Discovery, Innovation and Science in the Historic Environment

RESEARCH

Historic England

ISSUE 13 • TOURISM AND SEASIDE SPECIAL 2019

Welcome...

...to this Tourism and Seaside special issue of Research magazine.

As we swelter in record summer temperatures this year and people are flocking to our seaside towns and beaches in huge numbers it seems especially fitting to be introducing this special issue on tourism and the seaside.

Historic England and its predecessor organisations have been researching and publishing on England's seaside heritage for the last 15 years. Led by Allan Brodie, Senior Architectural Investigator, with input from many other colleagues, this work has transformed our understanding of that much-loved component of our national heritage, including the seaside's 'shop window': the seafront.

More recently our research has sought to locate the heritage of the seaside within the wider heritage of tourism in the UK which makes an ever greater contribution to our economy as well as to the enjoyment and wellbeing of domestic and international visitors alike. This improved appreciation of the importance of heritage to our wider tourism offer is important, as understanding how places developed, their character and significance is a vital first step in shaping change that results in attractive, vibrant and sustainable places in which to live, work and to visit. Seaside towns face particular challenges including a lack of investment and the seasonal nature of their local economies. This is recognised by Government and has resulted in an array of funding streams such as the £45 million Sea Change Programme and policy initiatives targeted at seaside towns.

Historic England has been playing its part with the creation of Heritage Action Zones in Weston-super-Mare and Ramsgate. The aim of HAZs is to unlock the economic potential of heritage sites in order to breathe new life into places. In this issue we feature two articles on our research in Weston – focusing on architectural investigation and the perspective gained from aerial photography. We provide a preview of historic area assessment work in Ramsgate, the full results of which will be published next year. We also include a guide to the rich holdings on heritage tourist sites and the seaside in the Historic England Archive, an indispensable resource for those seeking to learn more about where they live.

As is clear from the articles in this issue our seaside towns exhibit a long history of constant change and adaptation. Some, most notably Margate, have begun to reinvent themselves, providing a focus for cultural activity and iconic new buildings that alongside revitalised heritage buildings attract new visitors and provide a much-needed economic boost. They are to be celebrated as fascinating and remarkably resilient places which with concerted action can develop and thrive for many years to come.

John Cattell
National Head of Research.

Front cover image: A row of classic beach huts at Southwold, Suffolk. © Historic England Archive, Andrew Tryner, K030616

We are the **public body** that **helps people care for, enjoy** and **celebrate** England's **spectacular historic environment**

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Grasmere, the picturesque village beloved by William Wordsworth. © Historic England, Bob Skingle, DP056058

Tourism research in Historic England

Heritage is a key part of England’s tourism industry, whether it is Buckingham Palace, the Brontë Parsonage Museum at Haworth or a picturesque village of thatched cottages beside a slow-moving stream.

The beach at Weymouth on a sunny day. © Historic England, James O Davies, DP054532

At a time when some traditional businesses are contracting, our cultural and creative industries are showing robust growth, an achievement to be celebrated and built on.

Growing awareness of tourism heritage

Historic England, and its predecessor organisations English Heritage and ultimately the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (RCHME), have been in the tourism business since 1908, albeit perhaps sometimes unknowingly and indirectly. In recent years, Historic England has become more directly involved, partly due to changing ideas about what makes up our heritage. A century ago, this was restricted to studying buildings predating the early 18th century, and therefore the entire history of our leisure and tourism industry and its heritage lay beyond the scope of its research.

Fast forward to the present day and we are now much more conscious of the serious business of fun, and the legacy that it has left behind.

It was in this context that English Heritage undertook a study of the evolution of the seaside resort,

we are now much more conscious of the serious business of fun, and the legacy that it has left behind

culminating in the publication of *England's Seaside Resorts* in 2007, as well as books on Margate (2007), Weymouth (2008) and Blackpool (2013), and a book celebrating the wealth of our photographic archive in 2005. In 2018, a study on *The Seafront* was published (see pages 22-31), concentrating on the area between the end of the pier and the first line of buildings. This holistic study spans history, architecture, heritage, geography and engineering to try to understand and celebrate this complex space for the first time. Alongside, and stemming from work on the seaside, Allan Brodie has been exploring other aspects of tourism, including England's rich spa heritage. The culmination of his work was the publication in 2019, of *Tourism and the Changing Face of the British Isles* (see pages 12-21). >>

Above: The Turner Contemporary Gallery at Margate, a popular destination beside the harbour. © Historic England, Peter Williams, DP139572

This research is not simply an end in itself...

Research with real impact

This research is not simply an end in itself; by celebrating and explaining the seaside resort and tourism heritage, it aims to influence decision-making, nationally and locally.

Raising the profile of this heritage has undoubtedly contributed to a greater willingness to recognise the problems facing seaside towns and the wealth of opportunities that they offer. Coinciding with the publication of *England's Seaside Resorts* and an advice document *Regeneration in Historic Coastal Towns* in 2007, the government announced a three-year *Sea Change* fund of £45 million to be spent on cultural and heritage projects to stimulate regeneration in seaside resorts. And during the subsequent decade, other streams of funding have been earmarked for seaside resorts and earlier this year the House of Lords published a report on *The Future of Seaside Towns*.

Studies of individual resorts have also had direct local impacts. The first of these in Margate in 2007 contributed to a strategy of promoting arts- and culture-based regeneration in the town to coincide with the creation of the Turner Contemporary Gallery. Weymouth in 2008 was a response to the forthcoming Olympics, as it was to host the sailing events, and the research work on Blackpool was an attempt to highlight its rich heritage at a time when the town, one of England's most deprived, was in the midst of major regeneration initiatives.

In 2005-6, the project on Margate brought together members of English Heritage's research teams, regional planning staff and members of the local authority to work to understand the town, its issues and how to direct money and effort towards regenerating the town. This project was one of the inspirations for Historic England's Heritage Action Zone initiative launched in March 2017 and therefore it is fitting that two of the first ten heritage action zones were at seaside resorts, Weston-super-Mare and Ramsgate. (https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/breathe-new-life-into-old-places-through-heritage-action-zones/) Concerted research has taken place at both, yielding improved heritage protection by reorganising conservation areas, establishing new listings and feeding into decisions about targeting funding. Another outcome of both these projects are Informed Conservation volumes, the book on Weston having been published in 2019 (see pages 32-41), with the work on Ramsgate to follow next year. (see pages 50-59)

Making a difference

Historic England's research is of the highest quality, regarded with great esteem, nationally and internationally. However, what is equally important is that it makes a difference to the places that it is studying, describing and celebrating.

Its work on England's seaside resorts has also contributed to enriching the Historic England Archive and will therefore also continue to serve as a celebration of England's rich tourism heritage over the coming century ■

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The author

Allan Brodie, FSA
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Allan investigates buildings ranging from Roman forts through medieval churches and Georgian prisons to Art Deco airport terminals. He is a leading historian of tourism in Britain and has published many books and papers on the subject.

Further information

Brodie, A 2019 *Tourism and the changing face of Britain*. Swindon: Historic England https://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/books/id/52287/

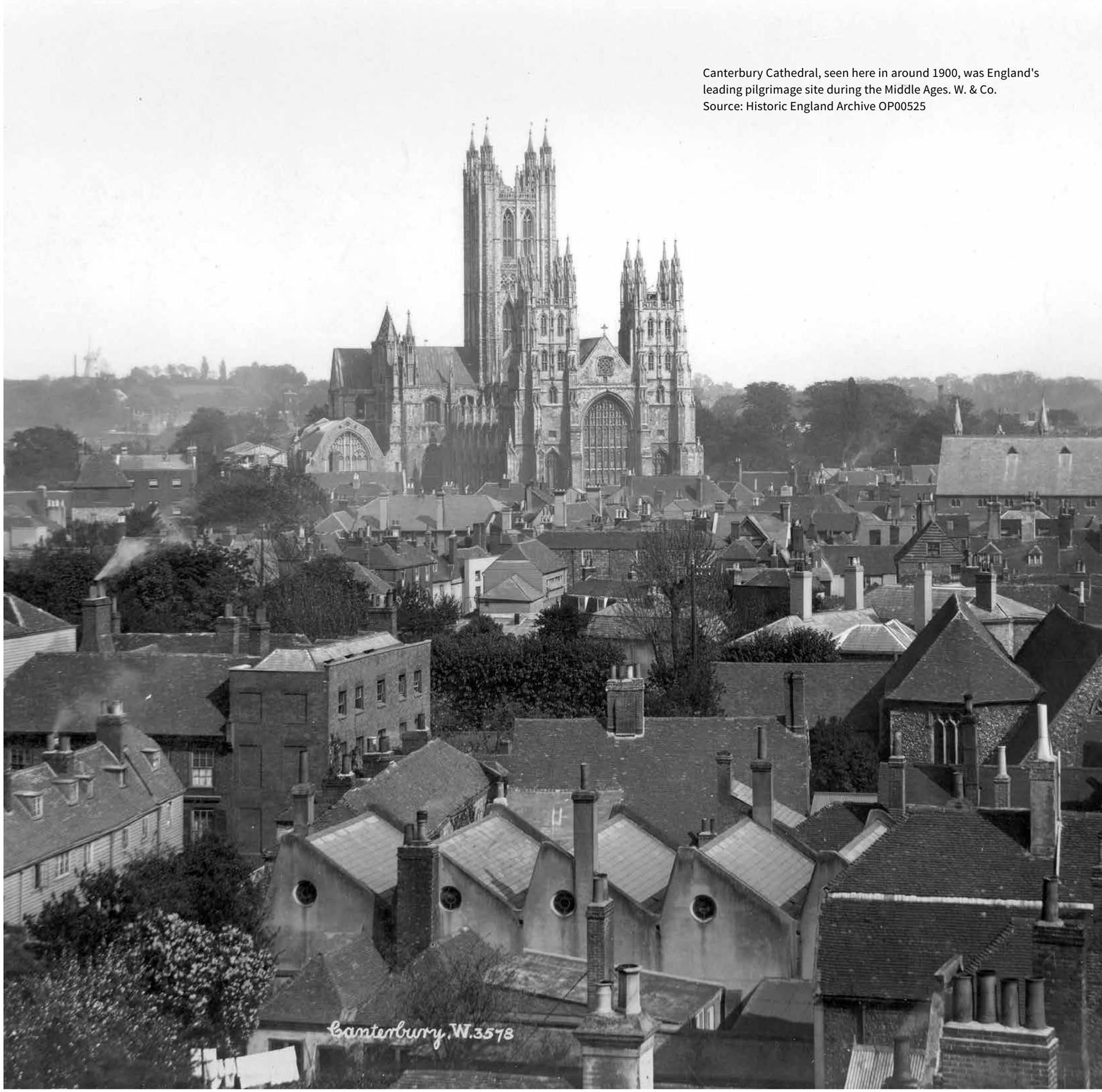
The serious business of holidaymaking

How tourism helped to transform the British Isles.

Historic sites ranging from Blackpool Tower and Buckingham Palace to Stonehenge and a cottage in the Cotswolds all play a part in one of Britain's most important industries, namely tourism. A new book published by Historic England about tourism in the British Isles describes some of the places that have welcomed visitors over the centuries and in the process were transformed by their presence.

The origins of tourism

Tourism in Britain can trace its origins back to the Middle Ages, when Britons travelled to pilgrimage sites such as Canterbury and Walsingham. Travel was necessary to rule the country and to manage the estates of religious orders. A by-product of this was some inquisitive tourism, the most famous example being Gerald of Wales (about 1146-1223), who travelled on royal and church business in Wales and Ireland during the 1180s. His curiosity led him to visit churches and castles, but he also described the landscape, natural wonders and the habits and behaviours of the people he observed or was told about. William Worcestre (about 1415-1485) was an antiquarian with an interest in history, topography, geography and botany. However, during his travels around England he was principally concerned with architecture and was able to draw and describe complicated mouldings using detailed technical terms, suggesting a professional interest. >>



Canterbury Cathedral, seen here in around 1900, was England's leading pilgrimage site during the Middle Ages. W. & Co.
Source: Historic England Archive OP00525

Georgian holidaymaking

The Reformation largely ended pilgrimage to religious sites and holy wells, but in place of spiritual healing came an interest in physical well-being through using mineral waters. During the 16th century, Bath, Buxton, Knaresborough and Harrogate were the main destinations, but during the 17th century a growing interest in spa waters led to the development of new sources, including at Epsom, Tunbridge Wells and Scarborough. By the 18th century Bath was being transformed into the spectacular Georgian city we enjoy today, with public and commercial buildings catering for visitors and high status residential developments to house those coming to take the waters. Smaller settlements such as Buxton, Cheltenham and Harrogate were also being embellished with grand terraces and crescents to accommodate visitors to their spas, assembly rooms and theatres.

