

Seaside Heritage: Colourful Past, Bright Future

Synopses of Papers

Allan Brodie *'Seaside Architecture – the 'frozen music' of past holidays'*

Goethe, who coined the phrase 'frozen music' to describe architecture, could never have expected to have it applied to the seaside resort. However, towns all around the coast resonate from activities associated with three centuries of seaside holidays. Traces of successive generations of holidays, and the facilities required for visitors, survive at the heart of resorts and these fragile remnants are not well-understood and appreciated. If holidaymakers could be persuaded to stop looking out to sea, and turn around, they would see their bed and breakfast, a Georgian house that Jane Austen might have stayed in and the nightclub that was once an Art Deco cinema.

The earliest traces of seaside holidays lie in the heart of a series of former working towns or former small villages that by the end of the 18th century were growing into lively resorts. Existing buildings were adapted or extended to cater for this new trade, but by the end of the 18th century significant purpose-built facilities and accommodation were being created. In the course of the 19th century resorts began to expand rapidly, particularly after the arrival of railways, creating new areas of resorts with hotels and houses for visitors and new residents. Flanking the heart of resorts are substantial areas of housing, the suburbia of the 20th century.

Seaside resorts still contain hints of the 'music' of past holidays though these traces face the unenviable challenge of competing with the annoying 'Darling Clementine' ditty favoured by machines in amusement arcades. This symbolic battle is between a precious part of Britain's history and the pressures of success in the modern world.

Pam Alexander *'Coastal Pearls for Economic Success'*

The Coastal South East is characterised by the country's cleanest beaches, major environmental assets such as the Downs and the Channel Coast, and a number of

coastal cities and towns – important assets forming a “string of pearls”, each with their own distinctive character and history. Yet it is also an area of substantial untapped economic potential, and of physical, environmental and community decline.

To address the diverse potentials and challenges facing the Coastal South East, both overall coherence and a variety of locally-driven approaches will be needed to achieve critical mass and local focus. These must address social and environmental frameworks as well as economic opportunities, embracing new interventions beyond the traditional ones of physical renewal and community support.

In the context of the South East Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and its implementation plan a coastal strategy will be developed, due to be finalised in early autumn 2007. The coastal strategy will focus on maximising economic potential and the differing opportunities presented by:

- **Skills-led growth** – removing persistent pockets of low skills attainment, providing an escalator of skills and increasing access to higher education, delivering employment-ready skills for increased productivity and excellence for global competitiveness.
- **Innovation and creativity-driven growth** – maximising the potential of existing creative and technology clusters and recognising the importance of high value manufacturing and knowledge-based supply chains.
- **Economic upgrading** as the basis for growth – enabling cities and major urban areas to reach their potential by investing in key infrastructure to enable housing development that supports economic prosperity.
- **Connectivity** as the basis for growth – addressing the remaining transport bottlenecks on the South Coast, ensuring efficient connections to major ports and maximising the potential of next generation Broadband.
- **Culture and leisure-based growth** – harnessing the power of place and quality of life to stimulate wider economic transformation.

The presentation will introduce the latest thinking on the South East Coastal Strategy focusing on how the economic potential of coastal areas can be released in the

context of smart growth, i.e. not just GVA growth but within a sustainable framework both for communities and for the environment. For this is how we can sustain the high quality of life in the South East which is a real competitive advantage and create towns and cities that people want to live in, that will attract and retain highly skilled workers, and provide family homes. Maintaining and creating quality places is critical to the success of the South East. If growth is to be acceptable and deliverable, we need to make sure that what we do adds to, rather than takes away from, the existing quality of life.

John K. Walton *'The English Seaside Resort: History, Heritage and Regeneration'*

The seaside holiday, in its modern form, is a great British cultural export, part and parcel of industry, empire and the first globalization. It was invented in the eighteenth century, transformed and democratised in the railway age, as resorts proliferated in bewildering variety, and it adapted to changing tastes and times through the first half of the twentieth century, while versions of it proliferated across the globe and mutated in response to varying environments and cultures. It has recently become clear that reports of its death or terminal illness in its original homeland have been greatly exaggerated by media misrepresentation, that there is plenty of vitality remaining in the old beast, and that there is ample scope for reinvention and regeneration at the seaside in the new millennium. Part of this process should involve the recognition of the nostalgia and sense of place and identity that the British seaside has the power to evoke, in all its variety, complexity and distinctiveness, and the importance of the heritage and industrial archaeology of the seaside, broadly defined, from fishing to architecture to entertainment. The purpose of this paper is to develop this agenda and substantiate this argument.

