

Key developments in the mid-20th Century: transformative legislation

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This article considers how Clacton-on-Sea, Frinton, Walton and the surrounding areas were significantly affected from the end of the Second World War by two far-reaching Acts of Parliament, and by an unforeseen development in holiday accommodation. These factors created substantial change to the physical and social environment, not just at the Tendring District resorts but at holiday destinations throughout the country. Planning legislation, in the form of the landmark 1947 Town and Country Planning Act had a profound impact upon the physical environment in the marginalisation and eradication of the plotlands and in a way that had not been foreseen by its architects: the development of the holiday caravan parks. Legislation for paid holidays enabled huge numbers of the post war working class to visit the Tendring resorts for the first time and populate the new accommodation. How this legislation was originated, its impact upon the holiday resorts and the development of the static holiday caravan site is considered below.

1947 Town and Country Planning Act

The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, when its full implications and complexities were fully understood by local authorities and regional planning officers, would have a profound effect upon the domestic holiday scene shortly after the end of World War Two. The implications of the 1947 Act for holiday plotland developments have been noted: in many areas, such as Saint Osyth Beach, as a direct consequence of the removal of huts during the war and the restrictions of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, holiday caravans became ubiquitous during the post-war period. It is also noted that in Tendring at least, once an area large or small has had some measure of plotland holiday home development, after the 1947 Act it can, and often does, attract continued development with caravans either

augmenting or replacing the plotland holiday homes. Details of how the new planning legislation came about and how it helped create this phenomenon will now be given.

Concern for sanitation was the impetus for much of the earliest planning legislation, as the full effects of industrialisation and a growing population were being felt in the towns and cities. The first planning Act to be passed, the Housing, Town Planning, &c Act 1909, sanctioned the preparation of planning schemes by local authorities for any land 'which is in course of development or appears likely to be used for building purposes'. These schemes were to be prepared with the aim of ensuring 'that in future land in the vicinity of towns shall be developed in such a way as to secure proper sanitary conditions, amenity and convenience in connection with the laying out of the land itself and any neighbouring land'. A further similarly titled Act passed in 1919 dealt with the problem of building works commenced before a local scheme was prepared; interim permission could now be granted by local authorities to developers wishing to apply. Those that did not risked losing any right to compensation if their buildings did not conform to a subsequently approved scheme.

The Town and Country Planning Act of 1932 further extended the powers of local authorities to prepare planning schemes not just for urban and sub-urban areas, but for any land in their jurisdiction. These first planning Acts were, therefore, essentially permissive, in that they simply enabled local authorities to draw up schemes. The first restrictive planning Act came in 1935: the Restriction of Ribbon Development Act sought to arrest the trend of new building developments 'creeping' out into rural areas alongside roads and byways. In 1943 the Town and Country Planning (interim Development) Act extended the earlier powers of interim control for local authorities to extend throughout England and Wales; the Minister for Town and Country Planning Act passed in the same year created the post for a Minister whose responsibility included 'securing consistency and continuity in the framing and execution of a national policy with respect to the use and development of land throughout England and Wales'. The final planning Act passed prior to the sweeping 1947 legislation was the 1944 Town and Country Planning Act; it was essentially concerned with the re-development of damaged, derelict or ageing built-up areas. It was also partly a response to the need for an approach to the re-building of areas damaged by bombing during the war.

The chief architect of the 1947 planning Act was Lewis Silkin. He entered Parliament as Labour M.P. for Peckham in 1936. A solicitor by occupation, his interests had always centred on town planning and housing. Whilst his involvement with planning matters is evident from

this time, his most influential and important period of activity was as Minister of Town and Country Planning in Clement Atlee's post-war government. The wartime government, under its emergency measures, had been enabled to exercise a level of state control and management that was unprecedented, and that would have been politically impossible, and indeed unnecessary, in peacetime. It is quite conceivable that Silkin judged that whilst the population were still used to this style of government at the end of the war, the situation could not be expected to last. His view that sweeping measures would be needed to achieve the aims that he felt were necessary in terms of planning reform, housing and land use would therefore need to be spelled out and acted upon as quickly as possible.