The spa town served as a model for the initial development of seaside resorts. By the early 18th century medical writers and scientists had recognised that the sea could act as Britain's bath and soon ordinary, if usually wealthy people were heading to the coast to wash away their ills. Scarborough already had the infrastructure of leisure in place as it had welcomed tourists to its spa since the 17th century, but other coastal towns, including Brighton, Hastings, Margate and Weymouth, had more basic facilities serving their resident population. Nevertheless, these proved sufficient initially to attract growing numbers of wealthy people to the seaside, ostensibly due to its health benefits but also because it was becoming the fashionable thing to do.

Where aristocrats led, royalty followed; George III and his son, the Prince Regent, both became seasonal residents, at Weymouth and Brighton, respectively by the end of the 18th century. The humble houses once endured by early sea bathers seeking lodgings were replaced in these and other resorts by grand terraces and crescents, as well as the first hotels. Visitors expected to be entertained as well as accommodated, and as in spa towns a range of increasingly large and opulent assembly rooms, theatres and circulating libraries were built, a testimony to the popularity of the seaside.

By the early 19th century a limited form of mass tourism was beginning to appear as a result of more affordable travel

Transport and tourism

By the early 19th century a limited form of mass tourism was beginning to appear as a result of more affordable travel. This was initially by travelling on steamers to towns reached by heading down the Thames such as Margate and Ramsgate, as well as 'doon the watter' from the fast-growing city of Glasgow to resorts in the Clyde Estuary. With the coming of the railways, Britain's seaside resorts came to be open eventually to almost everyone. Affordable rail travel, in combination with increasing free time and emerging paid leave, would stimulate both the growth of seaside resorts and access to sports, the early development of professional football particularly benefiting from the new circumstances. Technological improvements in transport went alongside new ways of marketing and packaging tourism. The modern package holiday owed its existence to pioneering ideas employed by steamship >>

Left: The Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells where Georgian visitors could enjoy drinking the water and visiting the assembly rooms and luxury shops. © Historic England Archive, Peter Williams, AA011846

Above: Hesketh Crescent at Torquay, built in 1845-8, was the brainchild of the local landowner Sir Lawrence Palk. © Historic England Archive, Mike Hesketh-Roberts, DP001355

operators, as well as most famously by Thomas Cook. Where steamers and trains had opened up towns to tourists, the bicycle, the motor car, the charabanc and the bus, increased access to the countryside. Towns faced new pressures to adapt to forms of transport that did not concentrate visitors near railway stations. Instead they spread tourists throughout a settlement, prompting suburban and seafront development towards the edges of existing towns. The popularity of the car soon led to congestion in resorts and the notorious bank holiday traffic jams on roads heading to the coast. During the interwar years it also led to the provision of the first purpose-built parking facilities.

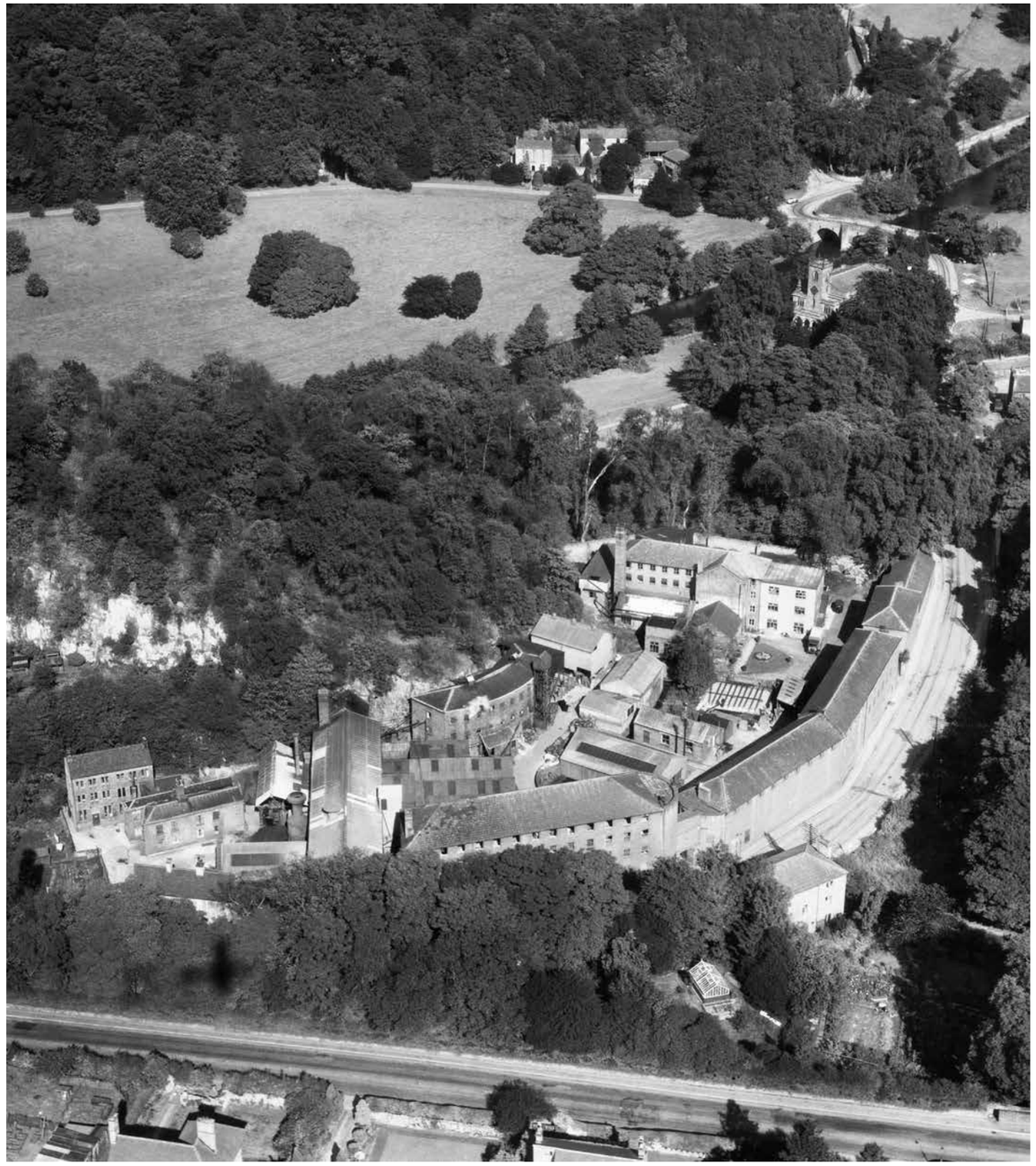
The popularity of the car soon led to congestion in resorts and the notorious bank holiday traffic jams on roads heading to the coast

Discovering Britain

Improved transport and increasing amounts of leisure time encouraged growing numbers of tourists to discover their home country, informed by affordable, portable guidebooks. Growing numbers of intrepid travellers who once admired the nation's agricultural achievements, by the 18th century they increasingly went in search of romantic, wild landscapes and picturesque natural beauty. These ranged from the Lake District of England and the Highlands of Scotland to curiosities such as the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland and Fingal's Cave off the Scottish coast. A growing number of travellers also went in search of ancient and modern, man-made sites, ranging from Stonehenge and Avebury to contemporary architectural gems, such as Blenheim Palace and Chatsworth House. >>

Above right: The Talbot Road car park at Blackpool was constructed above a ground floor bus station in 1937-9. © Historic England Archive, Steve Cole, DP119494

Right: The harbour at Hugh Town on St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly connects the archipelago to the mainland via the *Scillonian III*, which is moored by the quay. © Historic England Archive, Mike Hesketh-Roberts, DP085176



People who might be intrigued by castles and ruined abbeys could equally be found recording visits in their diaries to the latest country houses, industrial sites and even to military barracks and prisons, an early manifestation of 'dark' tourism reflecting an interest in how the nation was changing in a period of rapid development. Initially these visits were on an ad hoc basis, the site being visited through negotiation with a prison governor, the gardener or the housekeeper. However, by the 19th century increasingly formal arrangements were being put in place for the growing number of visitors, and by the end of the century the National Trust had begun to collect sites to preserve them as well as to show them off. The Trust's first purchase was a clifftop site in Wales in 1895, and in 1896 it bought its first house, Alfriston Clergy House in Sussex. >>

Left: This 1947 aerial photograph shows the rural setting of Sir Richard Arkwright's highly influential Cromford Mill in the Derwent valley, Derbyshire. © Historic England (Aerofilms Collection) EAW011494

Below right: The Inner Bailey of Dover Castle has buildings that were used as barracks. The central Great Tower housed French prisoners of war during the mid-18th century. © Historic England Archive, Damian Grady, NMR 27304/036

Above top: Blackpool Tower was Britain's tallest building when it opened in 1894. Soon after, the Alhambra opened beside it, seen to the left of the tower in this view of around 1900. W. & Co. Source: Historic England Archive OP00480

Above bottom: Volk's Electric Railway in Brighton, the oldest electrically- driven railway service still in use in the world, got its power from the third rail running between the main rails. © Historic England Archive, Peter Williams, DP153079

The seaside for everybody

Although many people roamed the countryside or travelled to visit places of interest and attractions in towns and cities, the vast majority of people's holiday time was spent at seaside resorts. By the early 20th century, seaside holidays began to come within the reach of almost everybody and to cater for this demand, huge entertainment complexes and new forms of accommodation became necessary, particularly through the provision of holiday camps. Resorts exploited new technology and new materials to create buildings such as winter gardens, cinemas and rollercoasters.

Tourism today

Since the 1970s the number of people taking their main holidays at British seaside resorts has decreased. The reason most often cited is that holidaymakers deserted Britain and fled to the sunnier shores of the Mediterranean. This is undoubtedly true, but other reasons include the growing complexity of people's lives, leading to greater flexibility in how they spend their disposable income on a growing range of activities and leisure pursuits: People can now visit theme parks or heritage sites, enjoy shopping trips, or be pampered at spa hotels. They may also attend sporting events, go on a retreat or perhaps try a parachute jump.

Britain has something to offer for every taste. Now the problem is often how to cater for huge numbers of visitors without ruining the very thing they came to see ■

The author

Allan Brodie, FSA
Senior Architectural Investigator with Historic England.

Allan investigates buildings ranging from Roman forts through medieval churches and Georgian prisons to Art Deco airport terminals. He is a leading historian of tourism in Britain and has published many books and papers on the subject.

Further information

Brodie, A 2019 *Tourism and the changing face of Britain*. Swindon: Historic England https://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/books/id/52287/

Above: Shoreham Airport Terminal Building, East Sussex, built in 1936 using contemporary Art Deco forms, brought tourists to the south coast but also took them abroad. © Historic England Archive, James O. Davies, DP054459

The seafront: exploring the seaside's shop window

Millions of people will visit the seafront of a favourite resort this summer, where they can relax, play and perhaps over indulge.

A new Historic England book discusses the familiar buildings, activities and sights of seaside resorts, but it also explores the mundane, the unnoticed and the unseen dimensions of the seafront, a space that is both familiar, yet also waiting to be discovered.

