



Historic England

Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset: Historical and architectural development

Allan Brodie and Johanna Roethe

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Historical and architectural development

Volume 1: Report

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SUMMARY

This report describes the historical and architectural development of Weston-super-Mare as a town and as a popular seaside resort. It traces its development from a small village in the 18th century to the substantial conurbation that exists today and includes discussions of its interesting housing stock, its churches, schools and main industries. Foremost among these is the tourism industry and the varied facilities and attractions of the town over the past 200 years are described. A gazetteer of the streets that exist in the historic heart of the town accompanies this report. The research project was undertaken as part of the Heritage Action Zone initiative and also resulted in the book *Weston-super-Mare: the town and its seaside heritage* (2019).

CONTRIBUTORS

Fieldwork and research were undertaken by Allan Brodie and Johanna Roethe of the South West Partnerships Team. Photography is by Steven Baker and aerial photography by Damian Grady. The maps are by Amy Wright and Sharon Soutar. Unless otherwise credited, the copyright for all illustrations belongs to Historic England.

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DATE OF RESEARCH

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Cover image: Aerial photo of Weston-super-Mare, looking north towards Worlebury Hill, taken on 16 August 2016 (HEA 33066/023)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
MAPS	2
EARLY WESTON	6
VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN WESTON	30
WESTON-SUPER-MARE 1914-1945	127
WESTON-SUPER-MARE 1945-2000	147
WESTON-SUPER-MARE: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE	158
BIBLIOGRAPHY	165
ENDNOTES	174

INTRODUCTION

In March 2017 Weston-super-Mare was chosen as one of the ten successful bids for support from Historic England through the creation of Heritage Action Zones (HAZ). The first tranche of HAZs will see Historic England investing £6million to help to bring these ten historic places back to life and to stimulate economic growth. As well as offering funding, Historic England is supporting local authorities by using its expertise to offer advice and training about repairs and finding new uses for buildings. It has also been making improvements to entries on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) to clarify where change may be possible.

Historic England has also been using its research expertise and resources to support HAZs. As part of the Great Weston Heritage Action Zone, research was carried out into the history and architecture of the town. This culminated in a book entitled *Weston-super-Mare: the town and its seaside heritage*, which was published in March 2019.¹ Behind this publication was a substantial body of research and a lengthy gazetteer of the historic streets of the town, which are being made available through this research report and the accompanying gazetteer.

MAPS



Figure 1: Map of Weston-super-Mare showing key locations mentioned in this report (© Crown Copyright (and database rights) 2019. OS100024900)

Key to figure 1:

- 1 Birnbeck Pier
- 2 Worlebury Hill
- 3 The Chalet, 71 South Road
- 4 Town Quarry
- 5 Atlantic Road
- 6 Anchor Head
- 7 Claremont Crescent
- 8 Manilla Crescent
- 9 Glentworth Bay/Marine Lake
- 10 Knightstone Island
- 11 Montpelier
- 12 Trewartha Park
- 13 Cemetery
- 14 Grand Atlantic Hotel
- 15 Open-Air Pool
- 16 Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church
- 17 Ellenborough Park and Crescent
- 18 Sanatorium



Figure 2: Map of central Weston-super-Mare showing key locations mentioned in this report (© Crown Copyright (and database rights) 2019. OS100024900)

Key to figure 2:

- 19 Shrubbery Estate
- 20 83-5 Upper Church Road
- 21 All Saints Church
- 22 Landemann Circus
- 23 Royal Crescent
- 24 Oriel Terrace
- 25 Parish Church of St John the Baptist
- 26 Grove Park
- 27 Baptist Chapel, Bristol Road Lower
- 28 Victoria Buildings
- 29 Leeves's Cottage
- 30 School of Science and Art
- 31 Blakehay Theatre
- 32 Playhouse
- 33 Royal Hotel
- 34 Waterloo Street and the Boulevard
- 35 The former Queen Alexandra Hospital
- 36 Library and Museum
- 37 Winter Gardens
- 38 The former British School (now 1-6 Jasmine Court)
- 39 Weston Museum
- 40 Grand Pier
- 41 Site of the former Assembly Rooms
- 42 Former Commercial Cable Company office
- 43 Alexandra Parade, site of the former railway station
- 44 Odeon Cinema
- 45 Public Toilets
- 46 Dolphin Square
- 47 Emmanuel Church
- 48 Town Hall
- 49 Board School, Walliscote Road
- 50 Magistrates' Court
- 51 Victoria Methodist Church and Whitecross House
- 52 Railway Station and Signal Box

EARLY WESTON

The Origins of Weston-super-Mare

Weston-super-Mare first developed on land at the base of Worlebury Hill, a short distance inland from the sea. The hill was used for grazing animals, at least until the early 19th century, and early maps such as a copy of an 1801 map in North Somerset Local Studies Library suggest that four large fields (West Tynning, West Field, Tor Field and East Field) were arranged along the lower slopes.² To the south was a large expanse of marshy land and moorland, separated from the sea by sand tots, the local dialect term for sand hills. Located on the River Severn estuary, Weston-super-Mare enjoys, or perhaps endures, the second highest tidal range in the world, meaning that because of its shallow, sandy beach, the sea can appear very distant at low tide. Low tide at Weston-super-Mare dramatically increases the area of the beach, though much of the land uncovered is unsuitable to walk on. A 1913 guidebook noted that 'The Sands are to many Weston's chief attraction'. However it then went on to record that 'Beyond the sand is a considerable expanse of exceptionally sticky mud' (Figure 3).³

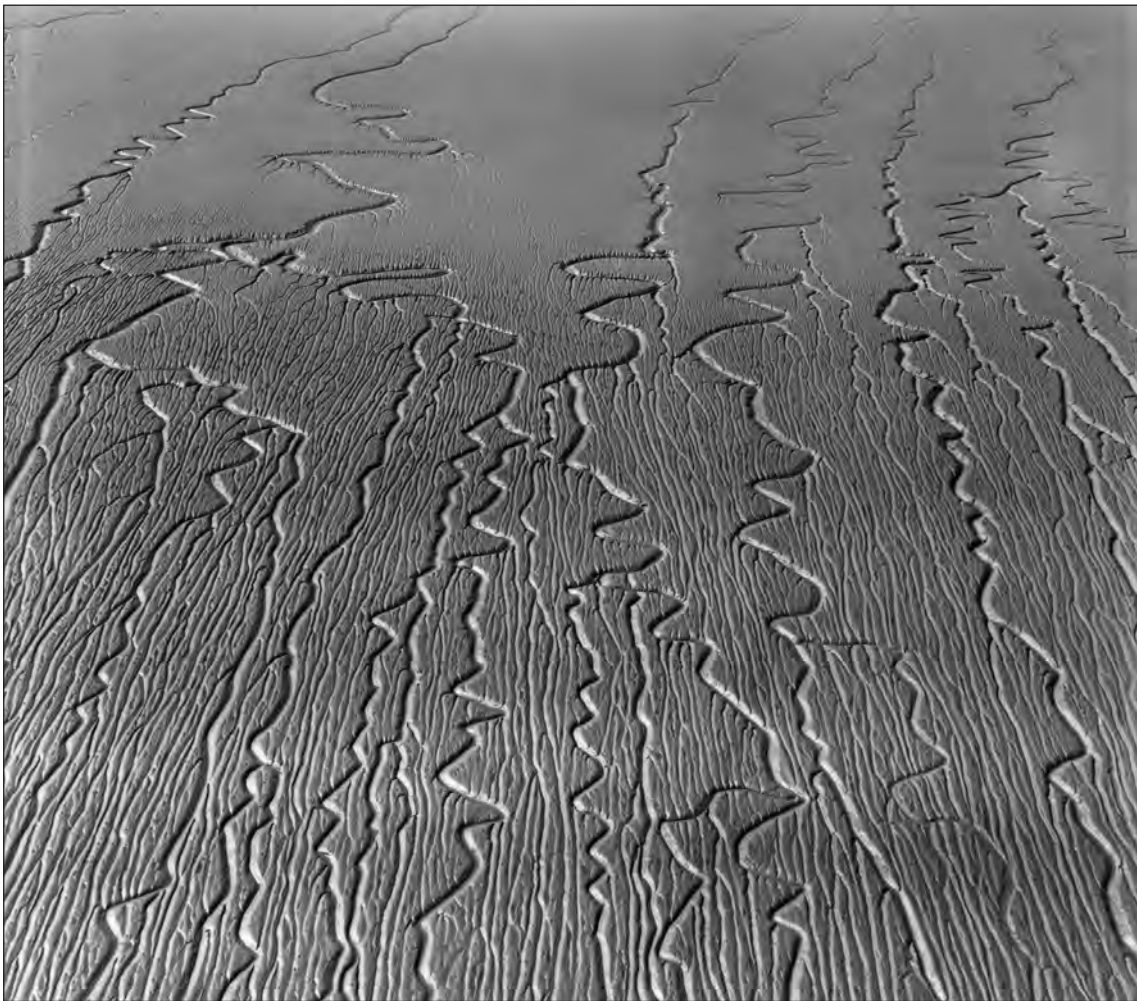


Figure 3: An Aerofilms photograph of patterns in the mud off Weston-super-Mare, 1948 (EAW014929)