Silkin had demonstrated a keen interest in planning for post-war holiday accommodation, but his primary concern was essentially housing and the urgent creation of 'New Towns' yet his rhetoric in 1945 clearly indicated that ideas for land use and reform were equally high on his agenda. In an essay based upon a lecture prepared for the Fabian Society in 1945 discussing the twin aims of economic efficiency and social convenience as characteristics of national planning policy, Silkin wrote:

'To realise these objectives, the solutions of these twin problems, we have to do two things. We have first to remedy the defects of our towns and villages, and to get rid of the abuses which mar the countryside; and, second, we have to control new developments, not merely to avoid the mistakes of the past, but to secure new and improved living standards.'

The view that the landscape was indeed marred by abuses (unlicensed holiday homes were cited as examples of this) was probably reinforced by the reports from surveys of the rural and coastal landscape carried out during the war by Cambridge geographer J. Steers, and by the lobbying from organisations such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the National Trust. In the Tendring District and more generally in the southeast of England, the coastal landscape had witnessed the building of makeshift holiday accommodation. However, it would be too simplistic a view to see such lobbying during the early and mid-twentieth century to be the result of campaigns run by marginal, elite, preservationist groups and individuals, looking backward to an idealised and nostalgic view of the English seaside. Nor was the work of small groups such as the National Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising (SCAPA, a group formed to check the disfigurement of the landscape by unsightly billboards) or the National Trust, for example, largely insignificant. They had

widespread support in Parliament, the media and the public at large. And so the post-war administration clearly had popular objectives in terms of new-build housing and seaside land use, and indeed had clear views on how holiday and leisure activities should be organised, and how they would impact upon the environment. This would not include the un-regulated holiday plotland development that proliferated in the inter-war years. Neither would it include (if it could have been foreseen) encouragement for private holiday caravan sites to develop in the way that they did, but this was one of the main unpredicted and highly significant outcomes of Silkin's plan.

The Atlee administration was much more in favour of planned, organised holiday camps along the lines of Billy Butlin's commercial model (as exemplified at Clacton); this was, therefore, still seen as a solution to the need for increased accommodation for domestic holidaymaking and leisure; an option that had been discussed during 1939 prior to the Camps Act. Silkin was also an advocate for land nationalisation as an answer to the problems of post-war urban and sub-urban reconstruction and agricultural re-development, and was in tune with Labour thinking generally on the subject of land reform. The Report of the Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment (The Uthwatt Report) of 1942 had laid bare the complex and controversial tasks associated with the agreement of compensation for land and assessing development rights; in 1943 Silkin argued that the only solution would, therefore, be the nationalisation of all land in urban areas. Also, as part of an overall planning policy, commercial holiday camps could be controlled and would form part of a much wider vision for the protection and development of rural and coastal Britain, as recommended by the Scott Report. Under such a scheme, the government would be able to ensure that many more families would be able to afford a decent holiday in comfortable surroundings without the prospect of further spoiling or overcrowding at coastal resorts and holiday centres.

Yet although this path had been discussed during the war years, and was seen by some politicians on the left in the coalition government as a way forward after the war, the post-war reality was not to live up to wartime ideas and ideals. Although land nationalisation was committed to in the 1945 Labour general election manifesto it did not subsequently materialise, and by 1950 was only mentioned as policy in a much more limited way, with no real commitment. There are parallels here with post-war state holiday planning: a report for the government's newly established British Tourist and Holidays Board bemoaned the unsatisfied demand for holiday camps by 1947. The report also feared that if provision was left to the private sector, virgin coastal areas could be at risk and existing resorts' prosperity