Sea bathing

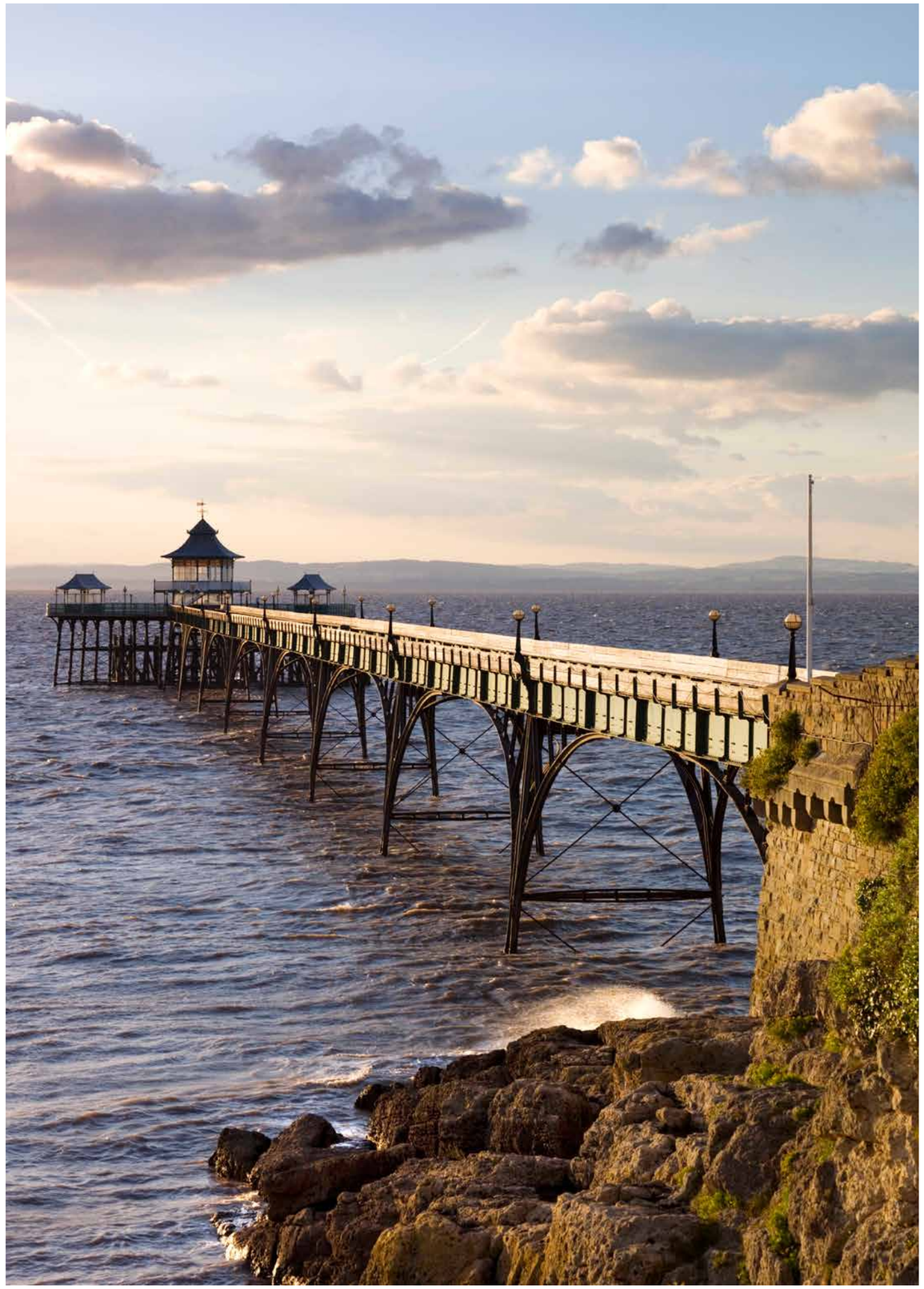
Although we were often taught that the Victorians invented the train, and set out to create the seaside resort, in fact our love affair with the seaside originated a century earlier. During the early 18th century Scarborough was at the forefront of the new fad of sea bathing, alongside Margate, Brighton and Liverpool. The initial reason for going to the seaside was in search of improved health by sea bathing, taking the air and drinking sea water, much as people were already doing when using mineral waters at spas, including the one on the seafront at Scarborough.

To make money from the sea, doctors and local businessmen came up with the bathing machine. This was a wooden cart with a canopy behind to hide bathers from public view; it was dragged into the sea while the bather was undressing. This remained the most common way to gain access to the sea for almost 200 years, but over time the etiquette of sea bathing changed as did the facilities. During the 18th century many seaside resorts also offered seafront bathhouses, which contained small individual baths. The oldest survival at the English seaside is Quebec House near the harbour in Portsmouth, which dates from 1754. By the late 19th century many resorts also provided swimming pools and by the mid-20th century lidos and open-air pools were commonplace at seaside resorts, where sitting around enjoying the sun, relaxing and being seen was as important as trying to improve one's health by bathing in the sea. >>

Top: The Royal Sea Bathing Hospital at Margate, Kent, closed in July 1996, after 200 years of caring for patients, who benefited from spending time at the seaside. © Historic England Archive, Patricia Payne, DP219033

Although we were often taught that the Victorians invented the train, and set out to create the seaside resort, in fact our love affair with the seaside originated a century earlier

Above: A row of classic beach huts at Southwold, Suffolk, in a wonderfully haphazard kaleidoscope of colours, an ideal place to sit and enjoy the health giving benefits of the seaside. © Historic England Archive, Andrew Tryner, K030616



Left: Clevedon Pier, North Somerset, a masterpiece of elegant Victorian engineering, and a popular attraction for visitors to the seafront. © Historic England Archive, James O. Davies, DP081827

Tourism on the seafront

Scientists and doctors recommended that sea bathing was most effective if it was carried out during the morning, but this left the rest of the day free for people to enjoy themselves. In the 18th century the social life of seaside resorts was based largely around circulating libraries, assembly rooms and the theatre. By the 19th century pleasure piers and the music hall had been added to the mix and by the early 20th century new technologies were allowing visitors to enjoy cinemas and hair-raising rides on rollercoasters. While sea bathing inevitably had to take place on the seafront, entertainment facilities were also focused there as this was where most visitors congregated.

The advent of mass tourism during the 19th century, after the arrival of steamers and particularly as the railway network grew, saw seaside resorts adapting and expanding to cater for hundreds of thousands and, in the case of the largest resorts, millions of visitors every year. The modest-sized seafront facilities of 1800 had been almost totally transformed by 1900. The polite, intimate and sociable Georgian entertainment facilities were replaced, or in some cases dwarfed by, industrial-scale entertainment complexes such as winter gardens and the literal pinnacle of the English seaside, the Blackpool Tower complex.

As well as being the focus for health and entertainment, the seafront was a place to stay and live. Lining it in the 18th century would have been a series of small, haphazard houses, the homes of local people, fishermen and seamen. These were gradually superseded by larger houses in which holidaymakers took lodging rooms, as well as by hotels and flats, while at the periphery of resorts, holiday camps and caravan sites sprang up. >>

In the 18th century the social life of seaside resorts was based largely around circulating libraries, assembly rooms and the theatre

Right: Marine Court at St Leonards, Sussex, with its sleek 1930s lines evocative of an oceangoing liner, visually crashes into the adjacent Regency terrace. © Historic England Archive, Derek Kendall, DP018000

The practical life of the seafront

Seafronts have to be practical places, allowing access to the sea yet at the same time preventing the sea from engulfing the resort town behind. At Blackpool, in the central part of the resort, a stepped form of sea defence with projecting headlands was chosen to replace the town's outdated Victorian seawalls. The steps reduce the energy of the waves while also providing a great place to sit and look out to sea. Contoured earth banks and long concrete seats seek to prevent most overflows from the sea reaching the new tramlines.

The practical dimension of the seafront also includes everyday things like the provision of sewers, electricity, roads, a tram line in the case of Blackpool and sometimes a railway line to bring visitors to and from the resort. To cater for tourists, a wide range of mundane facilities have to be provided, including benches, bins and toilets. Seafront shelters offer welcome respite from rain and wind and it was in one such shelter at Margate in 1921 that while recuperating, TS Eliot wrote lines for his epic poem 'The Waste Land'.

Seafronts have to be practical places, allowing access to the sea yet at the same time preventing the sea from engulfing the resort town behind

While we primarily think of the seafront as a place for leisure and pleasure, it also has to work for a coastal town's wider economy, and not just its tourist economy. For instance, it has to support fishing through the provision of lifeboat stations, lighthouses and coastguard stations. As well as being the base for beach-launched fishing fleets, seafronts are sometimes the home to large harbours, working facilities that also serve as colourful destinations for a tourist stroll. >>

Above: The stepped sea defences at Blackpool and new promenade protect the town, but also entertain visitors with accompanying giant blades of 'dune grass' © Historic England Archive, Steve Cole, DP154540.

Right: The cargo ship *Manaav Star* aground at Jurys Gap near Camber, East Sussex, in September 2004, successfully refloated later in the month. © Historic England Archive, Peter Williams, MF99/0789/00024

The seafront is also key to the identity of a seaside resort and it is often the town's main civic space

Over the centuries, easy access to the sea was a vulnerability at times of war. Many seafronts are still home to military defences created to protect the country from continental foes, ranging from the substantial fortifications constructed by Henry VIII, through Martello Towers designed to deter Napoleon, and Second World War pillboxes.

A civic and cultural space

The seafront is also key to the identity of a seaside resort and it is often the town's main civic space. It offers an area for events and provides a home for memorials to people lost at sea and commemorations of the townspeople who gave their lives to defend this country. At St Annes in Lancashire, a tribute depicting a lifeboatman looking out to sea was placed in the gardens on the seafront close to the pier, while on the seafront at Weymouth there is a series of war memorials, including the town's main Cenotaph.

In recent years artists have found the seafront to be an inspiring space for new and challenging artworks. There is perhaps none more iconic than Antony Gormley's atmospheric 'Another Place', on the beach at Crosby, where over 300 years ago the local landowner Nicholas Blundell and his family first bathed in the sea, one of the earliest recorded examples of this in England. Most iconic, unless you include Eric Morecambe's statue at Morecambe, a site of modern pilgrimage. >>

Above left: The clifftop, First World War lookout tower at 47a Percy Gardens in Tynemouth, was built in about 1916 to watch for approaching enemy ships. © Historic England Archive, Alun Bull, DP169954

Above right: The mysterious cast figures by the sculptor Antony Gormley in the sea at Crosby Sands, Merseyside, were installed in 2005. © Historic England Archive, James O. Davies, DP034504

Right: The irresistible Eric Morecambe at Morecambe, Lancashire. © Historic England Archive, Alun Bull, DP17507

The seafront today

The original natural form of the seafront has been transformed by the construction of defences to deal with rising sea levels and storms resulting from climate change. In the wake of enlarged sea defences are coming new facilities and novel attractions. In some resorts beaches have been replenished with sand and some have new and rejuvenated gardens that discretely incorporate walls to defend the town behind from the sea.

The seafront is complex and expensive to create and maintain; it has to meet many varied demands and it has to cater for many different types of user and customer. To do this, it has had to evolve constantly over the past 200 to 300 years as the tastes and the interests of visitors have changed. It has had to adapt to new technologies, and while this has undoubtedly been a challenge, it has also provided new reasons for visiting the seaside ■

The author

Allan Brodie, FSA
Senior Architectural Investigator with Historic England.

Allan has rightly earned the title of being a 'beach boy', having investigated seaside resorts for almost 20 years, leading to the publication of seven books and numerous papers on the subject.

Further information

Brodie, A 2018 *The Seafront*. Swindon: Historic England https://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/books/id/52254/

Above right: A girl looks at the sea at Newquay, Cornwall, where the damaged defences in front of the aquarium were quickly patched after the storms in 2014. © Historic England Archive, James O. Davies, DP196919

The seafront is complex and expensive to create and maintain; it has to meet many varied demands and it has to cater for many different types of user and customer

Weston from the air, looking north towards Worlebury Hillfort.
© Historic England Archive, Damian Grady, NMR 33066/023

Weston-super-Mare: a Victorian seaside town

New historical research and an Informed Conservation book are underpinning the work of the Heritage Action Zone.

In March 2017 Historic England selected Weston-super-Mare as one of the first ten Heritage Action Zones, a new initiative designed to reinvigorate historic places. Since then we have been working in partnership with North Somerset Council and other organisations to stimulate growth in a way that is sustainable and sympathetic to the historic fabric of the town.

As part of the first phase of work, Historic England investigators carried out an historic area assessment of Weston to highlight its special character and distinctiveness. This research has resulted in the publication of *Weston-super-Mare: The town and its seaside heritage*, a volume in Historic England's Informed Conservation series. While the fact that Weston largely originated during the 19th century is well known, the book hopes to raise awareness and enhance the public's appreciation of what is distinctive about the town's Victorian buildings.