Peter Borsay *'The Seaside Watering-Places of Wales: The Development of the Cambrian Holiday Resort'*

Wales is often characterised as a country of two landscapes; either a land of remote mountains, sparse populations, romantic castles and ancient cultures, or as one of

once green valleys peopled, modernized and physically scarred by the impact of mass migration, mining and manufacture during the Industrial Revolution. Yet it possesses a huge coastline and extensive maritime landscape that has undergone continuous change, sustaining not only ports but also towns of health and pleasure.

This paper will sketch in the history of the seaside resort in Wales from its origins to recent times. As early as 1767 Aberystwyth could be described as 'of late years ... frequented by Ladies and Gentlemen that have experienced the Benefits of the Sea Water', a date that compares not unfavourably with the emergence of many famous English resorts. A key issue is the extent to which Welsh resort development paralleled and dovetailed with that in England and Britain, and the degree to which it followed a distinctive trajectory. The paper will draw and report on the early findings of a research project co-directed by myself, Dr Louise Miskell (Swansea University) and Dr Owen Roberts (University of Wales, Aberystwyth), and funded by the Board of Celtic Studies, on 'Resorts and Ports: Swansea, Tenby and Aberystwyth, 1750-1914'. Though concentrating initially on its three case-study towns a broader aim of the project is to examine seaside towns within the Bristol Channel region as a whole, and with it explore the idea of a resort system. With Swansea, Tenby and Aberystwyth all medieval towns, a further objective of the project is to investigate the impact of long and complex urban heritages on the evolution of Welsh resorts.

Alastair Durie 'Sand, sea and golf; survival at, and of, the Scottish seaside'

The Scottish seaside began as an upper class medical fashion imported from England. But a cure for the wealthy few became translated into health and pleasure for a growing number, and while they shared much in common with their English counterparts, many Scottish resorts soon began to follow their own course. This put as much emphasis on activity beside the sea as in it, an enthusiasm shared by all sections of society. The upper classes drifted abroad, and much of the employed working class was to follow from the 1960s, thanks to cheap flights. However, middle class and professional loyalty remained, and still is remarkably addicted to the traditional formula of golf and sea, at places such as North Berwick and Elie. The mass resorts (of the Clyde, for example) have had a hard time, but there has been a

rediscovery of some, aided by good weather, cleaner sands and waters, the problems of travelling abroad, and new activities such as surfing. The Scottish beach, and seaside culture may well be coming back into vogue. And global warning-? Book now for the Costa Clyde!

Dr Phyllis Starkey *'Tackling the challenges faced by coastal communities'*

Dr Phyllis Starkey, Chair of the Communities and Local Government Committee will be speaking on the findings of the Committee's inquiry into Coastal Towns, which was published in March 2007. The inquiry examined the situation of English seaside towns and government policy affecting them. The Committee concluded that Government is failing to understand their needs, and made a series of recommendations to Government for action to support coastal communities. The Committee's report also highlighted the important role heritage can play in the regeneration of coastal towns.

Deborah Lamb *'Catching the Wave: Regeneration in Historic Coastal Towns'*

Coastal towns have always occupied an important place in English history. Nevertheless, the decline of domestic tourism, the fishing industry and diminishing numbers of jobs associated with naval support have all presented significant problems over the last thirty years. While some coastal towns have adapted well to changing times, in others these problems have manifested themselves in pockets of unemployment and social deprivation.

English Heritage believes that the historic environment has an important role to play in the regeneration of coastal towns and communities, and will be looking at examples where local authorities and others have created successful places through the reuse of historic buildings and areas. We will also be outlining our guidance on regeneration in historic coastal towns.

Derek Harding *'The Seaside Network: Sharing experience and learning from the past'*

This paper will introduce the work of BURA, its membership and its work, with a focus on the Seaside Network. It will explain the challenges presented in the regeneration of seaside towns by the need to balance tradition and heritage with new investment and contemporary experiences. It will draw on case studies and present a practitioner's perspective.

Laurence Bresh *'Putting heritage products at the heart of contemporary marketing'*

This paper will focus on three aspects of marketing resorts:

1. Quality resorts - how quality-assessed accommodation is not enough for increasingly demanding customers.
2. Should national and regional bodies focus on tourism marketing while local authorities invest in the public realm?
3. Green tourism: how travel trends could benefit heritage resorts.

Andy Brown *'Turning the Tide: Enabling Sustainable Seaside Regeneration in the South East'*

Rising to the challenge of regenerating the seaside towns of the South East is not new. Seen in a long-term perspective, indeed, renewal of the seaside town has been as continual as the ebb and flow of their prosperity. The richness of character that has resulted is something we cherish today. What lessons should we learn from past mistakes and what has contributed to successes? How can the historic environment play its part in sustainable regeneration on the next ebb tide of fortune for our seaside towns?

