Resort Landscapes

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This final part considers three aspects of the history of Tendring's resorts that have helped create the environment that visitors and holidaymakers now experience. The decline of hotels and boarding houses and the birth and development of holiday caravan parks are explored in the first section. The holiday caravan park came about as a largely unplanned, organic response to post war planning legislation and the agency of working class holidaymakers and small scale entrepreneurs and landowners. As a result, changes to holiday accommodation provision in and around the resorts would impact considerably upon the landscape. In the following section the significance of health and climate on Tendring's "sunshine coast" is considered. The early development of seaside resorts can be seen to have been derived from the supposed benefits to be gained from spending time at the seaside, sea bathing and even sea water drinking. Consequently, structures such as bathing machines and bath houses would soon become prominent features of the seaside environment, followed in the 20th century by swimming pools and lidos as swimming and sunbathing became popular. Further changes to the seaside landscape would occur as entertainment facilities began appear and develop. This phenomenon is explored in the final section: Attractions: piers, theatres, seafronts, promenades and gardens.

The decline of hotels, boarding houses and the ascendancy of caravan parks

In common with many pre-war holiday centres in the UK, Clacton-on-Sea, Frinton-on-Sea, Walton-on-the-Naze and Harwich emerged from the war years significantly altered in a physical sense. Local authorities duly began preparations to re-engage with the business of tourism, amongst other concerns such as housing and reconstruction. The existing tourist infrastructure was centred on the two commercial holiday camps: Butlin's at Clacton and

Warner's at Dovercourt. A number of hotels and guest houses at Clacton, Frinton, Walton, Dovercourt and Harwich remained, along with the holiday plots at Jaywick, Saint Osyth Beach, Point Clear and Wrabness. Nine other sites, besides Butlin's and Warner's, claimed in their later site licence applications to have been established by then as camping grounds in one form or another. As discussed in the previous article, the political, social and more importantly the legislative landscape had and would continue to undergo rapid change; these changes would directly and irrevocably affect the landscape and the way in which the provision of holiday accommodation in the Tendring resorts would subsequently evolve. The remaining plotland holiday homes, mainly concentrated at Jaywick and Wrabness, were still in use but would not expand at all in the post-war period. Hotels and guesthouses were, of course, offering holiday accommodation, but as has been suggested they were soon to be in decline.

The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, as discussed in the previous article, effectively brought a halt to unregulated holiday home construction: hence the marginalisation and decline of plotland holiday homes. But it was more or less silent on the siting of caravans. As these structures were not built upon the plot that they occupied but were mobile or portable, they appeared to be exempt from the strictures of the Act. Therefore they could be established at resort locations upon any land that was available for them to occupy. Thus, by the early 1950s, the Tendring resorts had seen numerous new holiday caravan sites develop and grow. Whilst the caravan parks initial development and growth occurred at the same time as the marginalization of the hotels, guest houses and plotland holiday homes, it also occurred despite the popularly perceived dominance of the commercial holiday camps. Accurate data for the situation in the UK at this time is hard to determine and estimates vary as to the number of holiday camps that had been established in Britain by 1939. Some sources suggest that by the summer of 1938 Britain had around 150 holiday camps; others estimate that in 1939 there were some 115 holiday camps with permanent buildings, and a further sixty temporary or tent-based establishments. After 1945, the two commercial camps at Clacton and Walton would soon be surrounded by some forty-nine static holiday caravan parks within the Tendring District.

In the post-war years, static holiday caravan parks became an increasingly popular feature of resort areas in the UK. At first, site licences were issued by the local authority under public health legislation. After the 1960 Caravan Sites Act, licenses were issued under this

legislation. In the Tendring district, the first caravan site proprietors were almost all small scale landowners, farmers or speculators. Of the forty-nine sites registered after 1945, only seven were licensed in the names of companies rather than individuals. Some of these companies that registered are known to have been owned and run by individuals or families. Generally not from a holiday trade background, most of these individuals initially saw opportunities for the provision of camping grounds with basic facilities. As their clients sought to put caravans or similar structures on the site, the operators realised that with this came the opportunity to charge an annual ground rent, even a siting fee. This meant a more guaranteed, predictable income than that which could be derived from tents and basic camping.

These early caravan sites began to develop on-site entertainments and facilities. Small shops were soon augmented by cafes, club houses and bars. Most of the entertainment activities were organised and carried out by the customers themselves: 'doing a turn' in the club house was a popular and integral part of the scene on the caravan sites in Tendring. Club houses would need to be licensed to serve alcoholic beverages; proprietors found that applications for such licenses were more straightforward if their club houses were 'members clubs'. Membership fees could be included in the caravan owner's annual ground rent. Such was the growing popularity of this activity that total memberships of clubs on caravan sites in Tendring rose from 529 in 1957, to 4,434 in 1962: an increase of 738 percent over the period. By the end of the 1950s more of the new caravan sites had originated their own facilities and entertainments, and formally registered their clubs. In these formative years they engendered a close, community spirit amongst their patrons who, as well as becoming stake holders in the sites by investing in the purchase of a caravan, would also have an involvement in the entertainment rituals and games that took place there. For the caravan owners on these sites this sense of stake-holding and involvement would continue to develop as the caravan sites became more established.

By the first summer season of the 1960s, caravan sites and the manufacture of dedicated static holiday caravans, along with all the ancillary or allied trades and industries, had become a major and established part of UK domestic tourism. In addition, control and legislation in the form of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, 1960 had finally arrived in the wake of the Arton Wilson Report, which for the previous two years had been investigating the nature of all forms of caravan use in the UK. Despite the growing popularity of foreign travel,

the development of package holidays and competition from other sectors within UK tourism, caravan sites would in general continue to be popular with domestic working-class holidaymakers. Some caravan owners and users would combine foreign trips to European resorts on package holidays with UK caravan site use. During this period, in addition to this broad, increasing popularity, caravan sites would also continue to evolve physically, economically and socially. By the 1980s the earlier image of the caravan site as a low-key, lowbrow, alternative form of holiday camp was replaced by one of a much more modern, well-ordered and regulated establishment, offering clean and hospitable facilities in an attractive environment. Caravan sites became caravan parks; eventually the words 'caravan' and 'site' seem to almost become redundant in some quarters: too reminiscent of an earlier, less professional or corporate era. Static holiday homes on leisure or holiday home parks emerged as the industry began to lead what was formerly a consumer-led phenomenon.

The parks themselves, with the growth in demand for caravans with integral toilets, showers and bathrooms, were able to replace the earlier shower-blocks, toilet blocks and laundry rooms with play areas for children, green open spaces or shopping facilities. The plain, grassy areas between caravans was, on some parks, replaced with fenced-in gardens, landscaped and personalised by the occupants. Where occupants perhaps had little or no garden at home, this landscaping could be quite extensive; garden centres close by providing the resources for the activity. Parks will almost always still have had a licensed 'club-house', and this was in most cases to provide food, drink and entertainment for children and adults alike. Swimming pools and leisure centres were not uncommon features on larger parks in the Tendring District.

Parks with privately owned static caravans now generally earned their income in a number of ways: the sale of a new caravan to a new customer (often including finance commission), fees to install it upon the park and connect it to the main services, an annual ground rent, any club memberships that are not included in this annual rent, retail sales and services on the park or in the clubhouse or shops, insurance (although this was not always compulsorily purchased from the park operator) and ultimately the sale of a new caravan after the original one had either become unsightly, worn-out, unwanted or had exceeded a pre-designated age for the park.