The early resort

During the 19th century Weston grew from a small coastal village into a well- established seaside resort. Early Weston was a cluster of cottages around 'the Street' (later the High Street), with the medieval parish church slightly further north on higher ground. During the second half of the 18th century the settlement's potential for curative seaside holidays began to be noticed and the first seaside cottages were built, including the Revd William Leeves's thatched cottage of about 1791. The first hotel, the Royal, was built between 1807 or 1808 and 1810, and despite a faltering start proved to be a timely investment.

Shortly afterwards, the development of the fledgling resort was initiated by Richard Parsley and William Cox, the main proposers of the Enclosure Act of 1810. As a result of the ensuing auctions of development sites, new roads, such as Oxford Street and Carlton Street, were laid out, and the first seaside villas were built. Sea bathing was undertaken either by means of bathing machines during high tide, or at a ladies-only location at Anchor Head, and from 1820 in a bathhouse and pool on Knightstone Island.[3] The latter location became synonymous with bathing, particularly during the ownership of the Quaker physicians Dr Edward Long Fox and his son, who built the surviving bathhouse in 1832. Other key institutions of a typical Georgian resort followed, such as circulating libraries, reading rooms and assembly rooms.

The Victorian boom

These early developments were accelerated by the arrival of the railway in 1841. This was a branch line of the Bristol and Exeter Railway, initially with horse-drawn carriages. Weston's new accessibility vastly increased the number of visitors; in 1844, 23,000 were estimated to have arrived by rail. The railway facilitated the first organised excursions, such as the day trip made in June 1849 by 1,600 workers from the Great Western Cotton Factory in Bristol.

The permanent population also increased, particularly during the 1840s and 1850s, when the total number of residents nearly doubled each decade. By the end of the century, the number of residents had increased almost ten-fold, from 2,103 in 1841 to 19,018 in 1901. Such rapid population growth required new buildings and new roads. Census figures reveal that the increase in the number of houses paralleled the increase of the number of residents: the total number of houses grew from only 379 in 1841 to 3,323 in 1901. >>

The railway facilitated the first organised excursions, such as the day trip made in June 1849 by 1,600 workers from the Great Western Cotton Factory in Bristol

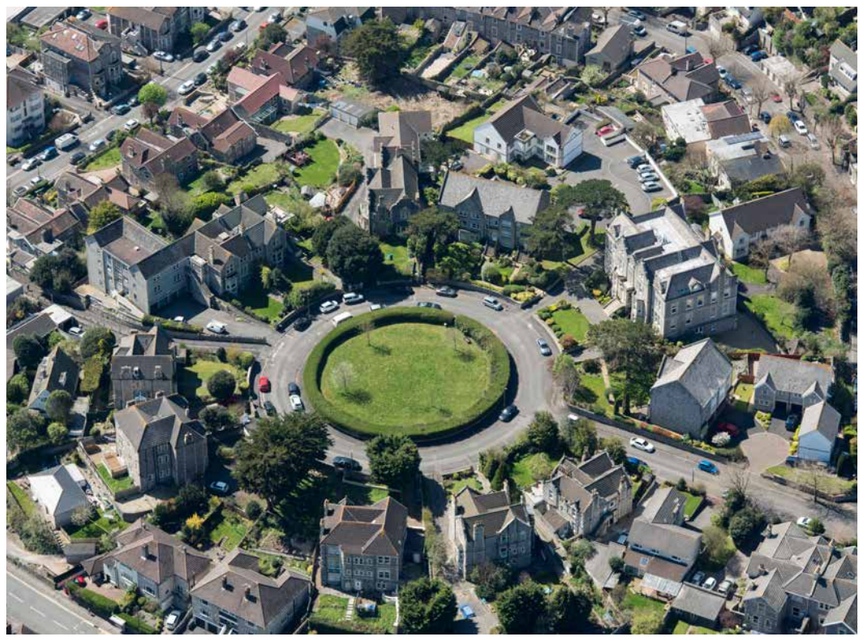
Below left: The Revd William Leeves's cottage of about 1791. © Historic England Archive, Steven Baker, DP218417

Below right: The Georgian bathhouse on Knightstone Island, built in 1832. © Historic England Archive, Steven Baker, DP218642

Above: The Royal Crescent of 1847 by the architect James Wilson. © Historic England Archive, Steven Baker, DP218741

From the 1840s, prestigious new housing developments aimed at wealthy residents and visitors spread northwards from the historic core, towards Knightstone Island and Birnbeck Island, and then along the hillside. They initially took the form of terraces and crescents, from the relatively modest Victoria Buildings (1838-41) to the elegant Royal Crescent of 1847 and the two Atlantic Terraces (1859-61). Grand set-piece developments such as these were soon overtaken in quantity and popularity by large-scale villa estates.

The villa, whether semi-detached or detached, was the preferred building type for many of Weston's estate developments, including the Smyth Pigott Estate, the Whitecross Estate, the Shrubbery Estate and the Montpelier Estate. These new villa estates had to be quickly provided with their own amenities, from places of worship such as Christ Church, Montpelier (1854-5), to means of water supply.



Left: The Smyth Pigotts' Grove Town estate with Landemann Circus, a development which started in the 1860s. © Historic England Archive, Damian Grady, NMR 33489/007

Above right: One of Hans Price's villas in Grove Park Road, dating from the 1890s. © Historic England Archive, Steven Baker, DP218588

The architectural form of the new villas was significantly shaped by the local architect Hans Fowler Price (1835-1912). He developed a type of gabled villa, which was built using the local carboniferous stone from quarries on the hillside, together with dressings of Bath limestone. The gables were frequently decorated with carved stone or plasterwork. This type of villa was also designed by other architects and percolated down to middle-class developments such as those in the southern half of the Whitecross Estate. By contrast, working-class terraced cottages in the town centre and close to the railway line were smaller and considerably plainer. >>

The architectural form of the new villas was significantly shaped by the local architect Hans Fowler Price

New amenities

By 1842, Weston had outgrown its previous parochial government and in that year an Improvement Act established a body of 18 commissioners charged with 'paving, lighting, watching, cleansing and otherwise improving the town'. The new status and the dignity of its administrators were underlined by the construction of a town hall designed by James Wilson of Bath, which opened in 1859.

Other improvements followed: the first gasworks opened in 1841, the waterworks at Ashcombe were completed in 1854, and in the 1860s Sir Joseph Bazalgette, the renowned civil engineer responsible for the creation of London's sewer network, designed a sewage system for Weston. During the 1880s, sea walls and a promenade were built along the seafront. Schools for local children were mainly provided by the Anglican churches until a school board was established in 1893. Private schools also thrived as it was considered fashionable and healthy to send children to attend a school near the sea.

Pleasure was not forgotten among these necessities: after a false start in the 1840s, Weston's first pier opened in 1867. Designed by the pier engineer Eugenius Birch, Birnbeck Pier is unique as a pier that terminates at an island. As well as providing leisure facilities including refreshment rooms, the pier also provided lifeboat houses and jetties for steamers. Weston's second pier, the Grand Pier, opened in 1904.

Many of the new public buildings in Weston were designed by Hans Price, who dominated the local architectural scene between 1860 and 1912. They include the Hospital (1864-5), the Sanatorium (1871-3), the School of Science and Art (1892-3, 1899-1900), the Library (1899-1900), the Gaslight Company stores and workshop (about 1912), several church schools, and the board schools in Walliscote Road (1895-7) and Locking Road (1905). >>

Birnbeck Pier is unique as a pier that terminates at an island

Top left: The 1859 town hall, with extensions by Price of 1897. © Historic England Archive, Steven Baker, DP218372

Above: Birnbeck Pier of 1864-7. © Historic England Archive, Steven Baker, DP218350

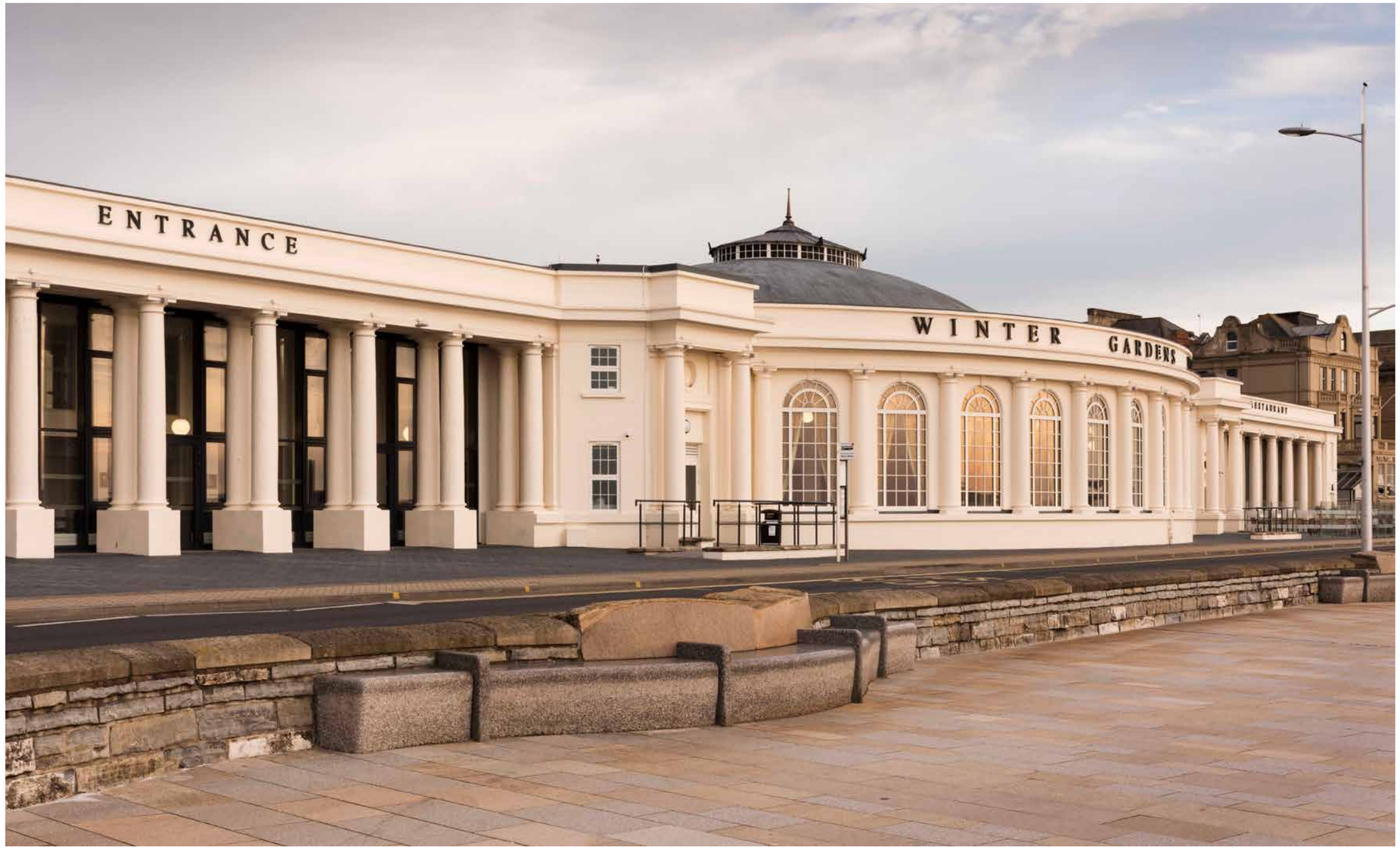
Top right: The School of Science and Art by Hans Price, 1892-1900. © Historic England Archive, Steven Baker, DP218737

Weston in the 20th century and beyond

The interwar years witnessed a number of popular additions to Weston's leisure facilities, including the Winter Gardens pavilion, the Marine Lake, and the open-air pool. During the Second World War, the presence of the airport, industry, the transatlantic cable office, and a naval weaponry research establishment on Birnbeck Pier all made Weston the target of several major air raids, resulting in the loss of lives and damage to many buildings, as shown in Edward Carpenter's article in this issue. Post-war developments were largely piecemeal, such as rebuilding on gap sites and implementing the long-planned widening of the southern end of the High Street, while two master plans remained unexecuted. By the 1960s, profound changes in transport options made themselves felt in Weston, with more tourists arriving by car than by train, and the number of steamers from Wales dwindling after the opening of the Severn Bridge. From the 1960s onwards, British seaside towns also faced significant competition from holiday resorts in the Mediterranean.