subjected to unwanted competition. In the wake of the report a proposal for the building of a 'Holiday New Town' between Kidwelly and Prestatyn was put to Harold Wilson, President of the Board of Trade by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. This plan, along with others for formal state intervention in holiday accommodation provision was effectively shelved, however, as the more pressing requirements of the post-war reconstruction were given priority. Any notion of state-owned and operated holiday camps was similarly not followed through. The Post-War Holidays Group, set up under the Catering Wages Commission, likewise failed to make any real impact. Its membership, including representatives from the Camping Club of Great Britain, the Royal Institution of British Architects, the Workers Travel Association, the Co-Operative Holidays Association, the Holiday Fellowship, the Miner's Welfare Association, the Industrial Welfare Society and the YMCA, collectively recommended against direct governmental control, suggesting that a separate body should administer the use of existing government hostels for holiday use and provide funding for local authorities and voluntary organisations to do the same. Ultimately, these plans substantially failed to materialise.

Silkin's 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, however, was successfully enacted, and was the first major piece of planning legislation to radically affect the way in which developers and individuals could approach building and development in this country. Its architects had, within a wider agenda, sought to curtail and control unwanted and unregulated building, and create a system of application and approval that would become a universal part of the process. In short, all land would now be subject to planning control. Apart from minor development, any person wishing to develop land had to obtain permission from the local planning authority to do so. This did, of course, deliberately target unplanned, spontaneous development that included plotland holiday homes. Silkin's frustration at the attempts to clear plotland structures from Shoreham Beach allegedly fuelling his determination to see an end to such structures.

It is clear how government envisaged holiday camp development of the commercial, regulated variety helping to satisfy the need for domestic holiday accommodation after the war during the formulation of the Camps act and in subsequent reports and recommendations; this would thereby make individual ad-hoc plotland-style provision obsolete. And the sooner such shacks, huts and shanties could be cleared away the better, thus restoring the 'ruined' areas of rural coastal England that they had hitherto occupied. But there was an un-intended outcome: plotlands would not be comprehensively replaced by well-ordered, commercial

campsites agreed and sanctioned by local and national government, such as Butlin's newly re-facilitated 'buy-back' camps at Filey, Pwllheli and Ayr, or Fred Pontin's growing chain of similarly re-vamped camps. They were much more extensively replaced by caravans on sites founded and run by local operators who were familiar with the recreational wants of the former Plotlanders and working-class urban families, and who responded directly to them alone. In north-east Essex, for example, it was estimated that in 1948 the number of 'approved caravans' on sites totalled 3,389 units. By 1958 this figure would rise to 7,397 on sites including Valley Farm and Highfields at Clacton; Seawick, Bel-Air and Hutley's at Saint Osyth Beach; Tower at Jaywick and Martello at Walton. The reason for this is quite simply that although the 1947 Act was complex and detailed, it seemed to be silent on the siting of *mobile* structures to be used as holiday accommodation. The static caravan holiday home did not exist *as such* directly after the war, and the architects of the legislation could scarcely have conceived of its subsequent development. The static caravan developed as a result of demand for caravans as holiday homes to be sited on caravan sites either by individuals, or by the site operators themselves to be hired to holiday makers. The practice of second-hand pre-war touring caravans being sited on campsites or on private fields, at first surrounded by tents and other mobile forms of accommodation marked the birth of the first caravan sites and this subsequent activity. Thus the 1947 Act should be seen as a critical factor in the development of the holiday caravan site, virtually eradicating plotland development (the existing form of independently originated low-cost holiday home), yet allowing the permanent siting of caravans on campsites for use as holiday homes and accommodation. The demand for these caravan holiday homes on caravan sites was considerable after the war.