Modern Weston-super-Mare is bounded to the north by Worlebury Hill, with the village of Worle lying about 4km inland from the sea, on the lower slopes of the hill. At the south end of Weston-super-Mare, the town is framed by Brean Down and the hill at Uphill on which the old church of St Nicholas stands, with the village beneath. In addition to these larger villages, there were also smaller settlements at Milton to the east and to the south at Hutton, Locking, and Oldmixon. Between was a huge expanse of marshy moorland, unfit for development without significant investment in drainage and consequently largely untouched until the mid-to late 20th century. These various small communities initially made their living from agriculture, while Uphill and Weston with coastal locations also exploited the sea.⁴

While Domesday Book records the manors of Ashcombe, Uphill, Kewstoke, Milton and Worle, the earliest reference to Weston-super-Mare is in 1226 in an entry in the Registers of the Dean and Chapter of Wells.⁵ Worle boasts a small, Norman motte-and-bailey castle known as Castle Batch, and a church with 12th century origins, while the old church of St Nicholas at Uphill is of similar antiquity.⁶ However, the name Weston, and specific names such as Worthy and the 'hay' in Blakehay, may imply a settlement with Saxon origins.⁷ Weston's parish church is first mentioned in 1226, though it seems to have been constructed some time before this, and the settlement was first taxed a century later as part of the Hundred of Winterstoke.⁸ By the 14th century, Weston-super-Mare had emerged as a distinct manor in its own right and by 1348, it had a settled name after various previous versions described its location, including Weston-propre-Worle, Weston-juxta-Worle, Weston-juxta-Mare and Weston-upon-More.⁹

The medieval parish church was demolished in 1824, but it is known from a brief description published in 1791 by John Collinson, a description and two engravings published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1805, an 1821 engraving and the testimony of old inhabitants of Weston-super-Mare gathered by Ernest Baker during the early 1880s (Figure 4).¹⁰ Collinson briefly described the form of the church: "The church, which is dedicated to St. John the Baptist, is a small building of one pace [piece], 84 feet in length and 20 in breadth, having at the west end a tower in which hang three bells."¹¹ The testimonies gathered by Baker suggest a church with Norman origins, which was largely remodelled and reconstructed during the 15th century.¹² Fragments in Weston Museum and the presence of a Norman font bowl provide evidence of its early origins, though fonts can easily be moved around. Engravings suggest that the parish church had a tower and aisleless nave with a southern porch and an aisleless choir with a door in the south wall. The tracery illustrated may be a 15th-century Perpendicular design, while the tower seems to have had earlier, possibly Y-tracery dating from the 14th century. The door in the north wall of the nave and the two lancets are of early Gothic character, implying a date around 1200 for the body of the nave.

As the parish church stands a few metres above sea level, it survived the worst natural disaster to befall the Severn Estuary, including Weston-super-Mare. On 30 January 1607, a devastating flood took place in the Severn Estuary due to what may have been a form of tsunami, resulting in around 2,000 deaths by drowning.¹³ Floodwaters may have been as deep as 12ft (3.7m) and any low-lying properties at



Figure 4: This illustration of the medieval parish church accompanied a description of the church and early Weston-super-Mare written by a local solicitor, George Bennett in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1805. It also includes a view of the Revd William Leeves's house, probably the only other building in Weston considered worthy of illustration. (Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, SHC A/DAS/1/439/1(2A))

Weston-super-Mare would have been badly damaged or destroyed by this event.¹⁴ Despite the settlement's demonstrated vulnerability to flooding, it continued to be inhabited as a survey of church lands by Parliament ordered in 1649, and returned in 1653, stated that 'the parish of Weston-super-Mare consisted of about five and 30 famelys'.¹⁵ They made their living by fishing, farming, teasel growing and collecting seaweed for fertiliser and later by providing potash for glassworks in Bristol.¹⁶ In the 17th century there was a windmill on the hilltop and there were numerous pits in the hill from where calamine, the ore of zinc, was mined for use in brass founding from the 1560s onwards.¹⁷ At the end of the 17th century, there are references to works being carried out on sea defences, but these would have probably been inadequate to deal with the storm of 26 November 1703, described vividly by Daniel Defoe during the following year.¹⁸ In *The Storm*, a number of the collated testimonies described its impact on Somerset and the River Severn, and while none were from residents of Weston-super-Mare, the severity of the damage to nearby settlements suggests devastation similar to the 1607 tsunami.¹⁹

Weston's First Visitors

In 1696 the manor of Weston-super-Mare came into the hands of the Pigott family, who had their main seat at Brockley. During the 18th century the Pigotts may have constructed a small cottage for their use, which was enlarged during the 1770s and 1780s into the more substantial Grove House, modern-day Grove Park originally being a private garden for this house.²⁰ The Glebe House, the Rectory beside the parish church, was similarly improved during the late 18th and early 19th century. An 1821 engraving shows it as a double-pile building with the front and rear piles separately roofed. By 1790 The Revd Wadham Pigott was the curate in charge of the parish and during his brother's prolonged absences, he became the *de facto* squire, staying in Grove House and leasing out Glebe House.²¹

The Revd Wadham Pigott was the first high-status resident of Weston-super-Mare, but visitors of note had been coming, at least occasionally, to the settlement since the late 17th century to study its interesting natural character. Among these were herbalists, botanists and geologists who were simply on a tour of this part of England, rather than specifically coming to study and enjoy Weston-super-Mare.²²

However, by the 1770s the area around Weston-super-Mare was already being recognised for its health-giving qualities. The writer, social reformer and philanthropist Hannah More (1745–1833) went to Uphill in 1773 to convalesce after an apparent nervous breakdown resulting from breaking off her engagement to William Turner, 'a nervous and uncertain fiancé' twenty years her senior.²³ Her presence at Uphill led Dr Langhorne, Rector of Blagdon since 1766, to visit Weston. A few years later another local clergyman, and friend of Hannah More, the Revd William Leeves, Rector of Wrington, found Weston to be sufficiently alluring that he built himself a cottage overlooking the sea, the building that still survives in a recognisable form today as The Old Thatched Cottage Restaurant on Knightstone Road.²⁴ The earliest illustration of this building appears in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1805.²⁵ An 1847 guidebook described it as 'a quaint and curious structure with a high thatched roof and square-headed windows ... On the ground floor are two little



Figure 5: William Leeves's cottage still survives in a recognisable form today as The Old Thatched Cottage Restaurant on Knightstone Road. (DP218417)

odd-looking gabled projections, like porches, one of which has a window inserted in front and attached to the dwelling is a stable, and coach house or barn'.²⁶ Its rustic charm may have been an attempt to reflect contemporary cottage orné architectural ideas, though its haphazard form suggests simply a reflection of vernacular traditions. William Leeves died in 1828 and the cottage was sold to a retired East Indian merchant, Mr Clements (Figure 5).²⁷

In April 1797, an advertisement in *Bonner & Middleton's Bristol Journal* sought to entice sea bathers to Uphill in search of a healthy summer location:

'For Health and Sea Bathing. At Uphill in Somersetshire. Jane Biss and Son most respectfully inform the public that they have fitted up two commodious Houses for the reception of Families or Single Persons during the summer, on reasonable terms, where it will be their study to render every accommodation in their power. The situation at Uphill is universally allowed to be healthy and pleasant. Pleasure boats and Passage Vessels to the Holmes or Welsh Coast.'²⁸

Despite such advertisements, no development relating to sea bathing at Uphill followed, and instead Weston-super-Mare became the focus of attention during the 19th century.