Nowadays many people will say that they enjoyed family holidays in a caravan when they were young. This would often be a static caravan on a holiday camp or caravan site, and this

campsite would nearly always have been in the UK, somewhere near the coast and quite possibly within the Tendring District of North Essex. Perhaps no-one need be surprised at this; it is has been claimed recently by the UK caravan industry that fifty percent of the British population take a caravan-park holiday in their lifetime; typically as a child, as a parent and again as a grandparent. In 1951 the holiday camp was estimated to account for only three percent of overall holiday accommodation. These statistics include holidays abroad, however. This rises to a peak in 1970 of six percent, not including foreign holidays. In 1970, however caravans, meaning 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. During the post-war years caravans have fallen into four distinct categories or forms: touring caravans, motor homes, residential park homes and static holiday caravans, all of which have become part of the Tendring holiday landscape. Touring caravans, as the name suggests, are designed and constructed to be legally towed behind a motor vehicle on the public highway. The users of these caravans will typically tow them to suitable locations over weekends or for more extended stays. A motor home, sometimes referred to as a motor-caravan or caravannette, is simply a vehicle that incorporates the features of a touring caravan as part of its integral structure. Residential park homes are much larger units, often comprising two main sections, that are transported by lorry to a residential park and assembled on site. There they are used as all-year-round residential accommodation, and generally remain in that location indefinitely. The static holiday caravan is designed and constructed to serve as a holiday home on a park established to accommodate it. It will be delivered to the park by lorry as it generally cannot be legally towed on the public highway, but may be towed by a suitable vehicle on private land for the purpose of moving it into its more permanent location. Typically, once purchased it will stay on-site for much of its life, although these units are of course portable, and may well be moved to other locations. Caravan holiday home parks themselves often purchase a number of static caravans (a fleet) to serve as rented holiday accommodation.

Recent statistics given by the domestic caravan industry estimate that there are over 3,500 holiday parks in the UK, over 2000 of these are licensed touring and/or holiday caravan parks. They contain some 335,000 static caravan holiday homes, 210,000 of which are privately owned. The industry also claimed in 2010 that individuals spend more than 51 million nights in caravans each year, and that more than £1.70 billion was spent on UK caravan holidays in 2008; a figure which was expected to rise due to a twenty percent increase in bookings at that

time. Further, the industry in the UK is said to employ in excess of 90,000 people, including part time and seasonal staff. Contemporary caravan holiday home parks, including those that are now established as part of Tendring's resort landscape, often seek to present themselves as exclusive, well-appointed and 'up-market'. Static caravan holiday homes themselves are now remarkably well appointed and include every convenience that one would expect in a conventional domestic environment: kitchen with cooker, bathroom(s), dining area, lounge and bedrooms; television and audio facilities are generally built in. Hot and cold running water, flush toilets, showers and fitted fridges, freezers and washing machines are common to all but the most basic models. More recent developments in manufacture have led to the production of 'lodges': large, wooden-clad units that scarcely resemble a caravan at all in the conventional sense. Again, these forms of holiday accommodation feature prominently in the Tendring District.

With the rise in prominence of the green agenda in recent years, parks have been quick to establish their green credentials. Much is made of offering would-be caravan owners 'a place in the country', to explore and enjoy rural pursuits. Some of this is undoubtedly cosmetic. But much has improved in recent years, and park operators are now seen as being responsible for the parks immediate environment; conservation and re-cycling are common themes throughout the industry. Representative bodies, such as the British Holiday and Home Parks Association (BH&HPA) encourage and promote this initiative, with endorsements from well-known campaigners. Parks are also keen to be seen as champions of the rural economy, claiming that every two caravan holiday homes represents one rural job. These jobs are said to provide work in areas where little alternative employment exists. It is also claimed that the parks provide a valuable alternative for second-home purchasers, as buying a 'bricks-and-mortar' holiday home helps create 'ghost villages' and inflated local house prices. However, as the static caravan parks are now the principle forms of holiday accommodation in and around Tendring's resorts, the employment opportunities that they create (and other income streams that they generate for the local authority and associated businesses) are considered an important aspect of the local tourism economy.

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HEALTH AND CLIMATE AT THE SEASIDE

The early impetus for the development of seaside resorts derived from the suggested therapeutic benefits to be gained from sea bathing and even sea water drinking. Although in some places there was a long-standing local tradition of such activity, in general this represented an extension of medical advice concerning 'taking the waters' from inland spas to the coast. The first structures to be found at the seaside were therefore bathing machines and bathhouses. The first bathing machines, originally entirely horse-drawn, were designed to take bathers safely out into the sea, whereupon they would be 'dipped' by paid attendants. By the later 19th century there was often a degree of mechanisation with, for example, bathing machines at Clacton-on-Sea and Dovercourt being winched back up the beach by ropes as the tide flowed back in. The bathhouses were required for more delicate visitors or invalids with more severe medical conditions; and they also enabled hot-water bathing.

In similar fashion to the inland spas, visitors soon discovered the additional social pleasures to be found at the new sea-bathing resorts, leading to the construction of hotels and boarding houses and amenities such as assembly and reading rooms. At nearly all of them the initial entrepreneurs were keen to attract wealthy clientele comprising the aristocracy and landed gentry, or at least the prosperous middle class of professionals, who would create the right social tone and the highest financial gains. In their earliest prospectuses, therefore, health-invigorating benefits of the seaside and mild climates were often heavily emphasized.

ADVERTISEMENTS. 27

SEA BATHING.

MESSRS.

SALLOWS & BATES,

THE OLDEST ESTABLISHED PROPRIETORS OF

BATHING MACHINES,

Gratefully acknowledging the favours bestowed upon them during the last thirty years, invite Visitors to avail themselves of their new and commodious Bathing Machines, which occupy the best position in Walton, viz.,

EAST PARADE,

(Fifty yards beyond the ALBION HOTEL).

Experienced Females attend Ladies and Children.

Figure 1 A later 19th century advertisement for bathing machines at Walton-on-the-Naze.

Sea water bathing was undoubtedly significant in the foundation of Walton, where Edmund Aldrich's Bath House Hotel (Shore Road; later Princes Esplanade) provided salt water baths and bathing machines from the early 19th century. When the resort got properly underway with the building of the main Hotel an official guidebook published in 1829 described the new resort as a 'sea bathing place in Essex'. Dr Roger Nunn, physician and surgeon at the Essex County Hospital in Colchester, was among the initial investors in the Hotel, but the guidebook concentrated upon the resort's other attractions and its accommodation. Perhaps the health benefits of a trip to the seaside and sea bathing were by then too widely accepted to need further elaboration. We may surmise that they were significant as a London visitor to Walton and Harwich two years earlier has apparently "benefited by the change of Air, Exercise and Sea Bathing".

Sea bathing continued to be a popular feature at Walton throughout the 19th century; Peter Schuyler Bruff's developments *c.*1860 had as its centre piece the Clifton Music Hall and Baths, neatly combining healthy bathing with social activities in the tradition of the spa. Nonetheless, it was not until 1878 that a guidebook or treatise specifically highlighted the resort's supposed therapeutic properties. Dr Philip Hayman's *Walton-on-the-Naze, and the Advantages which it Possesses as a Resort for Invalids* claimed that the town "is noted for the purity of and salubrity of its air, and the rate of mortality is very low". Emphasis here and elsewhere was placed upon the seaside air, which was believed to have disinfectant qualities due to the presence of 'ozone'. Later resort guidebooks around the turn of the century firmly advertised Walton as a health resort, one stating that "Walton-on-the-Naze claims not to be the queen of watering places; she boats not of palaces and princes; and sighs not for fashion and frivolity, but she does claim to be the home of health and the favoured centre of re-invigorating influences". Such claims were backed up the publication of the resort's low mortality rates of about 10 per thousand.

Figure 2 Traditional bathing machines at Dovercourt c.1900

One of the main features of John Bagshaw's planned New Town at Dovercourt, a resort clearly aimed at an upper and middle-class clientele, was the spa opened in 1854 fed by a natural spring in the cliffs. It has been discovered that one early visitor in 1858 was the novelist Charles Dickens. The failure of Bagshaw's development enterprise was rather mirrored in the fortunes of his spa, for

the fashion for spas was generally waning by that date; in the final decades of the 19th century the building instead served as a library, reading room and entertainments venue. Bathing in the sea continued to grow in popularity, however, especially with the later growth of Dovercourt; for example, bathing machines were provided by the Phoenix Hotel by the 1860s to which were added hot water baths by the 1880s. Towards the end of the 19th century Dovercourt was being actively promoted as a 'health resort', although the advertising had to put the best gloss on the resort's rather exposed position helped by an increasing emphasis concerning the significance of air quality. One guidebook stated that "The weather is seldom oppressively warm even in summer, for Dovercourt and its neighbour Harwich are swept with sea-air on all sides but the west; and it is rarely without a refreshingly cool breeze", adding that "the soil is so gravelly and so porous that it dries quickly after rain, and no dampness lowers the exhilarating character of the air".