This is unsurprising, as many post-war working-class and lower middle-class urban families and individuals sought to assert, once again but with renewed determination, an independent choice which reflected a desire to avoid a regimented, organised holiday regime and try to forge a more self-determined and original experience as the inter-war Plotlanders and pre-war Campers had before them. Despite the vision of the post-war planners, it was the working-class urban families in partnership with local landowners' and, as will be shown, a responsive caravan manufacturing industry, who dictated the form of post-war domestic holiday provision. The 'portable domesticity' realised by pioneering inter-war lower middle-class and working-class families as an ingredient to holiday enjoyment and satisfaction would be sought once again in the post-war period in a more clearly defined manner. It would not be

until the Caravan Sites Act of 1960 that national planning legislation would catch up with caravan site development. In the Tendring District coastal resorts the decline of hotels and guest houses in the post-war period was considerable, with static caravans becoming the major form of self-catering accommodation. As shown in the previous article, in 1951 the Clacton Town Guide featured advertisements for some fifty-five hotels; by 1971 thirty of these hotels had ceased to operate. The 1951 guide also listed some eighty-four boarding establishments, and although sixty-seven establishments were listed in 1971, it is estimated that in reality in 1971 there were only half of the actual number that were operating twenty years earlier.

Holidays with Pay

Along with the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, the inclusion of holidays with pay legislation in the statute books during 1938 signalled the arrival of a number of key Acts of Parliament that would have a significant effect upon the development of the post-war domestic holiday scene. Historians concerned with twentieth-century domestic holiday patterns and resort growth generally agree that the achievement of paid holidays was not only significant in terms of its impact upon domestic tourism, but also that it was only achieved for British workers after a prolonged campaign by the Labour movement, trades unions and politicians culminating in the 1938 Report of the Committee on Holidays with Pay and the subsequent Act of Parliament. More broadly, of course, such moves toward social democracy in Britain were aided considerably during the inter-war years by workers themselves, both employed and unemployed, via active campaigns that raised awareness of the plight of the unemployed, and a workforce being forced to accept bad conditions and exploitation. Other sectors of society and an unsympathetic press were gradually forced to confront such social conditions as a result of well-organised and meticulously prepared actions such as the hunger marches.

Since the mid-nineteenth century the very nature of the human capacity for work and the need for rest and holidays had come under the scrutiny of a variety of interested parties. Progressive scientists, economists, philanthropists, social reformers and industrialists were active in this field: indeed, it has been claimed that during the nineteenth-century, Europeans generally were 'preoccupied' with labour: with its political and economic interests, its diverse forms of organisation, its intrinsic meaning and with its productive potential. From the mid-nineteenth century, scientists in Europe were beginning to study human physiology in terms of motor efficiency. Alongside the research into muscular fatigue and tiredness in relation to

nutrition and diet, the relationship between health, standards of living and productivity were also under scrutiny. For some, the findings of such research would add further economic justification to the moral campaign for improving working conditions and holiday provision; by 1894 British socialist economist John Rae had claimed that the evidence clearly supported the view that reducing long working hours would have a beneficial rather than detrimental effect upon productivity. But for others, it would encourage the desire to create a new kind of worker. The scientific management theory of Frederick Taylor (Taylorism), striving for maximum efficiency and linking wages to productivity via time and motion studies, and the industrial production ideas and ideals of Henry Ford (Fordism) gained some currency in Europe and the Soviet Union during the early decades of the twentieth century (although the actual extent of this is debated). Yet by the 1930s these systems were seen by most as de-humanising, exploitative and out-of-date.

The industrial experiments in working hours, output, fatigue and productivity begun in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century challenged industrialists to consider that a workforce with a better balance between work, rest and relaxation would produce more than one which did not. As European industrialists and philosophers debated the merits of the British and American systems of half-day working on Saturdays and a rest day on Sundays in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, influential Belgian industrialist L.G. Fromont radically altered the working pattern in his sulphuric acid plant to a system of much shorter shifts, and was able to report a substantial rise in productivity. Ernst Abbe, director of German optics giant Carl-Zeiss pioneered the eight-hour working day at their factory and workers maintained the production rates of the old nine-hour day, but with no loss of pay. The practical endorsement of these ideas by such prominent industrial leaders is at this stage, and later on, significant in the journey towards paid holidays because it signals the start of the consensus between labour and industrialists that rest and recuperation opportunities are, in fact, crucial to the health, well-being and, therefore, productivity and *efficiency* of the worker. These ideas were given further impetus with the support of the continuing work of prominent scientists and health experts in European industrial centres.