Roger Bowdler *'Coastal Defences: Protecting Seaside Heritage'*

The significance of the English seaside resort is steadily emerging. From an early date, architecture responded in a distinctive manner, producing some of the most characteristic buildings of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Thousands have been designated: but is the heritage of the seaside adequately protected?

Many towns have seen a down-turn in prosperity. The consequences vary – some towns remain surprisingly intact, while others have changed radically and irreversibly. Much is protected, but have we identified the right elements for protection? Are the right buildings listed? Should we protect the more ephemeral structures of entertainment as well? What claim do places of popular fun-seeking have on the solemn realm of statutory designation? We are entering a new period of heritage protection, with new legislation promised by the Government and a new agenda of strategic designation opening up. What should we do about the seaside?

Peter Murphy *'Managing the Coastal Historic Environment through the 21st Century'*

This paper will begin with a brief review of coastal historic assets – from foreshore exposures of Lower Palaeolithic deposits (from c. 700,000 years BP) through to structures of the Cold War – including intertidal and offshore sites related to seaside towns. Progress on English Heritage's *Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment Survey* programme will be outlined. This survey programme is intended to enhance the National Monuments Record so as to provide an information base for future historic asset management. Defra's *Shoreline Management Plan (SMP)* review will be considered and the implications for the historic environment of the four SMP Policy Options ('Hold the Line', 'Advance the Line', 'Managed Realignment' and 'No Active Intervention') will be presented. Potential and actual climate change impacts will be reviewed in the light of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change report (February 2007) [and also the UK Climate Impact Programme 2007 report, if it is published by October]. In the context of this conference, the depletion and ultimate loss of sand and shingle beaches through the 21st century (a climate change impact not widely talked about, but very relevant here) will be considered. Mitigation of the impacts of 'natural' processes and shoreline management schemes on

archaeological sites and historic buildings will be discussed, and examples presented. The need for an EH coastal Risk Assessment will be emphasised and the regrettable, but inevitable, necessity of developing rational exit strategies for coastal historic assets that will be unsustainable later in the 21st century will be proposed.

Gary Winter '*Health and the Development of Seaside Resorts*'

This paper will investigate the role that the pursuit of good health has had in influencing resort development and the architecture it has produced. It will consider changing attitudes to climatic health practices and how these have affected the infrastructure associated with health at the English seaside resort. Finally, the paper will briefly consider examples of foreign resorts that continue to embrace climatic health tourism.

The desire for good health was the prime motivation for the establishment and development of England's seaside resorts. The scientific rediscovery of bathing in sea water emerged during the late 17th century and examples of sea bathing were occurring in the early 18th century. Facilities were soon provided to enhance, codify and profit by the experience.

Resort guidebooks consistently associated good health and wellbeing with place. The natural and built environments were expounded as reasons to make the effort to travel to, and spend time at, seaside resorts. Despite leisure and entertainment superseding health as the primary activity at seaside resorts, scientific discovery and the cyclical nature of attitudes to health ensured that the seaside environment continued to support individual and institutional health care into the 20th century. With the decline in the promotion of climatic treatments in the second half of the 20th century, and the general improvement of public health, one of the founding motivations to go to the seaside has been all but lost, as have growing numbers of health-related buildings.

However, health tourism continues to be hugely popular worldwide, and thalassotherapy is particularly widespread on the coasts of France. Could a reinvention of health tourism contribute to the regeneration of England's seaside resorts?

Fred Gray '*The Challenge of the Seaside Pier: past, present and future*'

The seaside pleasure pier is the most extreme and iconic of British seaside architecture. In the past it represented the mastery of Victorian society over nature and the wonders of modern design and construction on the severe and dangerous coastal edge. And yet there was also an important symbolism associated with the pier, sometimes suggesting the might and mystery of the British Empire and, as a platform from which to view the horizon, a structure allowing people to reflect on themselves, other places and other times.

Today, although the mystery of piers has been transformed, the structures retain their symbolism. A decayed pier may be used to represent a decadent, dangerous and declining contemporary society. Piers, too, are emblematic of the threats and opportunities of the contemporary British seaside. Today, there is ambivalence and dithering towards piers and, indeed, the seaside and its architecture more generally. A recurring British theme represents piers as architecture of the past, best reinterpreted as heritage and at worst as nostalgia.

Brighton's West Pier, over the last generation the most recorded, debated, pictured and radically transformed of all British piers, captures these issues and debates. In one contemporary view the structure 'was the most important pleasure pier ever built in terms of its climactic and seminal engineering design, its architectural ambition and as an enduring social symbol of Brighton as the acme of seaside resorts'. A contrasting perspective sees the present-day fate of the West Pier as 'a parable for everything that is wrong with Britain'. There are comparisons and counter-arguments

to be made, however, with the success and dominance of Brighton's Palace Pier – one of the most popular free tourist attractions in Britain, with proposals for 21st century piers and alternative iconic structures in the resort, and the use of new piers as a vehicle of reunification and regeneration on the Baltic coast of Germany.