Today, Weston is grappling with many economic issues, largely related to seasonal tourism. However, Historic England's recent research project and ongoing work as part of the Heritage Action Zone clearly emphasise that the town's historic environment, and particularly the buildings from the Victorian period, are central to its character and distinctiveness, and can play a crucial role in reinvigorating it. So far, our research and the resulting book have informed the activities of the HAZ initiative, including the creation of a single, large conservation area which now also includes the commercial and civic centre ■

Historic England's recent research project and ongoing work as part of the Heritage Action Zone clearly emphasises that the town's historic environment is central to its character and distinctiveness, and can play a crucial role in reinvigorating it



The author

Johanna Roethe

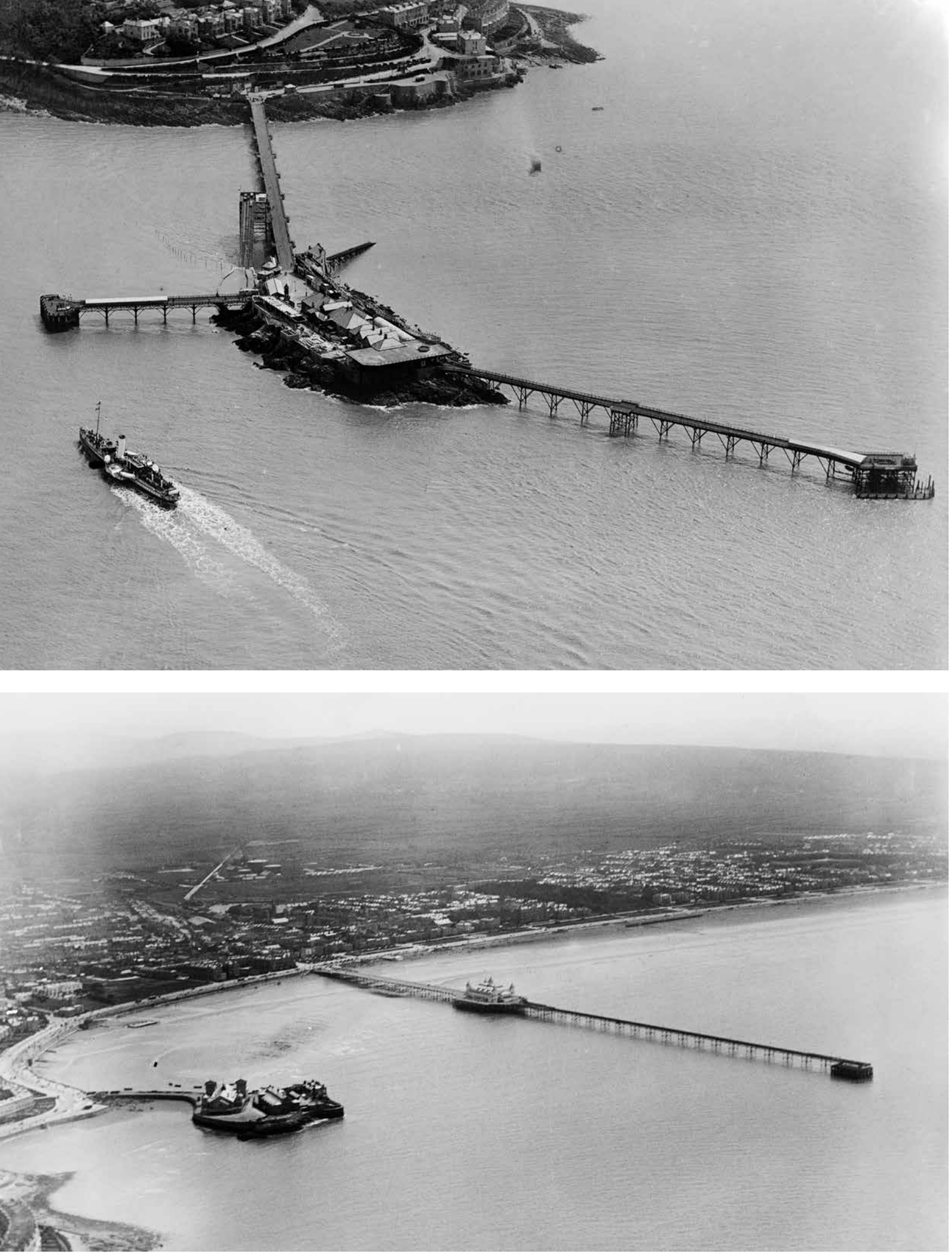
Architectural Investigator with Historic England.

Johanna joined Historic England in 2017 after working in the commercial sector for seven years. She has contributed to several historic area assessments, including for the Heritage Action Zones at Weston-super-Mare and Rochdale. She is a co-author of the recent Historic England publication *Weston-super-Mare: The town and its seaside heritage*, which is available from the online bookshop of Liverpool University Press (https://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/books/id/52305/)

Further information

Brodie, A Roethe, J and Hudson-McAulay, K 2019 *Weston-super-Mare: The town and its seaside heritage*. Swindon: Historic England.

Left: The Winter Gardens pavilion, opened in 1927. © Hstoric England Archive, Steven Baker, DP218317



Weston-super-Mare: the view from above

Historic aerial photographs of this Heritage Action Zone in Historic England's Archive show Weston at war and peace.

A detailed review of the historic aerial photographs of Weston-super-Mare was undertaken as part of Historic England's contribution to the town's Heritage Action Zone (HAZ). Historic aerial photographs document changes to Weston-super-Mare over the last 100 years. They show the development of the seaside resort between the wars, some of the ways in which Weston was affected by the Second World War and the post-war rebuilding in the town.

Weston's seafront between the wars

The seafront was a popular subject for Aerofilms, the commercial firm that took many photographs of the town from 1920 onwards. Many of the photographs illustrate the popularity of Weston as a holiday destination and show the range of buildings and structures built to cater for visitors. Weston Urban District Council took an active role in the provision of facilities and entertainments, which successfully attracted increasing numbers of holidaymakers to the town and August Bank Holiday visitor numbers rose from a pre-First World War peak of around 38,000 to 78,000 in 1937.

The town has two piers. The now derelict Birnbeck Pier was Weston's first completed pier. It opened in 1867 and linked the mainland to Birnbeck Island, which serves as the pier head. The pier also welcomed visitors to the town arriving by steamer, a service that ran until 1979.

Weston's Grand Pier remains a popular attraction and the historic aerial photographs document some of the changes made to this structure since it opened in 1904. Despite the addition of a low-water landing stage in 1906, which more than doubled the total length of the pier, problems with navigation and currents made it difficult for steamers to approach safely. A 1920 photograph shows this jetty, but it had gone by September 1928, demolished due to lack of use. >>

The seafront was a popular subject for Aerofilms, the commercial firm that took many photographs of the town from 1920 onwards

Left top: Birnbeck Island, seen here in 1920, was home to fairground rides, a lifeboat station and jetties used by steamer services to the town. Detail of AFL 60014/EPW001050 May-1920. © Historic England (Aerofilms Collection)

Left bottom: The Grand Pier in 1920 showing the short-lived jetty that increased the length of the pier from 329m to 786m. Detail of AFL 60014/EPW001032 May-1920. © Historic England (Aerofilms Collection)

Above: A photograph of the seafront taken in August 1932 includes a view of the temporary amusements on the fire damaged Grand Pier. The following month work began on the new pier pavilion. Detail of AFL 60818/EPW039934 Aug-1932. © Historic England (Aerofilms Collection)

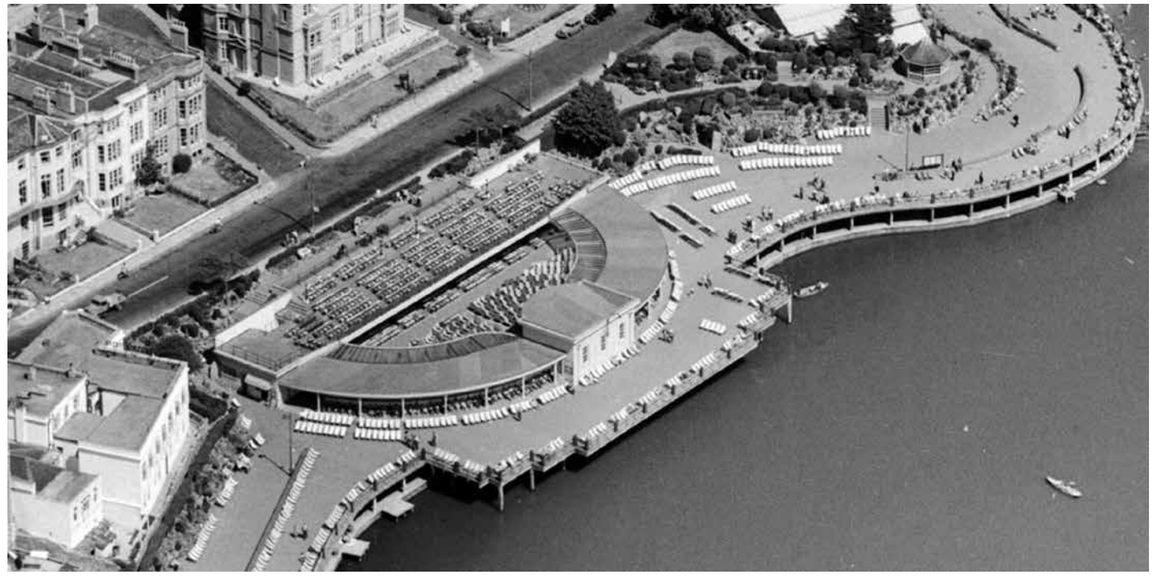
Fire destroyed the pier's original pavilion in January 1930 and photographs taken in July of that year show the damaged remains. Work began on a new pavilion in the autumn of 1932, but in the intervening period temporary amusements were established on the pier and the site of the old pavilion was home to marquees, stalls and a helter-skelter.

Aerofilms photographs show a number of new developments built in the 1920s and 1930s. These included the creation of the Marine Lake (1927-29) with the building of a causeway between Knightstone Island and the mainland, and improvements to the adjacent Marine Drive. A small bandstand was added around 1920, eventually demolished to make way for a slightly larger design (seen on aerial photographs taken in 1935). This too was short-lived, replaced by the large and partially enclosed Rozel bandstand in 1937.

The Winter Gardens pavilion with its large ballroom opened in 1927. The adjacent gardens included a lily pond, tennis courts and putting green. At the southern end of Weston's beach, a large open air bathing pool with diving boards opened in 1937. Nearby and at about the same time, a new bandstand was built on Beach Lawn opposite Ellenborough Park. Also built on the seafront was the Beach Garage and Bus Station (now demolished) which opened in 1928. >>

Aerofilms photographs show a number of new developments built in the 1920s and 1930s

Top: Because of Weston's large tidal range, at low tide the sea retreats over 1.5km from the town. The creation of Marine Lake ensured that holidaymakers could swim, paddle and play in the sea at all times. Detail of AFL 61877/EAW025153 24-Jul-1949. © Historic England (Aerofilms Collection)



Bottom: A 1949 view of the Rozel bandstand overlooking Marine Lake. It was demolished after being badly damaged by a storm in 1981. Detail of AFL 61877/EAW025153 24-Jul-1949. © Historic England (Aerofilms Collection)

Weston during the Second World War

Unlike seaside resorts nearer the continent, Weston's seafront was free from barbed wire and anti-invasion defences during the Second World War, in part also due to the unsuitability of its coast for landing enemy troops. Instead, the threat to Weston was from air attack and many of the wartime structures seen in the 1940s aerial photographs are concerned with the war in the air. They include air-raid shelters, facilities for the fire brigade, anti-aircraft obstructions, barrage balloons and anti-aircraft batteries. The photographs also show the effects of air raids on the town.

