

Seaside holidays in the past

A selection of objects, photographs and information which relate to holidays in the past, with particular reference to Walney Island.

Links to QCA schemes of work

Unit 3- What were seaside holidays like in the past?

Unit 11- What was it like for children living in Victorian Britain?

Geography Unit 4- Going to the seaside

Seaside Holidays in the past

Today many people in Britain go to other countries for their summer holiday. In the past mainly well off people in Britain would head to the coast for a holiday by the sea. In 1871 Bank Holidays were introduced and this allowed working people to escape to the seaside using the recently opened rail network. Many people wanted to leave the polluted cities behind, as sea bathing was seen to be very good for your health. The trains were often full and the stations busy. Unless they were wealthy, few people stayed overnight in the hotels on the sea front as they could not afford to. During their time at the seaside not many people would swim as they didn't know how to, but paddling could be enjoyed by everyone. People paid to get changed in wooden huts called bathing machines and these were wheeled into the sea where the bather could step directly into the water. Most people did not have costumes to wear, so many rented them and some people made their own. Holiday camps also became very popular, where whole families could stay in the same place as each other and enjoy the activities on the site. The increasing availability of cheap package holidays abroad from the 1960s onwards led to a decline in the number of holidaymakers choosing British seaside resorts as their holiday destination.

The photographs on the CD and in the loan box are all from Walney Island and date as far back as the late 1890s. These show the popularity of Walney Island to Barrovians eager to enjoy the delights of the seaside.

Parasols

The parasol was an **important** accessory for Victorian women. Parasols **protected** the lady's delicate **facial skin** from the sun's rays so that she could maintain her '**peaches and cream**'



Complexion. **Tanned skin** was **not** a desired look for Victorian women, as this denoted a woman of **work** and not one of **leisure**. Parasols also served as an elegant **fashion accessory**. Parasol canopy tops were sometimes made from **satin**, lined in **silk** and were often trimmed in **lace**. They could be in many **different colours** and made to match a lady's outfit for **special** occasions. Parasol **handles** could be made from **horn, silver, ivory or ebony**. Many Victorian ladies adorned their parasols with **silk cords, bows and tassels**. The two parasols in the box are dated **1920s to 1930s**.

Punch and Judy

From Victorian times **Punch and Judy** has been associated with the **seaside resorts**, although Mr. Punch dates back to the **17th century** and was known as **Punchinello**. **Pietro Gimonde** an Italian puppet player travelled to England and from Punch's first appearance he



was a hit with the general public. For **three centuries** Mr Punch entertained the general public travelling the length and breadth of the country, but in Victorian times Mr Punch became a **glove puppet** instead of a

marionette and the street Punch and Judy show was born. When the **railways** brought travel to the masses and took **town crowds to the seaside** Mr Punch went too, making himself part of traditional **beach fun** along with **sand castles, paddling and donkey rides**. With the gradual **decline** of the **traditional British seaside holiday** the Punch and Judy man has found it **harder and harder** to make a living from a **seaside pitch**. However there has been **no decline** in the **popularity** of the Punch show and Punch performers are more likely to be found at a **child's birthday party**, at a **village fete** or in a **shopping precinct** than they are to be seen at the **end of the pier**.

Boy's Bathing Costume This is an **accurate replica** of a **1920s** boy's **one-piece** bathing costume from an original included in the Pickford House Museum's collection at Derby.

During the 18th and 19th Centuries men wore a **woollen leotard-type** arrangement that showed arms and the lower leg. Showing the **chest** at the seaside was **not allowed**. Wool was used because it didn't become

see-through when wet, however it did **cling** and **hug** the body. By the late 19th century men's swimsuits started to show more leg and at the beachside had even started to show some chest, with the shorts design of today beginning to make an appearance. During the **20th Century** men's bathing suits shorts got **shorter**. A specialised swimsuit company called Speedo introduced the Y-front brief swimsuits for men. This became the fashion for a number of years until the surfing culture saw the rise of long shorts again.