Valther Balducci *'The Era of the "colonia di vacanza" in Italy: an architectural and social study.'*

Appearing first during the second half of the 19th century, the 'colonie di vacanza' have for more than 100 years populated not only the Italian landscape with strange buildings, but also the imagination of children. The 'vacanza in colonia' was a form of tourism specifically aimed at children, created for a variety of medical, educational and political reasons. Its history, both social and architectural, is complex, and reflects closely the changing history of Italian society.

From the second half of the 19th century the growth of 'colonie di vacanza' echoed the political development of the Italian state: the philanthropic movement of the "ospizi marini", founded by Dr Giuseppe Barellai, was the first of many organisations concerned with children and their moral and physical health, and it promoted the construction of buildings similar in form to schools or hospitals.

The fascist regime centralised the regulation and organization of 'colonie di vacanza'; their new goal became preventive rather than curative. Through activities in these institutions diseases would be prevented and the Italian 'race' would be improved. Buildings record this transformation: internally a greater prominence was given to communal spaces where regiments of children would parade.

After the war, with the disappearance of the tuberculosis patients and the cessation of the need for political propaganda, the 'colonia di vacanza' became a feature of popular tourism and its architectural expression often became standardised, low-quality buildings. It became a place for experimenting with new educational methods

centred on increasing the participation of the child and increasingly sought to counter the previous, repressive character of such institutions.

'Coastal Treasures INTERREG Project' Elizabeth Justome (Chercheur associé au Service régional de l'Inventaire, Picardie (France) and Frank Rallings (Head of Planning, Rother District Council)

As a result of European funding via INTERREG III this Anglo French project has raised awareness of the rich coastal architectural heritage along the Channel coast in East Sussex and the Nord/Pas de Calais and Somme areas of northern France.

The project area stretched from Dunkerque to Mers les Bains on the French side and involved the towns of Hastings, St Leonards and Bexhill on Sea in England. The objective of the project was to study and raise awareness of the coastal architectural qualities of the English and French towns to promote tourism and economic regeneration.

The project consisted of the following initiatives to promote coastal architecture

- A number of decorative lighting schemes of buildings in Bexhill on Sea and Hastings
- An international website promoting coastal architecture and tourism and displaying project data <http://www.coastaltreasures.eu/>
- An international photographic competition to promote coastal architecture
- Architectural audits of coastal towns in France and England
- Conferences and seminars on coastal architecture in France and England
- A film and promotional material relating to architectural tourism in the French and English coastal towns

James McVeigh *'The role of the arts in resort regeneration'*

Regeneration is not simply about bricks and mortar. It's about the physical, social and economic well being of an area; it's about the quality of life in our communities.

The place of the arts in creating living, vibrant communities is now widely understood. The arts have a key role in envisioning, designing and bringing creative and imaginative propositions to locations, galvanising community engagement, and creating a sense of identity and pride in communities. In addition arts and creativity play a significant part in injecting innovation and enterprise into the economy, with the creative industries already accounting for more than 5% of gross domestic product (GDP). The arts have always played a role in coastal locations and as we consider the future, the very process of artistic creation, collaboration and co-production raises fascinating new possibilities for the role of the artist and the nature of our seaside locations.

John K Walton and Jason Wood *'Reputation and Regeneration: History and heritage in the Re-making of Blackpool'*

In the last decades of the nineteenth century Blackpool became the world's first working-class seaside resort, and in the inter-war years it acquired a national visitor catchment area and became a unique centre of popular entertainment. This entailed immense investment in infrastructure (almost all by the local authority), transport facilities, entertainment facilities funded by the 'shareholder democracies' of big limited companies (three piers, the Winter Gardens, the Tower, the Pleasure Beach and much else besides), and accommodation (5000 boarding-houses at the 1921 census).

Blackpool's heyday came in the 1950s and early 1960s, although its entertainments failed to move with the times; and it acquired an equivocal reputation, loved by its loyal customers from industrial Britain but sometimes suffering the condescension of politicians and journalists who attended the party and trade union conferences at the resort. It continued to reinvent itself successfully during difficult times in the late twentieth century, but fell into the difficulties that were common across much of the popular British seaside at the turn of the millennium. This paper looks at Blackpool's efforts to regenerate itself, combining innovation and the search for new markets with an appeal to tradition, heritage and identity, as it develops a heritage strategy, seeks inscription as a World Heritage Site, trades on the industrial archaeology of

the holiday industry and tries to generate income streams for regeneration through casino gambling. It also investigates conflicting media attitudes to these strategies and to the changing nature of Blackpool itself as a seaside resort at the beginning of the new millennium.