In Britain, the long tradition of Liberal advocacy for better working conditions, holidays and the argument for a more enlightened approach to labour relations from the factory owners' perspective was epitomised by philanthropical industrialists in the Quaker tradition such as George Cadbury and B. Seebohm Rowntree. Rowntree in particular was highly influential in this regard during the course of his career. By 1914 his published work included the assertion

that increased opportunities for rest and physical and mental recreation for workers would result in greater efficiency. Whilst pushing for a wage policy that would allow the lowest paid to live at a decent standard of health and comfort, he also argued that efficiency should be a consideration not just for the worker as an individual, but also for the employer. Citing the benefits of the 'Research Committee' set up at his York Cocoa Works, Rowntree asserted that the efficiency of all aspects of the business, its organisation, systems and premises etc., were not only vital to the interests of the shareholders, but also of the workers. Simply put, an efficiently run business with efficient, healthy and contented workers would be more profitable. Increased profits would support better wages. Although some aspects of this may smack of Taylorism, Rowntree was clearly influential in promoting recreation and health as key aspects of an efficient workforce; ultimately he was also clear on paid holidays:

'Payment for Statutory Holidays should, of course, be made. The minimum wage I advocate will only suffice for a family of five if it is paid for 52 full weeks every year.' Rowntree's managerial methodologies may well be described as scientific, efficiency-driven and seeking to pacify the workforce, but his view of industry as 'a human thing, in which men and women earn the means of life, and from which men and women are entitled to expect the means to a life worth living', and that 'a true spirit of fellowship and co-operation between employer and employee should permeate the whole of the business' suggests a more progressive mind.

Rowntree's activities during the inter-war years should also be seen as contributory to the growing tide towards more enlightened progressive management (and hence paid holidays, which he argued should be seen as beneficial to both worker and employer). In bringing together key industrialists, directors of large companies, middle-managers and foremen in a series of conferences (the Oxford Conferences) and the Management Research Groups, Rowntree ensured that progressive ideas and strategies could be circulated and disseminated and, importantly, that the evidence for the benefits to industry in terms of productivity and efficiency as well as the improvements in industrial relations that such ideas could bring could be heard. Rowntree himself provides an anecdote concerning a manager promoted from the ranks within in a large Lancashire firm who, after attending a conference on the direction of his chairman, returned to instigate reforms for which the workforce 'had been clamouring for years'. The manager attended subsequent conferences, and urged that an invitation should be sent to his chairman as 'he was very backward'. When the Amulree Committee on Holidays with Pay were considering evidence in 1937, Rowntree was asked to give evidence. But he felt the case 'needed no bolstering'; Briggs' assertion that the Holidays with Pay Act

‘merely generalised what had already become the practice of the more progressive firms’ is supported by the extensive list of existing collective agreements between organisations of employers and workpeople providing for holidays with pay, acknowledged by the Amulree Committee.