The new development at Clacton-on-Sea was similarly promoted by reference to the health-giving properties of the local seaside. The "purity of the air" and the "extraordinary healthiness of the place, particularly for children" were noted in the advertisement of the landed estate in 1864, themes that were picked up by the resort developers P.S. Bruff and H. Page in the early 1870s. As with the other resorts Clacton's gently shelving beaches were used for large numbers of bathing machines provided by Alfred Cattermole (from *c.*1872) and Edmund Almond (from *c.*1885), initially with Clacton's local authorities imposing strict regulations on bathing costumes and segregating the sexes. Hot & cold water baths were also established at the pier about 1885. Already by the late 19th century Clacton's guidebooks were noting the generally favourable climate of the area, one in 1885 noting its suitability for "invalids and children", while in 1892 another claimed there was "no better place for consumptives to recover". The local press, always keen to promote the resort to visitors, reported on the area's low death rates and published statistics showing how the town's high sunshine and low rainfall compared favourably to other south-east resorts.

Figure 3 A late 19th century glass paperweight with a picture of Clacton Pier showing the Hot & Cold Sea Water baths at its entrance.

The coast also became a popular location for convalescent homes for patients recuperating from operations or illnesses initially treated elsewhere. A few hospitals had been founded at the seaside from an early date, one of the first being in Kent - 'The Margate Infirmary, for the Relief of the Poor whose Diseases require Sea-Bathing' (1791). Essex, like Kent, lay reasonably close to London and thus its resorts possessed the advantage of easy access for the establishment of outposts from the major London hospitals and other institutions. Yet, while many individuals visited the resorts for bathing and other health reasons, it was not until the growing publicity about the healthiness of the Tendring resorts that a significant expansion of seaside hospitals and convalescent homes took place. By the 1880s, soon after Dr Hayman's treatise had been published, there were small several convalescent homes in Walton. For example, the 'Home of Rest' at Walton's High Street operated for 'poor deserving Women needing change of Air and Rest' and 'for the benefit of poor invalids requiring the sea air'. In the early 20th century, four larger convalescent homes opened in locations towards the Naze, perhaps reflecting both the space available there and also the perceived healthiness of the higher ground. Probably the best known were the Home of Rest for the Work Girls' Protection Society of London (1886; later Mabel Greville Convalescent Home, Naze cliffs),

the Home for London Home Workers (*c.*1902, Hall Lane, Naze Park), the Poplar Hospital Convalescent Home (1909; Naze Park), and the Samuel Lewis Convalescent Home (1910; Naze Park cliffs).

The chronology was similar at Clacton, where the Essex Convalescent Home had opened in 1884. It was designed by the Chelmsford architect Frederic Chancellor with the appearance of a large domestic residence, although there was separate accommodation for the sexes (originally 10 patients of each gender). It was followed by John Groom's Crippleage and Flower Girls' Mission in 1890, an orphanage that comprised a group of purpose-built 'cottage' houses as a suitable environment for children. It was later extended with more 'cottages', a children's hospital and convalescent home. Both of these homes were both located inland on the northern outskirts of the resort at Magdalen Green, but most of the later ones were built closer to the coast in East Clacton.

Larger and important institutions included the Middlesex Hospital Convalescent Home (1896; Holland Road), Passmore Edwards Holiday Home (1899; Marine Parade East), St Michael's Orthopaedic Hospital (1908; Marine Parade East), the Reckitt Convalescent Home (1909, Holland Road), and the Ogilvie School of Recovery (1913; Holland Road). In a great many cases the seaside homes were intended to provide an escape and rest from the polluted air of the metropolis. Many had communal drawing rooms that were similar in character and furnishings to large private dwellings or modest middle-class hotels, and provided suitable homes for long-staying residents. As scientific research had demonstrated sunlight was lethal to the tuberculosis bacillus, some homes were specifically designed to treat such patients. The grandiose Middlesex home, for example, was designed by a firm of architects who specialised in hospitals and originally had two-storey verandas to give special access to sunshine and fresh air.

Figure 4: The Middlesex Hospital Convalescent Home, Clacton-on-Sea, opened in 1896.

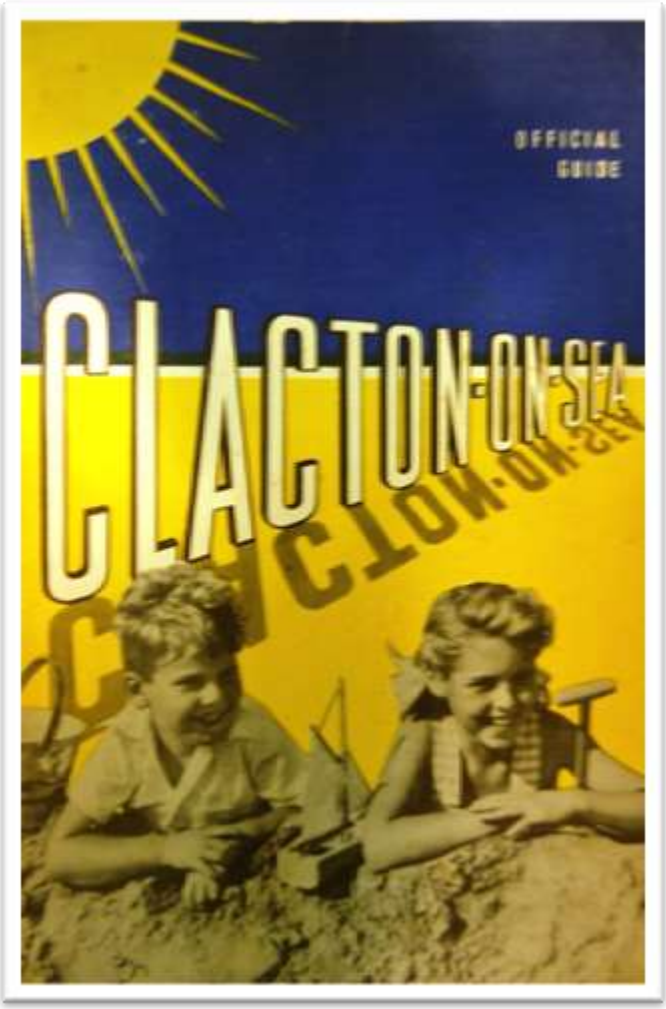
One curious aspect of the development of the first resorts is that despite the promotion of their healthiness they had often been developed out of older fishing and rural settlements which could contribute to serious public health problems. The unhealthy sanitary condition of many resorts was highlighted by the deaths caused at places like Margate, Great Yarmouth and Harwich by a cholera epidemic in 1849; about 50 people apparently died at Harwich. Sanitary conditions in both the old port of Harwich, and also at Walton where the resort was established in and around a pre-existing coastal village, were affected by inadequate water supplies and the prevalence of old-fashioned drainage systems and cess-pools. Even at entirely new foundations sewage was often disposed of straight into the sea, such as at Clacton-on-Sea where it was discharged at high tide via a sluice at Eagle Gap. The construction, scale and efficiency of drainage and sewerage systems often did not keep pace with the expansion of housing and population, so that despite a new system at Clacton sewage was still overflowing onto the beaches in the 1890s. Generally, it was not until the late 19th century that the powers and incomes of local public authorities such as Clacton Urban District Council were sufficient to tackle these problems; most directly this involved the building of new sewers in the towns and of sewer outfalls at a greater distance from the beaches. About 1895 the replacement of Clacton's entire sewerage system included a new outfall 1,000ft out to sea. Rather

ironically, the perceived ‘healthiness’ of the Tendring coastline also encouraged people to bring consumptives and other ill people to the resorts, probably explaining why Clacton had most reported cases of infectious disease in Essex urban districts in 1896!