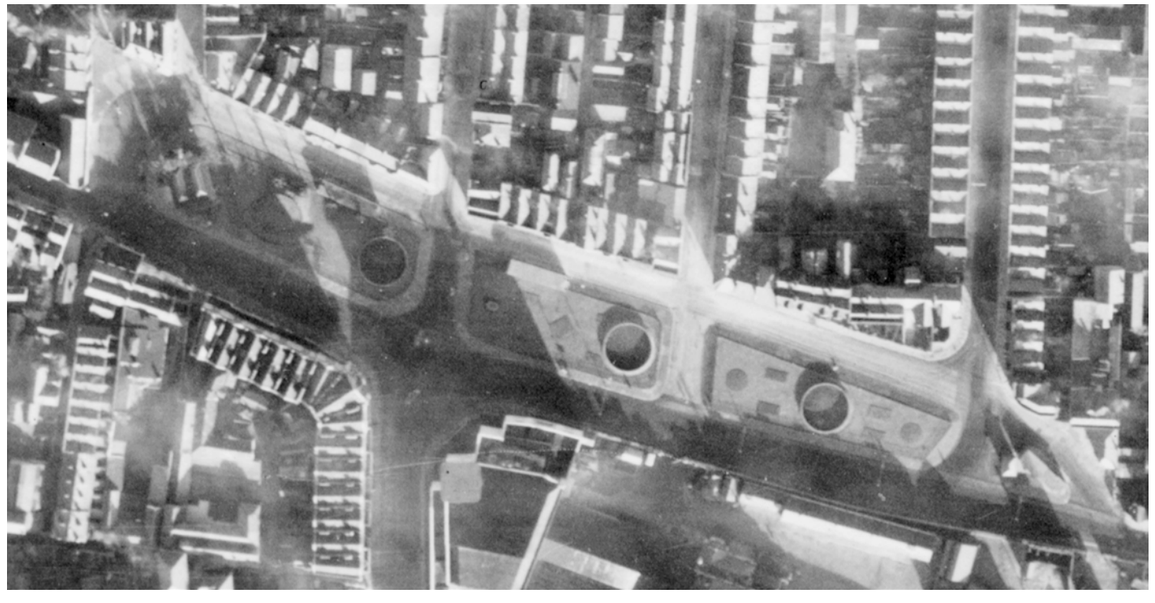
Many of Weston's air-raid shelters were built before the outbreak of the war and these included shelters in basements or small shelters in private gardens. The wartime RAF aerial photographs show 22 public surface shelters across the town, mainly on the seafront or by the public parks. Most of these were probably built before the outbreak of war, but a few, including two built on bombsites, were clearly constructed after the outbreak of hostilities. These long narrow structures were generally of brick with a flat concrete roof and each designed to shelter 50 people.

Britain's fire brigades encountered a number of problems during the raids of 1940-41, including the failure of water supplies due to bomb-damaged water mains. In late 1941, to ensure that the fire brigade had reserves of water, Emergency Water Supply reservoirs (EWS) were constructed in towns and cities across the country. Fifteen EWS reservoirs have been identified in Weston, placed individually or in groups on open land: three large reservoirs were constructed on the lawns of Alexandra Parade, beside the Odeon cinema.

Weston's first major air raid was in January 1941, but greater still were the raids over two successive nights in June 1942 when a total of 100 high explosive bombs and 10,000 incendiaries resulted in over 100 deaths. Most damaged occurred in the town centre and the aerial photographs provide evidence of the effects of the air raids on Weston, showing bomb craters, bomb damage and cleared bomb sites. The results of the raids were still apparent years after the end of the war and photographs taken in 1949 show bomb sites and the roofless ruins of bomb-damaged buildings. >>

Unlike seaside resorts nearer the continent, Weston's seafront was free from barbed wire and anti-invasion defences during the Second World War

Left top: Public surface air-raid shelters on Beach Lawn in 1941. Detail of RAF/1416/S512184/PO-060 19-Sep-1941. Historic England (RAF Photography)



Left bottom: Wartime EWS reservoirs on Alexandra Parade, photographed in 1946. Detail of RAF/3G/TUD/UK/21 V 5076 13-JAN-1946. Historic England (RAF Photography)

Above right: Bomb damage on Wadham Street, still apparent in 1949. Detail of AFL 61877/EAW025151 25-Jul-1949. © Historic England (Aerofilms Collection)

Prefabs

Bomb damage contributed to the national housing shortage at the end of the war, a situation made worse by a shortage of builders and building materials. The building of prefabricated bungalows, more commonly known as prefabs, was a temporary measure to increase rapidly the number of homes. Over 156,000 prefabs in a variety of different designs were built across Britain immediately after the war, including at Weston-super-Mare.

Prefabs were intended to have a short lifespan and those built in Weston were demolished from 1960 onwards. Weston's prefabs were all 'Aluminium Bungalows', a design entirely manufactured on a production line in five former aircraft factories, including the Oldmixon factory at Weston-super-Mare, built by the Bristol Aeroplane Company in 1940. Builders could assemble these in less than 24 hours and 54, 500 of this design were built across the country, more than any other type of prefab.

The Oldmixon factory produced other types of prefabricated aluminium buildings such as schools and these were sold at home and abroad. Aerial photographs taken in 1950 show a train about to leave the factory with a shipment of 26 prefabricated schools destined for Australia; this information was written on top of the wagons for a publicity photograph.

Historic air photographs

All the historic aerial photographs that we consulted for the project are held in the Historic England Archive, and the Aerofilms photographs can also be viewed online at https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/. They show what could be termed 'lost landscapes' and provide views of sites or structures that have since been demolished or significantly changed. In some cases, the photographs provide the only visual record of some of these sites, as is the case for many of the short-lived Second World War structures across the town. The historic images also provide a link with the town's past, its war years, the seafront and to the many thousands of visitors who enjoyed their annual seaside holiday at Weston-super-Mare ■

The author

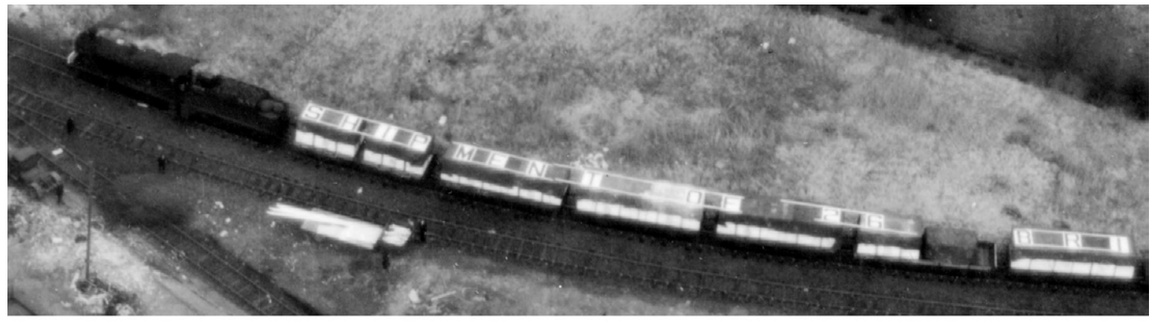
Edward Carpenter
Aerial Investigator with Historic England.

Edward has worked for Historic England and its predecessors since 1998, and moved to the Aerial Investigation and Mapping team in 2002. He has worked on a number of multi-period aerial investigation projects across England and is currently analysing the historic aerial photographs of Longton Heritage Action Zone, Stoke-on-Trent. He has contributed to a number of Historic England research reports, including that on Weston-super-Mare.

Further information

Carpenter, E 2018 *Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset: Great Weston Heritage Action Zone, Aerial Investigation and Mapping Project*, Historic England Research Report **50/2018**, available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/research/research-results/research-reports/

The Aerofilms Collection can be viewed online at https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/en



Left: Prefabs on Selworthy Road, Bournville on the south side of Weston, in 1948. Detail of RAF/541/99/PSFO-0059 16-Jul-1948. Historic England (RAF Photography)

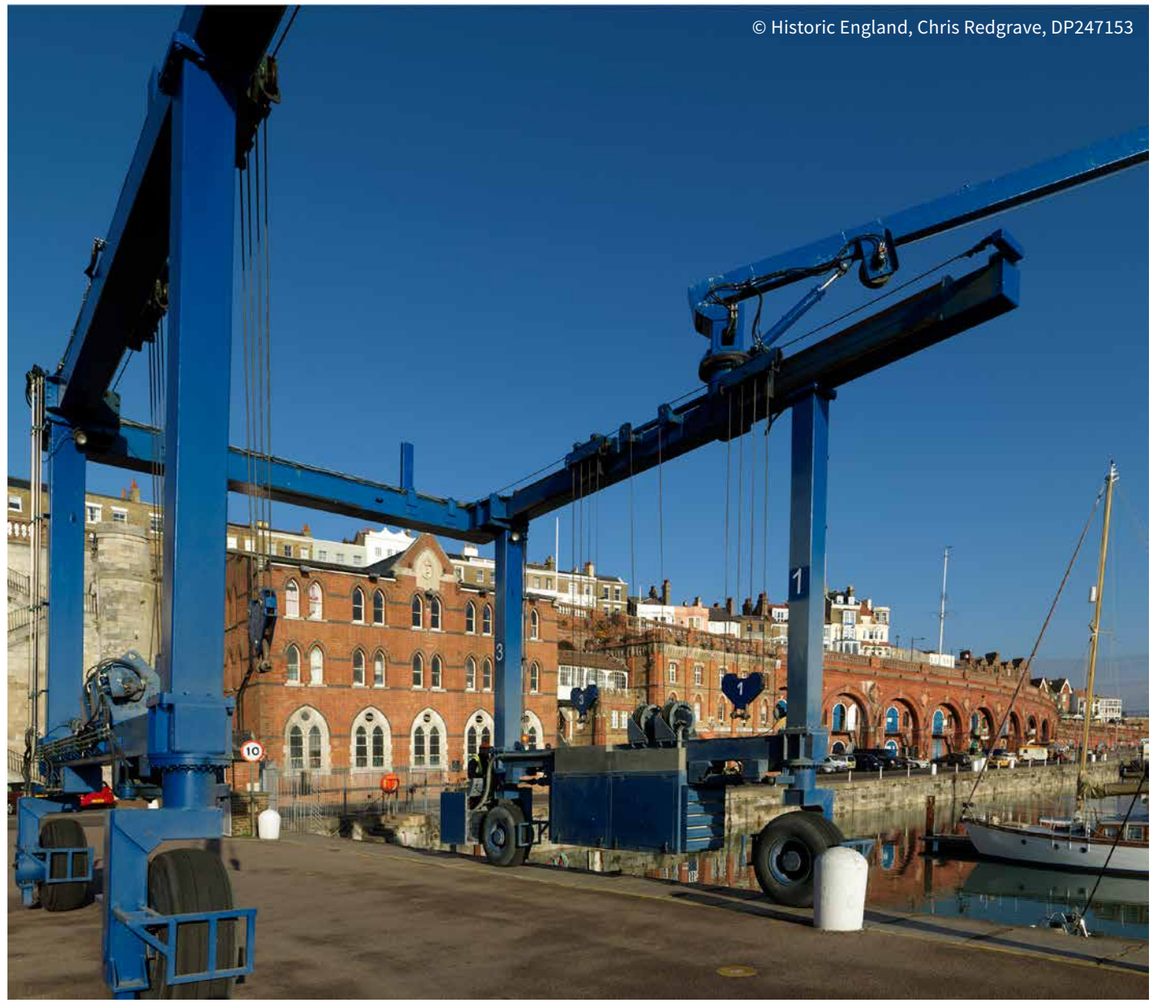
Above right: Prefabricated schools leaving Oldmixon factory in 1950. Although appearing on single photographs, for clarity this image has been cut in two and enlarged. The text on the wagons reads 'Shipment of 26 Bristol Aluminium Schools'. Detail of AFL 61944/EAW027896 7-Feb-1950. © Historic England (Aerofilms Collection)

Postcards from Ramsgate

A sneak preview of the historic area assessment behind the forthcoming publication *Ramsgate: the town and its seaside heritage*.

One of the first round of Heritage Action Zones to be nominated in 2017, Ramsgate's HAZ aims to bring about the sustainable regeneration of the town using its rich and diverse historic environment as a catalyst. One of Historic England's contributions to the HAZ is a programme of applied research to help the HAZ team better understand the town and its historic makeup.

