

Seaside 6 - Piers

Learning Objectives

- Look at how seaside piers developed from the 1860s to the 1960s
- Develop children's research skills in interpreting historical images, in particular with a view to recognising which are older and which are more recent

Sources



Source 1. Men, women and children on Bognor pier, c1865



Source 2. Opening of the Pier at Bognor Regis, June 1865



Source 3. Old Pier, Worthing, c1870



Source 4. Littlehampton Pier and Harbour, 1898



Source 5. Worthing Pier, Worthing, c1900



Source 6. Pier and Pavilion, Bognor Regis, c1903



Source 7. People sit on the pier, Worthing, c1900



Source 8. Pier and lighthouse, Littlehampton, c1910

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Source 9. Bognor Regis pier and bathing machines, c1921



Source 10. Littlehampton pier seen from West Beach, c1925



Source 11. People walking and sitting on Worthing pier, c1958



Source 12. Pavilion with sun lounge on Worthing pier, c1947



Source 13. Description of a children playing on the pier during their seaside holiday in Worthing in 1911.

Sources 1, 2, 3 and 4

The first piers were of a simple, jetty-like design, with wooden platforms supported by iron girders. They were built for "promenading", places where people could walk out over the sea to "take the air".

Some piers, such as those at Bognor and Worthing, had toll huts at the seaward end where people would pay a fee to go onto the pier (visible in Sources 1, 2 and 3).

In Source 3, note the horse-drawn carriages and goat-carts for hire waiting for passengers in the road on the right.

Littlehampton pier, although small, was situated at the entrance to a busy port, and had the added attraction of a lighthouse (Source 4).

Sources 5, 7 and 11 - Worthing and 12

In 1884, the rather basic toll hut on Worthing pier was replaced by two more decorative kiosks at the pier entrance (Source 5).

From 1887 to 1889, major reconstruction work was carried out, enlarging the pier and adding a 650-seat South Pavilion for concerts and other entertainments at the seaward end (Sources 5 and 7).

A landing-stage was also built (visible on the far right in Sources 5 and 7) from which people could take cruises in a paddle-steamer.

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TEACHERS' NOTES

Sources 5, 7 and 11 - Worthing and 12

In 1913, Worthing pier was wrecked by a storm though the South Pavilion survived. The pier was rebuilt and reopened in March 1914.

In 1925-26, the kiosks at the pier entrance were demolished and a new Pavilion, incorporating a large theatre, was built at the landward end (Source 11).

In 1933, the South Pavilion was destroyed by fire and replaced with a new structure (Source 12).

Sources 6 and 9 - Bognor Regis

In 1900, a pavilion was added to the seaward end of Bognor Pier, and in 1903 a landing stage was built (both visible in Source 6).

The shore end of the pier was widened in 1910-11, and a theatre, cinema and shopping arcade were added (Source 9).

The pavilion at the seaward end was destroyed by a storm in 1965, and a further section was demolished by storms in 1999.

Sources 4, 8 and 10 - Littlehampton

The original piers on both sides of the Rive Arun at Littlehampton were built in the early 1730s to improve access to the harbour by preventing shingle from silting up the river. They were extended in 1793.

By the late 1800s decking had been added to the east pier and walking on the pier was a popular pastime for visitors to the resort (Source 4). Although various repairs and alterations were carried out over the years, extensions were not possible due to its position on the river. The pier retained its character of a "working" structure and was not developed as a pleasure pier in the way that Worthing and Bognor piers had been.

Source 13

Source 13 is a description of a young girl and her brother and sister playing on the pier during their seaside holiday in Worthing in 1911. This was written in 1979-80 by Florence Alice Holloway (1901-1994).

Other extracts from Florence's memoirs can be found in "Getting there", "On the beach", and "In the water". The complete text of her description of the family's holidays in Worthing can be found in the Source Gallery (search by keyword "seaside" and select document titled "Florence Holloway's holiday - at the seaside").

[To find additional material related to this topic, go to the Source Gallery and search by keyword 'piers', or click on 'Extra material' in the topic list.]