There are also significant milestones along the route toward paid holidays that include actions in Britain by key politicians and public figures that were similarly crucial to maintaining the momentum towards this far reaching legislation. Notable amongst these is the Trades Union Congress’s adoption of George Lansbury’s 1911 motion in favour of paid holidays and his introduction of the first Holidays with Pay Private Members Bill in Parliament during 1912; further Bills were introduced in 1925, 1929, 1936 and 1937. Lansbury was, therefore, as always, a key voice in this process; his vision for workers’ holiday colonies and the influence of the Jaywick model (in which he had a keen interest, as discussed in the previous article) providing substance to his argument. He also maintained pressure for the reform in the left wing press, including his *Lansbury Labour Weekly*. The M.P. Guy Rowson, sponsor of the last Bill, published an article in the New Fabian Research Bureau quarterly journal in 1937 once again clearly stating the case for holidays with pay. Timing here was to prove important, with a growing international consensus in favour of paid holidays begun at the turn of the century (as described above); one of the great ironies of the 1930s and 1940s was the simple fact that the paid holiday became inevitable everywhere in Europe and in the America, with all sides of the political debate agreed that modern work required proper facility for leisure. Rowson’s piece neatly and convincingly contextualised the contemporary debate by emphasising the need for Britain to keep up with the international situation, citing the benefit of recent French legislation in this regard ‘not only to the actual recipients themselves, but also to the various business people in the holiday resorts of the country.’ It cannot be over emphasised therefore that the promotion of a convincing argument for paid holidays which included the benefit to business as well as to the worker was supremely important to the ultimate outcome of the campaign in the UK. As was seen in the considerations of the committee that reviewed evidence prior to legislation, this was the argument that added much of the real pressure towards successful implementation.

In 1937 the Annual Holiday Bill came up for a second reading in the House of Commons at the same time that a committee was considering the whole issue; it was defeated by 134 votes to 133. The following amendment was adopted by 130 votes to 122: ‘This House, while welcoming the development of the practice of granting holidays with pay by voluntary

agreement, considers that further information is required on the whole problem and cannot assent to the Second Reading [sic] of a Bill while a departmental committee is investigating the relevant facts and has not yet reported.’ Although the legislation was not yet in place, the long campaign for paid holidays was nearly over.

Against a background of some sixty percent of ‘workpeople in the employment field’ not being provided with, or entitled to, ‘annual consecutive days of holidays with pay’, the committee that produced the 1938 report, chaired by Lord Amulree, heard much evidence and made key observations and recommendations that in themselves were to have a significant affect upon post-war domestic tourism. Notable amongst these was the observation that accommodation for significantly increased numbers of domestic holidaymakers would be an issue. The report also conceded early on in its findings that ‘The subject is a complex one and needs detailed treatment’. The subject was indeed complicated; the extent of this was to become manifest in the overwhelming weight of evidence submitted to the committee both for and against the proposals, although the campaign by unions and politicians on the left had by now amassed much convincing and compelling evidence which complemented a very solid argument.

In the consideration of evidence for and against paid holidays, particular problems such as the financing of the scheme, whether voluntary schemes could be promoted instead, lack of accommodation for holidaymakers and the effect upon the countryside and resorts generally were tackled. But of all the observations made by the Amulree Committee, the most decisive was the acknowledgement that workers’ health, happiness and therefore productivity would be greatly enhanced by the right to a paid holiday over consecutive days. A good deal of convincing evidence was submitted to support this, with little effective argument to the contrary. The evidence against statutory paid holidays that *was* submitted to the committee by the National Confederation of Employers’ Organisations essentially focussed upon the problems of financing the scheme, suggestions that workers could and did effectively save for holidays from current wages (using the Lancashire cotton workers ‘Wakes’ holidays as an example). It was also characterised by localised or particular concerns applicable to specific industries rather than the national workforce in general. This evidence failed, however, to demonstrate that a statutory scheme would significantly harm industry.

An important point here is that even prominent representatives of the employer’s lobby were also convinced that a healthier national workforce would ultimately prove more productive;

this was an important breakthrough. A small but nevertheless highly significant paragraph in Part II, Section 1 of the report refers to testimony from ‘certain firms’ who ‘testified to the value of the schemes [already in operation] in reducing absenteeism, improving efficiency and creating a favourable psychological situation from the standpoint of industrial relations.’ In fact this evidence was submitted by representatives of companies that included Sir Malcolm Stewart, testifying on behalf of Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers Ltd. and the London Brick Company Ltd., by arrangement with the National Industrial Alliance. Such prominently endorsed empirical evidence of this nature should be seen as highly significant: the acknowledgement of the unquestionable ‘double benefit’ to workers health and wellbeing in addition to increased productivity in the workplace provided the powerful moral and economic argument needed to overcome remaining objections and the concerns regarding the complex details of implementation of the necessary legislation. This thereby ultimately helped secure legislation which would further empower working-class consumerism in the domestic holiday market.