The same *Gentleman's Magazine* article that illustrated Leeves's cottage and the parish church provides a brief description of the village in 1805 written by a local solicitor, George Bennett:

‘This village is much frequented of late in Summer and Autumn for the benefit of sea air and bathing; several good lodging-houses having been lately erected for the reception of company. And the Rev. Mr Leeves of Wrington has built a charming little cottage on the beach, at which himself and family reside a considerable part of the year.’²⁹

As well as writers, Weston was also beginning to catch the eye of artists; George Cumberland (1754–1848), a writer on art and a watercolour painter, moved to Weston-super-Mare in 1803, before settling in Bristol in 1807, where he lived until his death.³⁰ The village's proximity to Bristol and Bath undoubtedly explains a small but growing interest in Weston's aesthetic, as well as curative, properties despite its road connections to these towns still being challenging for coach travellers. In 1822 it still took five hours to travel between Bath and Weston-super-Mare and there was only an ‘indifferent road to Bristol’, as the village was miles away from the main coach road from Bristol to Exeter.³¹

The Fledgling Resort

A map in the local studies library at Weston-super-Mare shows the names of inhabitants in the year 1804 and along with a later copy of an unannotated map of 1806, they provide the earliest map of this village that numbered 108 inhabitants in 1801. The authorship of these maps is unclear, but it seems to reflect the oral history research undertaken by Ernest E Baker in the early 1880s.³² Samuel Norvill, who was born in Weston-super-Mare in 1800, remembered the village before there was a hotel, public house or shop:

‘There was no High Street: it was called The Street, and very narrow it was too, there was only just room for one putt or cart to pass down it at a time. On the East side there was a ditch, and on the West a hedge banked up with stones to keep the earth back. The street itself was always very muddy and dirty; some stones were thrown down loosely on one side to make a sort of footpath ... Midway there was a withy bed, in which refuse fish were generally thrown ... Nearly everybody kept geese, they paid so well; you see, they could run about over the common all day, and so didn't cost much to keep.’³³

‘The Street’, which would later become the High Street, ran from north to south and from its northern end heading eastwards was the road to Bristol. This road also extended a short distance to the west of The Street (the current Grove Road), giving access to the farmhouse of Richard Parsley (1767-1846). West Lane was on the site roughly of the modern West Street and almost opposite it was a short, narrow lane heading eastwards.

The poor state of the roads and lanes of the early village may be reflected by the fact that the only conveyance at one time in Weston-super-Mare was the sedan

chair owned by Emmanuel Pimm, and carried by him and his nephew.³⁴ Carriages were rare, unless it was Mrs Pigott's when she drove down from Brockley to see her son Wadham.³⁵ Ernest Baker's interviewees described the rustic, mostly thatched cottages scattered around the village, the absence of a shop or a pub (the nearest public houses were the Ship and the Dolphin at Uphill) and the weekly arrival on Wednesdays of the postman dressed in a red coat. The letters he brought were then addressed to Weston-super-Mare near Worle.

At the south end of The Street was Watersill Road, the precursor of modern Regent Street. From this point another lane wandered into the meadow and orchard, where today's Meadow and Orchard Streets were later established. There was a cluster of houses on either side of the southern end of The Street and a few between The Street and the sea, as well as a handful further inland. At the beginning of the 19th century, there were also three cottages on the hillside above the village, up what would now be Grove Lane, including one occupied by Richard Muggleworth and one that was used as a lodging house.³⁶ Interestingly, Betty Muggleworth, Weston's first bathing guide, is shown as occupying a seafront house towards the southern end of the village. Was she Richard's mother, daughter, sister or an estranged wife?

In the earliest stages of seaside resort development, the only requirements were access to the sea and a place to stay. In Georgian seaside resorts, any house, indeed any building, might provide lodgings for visitors, but there was a need for some better quality accommodation, as well as some rooms that people might use on their first arrival, before finding longer-term lodgings. In seaside resorts that developed from pre-existing settlements, the village inn often served this purpose, but modest-sized Weston-super-Mare had no such pre-existing facility, and therefore the town's first hotel was created during the first decade of the 19th century.

According to Samuel Norvill's testimony to Baker, the foundation stone of the hotel was laid in 1807 and this marks the start of the conscious development of Weston-super-Mare as a destination, and ultimately a town.³⁷ The main figures behind the first stages of the town's development were Richard Parsley and William Cox. It has been suggested that Parsley came from Yorkshire, but his family seems to have had local links, and in his marriage certificate to Elizabeth 'Betty' Wakeley on 8 January 1793 he describes himself as being from Kewstoke, at least by that date (Figure 6).³⁸ He farmed Worlebury Hill with a flock of 1,000 sheep until it was planted with trees during the early 1820s.³⁹ He was also Overseer of the Poor and Churchwarden in the 1790s and later steward of the manor.⁴⁰ Therefore, he would have been well known to the Pigott family, the Lords of the Manor, and it may have been through them that he came to know William Cox, a gentleman then living at Brockley. Their business partnership lasted until 1834, by which time Weston was emerging as a small town.⁴¹

Weston's first hotel was built between 1807 or 1808 and 1810 on the site of an old farmhouse, apparently burned down in 1805 or just previously. This project was undertaken by Parsley and Cox in partnership with James P Capell, the tenant of a farm at Ashcombe, and Richard Fry.⁴² In 1810 the hotel was leased to James

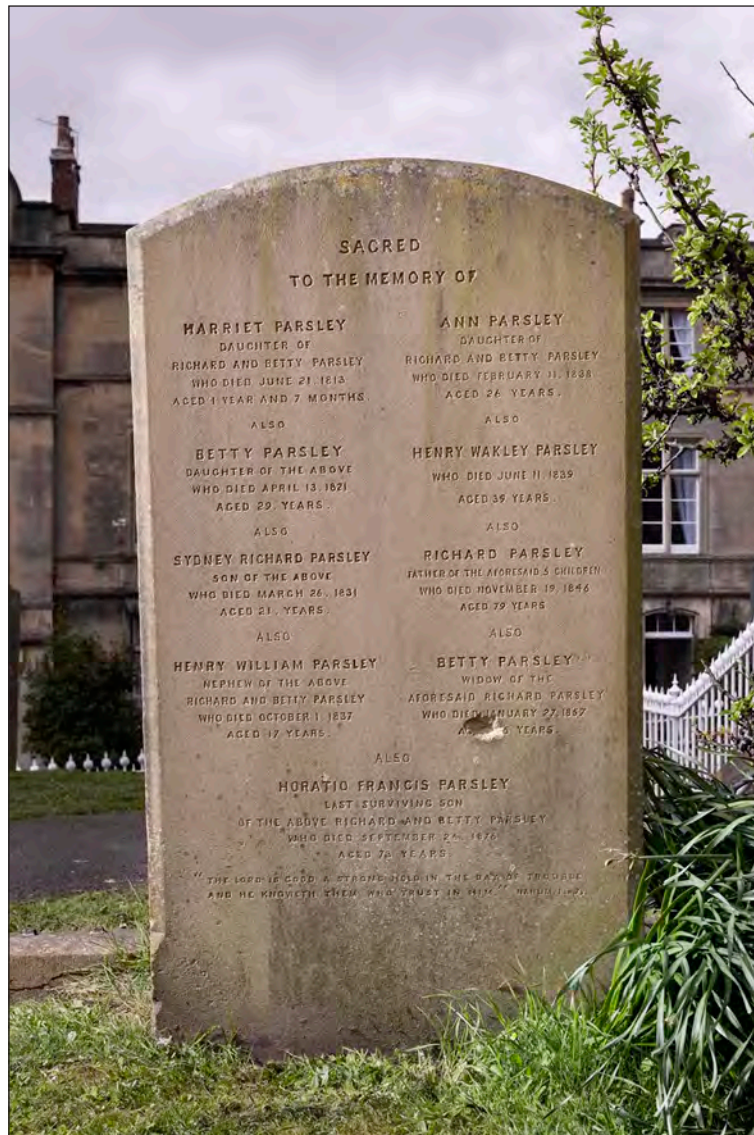


Figure 6: This gravestone in the parish churchyard commemorates the life of Richard Parsley, who died in 1846, aged 79. It also remembers the life of his wife, three sons, two daughters and one of his grandchildren. (DP218497)

Needham, a Bristol hotelier and it opened in July 1810. An advertisement in Bristol newspapers offered:

‘Sea Bathing.

Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.

20 miles from Bristol, 30 ditto from Bath.

James Needham respectfully informs the Public that he has fitted up the HOTEL, with every Convenience for the Accommodation of large and small Parties and Families; and hopes, by assiduous attention in every department, to obtain the honor of their patronage.



Figure 7: Early maps show the Royal Hotel to have been a much smaller building, which matches the southern three bays of the hotel (right-hand side). The end of the original building appears to have been where the almost central block breaks forward. (DP218422)

A Select Boarding Table

Neat POST CHAISES, good Stabling, and lock-up Coach Houses.

For Bathing, and the Salubrity of the Air, Weston has received the decisive sanction of the first Medical Characters in Bath and Bristol.

J. N. begs to notice, that the delay in opening the House, having arisen from unavoidable circumstances, he trusts a generous public will excuse any disappointment they may have hereby experienced.⁴³

This financial gamble does not seem to have paid off immediately for investors, as the doors of the hotel closed through a lack of custom in 1811 and it was put up for sale by auction.⁴⁴ The building remained closed for three years, but by 1814 a sufficient number of visitors seem to have arrived to merit its reopening.⁴⁵ Originally simply known as The Hotel, it subsequently becomes referred to in guidebooks as Fry's Hotel, Reeve's or Reeves' Hotel, then by the 1850s 'Reeve's Hotel, conducted by Mr Thomas Rogers' and by 1855, 'Royal [late Reeve's] Hotel conducted by Mr T Rogers.⁴⁶ Royal was adopted following a one-night stay by the Prince of Wales. A map of 1853 describes it as 'ROYAL HOTEL LATE REEVES' suggesting considerable fluidity in the name at this date.⁴⁷ It also shows the main body of the Royal Hotel as it stands today, the completed structure seeming to date from 1849 and being a work by Gabriel & Hirst.⁴⁸ Earlier maps show a much smaller building,

which matches the southern three bays of the hotel, the end of the original building being where the eastern facade breaks forward (Figure 7).

At the time that the hotel was first being constructed, Parsley and Cox were acquiring land on which to construct new housing, with a view to turning the village into a popular destination for visitors. The Pigott Estate sold them land and they began acquiring the common rights attached to the 'Auster Tenements' (small cottages / hovels with historic rights of common).⁴⁹ To further Weston's growth, an Enclosure Act was sought to establish the basic infrastructure for the settlement by concentrating land ownership in the hands of the small number of men who would drive development. And inevitably, the key beneficiaries would be Parsley and Cox, who would acquire most land and thence stimulate development.

The Weston-super-Mare Enclosure Act went through the House of Commons during April 1810 and the House of Lords during May, receiving its Royal Assent on 18 May 1810.⁵⁰ The Act specified the land in Weston-super-Mare, including common fields called the East Field, the West Field, Tor Field and the West Tynning, as well as other open and commonable lands, in total an area of 993 acres.⁵¹ James Staples of the City of Bristol swore his oath and took up his duties on 9 June 1810 as Commissioner, meaning that he was responsible for 'setting out, allotting, dividing and inclosing the said moors, commons and waste lands and common fields and otherwise putting the Act into execution.'⁵² The costs he incurred were high, as they had to cover the making of new roads, tracks, planting hedges, digging ditches, building walls and stabilising sand dunes. Four private carriageways were established, each 20ft (6.1m) wide, as well as ten bridleways, private ways and footpaths for the use of the owners and occupiers of some of the allotted land.⁵³ A series of bridges were also constructed and the Commissioner allotted and awarded the Town Quarry and the Manor Road Quarry to be used for the repair of roads within the parish of Weston-super-Mare.⁵⁴ To fund the development programme, a series of auctions were held on 8 July 1811 at the house of Joseph Leman, known by the sign of the New Inn at Worle (4 lots), on 26 August 1811 at The Hotel (5 lots) and again at The Hotel on 7 February 1812.⁵⁵ The average selling price of 1,381s per acre means that this was the most expensive enclosure land in North Somerset in its day, and was a reflection of the potential value of landholding and owning property in an emerging seaside resort.⁵⁶ The cost of maintaining and repairing roads, footpaths, bridges etc was defrayed from the main beneficiaries of the Act, including Cox and Parsley, James Partridge Capell at Ashcombe and the Lord of the Manor, John Pigott, and his brother the Revd Wadham Pigott.⁵⁷

The final award map was drawn up in 1815 and on 20 July 1815 the final award was deposited, while the final accounts for the Enclosure Act were closed in 1816.⁵⁸ The whole cost of the exercise was £4,907 11s and this was met by the funds raised by auctions and from money gathered from the main beneficiaries.⁵⁹ One twentieth of the land was allotted to John Piggott, with Parsley and Cox being the other main beneficiaries.

By the time that the enclosure process had been completed, the outline for the shape of the future development of Weston-super-Mare had been established. The sales

of parcels of seafront land paved the way for the development of Richmond Street, Oxford Street and Carlton Street, while some of Weston's first seafront villas began to be built. At the time of the Enclosure, the seafront to the south of Watersill Road, the future Regent Street, was largely sand dunes (dunes) behind which were sandy fields in which Parsley farmed teasels, an important product used in the manufacturing of cloth.⁶⁰

New, larger and more expensive houses began to appear. Isaac Jacobs, a Bristol glass merchant, built Belvedere in 1811 facing Beach Road and next door was Sidmouth House. The 1822 guidebook mentions Belvedere: 'A handsome pile of building, never yet occupied, erected by Mr Jacobs of Bristol, terminates this part of the village, which is frequently styled Jacobs Town.'⁶¹ Money difficulties forced Jacobs to sell Belvedere in 1819 and by 1847 it had been subdivided, with one half being used as an Academy conducted by Mr Elwell for young gentlemen preparing for university.⁶² Ernest Baker described Belvedere's demolition in 1925.⁶³ Belvedere and Sidmouth House were replaced by the bus station and today, Carlton Mansions occupies the site. Claremont House, built in 1816, is described in the 1822 guide as 'a beautifully situated lodging house'.⁶⁴ The house was demolished in about 1865 to make way for Claremont Crescent.⁶⁵ While some houses were being built on previously undeveloped land, the replacement of pre-existing houses was already underway. An old resident interviewed by Ernest Baker recalls walking along the side of the stream to three cottages, which were demolished to make way for the first Waterloo House, which was built in 1816.⁶⁶ It would later be demolished to allow the creation of Waterloo Street and the Boulevard.

Richard Parsley erected his substantial, at least by early Weston standards, Georgian house from where he would oversee his newly created Whitecross Estate. It appears on the 1838 tithe map and was described in an 1840 guide book as 'newly-erected'.⁶⁷ Originally three-bays wide and symmetrical, a fourth bay in a similar style was added to the east between 1903 and 1931, by which time the building was being used as a Sunday School.⁶⁸ The house has a Georgian doorcase and a stair of some antiquity survives inside, but externally the façade is dominated visually by a selection of later plastic windows, alongside earlier metal and wooden ones. The house is now part of a community facility associated with the Victoria Methodist Church that was constructed in front of it and hides it from public view. Whitecross House appears on the 1838 Tithe Map, accompanied by a larger complex of buildings, presumably farm buildings (Figure 8).

Parsley's most notorious architectural essay was his pigsty, which stood in a field 200m south of his house. Parsley got into a dispute with George Henry Law (1761–1845), Bishop of Bath and Wells (1824–45).⁶⁹ Soon afterwards, he erected a conical, 40ft (12.2m) high tower in a field between the north corner of the future Ellenborough Crescent and the present railway station. The sty was surmounted by a bishop's mitre carved in stone. When the Bishop visited Weston again, he saw the mitre at the top of the tower and enquired about it. He was informed that it was Parsley's pigsty. The differences between the Bishop and Parsley were soon made up when the mitre was removed. The Reform Act, having just been passed at that time, the monument's name was changed from Parsley's Pigsty to the Reform Bill tower.