In 1888 one of Clacton’s popular attractions, the new switchback railway, was advertised as offering a cure for biliousness, with the ‘official’ medical recommendation of up to a dozen rides as the effective dose. While clearly tongue-in-cheek, such publicity clearly drew on the known propensity for people to visit the seaside for their health. Indeed, as already mentioned above in several instances, there was increasing emphasis on the healthiness of the Tendring coastline’s general climate by the end of the 19th century, with not only the air but also the sunshine being specifically mentioned. By the 1890s, for example, public attention was constantly drawn to the ‘Clacton Air’ and ‘Clacton’s Sunshine Record’. The resort’s official guidebooks attempted to reassure potential visitors that the resort was not entirely geared to ‘cheap trippers and Cockney holidaymakers’. One such publication in 1902 highlighted the therapeutic effect of Clacton’s general climate, with ‘very small’ rainfall with hot and dry summers and mild winters’, ‘bright, clear and bracing’ air and ‘much brilliant sunshine’. In 1909 Clacton’s new Advertising and Advancement Association produced ‘sunshine postcards’ which compared Clacton’s weather favourably with that of Jersey, and forwarded local meteorological reports to the national press.

Health also played an important role in the promotion of the new resort of Frinton-on-Sea from the end of the 19th century onwards. Again, the developers wished to attract visitors, but even more specifically only those of the right character. Thus, whilst any amusements likely to appeal to day-trippers were actively discouraged at Frinton, in 1905 its Medical Officer of Health drew attention to the town’s ‘pre-eminent healthiness’ citing its very low death rates and incidence of epidemic disease. As at Clacton, the significance factors had been extended to the general climate, for emphasis was also placed on its ‘abundant sunshine’ and low rainfall. The Frinton Medical Officer of Health released daily weather forecasts at 8 a.m. which were displayed both in Frinton at Liverpool Street station in London.

Figure 5: Cover of a Clacton-on-Sea official holiday guide (early 1950s).



By the early years of the 20th century, therefore, it can be seen that the sunshine was becoming an important attraction of the seaside alongside the qualities of the air. Indeed, the sun soon came to be seen as important for improving health and sun-worship became a key feature of the seaside during the interwar wars. Whereas in the Victorian period a sun-tan was taken to denote a life of manual labour and ladies in particular were expected to have pale skins (hence the sheltering of ladies under parasols), social values became inverted by the 1920s and especially the 1930s. A sun-tan then came to imply healthiness as well as the wealth and leisure time to acquire one, and sun-bathing reached a high level of popularity that has lasted until today. As a result, resorts competed with each other over their sunshine statistics (even including ultra-violet counts – then thought to be health-giving rather than dangerous). The image of the sun (or sun-ray motif) was used to attract potential visitors to the Tendring holiday resorts or the 'Sunshine Coast' as it came to be known. For example, the cover to one guidebook pictured Dovercourt beach with the title within a sun logo 'Meet the Sun at …..' Harwich and Dovercourt Bay. Clacton also used similar imagery on some of its official guidebooks including the one illustrated above, which had as its title (inside front cover) 'Sunshine Holidays at Clacton-on-Sea'. Often the front covers of these guidebooks deliberately used colours of yellow and blue, presumably to denote sunshine, sea and sky.

The development of sun-worship was a major influence on the changing nature and fashion of bathing at the seaside, with the emphasis changing from dipping and bathing to active swimming. Display also increased in importance as the segregation of the sexes was abandoned and mixed

bathing developed. Bathing costumes changed out of all recognition as both sexes adopted more flattering bathing gear, with ill-fitting hired costumes that covered most of the body being replaced with more revealing styles that allowed maximum exposure. The liberalisation of social attitudes to bathing was summed up by the *Clacton Graphic* in 1930 which reported that "bathers of both sexes were allowed to wear what they like at Clacton". These changes also had an impact upon the built environment as bathing machines rapidly became outmoded. Some local councils attempted to maintain standards by replacing them with licenced bathing pavilions or chalets where people would change into their costumes, such as those erected at East Cliff by Clacton UDC *c*.1914 and again in 1921–2. In a similar fashion, from the end of the 1920s local builder and entrepreneur Walter Johnston built five pavilions at Little Holland offering refreshments and changing facilities for bathers. This was also the period when beach huts became really popular, being in many ways the natural successor to the bathing machine. They were to be found in all the resorts, but perhaps were particularly prevalent at Frinton which had nearly 600 beach huts by the early 1920s, most of them in the hands of Frinton residents and operated under strict municipal control.

Sun-worship also had an impact on other types of seafront building. For example, sun lounges became a feature of many seafront hotels in the interwar period and many coastal resorts made heavy investments in building open-air pools or lidos which combined sunbathing with the increasingly popular activities of swimming and diving. It is notable, though, that many bathers did not swim at all at these new lidos and merely engaged in display, one contemporary commentator commenting that they were 'merely displaying, for the edification of the other sex, their physical charms with the aid of daring and attractive bathing costumes'. The Tendring resorts seem to have lagged behind many on the south coast, with Clacton UDC unable to agree on a municipal pool. Change eventually came about through private enterprise. Ernest Kingsman had bought Clacton pier in 1922 and through multiple investments (spending £200,000 before World War Two) proceeded to turn it into the largest and most attractive mass entertainment centre on the east coast. One of the major attractions added in 1932 was a swimming pool erected on piles over the water which measured 165ft x 60ft and could accommodate 1,000 bathers at a time. Not long afterwards, when Billy Butlin was negotiating the development of the Butlins estate at West Clacton in 1935–6 his proposed holiday camp was described as a 'lido'. When work started in 1938 the centrepieces included an imposing Art Deco façade to the main building and an unusually large L-shaped outdoor swimming pool, with cascades, which was alleged to be the largest heated pool in the British Isles. The development of swimming pools was also encouraged by government because of

an increased interest in the fitness of the nation, and other experiences offered in the new holiday camps format included mass fitness classes for holidaymakers.

Figure 6: Postcard titled 'Fit & Well' at Butlin's Holiday Camp, Clacton-on-Sea.

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THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE SEAFRONT

Piers

Piers are such an iconic feature of English seaside resorts, that it seems surprising that they were a rather late addition to the attractions available. The first purpose-built pier was that at Ryde (Isle of Wight) in 1814, built to facilitate the arrival of visitors and for promenading over the sea. All the earliest piers were similar utilitarian structures with these two purposes in mind. It has been argued by Fred Gray, in his book *Designing the Seaside,* that walking on a pier 'was to be transported ever closer to raw, untamed nature', and certainly walking over the sea in this way for pleasure remained popular throughout the 19th century. At some resorts, where a purpose-built pier was never constructed, existing stone breakwaters that protected the coast or a harbour had already, and continued to be, pressed into the same use. This was famously demonstrated by the Cobb at Lyme Regis immortalised as the scene of an important turning point in Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion.* The first purpose-built pier at Ryde was followed by many others, with a total of 98 being erected between 1814 and 1910. Gradually the purpose of piers changed and expanded, so that as well as acting as landing stages and promenades they also housed other attractions and entertainments and became an even greater focus for the resorts. Nonetheless, around the time of the First World War the popularity for pier building collapsed, with no new piers being constructed in the interwar period; instead a number of the existing ones underwent major redevelopment into mass leisure and entertainment centres.

