastal locations during peacetime. In due course the National Camps Corporation was set up under the Camps Act of 1939, and the construction of a planned fifty camps was underway (some 'thirty-one with dormitories, classrooms, kitchens, dining and assembly halls and accommodation for staff had been built in England and Wales' by mid-1940). Of these, some would present opportunities for post-war leisure development: Fred Pontin's purchase of a former military camp at Bream in Somerset was successful enough for him to buy further camps, and form the Pontin's holiday group in 1946.

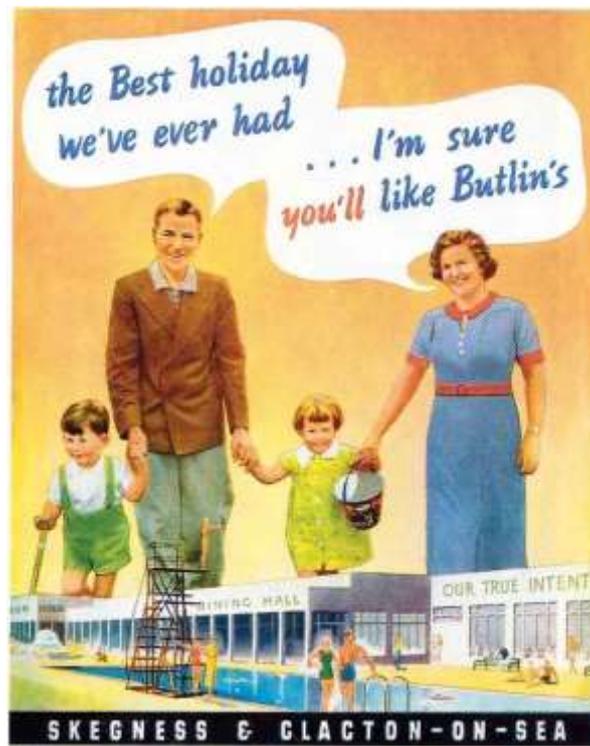
Billy Butlin saw 1939 as a year of mixed fortune, being largely unaware of such developments. He had embarked upon the construction of a third camp at Filey in Yorkshire which, as events progressed, he believed he would now have to abandon and leave unfinished until the war was over. He saw his first camp at Skegness, and his newest second camp at Clacton-on-Sea, handed over to the armed services and he busied himself with the 'mothballing' of his amusement rides and equipment at his various amusement parks. But his fortunes would change and his opportunities become apparent when Leslie Hore-Belisha, the War Minister, sent for him. Butlin claimed to have had a good relationship with the minister, partly, no doubt, as a result of helping him raise money for the Great Ormond Street Hospital, of which Belisha was a governor. The Skegness and Clacton camps had proved of much use as military establishments, and the government wanted a price from Butlin to complete the Filey Camp. Butlin recalled that Belisha confided to him that it cost the army £250 per head of accommodation to build a camp; Butlin claimed he duly quoted £175 per head, with the stipulation that he would be given the option to buy back the camp at the end of the war for three-fifths of the cost. On the agreement of what was seen as a good deal for all concerned, Butlin gave his friend and associate Harry Warner the job of completing Filey. Shortly after, the Admiralty requested he search for a suitable site on the south coast, in order to begin

construction of yet another camp. After Dunkirk, the choice of location for this camp moved to North Wales (the south coast now seeming too vulnerable), and Butlin found a suitable green-field location at Pwllheli. Before this camp was finished, yet another was commissioned by the Admiralty this time in Scotland; Butlin chose a site at Ayr. All of these sites were destined to become Butlin's Holiday Camps in the post-war period.

Butlin was later called into the Ministry of Supply by Lord Beaverbrook to assess and address the problem of the accommodation of female labour in the armaments factories. As many of the factories were located in remote areas, the problem was one of desertion from the 'hurriedly-built hostels which were dreary beyond description.' This situation was deemed to need sensitive handling, and Butlin carried out an inspection of the hostels. He soon realised that the whole atmosphere and perception of the accommodation was wrong, and made recommendations toward resolving these problems. Hostels became 'Residential Clubs', and were opened up to entertainments, activities and social functions, all of which had been previously forbidden. The numbers of workers leaving the accommodation was thereby drastically reduced. This activity, coupled with Butlin's promotion of the Holidays at Home Campaign helped secure his standing as Britain's most experienced and capable organiser of mass leisure and accommodation strategies. Holidays at Home, an initiative to encourage rest and recuperation without the need to travel any great distance in times of fuel shortage, also allowed Butlin to recruit his 'old fairground friends Billy and Charlie Manning' to form travelling fairs and make good and profitable use of previously mothballed fairground equipment.