Figure 8: Originally three-bays wide and symmetrical, a fourth bay in a similar style was added to the east of Parsley's Whitecross House between 1903 and 1931, by which time the building was being used as a Sunday School. (DP218260)

Whereat's Weston guide of 1855 describes it as a 'grotesque monument ... erected by the late Richard Parsley, in commemoration of the passing of the reform Bill.'⁷⁰ It remained standing in the field until 1886 when it was pulled down to make room for the Ellenborough Park Road houses. Its site is shown on the 1:500 Ordnance Survey map published in 1886, shortly before its demolition.

As well as new houses for residents, small hotels began to be built. In 1819 Weston's second hotel, the Mason's Arms (later known as the Bath Hotel now the Imperial), opened on the new South Parade.⁷¹ An engraving in an 1847 guidebook shows South Parade, consisting of, from west to east, a substantial two storeyed house (formerly Myrtle Cottage), the three-storied, four-bay wide Bath Hotel, with a terrace of seven, lower, three-storied houses to the right.⁷² Today the same elevation consists of the Sass Bar (a former bank building), the Imperial Hotel (the modern name for the Bath Hotel) and three of the original terrace of seven houses. The eastern end of South Parade is now dominated by the Victorian and mid-20th century Lloyds Bank buildings.

The Plough Hotel opened on the High Street in 1819, becoming Weston's third hotel.⁷³ An advertisement in the *Bristol Mirror* on Saturday 22 May 1819 placed by Christopher Kingdon notes that 'The Larder will be liberally supplied, and the Wines may be relied upon as of the first Vintage.' The advert goes on to say 'To the Beds much attention has been paid, and every care will be taken to keep them and the chambers well aired.'⁷⁴ By this date, numerous houses were being built, rebuilt or refurbished to provide lodgings for visitors. The 1811 Census recorded that Weston's population of 125 lived in the 30 inhabited buildings; by 1821, its 738 inhabitants occupied 126 buildings, while a decade later, the population of 1,310 lived in 218 houses.⁷⁵ Rutter's guidebook of 1829 claimed that there were upwards of 150 lodging houses.⁷⁶ A more accurate statement might be that there were more than 150 houses where rooms were being let to lodgers, the standard practice in Georgian seaside resorts to meet the accommodation needs of visitors.⁷⁷ For instance, a 'NEW- built MESSUAGE, or DWELLING HOUSE' was advertised for sale in February 1811. It consisted of two kitchens, with suitable offices, three parlours, five lodging rooms on the second floor and five in the attic.⁷⁸ This is simply a house, but with ample rooms to accommodate visitors during the summer.

The rapid growth of Weston, admittedly from a very low base, and a commensurate increase in the number of visitors, relied on improved transport services and roads. A limited coach service between Bristol and Weston-super-Mare began in 1814, and soon a regular service was in place. On 26 April 1817 an advertisement for The Hotel stated that prospective visitors could use 'A Four-Horse COACH from the Hope and Anchor Redcliffe-Hill, every Wednesday and Saturday, at 2 o'clock.'⁷⁹ On 8 May 1819 John Harse and William Hill advertised their coach, the Prince Regent, which was to resume its regular, four times a week, service on 15 May between Bristol and Weston-super-Mare. To attract customers, the advertisement says that 'they have purchased an entirely new, elegant, safe, and commodious POST COACH' and that they 'have likewise engaged a steady, sober and experienced Coach-man'.⁸⁰ In 1806 Messrs Stabbins and Hill began a carrier service in the summer using wagons to bring goods and less affluent visitors, but this was short-lived. In 1811 John Harse

revived the service with greater success.⁸¹ Two other carriers began operating in 1813 and by 1820 there were eight.⁸² Tourists were also beginning to arrive at Weston by sea; in June 1825 the first pleasure steamer called at the Knightstone Wharf bringing in passengers from Newport.⁸³

Sea Bathing in the Early 19th Century

At the beginning of the 19th century, people were coming to Weston-super-Mare primarily for its health-giving properties. A newspaper advertisement in February 1811 for the sale of a house, promoted the village by saying that ‘Weston holds a distinguished claim to fashionable resort, and from the purity of its air, the most cheering hope is presented to the general Invalid, elasticity to the enervated, and to the convalescent the most abundant supplies.’⁸⁴ Weston’s first guidebook in 1822 states that ‘The air is soft but bracing, and is particularly efficacious to those constitutions with which the Devonshire coast disagrees.’⁸⁵

Men and women had separate bathing areas; in August 1811, Hugh Hodges was fined £1 and forced make a public apology when he was caught naked on the most public part of the sands.⁸⁶ However, access to the sea was problematic due to the distance that it retreated at low tide, and while bathing machines led the charge into the sea at most resorts from the 18th century onwards, additional arrangements had to be made at Weston-super-Mare. The 1822 guidebook refers to three bathing machines on the sands, the time of their use being regulated by the tide, rather than by medical advice that stipulated that sea bathing was most effective first thing in the morning.⁸⁷ However, at all times of the day there was bathing at Anchor Head, while at Claremont there was a convenient lodging house. According to Baker’s interviews in the early 1880s, Betty Muggleworth managed the open sea bathing at Anchor Head. She spread an old sail between rocks and under this primitive shelter ladies would dress and undress. Mrs Rose Roberts wrote to her husband in Bristol in August 1817, and said ‘I drink the salt water in the morning, but do not bathe, being fearful of venturing my delicate frame out amongst the waves... The gowns they make use of are such nasty looking things I do not think I could put one of them on.’⁸⁸ To protect their toes from the pebbles, Betty provided shoes and looked after the comfort of customers in every way.⁸⁹ In his 1829 guidebook, John Rutter recorded that ‘The bathing machines are well built and are kept clean and neat; they are constantly in attendance, except at very low tides.’ Female bathers are accompanied if required by ‘careful and experienced bathing women.’⁹⁰ He also noted that there was bathing from the narrow pebbly beach at Anchor Head, where ‘There are convenient dressing rooms and a careful and attentive guide lives in a turreted cottage at the upper end of the narrow beach.’⁹¹

Another means of overcoming the limitations on bathing caused by Weston’s geography was to provide a bath house. A hot, salt-water bath had been opened in Somerset Place in the centre of the village, attended by Mrs Jane Gill, one of the original bathing women who accompanied female bathers into the sea.⁹² One of Ernest Baker’s interviewees provided some detail about the facility. The water was hauled from the sea in a barrel, stored in a tank over a boiler in which it was heated by means of pipes running through walls. Mrs Gill’s baths also had a shower bath,

a 'Punch and Judy box', affair, in which the victim stood with curtains drawn close all around whilst a bucket of sea water was poured over his head from the top by an assistant standing on steps.⁹³ Mrs Gill's baths were not perhaps on a par with the apparently luxurious Knightstone baths, but they were well supported and patronised by visitors.

Early Development on Knightstone Island

From the 1820s onwards, Knightstone Island became the main centre for bathing, and for about a quarter of a century, it was also the focal point for new development. Although Weston-super-Mare could not have a substantial sea-going fishing fleet because of its geography, Knightstone Island and Birnbeck Island were both used to catch fish in nets hanging between stakes set into the foreshore.⁹⁴ Knightstone Island was also home to Weston's first coal yard and so must have seemed a singularly unappealing, and unhealthy, part of the settlement in the early 19th century.

