

20th Century Sparks!

The Seaside

'Kiss me Quick!'

During the early part of the twentieth century, cheap rail travel and the introduction of 'annual leave' during the working week, helped to create the popular seaside holiday.

On this page you can explore local memories of the seaside holidays.



"West Pier and Sea Wall, Brighton, c. 1905"
Brighton & Hove in Pictures

To the seaside

It seemed miles and miles, till we reached the Palace Pier where our journey ended. I walked along the sea front by the railings, smelt the sea air and noticed all that was going on.

The vendors on the beach with papers, and plates of shell fish, stalls selling Brighton Rocks, people with "kiss me quick" hats, everyone enjoying themselves. Even those asleep in the rows of deckchairs were loving every minute.

I thought about all I had seen as we traveled back. My mind was full: the boatmen plying for hire - I'll go for a boat trip one day; I'll also buy a Brighton Rock to take back proving that I had been.

George Noakes - To be a Farmer's Boy

Seafront entertainment

Black minstrels played their banjos at low tide on the sands, and would get the children to join in the choruses; I remember "Oh Moana" and the actions.

People on the Pier would throw pennies down to the sands, and the boys would scramble for them. All sorts of vendors were on the beach with newspapers, Brighton Rock and the Whelk Stalls where one could buy a small plate of whelks, cockles, mussels or winkles, and one could leave the plate on the beach to be collected.



The Seaside

'Kiss me Quick!' - continued

Between Palace Pier and Black Rock was to be seen the sand artist who had his square of sand on the beach but near enough for the promenader's to view his work.

Plenty of deck chairs for 2d. but one could sit on a wooden seat which sat five persons for 1d. each. And on Dalton's Beach kites would be flying, their strings attached to the back of one of these seats.

On the Promenade were the goat carts and large carriages which were pulled manually between the piers, where ladies holding parasols could ride in comfort.

Sandwich board men would walk behind each other, inviting you to "Dine at Joes", or some other place they wished to advertise.

Men on the beach would ply for hire of boats, for a jolly ride out, mostly row boats, but there was "The Skylark" between the piers which was motorised, and I had a ride in it, while a man with a concertina sat in the bows playing "Over the Waves".

Daisy Noakes - The Town Beehive

Putting up the holiday children

For a number of years our parents - along with many others in the village - boarded holiday children. These children came from the poorer parts of London to have two weeks of country air. Some of the children loved the change from their normal life and they got into all sorts of mischief (encouraged by us).

Others seemed to find the quietness frightening and were homesick, and they only brightened up the day that they were to return to their own homes.

Doris Hall - Growing up in Ditchling