

Trade and Industry: Activity 4 - Seaside Resorts

TEACHERS' NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Understand the idea of the seaside as a "watering place" that people visited to improve their health by bathing in sea-water, taking exercise and breathing in the fresh air; and that this led to a growing "tourist trade" in Worthing and other West Sussex seaside towns.

Cross-curricular links

- literacy (vocabulary, comprehension)

Sources



Source 1a. Engraving of Worthing beach and Royal Baths, 1849



Source 1b. Close-up detail of 1a



Source 2. Engraving of Worthing pier and beach with bathing machines, 1866



Source 3. Photographic postcard of Worthing pier and beach with bathing machines, c1900



Source 4a. Advertisement for West Worthing baths, Long's Worthing Directory, 1892



Source 4b. Audio version of 4a.



Source 5a. Advertising card for Harmer's Royal Baths, c1860



Source 5b. Audio version of 5a.



Source 6a. Extracts from guide books of 1839, 1863 and 1900



Source 6b. Sound recording of 6a

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Sources 1a and 1b

This 1849 engraving shows visitors on the beach with the Royal Baths and hotel in the background. The closeup detail shows an invalid being pushed in a bath-chair, which is being steered by the invalid with a long handle, while the owner or operator of the bath-chair provides the pushing power. In resorts where many of the visitors would have been in frail health, bath-chairs could be rented like taxis.

Note the formal clothes being worn by most people on the beach - long skirts, suits and jackets, hats - in contrast to today's casual wear.

Sources 2 and 3

These two views of the beach in 1866 and c1900 have many similarities: there are people walking on the beach, boats, bathing machines, and the pier. In the later picture, the pier has been enlarged and has a pavilion built at the seaward end (mentioned in the later guide book extract).

Bathing machines were in use from the mid 18th century into the early 20th century. People hired them to use as private changing rooms to get into their bathing suits and then back into their clothes. The bathing machines could also be moved up and down the beach as the tide came in or went out, so that people could get into the sea without having to walk on the beach where others could see them in their bathing costumes. There were separate machines for men and women who would bathe on different parts of the beach.

Sources 4 and 5

The 1862 advertisement for the Royal Baths mentions several different kinds of bath (hot, cold, shower, douche, vapour) all believed to have different health-giving properties. The Royal Baths would not have included a swimming pool, but in 1892 the West Worthing baths offered swimming in cold or tepid water as well as hot, cold, salt or fresh baths, and "ozone baths for rheumatism".

[Ozone is a gas formed when oxygen and ultraviolet light interact, and was first discovered in 1840 in Germany.

Victorians believed ozone was present in the air at the seaside and had "vital powers" that could be used to treat various diseases. They also believed that bathing in "ozone baths" had the same health-giving properties.

The first ozone generator was constructed in Germany in 1857. Ozone baths for invalids were prepared by using an ozone generator to pump ozone into the water.]

Tennis and skating were also available at West Worthing.

Source 6a

Worthing was popular as a seaside resort in 1839 because it had a flat, sandy beach for riding or walking; was sheltered from the cold winds; there were fashionable hotels and baths; and it was relatively close to London.

By 1900 there were many new attractions including a pier, pavilion, band, and skating rink. It was also easier for people to visit because of the railway service from London and the introduction of cheap "pleasure tickets".

Note that the guide books refer to "bathing places" and "watering places" rather than a seaside resort - illustrating the importance of sea-bathing for health which was the main reason early visitors came to the seaside. The clean seaside air was also recommended for invalids as being much healthier than the dirty and diseased air in London and other large cities.