The passing of the Holidays with Pay Act also meant that for the first time many working people were no longer reliant upon philanthropic or organised holidays. There is, of course, much evidence that highlights the plight of families for whom unpaid leave was a time of hardship and strain. Now families who could take time during the working year for a holiday but could not afford to do so, were entitled to a least a week of paid leave. But it is also important to note, however, that with this entitlement came freedom of choice: families and individuals could choose to stay at home and save the money, or take a holiday away from home in the accommodation that suited their interests and that they could afford.

As suggested, the approaching reality of paid holidays caused concern amongst ministers and conservation bodies who envisaged a mass rush to the seaside by the newly liberated workers during the holiday season. The fear was that as working-class day-trippers became weekly holidaymakers, local facilities would be swamped, causing chaos. The issue was considered in detail at governmental level during the war years, and reports were made to committees who wrestled with the perceived problems. As a result of these reports, meetings and concerns, ministers started to view the idea of holiday camps along the lines of the successful model introduced by Butlin and Warner in the 1930s to have the potential to offer what would be needed. Obviously existing resort accommodation in the form of hotels and guest houses would not be able to accommodate the anticipated increase in numbers, but these new camps with their clean, modern, simple accommodation, all meals provided and a full

programme of entertainment and activities to keep everyone occupied and free from boredom (and its associated problems) would surely provide an ideal solution. It was this view that ministers held on to as potentially the main answer to the envisaged problems that would emerge once the war was over and the full implications of paid holidays would roll out.

Amongst the evidence submitted in favour of paid holidays issues of gender were raised, and in this respect the Amulree Report considered the situation of the wives of workers:

‘A further effect it [the provision of paid holidays] would have, to which importance was attached, was that of providing a facility which would be of great benefit to the wives of workers. For every three of four men working in industry there must be someone working in the household contributing to their efficiency; such persons should, as a measure of social justice, participate in the promotion of health and recreation by holidays with pay.’

The report’s conclusions reflected this finding: ‘It is plain that for full enjoyment of a holiday not only the weekly remuneration but an amount over and above that is really necessary, so that the wife or mother may receive the benefit of a change, and if practicable, of a rest as well as the actual employee.’ This consideration would offer support to the argument for workers holidays to be all-inclusive, and to thereby free women from the need to provide meals and perform other household duties whilst on holiday. Again, the commercial holiday camp model would appear to be ideally suited to this aim by providing meals, childcare and housekeeping. It would, of course, be wrong to argue that in the post-war years (and also in the inter-war years, but to a lesser extent) many women in working households did not benefit from the commercial holiday camp experience. This is illustrated with testimony from a letter written in 1955 by a working mother to the *Manchester Evening News* stating: ‘We’ve tried caravans, but with the shopping, cooking, bed-making etc., that’s no holiday for ME.’ But the situation was, in reality, more complex: similar evidence suggests that self-catering holidays would have a wide appeal amongst women and families as paid holidays became almost universal.