The first bathhouse and pool on Knightstone Island were constructed by Mr Howe of Bristol in 1820, and by 1822, they were being rented by Benjamin Atwell.⁹⁵ Weston's first guidebook in 1822 recorded that 'Three years ago Knightstone was a useless rock', but 'A reading room, hot and cold baths and a lodging house have been erected on the island.'⁹⁶ At this date Knightstone was still an island, only connected to the mainland by a ridge of pebbles, but when the Revd Thomas Pruen took it over, one of his main projects was the construction of a causeway.⁹⁷ Rutter in 1829 also recorded that a small pier had been erected on the east side of the island for use by the fishing smacks (boats) and that 'On this rock are three turreted houses, now let exclusively for lodgings. Its largest contains several handsome sitting apartments, with numerous bed-rooms, separate kitchens, coach house, and stables.'⁹⁸ The Revd Thomas Pruen had also improved the bathing facilities, including constructing an open-air swimming bath on the shore of the island facing Glentworth Bay. Rutter described the bathing facilities available in 1829:

'On Knightstone are several hot and cold baths, plunging and shower baths of sea water, which were constructed at a considerable expence, and fitted up in a commodious manner, with every convenience; each bath having a private dressing-room attached to it, and every attention paid to the accommodation of the bathers. An open cold bath with dressing-rooms attached, has also been formed by enclosing a flat shelving portion of the rock, with a breakwater, within which the sea flows at high tide.'⁹⁹

On 5 August 1828, the island of Knightstone was put up for auction as an entirety, and if that failed as separate lots. This included a commercial wharf, the Centre House, East Turret House, the Coach House and Stable, the West Turret House, the Baths and High Cliff Lodge with a gig house and stable.¹⁰⁰ The island was acquired by Dr Edward Long Fox (1761-1835), a Quaker physician from Brislington House lunatic asylum in Bristol, who advocated sea-bathing for the treatment of mental illness as well as for physical complaints. He was assisted in his development of the island by his son Dr Francis Ker Fox (1805-83). Among the subscribers to an abortive sea bathing hospital project in Weston-super-Mare or Uphill in March 1826



Figure 9: The Georgian bathhouse on Knightstone Island is five bays wide, with the central three bays breaking slightly forward and topped with a low, triangular pediment. The central door is covered by a rectangular porch. (DP218642)

was ‘Dr Fox, Brislington’, and this may indicate that he was already interested in the resort, or it may be the reason that he became interested.¹⁰¹ The present bathhouse on Knightstone Island was built in 1832 and, despite damage in a fire in 1844, is now in use as offices and a salon.¹⁰² This building is five bays wide, with the central three bays breaking slightly forward and topped with a low, triangular pediment. The central door is covered by a rectangular porch. In 1840 a guidebook described the facilities available for bathers:

‘The bathing establishment consists of a spacious open swimming bath, plunging and warm baths, hot and cold shower baths, dry hot and vapour baths, either medicated with sulphur, iodine, chlorine, or otherwise. The necessary apparatus is also provided for the administration of the douche, and the superintendent has been instructed in the process of shampooing.

The baths are commodiously fitted up and are supplied at all states of the tide, with pure sea water, formerly difficult to obtain.’¹⁰³ (Figures 9, 10)

Shampooing involved using oils to massage patients and was an idea imported from India by Deen Mahomed (1759–1851), who was also the founder of Britain’s first

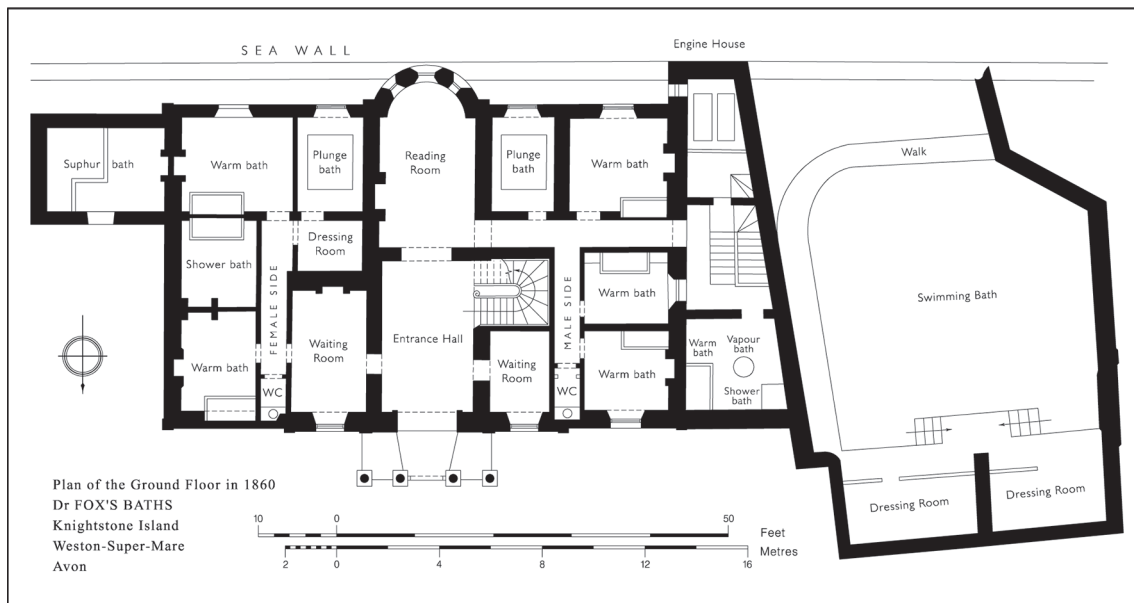


Figure 10: This plan of the bathhouse on Knightstone Island as it was arranged in 1860 reveals that men on the right were separated from women by the central entrance hall. (DMP/DFB001)

curry house.¹⁰⁴ The baths on Knightstone Island were open daily from 6am until 9pm, except on Sundays when they closed at 9am, but reopened at 6pm for invalids.

In addition to the bathhouse, there were also houses providing lodgings. An advertisement in the *Bristol Mirror* on 25 February 1832 described the accommodation available on the island for visitors:

‘Two desirable dwelling-houses, at Knightstone, the one for a Private House as a Lodging House, the other as a Boarding and Lodging House.

The first contains 4 Sitting-Rooms and 7 Chambers, Servants’ Hall, and other conveniences; the latter has 3 Private Sitting-Rooms, one public Sitting-Room, capable of entertaining from twenty to thirty persons at dinner, 8 chambers, 2 kitchens, Servants’ Hall, and other accommodations for an extensive Table d’Hote, or Ordinary.¹⁰⁵

In April 1844, a fire destroyed Centre House, the earliest lodging house, but it was soon rebuilt.¹⁰⁶ An advertisement for the sale or lease of Knightstone Island for three or five years appeared in the *Bristol Mercury* on Saturday 9 January 1847.¹⁰⁷ This contained a lengthy description of the buildings there at the time, which were being promoted as ‘one of the most complete Bathing Establishments in England.’ The Bathhouse consisted on the ground floor of an entrance hall; a spacious room, now used as reading room; eight bath rooms, properly fitted up with hot, cold and shower baths, with anterooms and water closets. On the first floor, there were three sitting rooms, seven bedrooms, and a water closet, with an underground kitchen, scullery etc. servants hall, the boiler for hot water, steam apparatus and drying and hot air stores. Attached to the Bathhouse were vapour and shower baths, a commodious open swimming bath, well supplied with sea water, with three dressing rooms.

There was also a sulphur bath with apparatus, a dressing room and large cisterns for rain and sea water.

Accompanying the Bathhouse was a small dwelling house, then occupied by Mr James, the Superintendent at Knightstone. It contained two sitting rooms and four bedrooms with an underground kitchen and offices. There was also a row of three houses running from south-east to north-west, roughly on the site of the later swimming baths. Arthur's Tower, the most southerly, consisted of an entrance hall, spacious drawing and dining rooms, and a water closet on the ground floor. On the first floor were three bedrooms and a dressing room, while there were five bedrooms on the second floor. The basement contained the kitchen, a china pantry, servants' hall, and other offices. The adjacent Centre House was erected in 1844 and consisted on the ground floor of an entrance hall, the housekeeper's room, servant's hall, kitchen, butler's pantry and larder. On the first floor, the house had excellent dining and drawing rooms, a large bedroom and a water closet, while on the second floor there were five bedrooms and a watercloset. The Upper House beside the Centre House consisted of an entrance hall, housekeeper's room, servants' hall, kitchen and convenient offices on the ground floor, with excellent cellars underneath. On the first floor, the house contained large drawing and dining rooms and a bedroom, dressing room and water closet, while on the second floor it had four good bedrooms and a servants' room.

Sea Defences in the early 19th century

To safeguard the growing investment in the settlement, improved sea defences were required. Sand dunes, known locally as tots, would have afforded some protection to any properties lying behind them, but it is clear that some attempt to consolidate them had been taking place during the early 19th century. In early 1814, the Revd Lewis, who lived at the beach end of Regent Street, requested that the sand bank nearest to his house should be covered with clay to prevent sand shifting into Watersill Road (Regent Street) and 20 guineas were set aside to improve the bank.¹⁰⁸ By the early 19th century there was a high pebble beach from Knightstone to the Revd Leeves's cottage and inside that there was an artificial mud bank acting as a sea wall, with a walk along the top of it.¹⁰⁹ This seems to have been established in 1826 and is presumably related to the greater use being made of Knightstone Island.¹¹⁰ This bank was extended to where Regent Street was located in 1829. Richard Parsley, John Cox and particularly John Reeve, then the proprietor of the Hotel, were the main instigators of this work, which was partly paid for by public subscription. A new esplanade was created on the site of the former sand dunes that had been levelled during enclosure. It was a gravelled path fronted by a low wall and is depicted in a c 1860 oil painting by William Henry Hopkins (1825-92) (Figure 11).