The history of piers on the Tendring coastline follows many of the national trends, but also has features that reflect the individual circumstances and development of each Essex resort. At the most basic level, it is clear that piers were fundamental in generating the popular success of Walton and Clacton. The first pier at Walton was built in 1830 followed by a new pier in 1867, while the pier at Clacton was opened in 1871. These early wooden piers all had functional purposes enabling visitors to disembark from sailing or steam ships, but they were also used for pleasure purposes, such as promenades and for the taking of pleasure trips and excursions by boat from the pier heads. Later, towards the end of the 19th century, they were increasingly used for other entertainments such as concerts and for popular amusements such as 'What the Butler Saw' style machines. The piers also changed in form as new materials in the form of iron and steel, more suited to the severely testing conditions, were used both for the piers themselves and for the buildings erected upon them. By the inter-war years, Clacton pier in particular became a mass entertainment centre, and there were also

(albeit to a lesser degree) many popular amusements at Walton pier and at Clacton's Jetty (demolished 1940) located towards the western end of the beach.

Before examining the history of the main piers at Walton and Clacton in more detail, it is also worth considering why the new resorts of Frinton and Dovercourt did not have piers. About 1887 the initial development plans for Frinton, then called 'Frinton Haven', published by the Marine & General Land, Building & Investment Co. Ltd, included a 'proposed pier'. However, this idea was subsequently dropped, probably due to the opposition of the main investor and landowner R.P. Cooper. He realised that the seafront and greensward would have to remain uncommercialized if Frinton was to maintain its 'select' character and excursionists to be discouraged from visiting. Thus, conversely to the situation at Walton and Clacton, it was the very the absence of a pier at Frinton that was significant in the resort's successful promotion. Further up the coast, landing piers were built as part of the quay improvements at Harwich (associated with the arrival of the railway). The Corporation pier (later known as Halfpenny Pier) opened in 1853 as part of the harbour development work under the provisions of the Harwich Improvement, Quays and Pier Act (1851) and Harwich Dock and Pier Act (1853). Nearby another pier was opened in 1865 by the Great Eastern Railway which also later acquired the Corporation pier and quays; the Quay Pavilion was built *c.*1900 and had a tunnel linking it to the Great Eastern Hotel. Although these piers were not developed as major resort attractions, they served to deliver visitors to both Harwich and Dovercourt, and in combination with the train services they seem to have made an early pier or jetty at Dovercourt unnecessary. Two small landing stages or jetties were probably built after 1900, but were not developed like piers. Promenading was also already well served at Dovercourt by the beacon hill breakwater and promenade built for sea defence purposes *c.*1850 and the seafront development and Marine Parade begun by John Bagshaw in the 1850s.

Walton's two piers:

The original pier or jetty at Walton was built by the first developers in 1830, opposite the new Hotel, to coincide with the inaugural staging of the Walton regatta. This was a relatively advanced decision by the promoters, as the pier was apparently only the fifth to be built in England after Ryde, Brighton, Margate, and Southend-on-Sea. It was built of timber and initially only 150ft long, although it was twice extended in 1838 and 1848 making it a more suitable for promenading as well as a berthing jetty for boats. It was designed by J. Penrice, the architect responsible for the Hotel

and many of the resort's earliest housing, and was built by a local builder Joseph Salmon of Beaumont. Although remaining open and being extended and refurbished, this pier was never seriously developed. It was finally damaged by a storm and demolished in 1881 by which time it was known as the old pier to contrast it to another which had been subsequently erected.

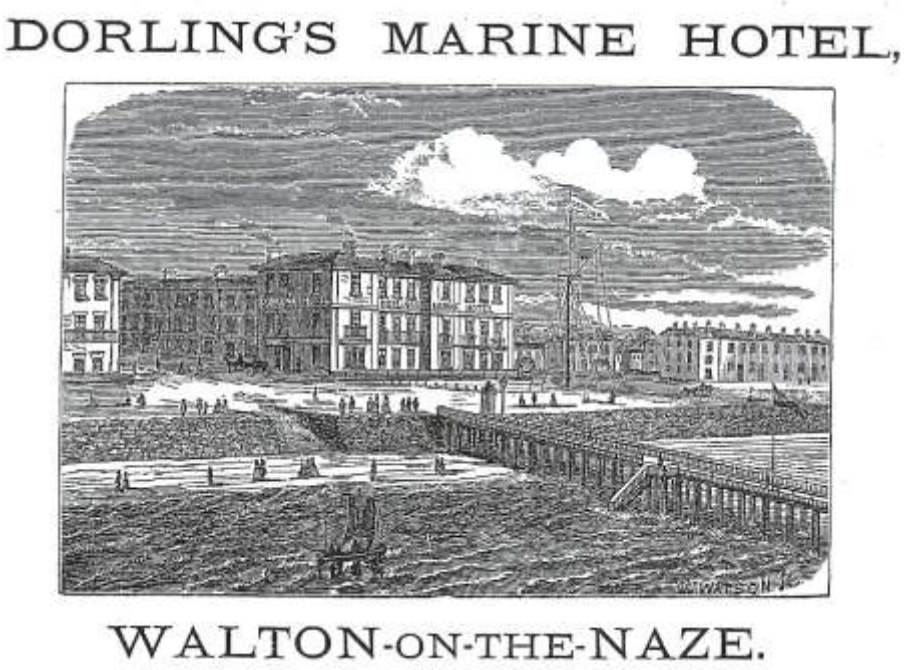


Figure 7: The original or 'old' pier at Walton depicted in a guidebook advertisement from the later 19th century. It shows the pier was undeveloped and still mainly used as a landing stage and for promenading.

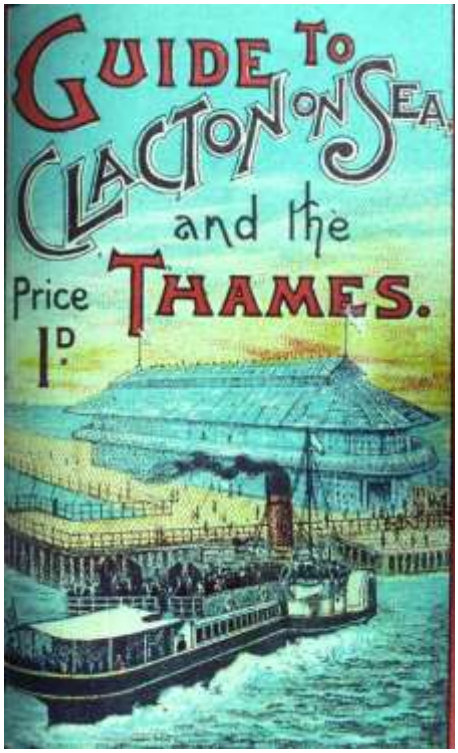
Walton's second pier, opened in 1869, was built by the resort developer P.S. Bruff as part of his new development on the cliffs to the south-west of the initial resort. It was erected not far from the train station and new housing, in front of Bruff's new Clifton Hotel of 1862, all being part of an integrated plan for the resort to provide communications, accommodation and attractions. Instead of being an entirely local endeavour, the new pier was designed by specialist pier and resort engineers Kinipple & Jaffrey and the contractors were J. Cochrane and Sons. It was initially planned to be 300ft long, but was subsequently extended first to 700ft and in 1897–8 to 2,610ft, and also widened. The tidal range at Walton was large and extending the pier meant that steamers and other craft could utilise a greater depth of water at the pier head. The only longer piers in England were those of Southport in Lancashire and Southend-on-Sea in Essex. Like other piers in late Victorian

England, Walton's new pier was developed as a resort attraction by adding various entertainments, especially after the Coast Development Corporation took control. In 1899 it was equipped with an electric tramway and in 1900 with a pavilion (also designed by Kinipple & Jaffrey) accommodating 750 people which played host to concert parties and other entertainers. Sadly, neither the tramway nor the pavilion have survived. Walton's slow growth and relatively quiet status as a resort meant that subsequent investment was limited. At the start of the 1930s the pier's principal attractions were the Sea Spray café with dance hall, the electric train, the pavilion and an amusement arcade.