Ladies Swimming Costume This is an **original 1960s** ladies swimsuit, made from a mix of **nylon** and **stretch** material known as **Lastex**. This was very different to the swimsuits of Victorian times where ladies wore **bloomers** and a **wool over-dress**. The dress ends



were sometimes **weighed down** to stop them rising up upon entering the water. In the early **1900s** ladies grew tired of these **heavy woollen swimsuits**. Fashion designers produced a leotard-style top, made of tighter fitting material.

Accessories included shorts, bathing socks and a hat. By the **1920s** the swimsuit became tighter and consisted of a short skirt that left the legs bare. This short skirt was abandoned by the **1940s** and a tank-top style with tight, belted shorts was introduced. The **1950s** then saw the emergence of the bikini.

Tin bucket and spade

Wealthy families began to visit the **seaside** in the 18th century, but it wasn't until the 19th century that the **seaside holiday**, as we know it, developed. It was made possible by the **expansion** of the **railways** in the 1840s and 1850s, which made long distance travel **affordable** for most people. Initially the **first** toys for the beach were made of **wood**, but soon **tin** became more common, especially for buckets as it gave more opportunity for colourful **patterns** and **pictures**. Today most seaside toys are made of **plastic**, which means they no longer become rusty.



Glass bottles

Both of these bottles were made by **Marsh's**, a local firm that made **soft drinks** and were famous for their '**sass**,' made from a **secret recipe** which was the result of years of **experimenting** by the Marsh family. The **formula** passed into the hands of the **Brady family**, [famous for their haulage business] who took over the firm. In years gone by **Marsh's wagons** were pulled by **black and white horses** and when they switched to lorries these were **painted** in **black and white**. Older people still dream about that never-to-be forgotten taste and live in hope that it might come back on the market. The pop was last made in the **1990s**. Marsh's **Vimto** was also made to a **secret recipe** and has been around since 1908. It is made from a mix of grape, blackcurrant and raspberry along with a secret blend of 23 fruit essences, herbs and spices.



Glass penny lick

This is a **replica** glass Penny Lick. Before the invention of the cone, **ice cream** was **licked** out of a small glass known as a **Penny Lick**. The ice cream man would sell an ice cream in a Penny Lick and then **collect** the Penny Lick back in. This glass cone would be **washed** and **re used**. In **1926** the Penny Lick was **banned** for **health reasons**.



Dinky Toy Bus This Dinky toy bus has been hand painted **red** with a **blue stripe**. It was originally painted **green**, and is a 'Half Cab Coach'. It was made between **1948 and 1952** by the company Meccano Ltd.

Tri-ang model railway coach This is a **plastic** model of a brake passenger coach in Great Western Region colours, **brown and cream**. It was made in the **1960s**, by the company **Tri-ang**.

Dinky Toy Black Car

The **first Dinky Toy** cars were sold in **1933**, however they were not called Dinky Toys until **1934**. Before that they were called **Modelled Miniatures**. The model cars were made in **France** and in **Liverpool** by the **Meccano Company**. This Dinky Toy car is an American car called the 'Studebaker State Commander'. This model was made around **1939**.



2A Folding Autographic Brownie

An American called **George Eastman** and his company the Eastman Kodak Company made the **first simple, affordable** camera. This company still makes cameras today. The first cameras were quite **expensive** and not many people could afford them, so George Eastman introduced the **Brownie**. The name **Brownie** came from the characters in a children's storybook, which was popular in North America. This Brownie was made between **1917 to 1927**. The round ends of the camera indicate it must date **after 1917** and not before. Autographic cameras were special as **dates and names** could be included on the **negatives**.



The Dacora camera

A German man called Herr Dangelmaier started the Dacora Company. It all began in an **attic** after the end of the war. Herr Dangelmaier would often make **smuggling trips** into Switzerland to get parts for the cameras. The **Dacora Company** joined up with an English company called **Ilford Cameras**, and together they made and sold Dacora cameras. Most cameras were made in **Germany** and then inspected and put into boxes in **Ilford, England**. This camera was made in **1952** and was given to the museum by Mr Roberts who owns a camera shop in Barrow.



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