Weston's Earliest Guidebooks

The first guidebooks to Weston-super-Mare were published in 1822 and 1829, while the earliest commercial directory with a useful entry for the village was published in 1830.¹¹¹ The 1821 Census had found a town with 126 inhabited houses and a population of 738.¹¹² The 1822 guidebook recalled that not many years ago, Weston



Figure 11: This oil painting by William Henry Hopkins dates from c 1860. It shows the nature of the beach, seawall and Esplanade at Weston-Super-Mare at that time. Painted at Low Water, the extensive sandy shore is visible. (North Somerset Council and South West Heritage Trust, 2019. WESTM: 326)

consisted only of ‘a few huts’ and the inhabitants had made their living by fishing. However, ‘the purity of its air, added to its vicinity to Bath and Bristol, attracted the attention of valetudinarians; and the cures continually affected by the uncommon salubrity of its invigorating breezes, soon raised it to the station it now occupies amongst fashionable watering places.’¹¹³ A measure of exaggeration due to local pride and a desire to attract customers is inevitable, but it is fitting that a site associated with health features prominently at the start of the guidebook. The frontispiece of the 1822 guidebook shows Knightstone Island with just the main bathhouse building and some smaller structures around it. It was definitely still an island at this date, and its prominence in the publication probably also reflects the limited picturesque development that had taken place by this date. Despite its proclamation that Weston-super-Mare now occupies a station amongst fashionable watering places, the 1822 guidebook describes a small, not especially attractive village with the first elements to cater for tourists beginning to be put in place. Having built up the village on page 5, the subsequent page more than somewhat redresses the balance:

‘Weston-Super-Mare does not present a very inviting appearance to the stranger. The houses, scattered mostly without arrangement, and roofed with red tile, give a character of meanness to the village; and if a stranger first enters it on a stormy day and at low water, he may perhaps feel inclined to turn his horses and head towards home again.’¹¹⁴

Three hotels were mentioned, but for some reason it does not mention the Bath Hotel; ‘Fry’s Hotel is a large square house near the sea, and affords excellent accommodation’; ‘The Plough Hotel, in the village, is a comfortable house’ and ‘The

Eagle House is at the entrance to the village.’¹¹⁵ A number of the newest and larger houses that provided lodgings were mentioned: ‘Bellevue House, one of the largest and most comfortable in the place’; ‘The Veranda House, in the hotel fields, is a favourite lodging’ and ‘The Veranda Cottages let from two Guineas and a half to 3 Guineas per week each.’¹¹⁶

The village already boasted a school room for 100 children, with a house annexed for the master and mistress; this had recently been built at the sole expense of the Revd Stiverd Jenkins, who also opened a Sunday school under his direction.¹¹⁷ The first small-scale, private educational establishments had already begun to appear, and these would become an important feature of Weston later in the 19th century. Mr May ran a seminary for young gentlemen on the North Parade and Mrs Downman had an establishment for the education of young ladies in Wellington Place.¹¹⁸

The 1822 guidebook also pointed people to the bathing facilities at Anchor Head and Knightstone, as well as to Mrs Gill’s facility in Somerset Place.¹¹⁹ While bathing facilities were beginning to be provided, there was little to entertain people for the rest of the day. There was a billiard table near the hotel and a reading room offering a fine view of the sea. There were two pleasure boats, Princess Charlotte and Princess Mary, which were kept for hire and run by experienced fishermen. People with an interest in nature might visit Brean Down, while others with an interest in killing nature could shoot while on expedition to Flat Holm and Steep Holm. A house had been erected on Flat Holm for the refreshment of visitors, who could admire the lighthouse, which had been recently re-glazed.¹²⁰ Jaunting cars, wheel chairs and sedan chairs, ponies and donkeys could be hired in the village to help visitors get around and enjoy excursions into the countryside and southwards to Uphill.¹²¹

By the time that Rutter’s guidebook was published in 1829, modest but significant additions had been made to the village’s building stock. The parish church had been rebuilt and Weston-super-Mare’s first, albeit modest, sea defences and promenade were in place. As well as the parish church, the first places of worship for nonconformists had been established:

‘Nearly in the centre of the town, is a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, which is open every Sunday at half past ten in the morning and at six in the evening, and on Wednesday evenings at seven.

There is also an Independent Chapel, at which the Rev. - Page officiates. It is at the back of Beach Parade, and service is performed every Sunday as above, and on Thursday evenings at seven.’¹²²

Quakers did not yet have a facility within the town, but Rutter helpfully lists a series of meeting houses in villages in Weston’s hinterland.

Next, Rutter addressed the issue of ‘PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS’ and found that ‘In fashionable and public amusements, Weston must be acknowledged to be deficient; “health, not dissipation,” is the lure it presents.’¹²³ He began by regaling readers with examples of how wholesome Weston was: ‘Riding, walking, sailing,



Figure 12: An illustration of Whereat's Library appears in an 1847 guidebook. Remarkably for a modest building in a very prominent location, this building has survived and has been incorporated into the complex of buildings, including the former Beach Hotel at the end of Regent Street, facing the Grand Pier. (North Somerset Library Service)

and reading, generally have the effect of banishing care from the mind; whilst the peculiar salubrity of the atmosphere, expels disease from the body.' Thereafter, he described the assembly rooms that were erected in 1826 by the late John Thorn and 'consist of a handsome suite of rooms on the first floor, the largest is 40 feet by 20, and commands a fine view of the bay. On the ground floor are other large and commodious apartments.'¹²⁴ Assembly rooms, even modest ones like this example, provided Georgian tourists with a venue for taking tea, playing cards, and dancing during the afternoons and evenings. By 1840 the assembly rooms had been taken over by Joseph Whereat, a printer, publisher and engraver, who created a library on the ground floor:

'Beneath the assembly room is a good library and a convenient reading room, supplied with several London daily, and local weekly papers. It is kept by Mr Whereat, who has a book in which all visitors, on their arrival, should cause their names and local addresses to be inserted; and where may be inspected a list of the unoccupied lodgings.'¹²⁵

An illustration of this building appears in an 1847 guidebook, with the words:

'J. WHEREAT'S LIBRARY

READING ROOM'

emblazoned on the side of the building (Figure 12).¹²⁶ Remarkably for a modest building in a very prominent location, this building has survived and has been



Figure 13: The cluster of buildings at the western end of Regent Street, including the remains of the circulating library in the centre. (DP218266)

incorporated into the complex of buildings, including the Beach Hotel at the end of Regent Street, facing the Grand Pier (Figure 13).

Another essential of the Georgian daily timetable was the circulating library, a venue for socialising, borrowing books, buying holiday essentials and gathering information about visitors and accommodation. The 1822 guide mentioned briefly a reading room, but seven years later Rutter provides a little more information: ‘On the North Parade is a good library and the convenient reading room. It is kept by Mr Richard Hill, who has a book in which all visitors, on their arrival, should cause the names and local address to be inserted; and where may be inspected a list of the unoccupied lodgings.’¹²⁷ By 1840 Hill’s facility was being rivalled by Whereat’s created in the assembly rooms building.

Since 1822 Weston had acquired its first market house, built by Richard Parsley. It was constructed in 1827 and was located on the site behind the High Street where the Playhouse now stands. Most people visiting seaside resorts at this date would stay in lodgings and the usual arrangement involved visitors purchasing their own food that was then cooked by their landlord or landlady. Weston’s initial lack of any shop must have caused significant difficulties, but the creation of the market house suggests that the village was enjoying better provision of the basic needs of holidaymakers and residents.