Clacton pier:

Clacton's first developer, Peter Bruff, obtained an Act of Parliament in 1866 to build a pier and railway line. The Act authorised the construction of a 300-yard long pier, which was finally completed in July 1871 only just before the five years allowed by the Act had elapsed (the first steamer the Queen of the Orwell arrived on 27 July 1871). In its first incarnation it was similar in form to the old pier at Walton, being only 480ft long and 12ft wide, and also built of timber. By 1877 the future of the resort had passed from Bruff to a wider group of investors in the Clacton-on-Sea General Land, Building and Investment Co. Ltd (Land Co.) which also took an important stake in The Clacton-on-Sea Pier Co. Ltd. The latter had been formed in 1875 with capital of £10,000 to acquire and further developer the pier. In 1877 the pier was extended by 170 yards, and subsequent extensions increased the length of its stem to 1,180ft and it was also widened to 30ft by the early 1890s. A shelter head and two berthing arms were added to the end of the pier for the mooring of steamships and so that passengers could land and embark at any state of the tide. The Pier Co. obtained further parliamentary powers in 1897 including for new berthing arms that would allow four steamers to go alongside simultaneously.

By the 1880s and 1890s Clacton pier was used by vast numbers of visitors for promenading and basic amusements, with a band playing there three times a day. In 1885 the shops at the pier entrance were leased to Frederick Wallis of the Royal Hotel who constructed hot and cold sea water baths. Less than a decade later, in 1893, a pavilion theatre was built towards the end of the pier where it widened to 90ft in response to the fashion for concerts and entertainments protected from the weather. It was built of iron, glass and wood and again designed by the seaside engineers Kinipple & Jaffrey. The polygonal pavilion had a concert hall which could accommodate an audience of between 1,000 and 1,500, where concert parties, pierrots and other 'London artistes'



were hired to perform every week during the season. In 1933 it was converted to a hall with a funfair underneath, and most of the original structure still survives although now concealed by cladding.

Figure 8: The new concert pavilion built at the end of Clacton pier in 1893 as shown on the cover of a contemporary guidebook. Excursionists could land by steamer on one of the new berthing arms and then head straight for the entertainments on offer!

But the transformation of Clacton pier into a modern, commercialised, mass entertainment centre really occurred after 1922 when it was purchased by Ernest Kingsman. His first construction was the Blue Lagoon Dance Hall, doubled in size in 1925, reflecting the dance craze of the 1920s. Kingman's other pier investments in the 1920s included the Crystal Casino amusement arcade (1925) and Ocean Theatre (1928). Many national entertainers performed at the Ocean theatre, but its best-known entertainer was Clown Bertram who arrived in 1922 and stayed until the outbreak of the Second World War, ultimately having his own Children's Theatre built near the pier head. Another of Kingsman's major developments was the outdoor swimming pool (1932), being built on piles over the water; soon afterwards the entrance to the pier was revamped in the style of the age with a new Art Deco frontage (1933–4). By *c*.1933 the pier had around 90 staff and was reputed to have the widest range of amusements of any British pier, including skee ball (1923), electric toy taxis (1927), dodgem cars (1935) and the famous Steel Stella roller coaster (1938).

Sea defences, cliffs, and promenades

The key factor defining the nature of a resort seafront is the relationship between the land and sea. There evolved a gradual, and carefully managed, transition from man-made features such as hotels

and entertainment facilities, promenades, parks and gardens, through to the natural world in the form of the cliffs, beach and sea. The Tendring resorts were of the type where the coastline was mostly dominated by low cliffs providing highly desirable sea views. The developers therefore exploited these cliff top positions to construct the resort's hotels and housing, typically with the highest status properties facing the sea across a cliff-top greensward. The larger speculative schemes, such as Bagshaw's New Town at Dovercourt and Bruff's original scheme at Clacton, had integrated landscape designs to exploit their seafront positions. Over time the character of the open space between the resort proper and the beach and sea, where nature, leisure and entertainment could all be experienced to varying degrees, came to be a core attraction of each resort.

The first step in amending or taming the wild coastline generally came about through the building of sea defences. The hazards of erosion were especially prevalent along the Tendring coastline due to the vulnerability of the London clay cliffs. Defensive sea walls developed from timber and rubble or clay, to stone and ultimately to concrete, but all had an important impact in enabling the construction of new roads and promenades as a by-product. At one level promenades, esplanades and cliff walkways formed a new landscape in which residents and holidaymakers could interact with nature, either taking the air or resting, sitting and sunning themselves. At another level, however, participation in the teeming promenade crowds at a popular resort was a social and leisure activity in itself as well as an awe-inspiring spectacle.

In the first stages of resort development responsibility for such sea defence lay with individual private landowners and developers. Thus, at Walton the first sea defences were built in a piecemeal fashion and were not very effective, a situation exacerbated by the initial failure of Walton's Improvement Commission created by an Act of 1841. While by the late 1870s Walton's seafront had a fine promenade of brick and stone on the sea wall, constant repairs were needed and the first fully effective defences were built after the Walton Sea Defences Act of 1890. Walton's Parade and the later Esplanade became important elements of the resort's attraction. At Dovercourt about 1845 John Bagshaw had built his own fine residence Cliff House with a promenade against the sea. By 1851 a promenade was also built near Beacon Cliff as part of necessary sea defence work. When Bagshaw laid out the first part of this New Town further south-west he landscaped the slopes, including features such as a grotto and shelters, and completed Dovercourt's first Marine Parade, but the costs contributed to his bankruptcy in 1859. Towards the end of the nineteenth century it

was the local authority who completed the Marine Parade and improved the slopes and cliffs. In 1900 Harwich Corporation built a pavilion and shelter on the slopes and in 1901 a bandstand was added.

Figure 9: A view of the Marine Parade, Dovercourt, probably published around 1890, with the few strollers providing a rather genteel atmosphere. In the distance can be seen Bagshaw's Orwell Terrace and the Beacon Hill breakwater.

The first efforts to defend Clacton were also limited in nature, and eventually a Sea Defence Commission was created in 1880 which built the first large scale defences. However, ultimately the Commission found its rating powers insufficient and in 1906 responsibility for the resort's sea defence passed wholly to Clacton Urban District Council. In the meantime, the various stages of sea defences work at Clacton enabled new and longer promenades to be created. For example, the first stone sea wall built to protect East Clacton by the Commissioners in 1881–2 was topped by a 20-ft wide promenade stretching for about 2000ft east of the pier, while the cliffs above were drained and divided into an upper and lower slope separate by a walkway. About 1890 the seafront had been transformed by a 'delightful promenade' of nearly 1¼ miles, and the cliffs behind had again been sloped and planted with shrubs and a shelter had been built into them. After Clacton UDC took full control of Clacton's seafront in 1906 it became clear that more major works were needed west of the pier, and in 1911 a new concrete wall 1,870ft long was built at a cost of *c*.£15,000 and named

King's Parade in commemoration of the Coronation Day of George V. The need to continuously update sea defences gave opportunities for resorts to constantly renew and modernise their promenades; for example, in the interwar period Walton greatly improved its seafront through the construction of the Prince's Esplanade between the High Street and East Terrace which opened in 1930.

As at many resorts, above the Clacton cliffs was a greensward (later Marine Parade) which stretched some way back from the cliff edge before the line of hotel and housing development. Initially, most of the seafront was owned by Bruff and the trustees of C.G. Round, but as development progressed so many property sales divided it. By 1879 different sections of the Marine were owned by 16 parties (but chiefly the Land Co.); with no single authority responsible it remained unmade, being described as being in a 'disgraceful' state in 1887. It was not until Great Clacton Local Board bought the greensward from the Land Co. in 1893 that a more unified approach to 'beautifying' the seafront was possible, increased as Clacton UDC later extended its control along the coast. The Marine Parade roadway was made up soon afterwards, although initially the cliffs and greensward were left largely unimproved with just seats and shelters being provided by the Clacton Improvement Association. In 1896 there were complaints from visitors about the unfinished promenade and dilapidated cliffs, and Clacton UDC started to invest more heavily in transforming the seafront. Ornamental gardens were created in 1896, three ornamental shelters were built in 1897, a bandstand was erected on the East cliff in 1899, and lavatories were built at the west cliffs about the same time. Landscaping and planting were also undertaken on the cliffs, said by some to have removed its 'natural beauty'. The Reno Electric Stairway was constructed by a private company in 1902 to convey passengers up the cliff face from the west beach, but it proved uneconomic and had been replaced by 1910 with typical cliff terracing, cliff path and a shelter.