It includes an historic area assessment of the town which will feed into an accessible publication, *Ramsgate: the town and its seaside heritage*, to be published in 2020. Here architectural investigator Geraint Franklin and photographer Chris Redgrave talk about their behind-the–scenes investigation and photography at Ramsgate.



The Royal Harbour

Geraint: Ramsgate's royal harbour is its most significant single heritage asset and crucial to the town's future prosperity. This view shows a multi-phase maritime landscape including the 18th century inner basin; Military Road (built about 1805 to facilitate embarkations in the Napoleonic Wars); the Sailors' Home and Church; Smack Boys' Home; and the arches of Royal Parade. This image makes the point that it is still very much a working harbour: in great demand as a leisure marina and maritime hub.
Chris: Ramsgate is a very visually rewarding place to photograph and the harbour presents many chances to frame the architecture with the quayside infrastructure. The gantry crane in this picture is acting as a kind of portal to the Sailors' Church with Nelson Crescent just visible above the harbour. >>

East Court

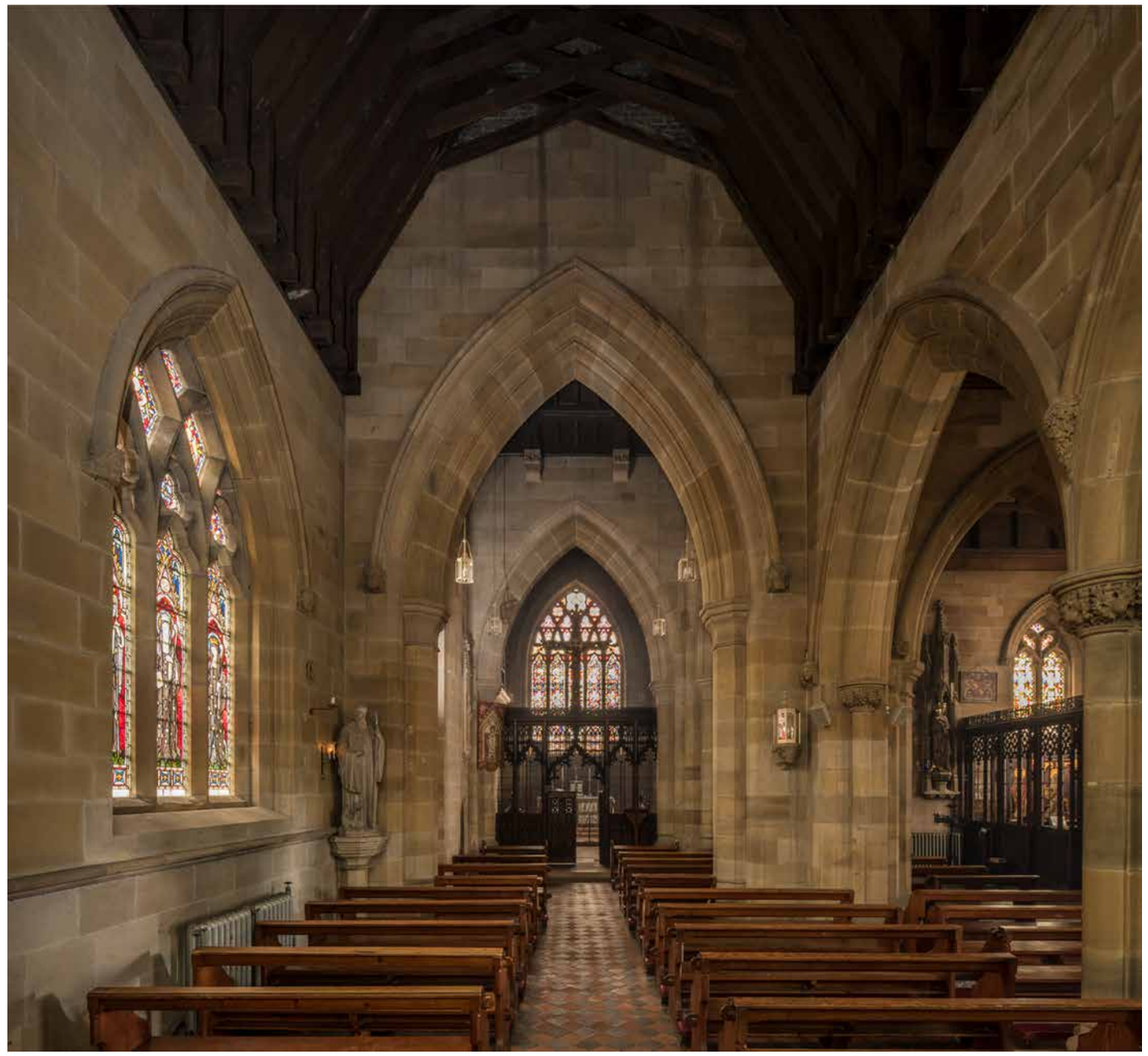
Geraint: Ramsgate boasts some spectacular and overlooked architecture. Here is East Court, of 1889-90 by Ernest George and Harold Peto, which takes the Victorian vernacular revival style on a trip to the seaside. It was upgraded from grade II to grade II* by Historic England in 2019. The WHW on the rainwater head refers to their client, the businessman and philanthropist William Henry Wills, first Baron Winterstoke. He bequeathed the house to his adoptive niece, Dame Janet Stancomb-Wills, Ramsgate's benefactor and first woman mayor.
Chris: This beautiful house has an incredible colour and texture to the façade. It is of course important to photograph general views but sometimes the essence of a building can be conveyed in a detail such as this one, where we can see the texture of the tiles but also the quality and rhythm of the design.

© Historic England, Chris Redgrave, DP251112

St Augustine's Church

Chris: This was a challenging and mysterious interior to photograph. It is a very dark space, which is the way it is meant to be experienced. The challenge of the photographer is to light it enough to convey enough architectural information to the viewer but also maintain as much of the atmosphere as possible.

Geraint: St Augustine's is a Roman Catholic church, founded, designed and funded by A W N Pugin (1812-52), the pioneering architect of the Gothic Revival. It was intended as the cornerstone of a Catholic community which included Pugin's home, The Grange. Dilapidated and frequently closed, the church was restored over five years with a Heritage Lottery grant and today hosts a visitors' centre and St Augustine's shrine. Meanwhile The Grange and the neighbouring St Edward's Presbytery was painstakingly restored by the Landmark Trust and are available all year round as holiday lets. >>



© Historic England, Chris Redgrave, DP247166

© Historic England, Chris Redgrave, DP247253

Madeira Walk

Geraint: In the 1890s the newly-formed Borough of Ramsgate decided to construct two new carriageways between the harbour and the east and west cliffs. Shown here is the sinuous Madeira Walk which leads from Harbour Parade to Albion Place. The development incorporates Pulhamite artificial rockwork erected by James Pulham & Son, modelled to resemble geological strata. The colourful houses in the background front Albion Hill, the old route to the east cliff. **Chris:** The Pulhamite fake stone structures all over this part of Ramsgate act as a kind of rugged plinth and foil to the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian architecture that sits above them. >>


© Historic England, Chris Redgrave, DP247194

The Artillery Arms

Chris: The stained glass in this pub is really quite something and in photographing it I was keen to remove the usual modern beer mats and pub paraphernalia, so the windows could be seen with fewer distractions. This picture also reminds me of the kindness Geraint and I have experienced from helpful Ramsgate residents and businesses in having access to these wonderful buildings. **Geraint:** This is the family-run The Artillery Arms, at the end of Royal Road. Listed at grade II, it began life as a beerhouse and gained its spirit licence in 1869. Its attractive stained glass windows perhaps allude to Ramsgate's military heritage as a port of embarkation during the French wars. They might have been installed in 1871 as part of a programme of alterations and additions made by the publican, J D Peal.


© Historic England, Peter Williams, DP114496

The Montefiore Synagogue

Geraint: Ramsgate has been home to a variety of minority faith communities. Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) settled in Ramsgate in the 1830s, and his residence on the east cliff became the focus for a thriving Jewish community. In 1831 he commissioned David Mocatta to design this Neoclassical synagogue. This photograph is by former HE photographer Peter Williams. Just visible to the left is the mausoleum of Sir Moses and Judith, which was erected in 1864. The site has been designated by Jewish Heritage UK as amongst the top ten synagogues of Britain. >>

The Duke of Kent

Chris: It has been important to record all aspects of the historic environment in Ramsgate as part of the Heritage Action Zone work, and the condition of this pub illustrates how vulnerable buildings can be when they are vacant. Whatever happens to the building at least there will always be a set of pictures of it at the Historic England Archive. **Geraint:** The historic area assessment documents the town at a transitional moment. This eclectic and rather forlorn building is the former Duke of Kent pub, of 1938 by W Everard Healey for the Ramsgate brewer Tomson and Wotton. It was described at the time as a 'Dutch-cum-Tudor barn' and an example of 'a unique Continental style'. The pub, on a prominent site in King Street, has been derelict for several years and faces probable redevelopment ■

Whatever happens to the building at least there will always be a set of pictures of it at the Historic England Archive

The authors

Geraint Franklin
Architectural Investigator with Historic England.

Geraint joined English Heritage in 2005, and has worked on a variety of thematic and place-based investigation projects. He is the author of Historic England's ***Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments*** (2017); *Introduction to Heritage Assets: Post-Modern Architecture* (2017) and *Post-War Public Art: Protection, Care and Conservation* (2016). Geraint specialises in British architecture after 1945 and his publications include *Howell Killick Partridge & Amis* (2017) and *Post-Modern Buildings in Britain* (2017, with Elain Harwood). He is currently writing a study of the architect John Outram.

Chris Redgrave
Photographer with Historic England.

Chris is an architectural photographer who has been with Historic England since late 2012. His work involves working across the organisation, visually supporting Listing and Planning cases, research projects, Heritage at Risk, Heritage Action Zones and numerous other projects including 'I Am London', which can currently be seen at five different London Underground stations. Published work includes many Historic England publications, the Twentieth Century Architect Series and Survey of London South East Marylebone, which recently won the Colvin Prize. Chris has also been a Visiting Lecturer at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL on the 'Surveying and Recording of Cities' course.

Further information

Franklin, G., Dermott, N. and Brodie, A. forthcoming *Ramsgate: the Town and its Seaside Heritage*. Historic England / Liverpool University Press

I do like to see beside the seaside

Exploring 150 years of seaside photography in the Historic England Archive.

Seaside tourism and photography go hand-in-hand. The Historic England Archive offers a wealth of photographic collections that record England's seaside resorts, including images from every decade from the 1850s to the present day. The Archive's collections are a valuable resource for researchers and students of architecture, urban development and tourism. They also reveal how seaside resorts and the activities taking place in them have appeared in the eyes of photographers who have been influenced by a variety of motivations.

This article features a selection of photographs created by a range of photographers and photography firms over the course of the past century and a half. From paper negatives to born digital images, for commercial gain, private memory and official record, the Historic England Archive's seaside photography offers insights into what we love to see beside the seaside.

Our earliest seaside photographs

John Urry and Jonas Larson have dated the birth of the modern tourist gaze in the west to around 1840 – Daguerre's and Talbot's photographic processes were announced to the world in 1839, Thomas Cook's first excursion took place in 1841, and 'railway mania' was about to take off.

Of course, people with sufficient free time and disposable income had been visiting the seaside to improve their health and to enjoy leisure for more than a century before the first seaside photographs were taken. However, once photography had taken root, seaside resorts became a popular subject and a source of income for commercial photographers, and the seaside holiday experience proved to be a source of inspiration for both professional photographers and keen amateurs.