If Butlin's pre-war model commercial holiday camps were to be a success after the war, they would of course need a clientele that were in a position to make use of them. In this regard it may be concluded that Butlin also had an ally in the person of the wartime Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin. When Churchill appointed Bevin (then Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union) to the post of Minister for Labour in 1940, he went a long way to ensuring that the labour movement would have a strong voice in wartime politics. Bevin's determination to ensure full employment for returning soldiers and working families after the war would ultimately become a major priority for the post-war Labour government in a new deal for the working classes, thereby, seemingly, helping to ensure a market for the new commercial camps. In addition, Bevin, to the alarm of many Conservative back bench M.P.s, continually pushed for social reform which would eventually become a key aspect of post-

war policy. His Catering and Wages Bill, which sought to lay down a minimum wage and improved conditions for those in the hotel and catering trades (which could, possibly, have worked against Butlin after the war), was voted down by Conservative M.P.'s. But he nevertheless maintained his campaigning, and pushed through the Catering Wages Act of 1943. As part of this campaign he asserted his view that there was a need to plan for post-war holiday accommodation and holiday centres for a population who 'have had no holiday, no rest, no recuperation since the war broke out.' The Catering Wages Commission, established under the Catering Wages Act, set up the Post-War Holidays Group which would aid the conversion of government accommodation (workers hostels) to holiday accommodation in peacetime. Other M.P.s on the Left suggested that perhaps the way forward after the war would be to institute state-owned or nationalised holiday camps, of the Butlin model, which could be fully planned and controlled. Although the idea seemed to have some currency during the war years, ultimately it did not become part of any manifesto for peacetime; although the view that planned commercial holiday camps would feature largely in the post-war holiday scene was popular.



(6) Advertisement for Butlin's first two established commercial holiday camps in Britain: Skegness and Clacton-on-Sea.

Recent works have echoed the view that the Second World War provided opportunities for commercial holiday camp entrepreneurs to capitalise on the re-facilitation of war-time camps for holiday use in peacetime. The war did consolidate the role of Butlin and Warner as Britain's foremost mass holiday catering specialists. But what has so far remained largely undemonstrated is that, whilst the commercial holiday camp proprietors were placed in a highly advantageous position at the end of the war to capitalise on the demand for affordable holiday accommodation and facilities, the commercial holiday camp model would never really dominate this particular market: in 1951 the holiday camp was estimated to account for only three percent of overall holiday accommodation (these statistics do, however, include holidays abroad), rising to a peak in 1970 of six percent (not including foreign holidays). In 1970, however, caravans (this, presumably means touring and static) account for eighteen percent of the accommodation for British holiday makers, second only to staying with friends or relatives at twenty four percent. The holiday caravan in either of its forms, therefore, becomes a holiday choice preferred by many. The reasons for this are complex, but may be partly attributed to the social effects of the war upon working-class consumers, the post-war planning legislation and, of course, the achievement of statutory paid holidays for workers.

Nevertheless, Butlin's Clacton was a popular destination for holidaymakers during the post war period. Visitors to Clacton were largely from working and lower middle class families. Upon arrival, they would pass by the expansive outdoor swimming pool with its iconic diving boards to check in at the main reception building. There was a great deal to occupy them after settling in to their chalet: an indoor swimming pool augmented the outdoor one, the Viennese Ballroom featured competitions, games, live music and dancing, a dining hall and café provided meals and refreshments, the Jolly Roger Bar and Crazy Horse Saloon provided licensed bar facilities, activities for children included roller skating, a miniature railway, an indoor model racing car circuit, and of course the wide range of activities organised by Butlin's 'Red Coat' entertainment staff.



(7) *The large outdoor swimming pool and main reception building at Butlin's, Clacton-on-Sea.*

At its most popular during the 1960s, visitor numbers began to dwindle during the late 1970s. The camp was eventually sold in 1983. Remarkably, it reopened under new ownership shortly after this closure, rebranded as Atlas Park, but this venture did not succeed and closed after only one season. The site was eventually redeveloped for housing. Warner's Dovercourt Bay Holiday Camp, offering similar facilities and amenities to Butlin's at Clacton, experienced the same period of popularity and decline, and achieved wider fame as the location for the popular BBC comedy series *Hi-De-Hi*. It finally closed in 1990 and the site was redeveloped for housing soon after.

Conclusion

Plotland holiday homes and the commercial holiday camp came to prominence in and around the Tendring District Resorts during the mid-twentieth century. The plotland huts and bungalows were extensively curtailed in the post war period by more far-reaching planning regulations and the rapidly growing appeal of the static holiday caravan. Butlin's at Clacton and Warner's at Dovercourt faced serious competition from the growth of static holiday caravan parks in the district but also gradually lost popularity as a result of the changing aspirations and expectations of their clientele, who by the late 1960s had the option of cheap

‘package-tour’ continental holidays. The static holiday caravan sites however, evolving as they did to meet changing tastes and demands, would continue to attract large numbers of visitors to the district.

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