Figure 10: The Marine Parade and the west cliff at Clacton c.1900. The pier is on the right and facing it is the Royal Hotel on the left, with the greensward in between largely undeveloped except for the bandstand of 1899, a shelter and a flagpole. By this date there was also a pathway down the cliffs which had been planted with shrubs to beautify them.

Gardens and Music

Seafront gardens were to become an integral part of holiday resorts, but until the mid-19th century these had often been private and a fee charged for entry. In the late 1850s Peter Bruff's new resort focus at Walton used the site of the former Martello tower on the cliffs, above his Clifton Hotel and pier, as an ornamental garden. Another example is Dovercourt's Royal Cliff Gardens, a pleasure ground and bazaar in the grounds of the Cliff Hotel opened in 1882. A little later, the expanding role of local authorities saw the provision of such facilities for the general public as an important method of stimulating the local holiday industry. As first Local Boards, and then from 1895 Urban District Councils, took over and further developed seafronts, there were large investments in public parks and gardens. These had a distinctive character as they usually included far higher numbers of shelters, benches, kiosks, and toilets than a typical inland park. Examples of such gardens can be found all along the Tendring coast. In 1895 Clacton UDC obtained the undeveloped area of Lancaster, Albany, and Connaught Gardens from the Land Co., subject to a covenant that they were to remain as public open spaces. Frinton's Jubilee Gardens were laid out in 1897, and the council

laid out another public garden as the Crescent Garden in 1911. Also, in the latter year, the local authority converted the grounds of Dovercourt's Cliff House (subsequently demolished) into the public Cliff Park. Promenade gardens were also used as the position for major pieces of public sculpture and memorials, for example the prominently located war memorial statue and Garden of Remembrance at Clacton-on-Sea dedicated in 1924 (restored in 1999), and the memorial to Private Herbert George Columbine, VC, which originally stood in gardens on Walton's seafront (moved to All Saints' churchyard in 1970).

Figure 11: The Gardens of Remembrance and War Memorial laid out at Clacton in 1924, with the Royal Hotel behind. Compare to Image 4 for the typical transformation of seafront greenswards brought about by the creation of formal public gardens.

The significant impact that public works by a local authority could have on a seafront is exemplified by the extensive improvement and modernization undertaken by Clacton UDC just before the Great War. The council had a long term aim to buy and remove the Land Co's unsightly commercial shops in the Pier Gap, but the scheme was expanded to include landscaping the Gap, constructing a 'Venetian' or 'Rialto' bridge over it to link the West and East Marine Parades, and creating a new sunken band pavilion into which an earlier bandstand was moved. The improvements were formally opened by the sheriff of the City of London in May 1914. The council returned to work after the Great War, when in 1921 the whole of the West cliff was landscaped, with three shelters, two

sunken gardens, two further gardens and the Garden of Remembrance mentioned above. Clacton also witnessed a number of cliff improvement and landscaping schemes in the first half of the 1920s. Plans were also laid for new sea defences to protect the collapsing cliffs at the newly developing resort of Holland-on-Sea, incorporated into Clacton Urban District in 1934, but the outbreak of the Second World War delayed the schemes.

That the heavily developed seafronts of Walton, Dovercourt and especially Clacton were not an inevitable feature, and that there could be many variations, is amply demonstrated by Frinton-on-Sea. As well as enforcing the 'usual Frinton covenants', designed to keep Frinton as a quiet and respectable residential resort, the major landowner and developer R.P. Cooper had retained control of the seafront (known as the Greensward) and prevented any development there. In 1902 he transferred the Greensward to the town, but with restrictive covenants to secure it from future commercial development. Although this could be presented as an act of philanthropy, it was also noted by local opponents that the transfer relieved Cooper of the obligation of paying for sea defences to protect his investments, with the future cost being transferred to Frinton's ratepayers. Certainly, the cliffs at Frinton were by then under threat of erosion and in the following year the Frinton Sea Defences Act (1903) was passed. This led to the construction of sea wall a mile long in 1906, as well as 32 groynes to protect the beach, and a promenade costing a total of £32,000. The cliffs were also tidied up by being sloped, drained and turfed.

In 1904 a public Kiosk was opened at the west end of the Frinton's greensward, but it was not allowed to become a place for selling refreshments. Even picnics were actively discouraged. A distinctive round clock tower shelter opposite the Grand Hotel was built in 1921 but taken down in 1939 (a copy was erected in 2002). Some public events were allowed on the open space although they were chiefly restricted to church organisations and other respectable Frinton clubs and societies; anything with a commercial flavour was banned. Instead, Frinton's golf and tennis clubs were key attractions appealing to residents and high-class visitors, with the former's links being situated beyond the western end of the greensward. Overall, the carefully controlled, almost 'sacred', greensward became an important symbol of Frinton's tranquillity and respectability, so very different from the other resorts but just as 'constructed'.

Returning to the resorts with more mass appeal, the combination of music with promenading, whether along the seafront or in garden or park, was another important feature of leisure from the final decades of the 19th century through to the interwar period. Massed workplace or union excursions to resorts often brought along their own brass bands, but more regularly music was performed in gardens, pavilions and concert halls, and ultimately in the iconic ornamental seaside bandstand. At Dovercourt the former spa was the location of both indoor and outdoor concerts in the 1870s and 1880s, and promenade concerts were being held at the spa every Monday and Thursday in 1889. A seafront bandstand on the front was finally presented to the town by the Co-operative Society in 1901, which then played host to a wide variety of bands. There was also a bandstand in Cliff Park. One of the problems that such structures faced was that the audience could on occasion be exposed to inclement weather. This was addressed at Dovercourt by the construction of a pavilion or covered band enclosure of steel and glass positioned on the sea wall which opened in July 1929 (demolished 1972). New interest in dancing to music also made an early impact with the former Cliff Hotel pavilion at Dovercourt being converted into the Palais de Danse ballroom in 1924.

Figure 12: Well-dressed holidaymakers sunning themselves on the outer (seaward side) of Clacton's new sunken bandstand enclosure built in 1914 (the original Victorian bandstand was moved into the enclosure from the cliff top). Below, on the right, was a lower promenade on the sea defences. This promotional illustration was used for an LNER poster in the 1920s, and in this example was applied as the image on a pack of contemporary playing cards.

The chronology was slightly different at Clacton, although the influences and outcomes were not dissimilar. A similar ornamental bandstand was first built on Clacton's cliff top (Marine Parade East) in 1899, which housed a resident town band as well as visiting regimental bands. This was another municipal enterprise to make the seafront more attractive to visitors and of some commercial value; at first concerts were free but the seating was later fenced off and a charge levied. Clacton's 1905 Improvement Act allowed the council to take the bandstand under its direct control (rather than being let as a concession) and regulate the entertainment offered. In 1914, as part of the above-mentioned rejuvenation of the seafront, the bandstand was relocated to a new, much larger, sunken pavilion next to the pier. This had a very modern seaward-facing glass front to protect audiences from the wind. In that year the new bandstand hosted 14 regimental bands as well as vocalists providing 'high-class singing'. The bandstand continued to be a principal attraction during the 1920s, but popular interest in military bands gradually waned to be replaced by jazz and dance music. The pavilion was therefore redeveloped yet again in 1936, with a dance floor for up to 700 dancers.

