

Molly Blair
Mr Charlwood
9/10/02

“The traditional British seaside resort is in the danger of extinction”

Analyse and evaluate the “validity” of this assertion.

What do I think of as the traditional British seaside resort? Crowded beaches, with screaming children, buckets and spades, candy floss and donkey rides. A holiday by the sea has been a traditional break from the bustling city life since the 1840's, before which it was exclusive to the middle and upper classes. People could escape from their working lives- to experience the fresh air and relaxed atmosphere in places such as Bournemouth and Brighton.

Blackpool also was a definite traditional seaside resort. After the railway arrived in 1846, Blackpool became an easily accessible destination only an hour or so from the smoggy cities such as Manchester and Bolton. With the arrival of cars and coaches Blackpool became even more thriving; by 1980 it was attracting over a million visitors every year. The 11km of white sandy beach was one attraction along with the famous tower, the pleasure beach and the piers. Another resort which shared this huge popularity, even with the royals, was Southend on Sea. From the 1800's onwards it was a popular destination for the tourists, with the beach, the amusement arcades and the longest pleasure pier in the world. It's within close proximity to London, and with the railway being built in 1854 it became even more accessible, throughout the 20th century its popularity continued with working and middle class day trippers and in the 1960's and 1970's the bank holiday invasions began.

However these two resorts, along with many others have been hit by decline over the last few decades. They have been overtaken by tourists moving further from home. Cheap package holidays to destinations in the sun have proved too much of a temptation and today as many Britons take their main holiday abroad as do within Britain. The general public are choosing more adventurous holidays, further a field, they are much more aware of the possibilities they have through advertising and travel agencies. Also today's wealthier population have taken to spending their money to pamper themselves, which so often involves lounging in the guaranteed sunshine of the Mediterranean or some other foreign destination.

The number of visitors spending time and money at Blackpool has fallen dramatically over the last 30 years. Families have stopped visiting and the tourists are falling into the ranks of “clubbers” and old age pensioners. The clubbers are bringing with them disruption, noise, violence, drugs and a general feeling of unrest and disturbance, this in turn is deterring the old age pensioners visiting, who are trying to find some peace and quiet and enjoy romantic strolls along the shore. This has caused the halt of the cash flowing into the area, so hotels are downgrading to hostels and restaurants are being replaced with fast-food joints. The beach has become littered and not desirable for children to play on.

The social status of Southend on Sea has plummeted noticeably through the ages; the once fashionable resort has changed to the tacky stereotypical seaside resort. With the influx of Mods and Rockers “coming off the trains and having to have their shoe laces and belts confiscated by the police to restrict the violence”. Since the decline of the resort it has also become the “dumping ground” for refugees. Southend

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has an estimate of 6-7000 Kosovan refugees and 3-4000 Londoners sent down by social services. The reputation of the refugees has led to a further decline and an even

more dramatic drop in visitors. The only visitors it now receives are the occasional day trippers- conceding to only do day trips as they don't like "the sound of the place at night".

However, the seaside resort is not in total decline, over the last few years the government has made a stand and the regeneration process is underway in many areas. They are attempting to bring the resorts back onto their feet.

"We have turned our backs on our heritage in a lot of these places, and many fell into decay. But now, people are rediscovering the rich history associated with the seaside holiday resorts" (*Steve Hayler, of Canterbury Church university college*)

Local towns, local councils and businesses are cleaning up beaches, improving facilities and rejuvenating traditional attractions. This year a record number of the UK's beaches were awarded the "blue flag" for meeting exacting standards of cleanliness and management demanded by the European clean-up scheme. 57 beaches made the grade, compared to 41 last year. Hopefully this is attracting people back to the beaches. Some areas are taking more drastic measures e.g. Newquay and Bournemouth with the prospect of building an artificial reef that would guarantee bigger waves. This would boost the already booming trend of surfers flocking to the beaches to catch the waves. This year an expected 100,000 are expected to turn up at the annual "Rip Curl Newquay Boardmasters festival".

Blackpool is considering a complete change in image. To transform the Lancashire town into a British version of Las Vegas.

"We see huge opportunity; we want to see a year-round resort with year-round jobs that can be the centre of a larger regenerated Blackpool" (*Alan Cazill the economic development officer at Blackpool Council*).

However some resorts are taking the more conventional route, just trying to improve on what they've got. For example Brighton's west pier ravaged by fire, was for decades a ghostly remnant of the past slowly falling into the sea. As part of the refurbishment, the underwater supports have been shored up and the decaying pier is floodlit at night.

True the "Traditional" British seaside resort may be in danger of extinction, but in no way is the new and different seaside resort dying out its only just getting started. Despite the lure of foreign climate and the growth of cheap package holidays, this year for the first time in long time Britons are choosing once more for the pebbly shores close to home. The number of people heading for the seaside for four nights or more- 30 million a year- is the same as in 1965. Some 110 million day-trippers also make for the coast each year.

In conclusion: has the British seaside resort come to the end of the line? Do people only want the guaranteed sun found in Europe and other countries? Or do people look for more in a beach holiday. Seaside may never return to how they were, but that does not mean they will die out, they may return in a brand new regenerated new fashion.