Perceptions of women’s leisure being inextricably intertwined with the usual daily domestic tasks (shopping for provisions whilst shopping for luxuries and taking varied breaks for rest and relaxation during the day, for example) may well contribute to the notion of the self-catering holiday being reasonably acceptable to many women. Also, there would of course be other family members present whilst on holiday to help with the daily tasks. The normality of

life in the working household may have meant that simply ‘handing over’ the responsibility of preparing and serving the family meals was not always as easy as it might have been: many women may have seen this as their ‘territory’, their role and responsibility in family life; a function not easily given over to others. In many households (particularly in northern industrial areas and mining communities) the type and size of meal would differ within the family on gender lines: older mothers continuing the traditions of the hungry 1930s by serving a ‘heavy meal’ for their families and a ‘mere snack’ for themselves. The fare that was likely to be served at a holiday camp might, therefore, be less acceptable. But it is more likely that the sheer freedom to choose an independent, highly personalised holiday experience would become the more powerful motivation for a considerable proportion of working families to shun the commercial holiday camp regimentation and routine. ‘Portable domesticity’ - the possibility of taking temporary or permanent ownership of the holiday parlour- could and would be an appealing concept, particularly in the unprecedented social conditions of the immediate post-war period.

Thus, the holidays with pay legislation created the possibility for working-class families to at last enjoy the benefit of a week or two away from home each year if they so desired, without the spectre of financial burden or hardship at key coastal resorts such as Clacton, Frinton and Walton. It also forced many (including key politicians) to consider the problem of accommodating the new holidaymakers and to view the new commercial holiday camp model, born in the inter-war years, as a virtually tailor-made solution, ripe for adoption and promotion by the state in the post-war years.

The legislation would not take full effect until the war was over, but the process had begun. With the inevitable levels of state control that the war would engender, planning for the anticipated peacetime increase in demand for holiday accommodation was given extensive consideration as discussed; but, importantly, what was not envisaged was the widespread embracing of the freedom of choice to originate and select alternative forms of provision other than the state-sponsored model. The campaign leaders’ eventual persuasion of those on the political right as well as business leaders of the benefit to industry from paid holidays is also an important factor that should be seen as crucial to the legislation’s ultimate enactment. Two further points are also worthy of consideration: the timing of the legislation, and the fact that it was key individuals and politicians in harmony with the unions who initiated, kept its momentum and protected it during the war years prior to its ultimate realisation. Timing, prior to the outbreak of war, was significant for the reasons mentioned above, and

additionally in that it gave working families, in most cases separated by wartime service, the hope of better holidays in peacetime and crucially the opportunity to make up for wartime sacrifice and spend more time with the family. This, coupled with the effects of wartime social change would have a considerable impact upon the post-war domestic holiday scene. It is also apparent that ultimately it was key politicians who saw this process through. At vital moments they acted to protect or promote the programme. Lansbury's persistent and timely proposals, his maintenance of the campaign in the press and in Parliament, coupled with Rowson's awareness of international developments and the emphasis that there were indeed benefits to business with paid holidays all served to bring the campaign to a successful conclusion.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this article it was asserted that the two landmark Acts of Parliament discussed above significantly affected the physical and social landscape surrounding the Tendring District resorts. The Town and Country Planning Act, once rolled out into local government, effectively quashed further unrestricted plotland holiday home development and placed solid restriction of use and development on existing structures. It was envisaged that the development of new holiday accommodation would only really take place as part of the commercial holiday camp model. This was not the case. The static holiday caravan, an alternative form of holiday accommodation unforeseen by the planning legislation, became ascendant in and around the Tendring resorts. Hotels, guest houses and eventually the two commercial holiday camps went into decline or closure. The static holiday caravan parks drew increasingly large numbers of holiday makers, liberated and encouraged by the holidays with pay legislation to the Tendring resorts during the 1950s and 1960s. In the closing decades of the twentieth century into the twenty-first, caravan parks held their appeal against the closure of the commercial camps and many of the hotels and guest houses during a period of changing expectations from holiday makers and the perceived cultural decline of the resorts with their fading Victorian buildings and outdated appeal. This phenomenon will be explored further in the first part of the following section.

Suggested further reading:

Barton, S. *Working-class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005)

Briggs, A. *A Study of the Work of Seebohm Rowntree, 1871-1954* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1961)

Duxbury, R. ed. *Telling and Duxbury's Planning Law and Procedure, 12th Edition* (London: Butterworths, 2002)

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