Entertainment Centres

As the first resorts were designed to appeal to the tastes of late Georgian and early Victorian upper- and middle-class audiences, the leisure facilities offered beyond bathing were distinctly genteel and respectable, many of them derived from inland spa culture. Examples included assembly rooms, small theatres, circulating libraries and reading rooms. Such activities continued to be popular among some visitors in the late 19th century; for example, Ubsdell's circulating library at Clacton had 1,000 volumes in 1893. But by the later Victorian period the developers were also providing larger and more up to date venues near the seafront. Peter Bruff placed a concert hall at the heart of both his new ventures at Walton (the Clifton Music Hall and Hotel) and at Clacton (The Public Hall). To use the latter as an example, the hall was built by The Clacton-on-Sea Public Hall and Library Co. Ltd (incorporated 1877) not far from the seafront. It could seat an audience of about 400, but also retained a library, and separate assembly, reading and retiring rooms. In the late 19th

century it played host to regular dramatic performances, concerts, and evening lectures of a respectable character, as well as more popular entertainers such as comedians and impersonators.

In the following decades the seafronts and marine parades themselves became more prominent locations for major places of entertainment. The new facilities were more often than not private ventures rather than municipal enterprises, and formed part of a change in the nature of the seafront from a place for a gentle stroll over natural cliffs to a venue for music, more formalised gardens, and entertainment. Often these new large facilities were a little way from the core of the original resorts, where the prime seafront locations had already been occupied by hotels and high-status housing. In the late 1880s, J.T. Rigg, a Chingford caterer, extended his entertainment business from the outskirts of London to the Tendring coastline. In 1885 he opened Rigg's Retreat at West Clacton, a complex of buildings set in gardens and sports grounds some 3½ acres in extent. Rigg's business specialised in entertaining and feeding large numbers of excursionists, the main hall being able to accommodate 1,000 diners at a sitting. The Retreat also served as a winter garden, with skating rink, dancing platform, bandstand and an orchestra. Six years after opening it claimed to have over 100,000 visitors in a year. His Clacton venture having proved profitable, Rigg opened another at Dovercourt *c.*1890. That Riggs' Retreat (later known as Gray's Temperance Retreat), also had large catering facilities as well as popular entertainments such as a helter skelter. Both venues were especially popular with school and temperance excursion parties.

Figure 13: Rigg's Retreat at Dovercourt in the late 19th century. Note the helter skelter, popular with children, on the left and the small sailing boats in the foreground.

Another large-scale commercial venture was Clacton's 'Palace by the Sea', again built along Marine Parade West, which opened in 1906. The building was typical of many late Victorian resort buildings in the incorporation of oriental influences in its architecture. The Palace and its grounds contained a large galleried theatre, restaurants, bandstand, helter skelter, 'madeira' promenade, illuminated fountains and fish pond. A noted feature, reproduced on many postcards of the time were a series of set-piece exhibitions including reconstructions (or perhaps, more accurately, 'visualisations') of places from around the globe. They included 'Tibet', a 'Neapolitan Pergola', a 'Japanese Pagoda' and the 'Blue Caves of Capri'. Despite its grandiose vision the Palace was not a commercial success, and although a relaunch in 1909 claimed to have attracted 120,000 visitors it was converted shortly afterwards into a skating rink. Much later, in 1932, it was converted again this time into a cinema, although most new cinemas were built away from the coast within the resort towns themselves.

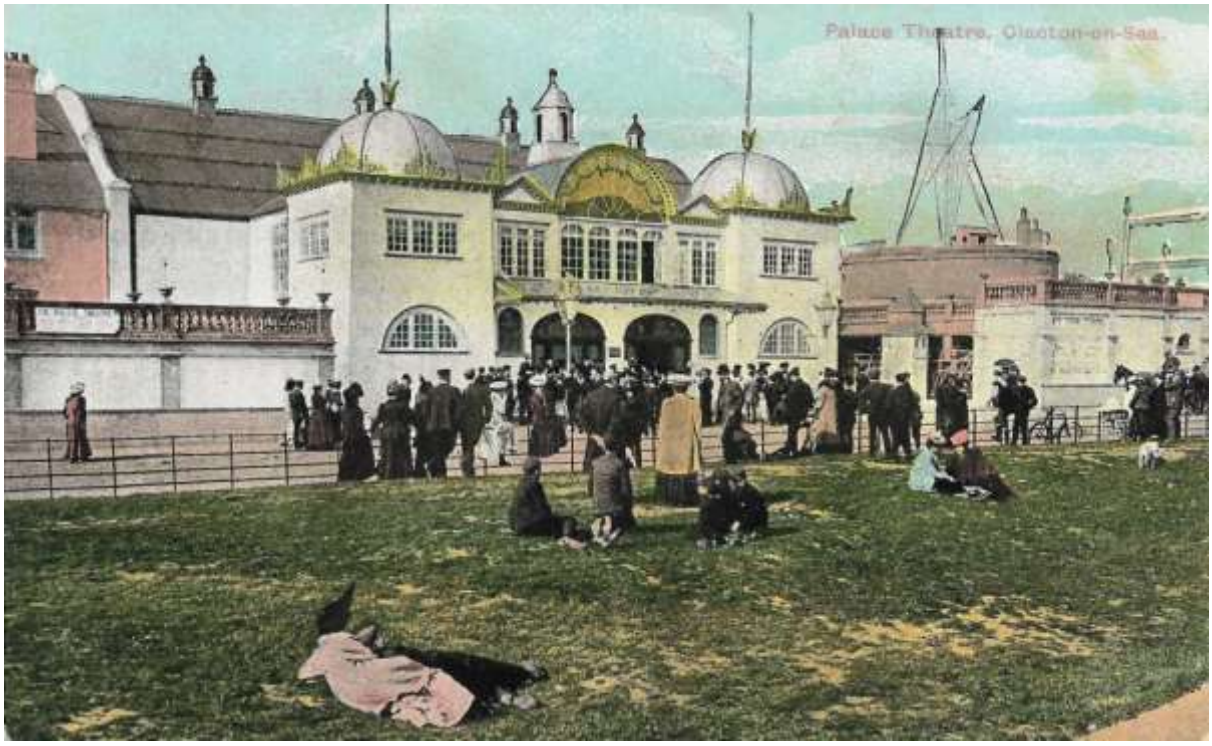


Figure 14: The Palace by the Sea at Clacton depicted on a postcard of about 1910. Its location can be judged by the Martello tower which can be seen in the background.

One problem faced by such attractions was the limited length of the holidays, and the idea of extending the season into the winter months began to attract the attention of the holiday industry and the municipal authorities towards the end of the 19th century. Although 'Winter Gardens' were typically constructed as enormous prefabricated glasshouses they were in reality just another form of indoor entertainment centre or pavilion providing a range of leisure facilities. In 1898 Clacton UDC proposed erecting Winter Gardens on its West Cliff to increase the popularity of the resort beyond the summer season, and the facility opened by 1901 being run with the assistance of the Winter Garden Association (formerly Clacton Recreation and Development Association). The venue had both large and small halls which could be used for games, dining, dancing, concerts, rollerskating, gymnastics and other activities. The Coast Development Co. followed in the same direction at Walton at exactly the same time, developing the former Round Gardens into Winter Gardens in 1899–1900.

A final and very significant feature of the seafronts in the first half of the 20th century was the expansion of new types of leisure facilities at the extremities of resorts, some of which have already been mentioned above. During the 1920s the West Clacton estate at the far western end of Clacton's seafront was developed into an outdoor leisure complex with a caravan park, miniature golf courses, boating lakes and cafés. In 1936 the estate was bought by Billy Butlin to become a holiday camp or 'Lido'. In similar fashion, in 1937 Harry Warner opened the Dovercourt Bay Holiday Camps & Lido at Dovercourt. These new forms of holidaymaking pioneered the 'package holiday' accommodation, meals and entertainment all on the same site at a reasonable cost. They were also presented in a distinctly 'modern' format both in their planning and architecture and also in the facilities and entertainments that they provided with an important emphasis on their large swimming pools (hence 'lido'). Although interrupted by the Second World War, these new developments were a major force in setting the tone of the resorts and their seafronts in the 1950s and 1960s.

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