The earliest known seaside photographs in the Historic England Archive were taken in the 1850s. In a collection of 327 paper negatives attributed to the Godalming chemist Henry Taylor (born 1814), around 15 were taken at seaside towns. Only four of these feature anything remotely 'seaside': two are of a thatched cottage next to sand dunes in or near Bournemouth, one shows houses on Marine Parade, Eastbourne, and one is a view along the seafront at Hastings. >>

the Historic England Archive's seaside photography offers insights into what we love to see beside the seaside

An 1855 view of Hastings seafront and castle, created using a paper negative. Attributed to Henry Taylor. Source: Historic England Archive DD67/00009

Right: A late 19th-century albumen print of Bamburgh beach. George Washington Wilson & Co. Source: Historic England Archive OP05276

Commercial giants

The developments in sea, road and rail transport during the mid-19th century, followed by greater opportunities for the urban working class to take time off work – the 1871 Bank Holidays Act introduced four additional holidays – stimulated the growth of existing resorts and the creation of new seaside towns. At the same time, photographic technology evolved to a point where it became a viable commercial profession and an industry that could produce and supply masses of affordable images to a growing customer base.

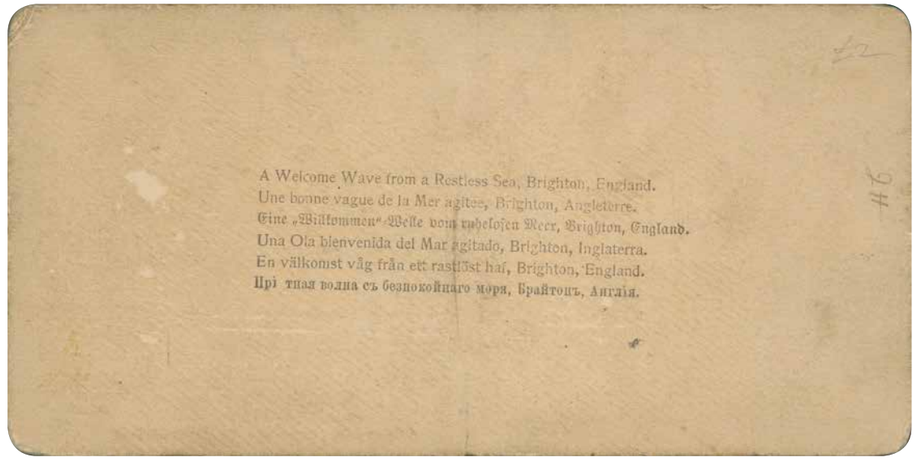
A number of photographers, such as Francis Frith, James Valentine and George Washington Wilson, grew from individual practitioners to commercial giants, publishing tens of thousands of views of tourist destinations, including seaside resorts. Their works, and that of their teams of photographers, were produced in many forms, including stereocards and albumen prints. Photographs of the English seaside were even an attractive subject for overseas audiences.

The railway companies recognised the value of marketing resorts that could be reached by their trains

Railway marketing

In 1840 Great Britain's railway track measured 1,500 miles; sixty years later, this had increased to nearly 20,000 miles, providing easy access to scores of tourist destinations. The railway companies recognised the value of marketing resorts that could be reached by their trains. The Historic England Archive holds over 1,600 negatives created for the London, Midland and Scottish Railway and its predecessors, dating from the mid-1880s to the mid-1930s. Among the collection are photographs of seaside resorts and the kinds of facilities and activities that railway travellers could expect to experience during this heyday of seaside holidays. >>

Left top: A stereocard for international viewers by Strohmeyer and Wyman of New York, dated 1896. Source: Historic England Archive DSH01/02/001A



Left middle: The reverse of the stereocard gives its title in six languages. Strohmeyer and Wyman Source: Historic England Archive DSH01/02/001B

Left bottom: A railway company view of Wellington Pier, Great Yarmouth, 1904. LMS. Source: Historic England Archive CC76/00474

Above left: A postcard view of South Sands, Scarborough, 1924. Walter Scott. © Historic England Archive WSA01/01/05779

The picture postcard

The late 19th century saw the introduction of the picture postcard, which could rapidly visually connect the recipient with the holidaymaker. The first picture postcards appeared in 1894, and in 1902 one side of the card was divided into two to provide space for a message and an address, while the other side was given up to one or more pictures. Established photograph publishers took up the medium and new firms were formed to exploit what has become one of the most enduring forms of popular pictorial representation of the seaside. Historic England's Archive is home to the Walter Scott and W & Co Ltd collections, which include some wonderful views of seaside resorts that were taken principally for use as postcards.

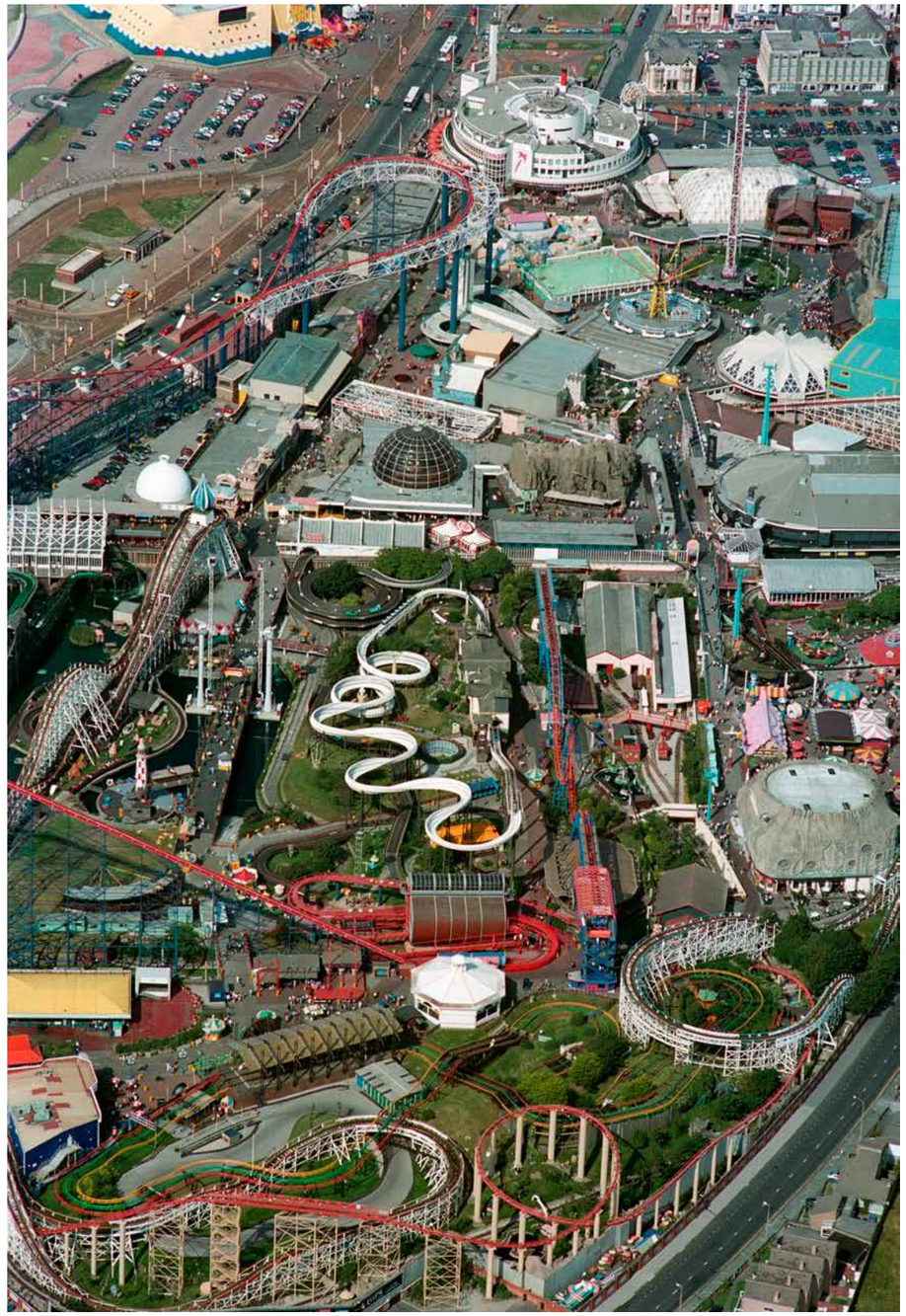
The view from above

The early 20th century witnessed something altogether new; aerial photography from fixed-wing aircraft could wow viewers with birds-eye perspectives of seafronts and resort buildings, which up to that point could only be imagined (unless you count the photographs taken from the top of the Blackpool Tower!). As Edward Carpenter's article in this issue describes, the Aerofilms Collection is filled with stunning views of England's seaside resorts, showing oblique views of beaches, piers, hotels, entertainment buildings and street layouts taken by this pioneering commercial firm. Combined with more recent aerial photography, the view from above provides us with an excellent resource for seeing how seaside resorts have evolved over time. >>

Historic England's Archive is home to the Walter Scott and W & Co Ltd collections, which include some wonderful views of seaside resorts taken principally for use as postcards

Above centre: The Pleasure Beach, Blackpool, viewed from the air in 1920. Aerofilms Ltd. © Historic England Archive, Aerofilms Collection EPW002058

Right: Blackpool Pleasure Beach, photographed from the air in 2002. English Heritage. © Historic England Archive, NMR, Dave MacLeod, 17760/20



Above right: Inside a railway carriage holiday home, possibly at Shoreham-by-Sea, taken around the 1920s. Unknown photographer. Source: Historic England Archive AL2397/009/01

Below: An amateur ‘snap’ of the shore at Clovelly, Devon, taken in 1958. Norman Barnard. © Historic England Archive BAR03/01/173

Until fairly recently, relatively little attention has been given to amateur photography, meaning that this substantial and varied resource has been generally overlooked

The amateur view

From the 1880s, further developments in photographic processes and equipment increased the popularity of photography as an amateur pastime, resulting in the kinds of hand-held camera holiday ‘snap’ that most of us are familiar with today.

Until fairly recently, relatively little attention has been given to amateur photography, meaning that this substantial and varied resource has been generally overlooked. Much of this kind of photography can resonate more closely with the general public than professional, commercial photography, and so its value as a means of communicating about the historic environment and social history should not be underestimated. It is photography created for the photographer and his or her immediate circle of family and friends and is not intended generally for the eyes of others. However, over the years, the Historic England Archive has acquired photograph albums and collections that include this kind of intimate and revealing photography.

Nostalgic photography

The return to ‘normal’ seaside holiday activities after the Second World War witnessed a return to ‘normal’ seaside resort photography. Much of the commercial and personal photography produced during the second half of the 20th century has an added resonance as it can connect with us on a nostalgic level – today’s living generations may have personal connections with what is contained within, and beyond, the frames of the photographs they are looking at. This greater familiarity with the recent past can underpin our collective image of the classic English seaside resort and seaside holiday. Ironically, it is perhaps the Archive’s collection of photographs by the German émigré John Gay that most clearly exemplifies this perception. >>

Above right: Photographing the photographer, a scene in Blackpool between 1946 and 1955. John Gay. © Historic England Archive AA047919

Above: Staring out to sea, Felixstowe, Suffolk, 1999. © Historic England Archive, Peter Williams, MF99/0674/35

Project photography

We are all familiar with the oft-repeated narrative of affordable foreign holidays influencing the decline of domestic seaside resorts, and the subsequent threat to historic seaside buildings due to lack of use, dereliction and even arson. In recent years, English Heritage and Historic England have undertaken several local and national projects to research the historical development of the seaside resort and its impact on the built environment, and to highlight the wealth and variety of resorts, their buildings and infrastructure. Much of this record photography has been dictated by project investigators, via fieldwork and documentary research. However, a valuable addition to Historic England's collections has been the creative and highly personal seaside photography of staff photographers, such as Peter Williams, whose astute eye for contemporary culture and the social aspects of the seaside has resulted in a unique seaside photography collection.

The new photography, both terrestrial and aerial, produced for these research projects has added significantly to the visual record of seaside resorts and their historic buildings. Together with the historic photograph collections in the Historic England Archive, they have helped to raise awareness of our seaside resort heritage and have helped to influence public perceptions and government thinking to provide brighter futures for these photogenic communities by the sea ■

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The author

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For a number of years, Gary investigated the nation's seaside resorts with Allan Brodie, contributing to several English Heritage books on the subject. In recent years, Gary has delved into the treasure trove that is the Historic England Archive, helping to produce exhibitions based on its collections and co-authoring *Picturing England: the photographic collections of Historic England*. Gary now works in Historic England's Public Programming team.

Further information

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Some of Historic England's archive photographs can be seen online at https://archive.historicengland.org.uk/ and at https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/

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