In 1830 *Pigot and Co.'s National Commercial Directory for Somerset and other West Country Counties* was published, and includes a short, but informative, section on Weston-super-Mare. It confirms the facilities mentioned by Rutter during the previous year, but as a directory, rather than a guidebook, it also lists the everyday trades and services of the village, including the coal merchants, drapers, grocers, painters and the stonemasons. There is also a short section listing the five academies, including three ladies boarding schools, a ladies day school and a gentleman's boarding and day school.¹²⁸

Renewing the Parish Church

Weston's first two guidebooks of 1822 and 1829 appeared on either side of the reconstruction of the parish church in 1824-5. The *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1805 had described the poor state of repair of the building:

'I was sorry to see the roof and windows of this room [the vestry-room] in so bad a state of repair; the tiling being gone from some parts, exposed this venerable little Consistory to the inclemency of the weather. The roof and windows of the Church and Chancel also are in a sad state of repair; one window in particular on the North side of the Chancel I observed to be much broken, and where the glass is wanting, its place supplied by bundles of hay.'¹²⁹

Therefore, on 19 July 1820, a Vestry meeting was held and the leading figures of the day signed a resolution to rebuild the church. Two years later, a meeting on 6 May 1822 attended by 29 ratepayers unanimously decided to enlarge the church.¹³⁰ The mediaeval church was both in a poor state of repair and too small for the rapidly growing village, the increasing number of visitors as well as its belief in its higher social status. The reconstruction fund was kick-started by a donation of £1,000 by the church's rector, the Revd Wadham Pigott.¹³¹ The old church was pulled down in 1824 and had reopened by the following year.¹³² The new structure could accommodate a congregation of 1,000 and had sufficient space for visitors as well as residents. Prior to its reconstruction, there had been few pews in the church. Originally the gallery was reputedly the most aristocratic part of the church, with all the best families having pews in it, allowing them to pray separately from the poorer people down below.¹³³ However, the new church was fitted up with pews and 'most of the lodging houses have pews attached to them by purchase'.¹³⁴

By the time that Rutter's guidebook was published in 1829, he could claim that the church was 'a neat modern structure'. He went on to describe it as it existed before the extensive later additions and alterations:

'It is large and commodious, consisting of a nave, 60 feet by 40, with a square tower, a chancel, and a projecting chapel on its northern side. The tower is divided into four stories, ornamented with a pinnacle at each corner, united by an open parapet; but it is rather too small in proportion to its height: within it are three small bells, and a clock with a conspicuous dial-face.'¹³⁵

The interior was lavish, at least in comparison with its predecessor:

‘The chancel has two windows and a centre doorway to the south. It is supported by three well-wrought buttresses, and attached to the south east angle of the new church, into which it opens by a large pointed arch. The ceiling of the chancel is ribbed, with ornamented bosses at the intersections alternately with a few shields, one charged with three clarions, and another with three roses.’

VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN WESTON

1830s – Weston on the Eve of the Railway Age

For Weston-super-Mare, the 1830s was a decade of consolidation and steady growth, building on its reputation as a pleasant, healthy place to visit and to live in. As has been mentioned, the most significant event of the decade was the reconstruction and improvement of Dr Fox's bathhouse on Knightstone Island. By the end of the decade, much of the settlement's new development was beginning to be orientated towards the bathhouse, rather than southwards along the beach, as had occurred previously.

The 1831 Census recorded that there were 218 inhabited houses, with a further 8 being constructed and 52 uninhabited, a surprisingly large number. In total, the population of Weston was 1,310. As the Census was enumerated on 30 May, there may have been some visitors present, but at least some of the 52 unoccupied houses may be properties already considered by their owners to be lodgings only for use during the summer months. A decade later, Weston boasted 350 inhabited houses, but only 25 uninhabited ones. The population had risen by 60% to 2,103 in 1841, a rapid expansion compared to England's growth of 15%, but actually broadly in line with the growth of other seaside resorts.

The 1838 tithe map is the first detailed map of Weston-super-Mare.¹³⁶ It shows that most of the High Street has been built on, the exception being the stretch on the west side, now occupied by the Italian Gardens. South Parade has been built, as had the south side of West Street and the triangular area formed at the junction between Meadow Street and Regent Street was beginning to be filled in.

To the south of Regent Street in 1838, there was an area of dense, small houses, home to artisans and tradesmen, but the seafront Beach Road is already shown with much larger detached and semi-detached villas. Development at this date had spread as far as the north side of the future Ellenborough Park and the general grid pattern of streets was beginning to form in this area, though some of the early buildings shown inland, behind the seafront, were subsequently replaced by streets of standard Weston-super-Mare houses. Richard Parsley's Whitecross House, and accompanying outbuildings, lay a short distance to the south-east of the growing village, still in splendid isolation, though the town would engulf his house during the coming decades.

To the north-west of the village, where once the Revd William Leeves's thatched cottage had once stood alone, Shepherd's Cottage was demolished and replaced in 1831 by 1 - 2 Beachfield Villas, built by Thomas Harrill (Figure 14). One of Baker's interviewees in the early 1880s said that: 'These were the wonder of all the inhabitants when they were first built, and were thought to be very grand indeed'.¹³⁷ They are now part of the Lauriston Hotel, which was created through the amalgamation of the two Beachfield Villas and the adjacent pair of Lauriston Villas. By 1838 the northernmost five of the seven houses that comprise Victoria Buildings had been constructed; the southern two, which have been least altered and are consequently listed buildings, were built soon after the map was surveyed.¹³⁸ Slightly



Figure 14: 1-2 Beachfield Villas are now part of the Lauriston Hotel, which was created through their amalgamation with the adjacent pair of Lauriston Villas. (DP218412)

contradictorily, the 1847 guidebook said that: ‘A little further is a row of seven neat stone houses called Victoria Buildings, erected in the year 1840.’¹³⁹ (Figure 15) On the slopes of Worlebury Hill an occasional detached villa had begun to appear and the three houses can be seen on what would now be Grove Lane.

In 1840 Weston-super-Mare had changed little during the past decade. A directory and a guidebook published in that year recorded the steady progress being made. Instead of five schools, there were now seven and there were two libraries, Richard Hill’s original library was being run by Samuel Serle and there was also the more recent library created by Joseph Whereat at the assembly rooms.¹⁴⁰ The number and frequency of coach and waggon services seems to have increased during the decade and as the number of houses had increased, so the number of lodgings had similarly risen. The chancel of the parish church was rebuilt and enlarged in 1837 due to money provided by Henry Law (1797-1884), the Rector of the parish church from 1834 to 1838, and again in 1840-62. He was the son of Dr George Henry Law (1761–1845), a former Bishop of Bath and Wells.¹⁴¹

One notable visitor has left behind a diary that provides some insights into the character of holidays at Weston-super-Mare during the 1830s. The antiquary and diarist the Revd John Skinner enjoyed a number of visits during the late 1820s and early 1830s due to his friendship with George Henry Law. In his diary for 24 July 1832, Skinner described how ‘I accompanied Anna to the bath during the middle of



Figure 15: Victoria Buildings was the first terrace built on the seafront. Although it was originally constructed for wealthy residents, its houses were soon being used as lodgings for affluent holidaymakers. This photograph shows that most of the terrace has been raised by one storey. (DP218275)

the day, and while she was bathing I made a sketch of the place where the lodging houses and baths are lately purchased by Dr Fox of Brislington, who seems to be doing a good deal on the spot.¹⁴² On the following day, before breakfast, his daughter went to the bath and later he hired a boat to sail in the bay for a couple of hours. At the end of the jaunt, he landed on the pier at Knightstone, causing him to reminisce about the island before anything had been built on it. The Revd Skinner ends his diary entry for the day talking about his daughter's lodging room in the hotel, a small bedroom divided into two by a thin deal partition. Assured by the hotel that no one would be allowed to occupy the other half, instead a chambermaid put two young men into it, forcing him to swap with his daughter 'and a miserable night I passed.'

1841 and the future – Weston-super-Mare and the Railway

The most significant event in the history of Weston-super-Mare did not initially take place there. The coming of the railway would usher in a period of rapid growth in Weston's population as well as an increase in the number of tourists and a growth in the town's industries. The middle decades of the 19th century would witness a rapid growth in the town's housing stock and see the establishment of a standard form of Weston-super-Mare house, the two-storied semi-detached or detached house constructed in local stone, but with oolitic limestone ('Bath' stone) detailing. The arrival of the railway also created distinctive social zones in the growing town, with wealthy residents and their seasonal lodgers occupying the slopes up to Worlebury Hill and along the seafront, while the working class population and holidaymakers with a limited budget occupied areas of dense housing beside the railway station and along the railway line. The latter location would also be where larger-scale industry

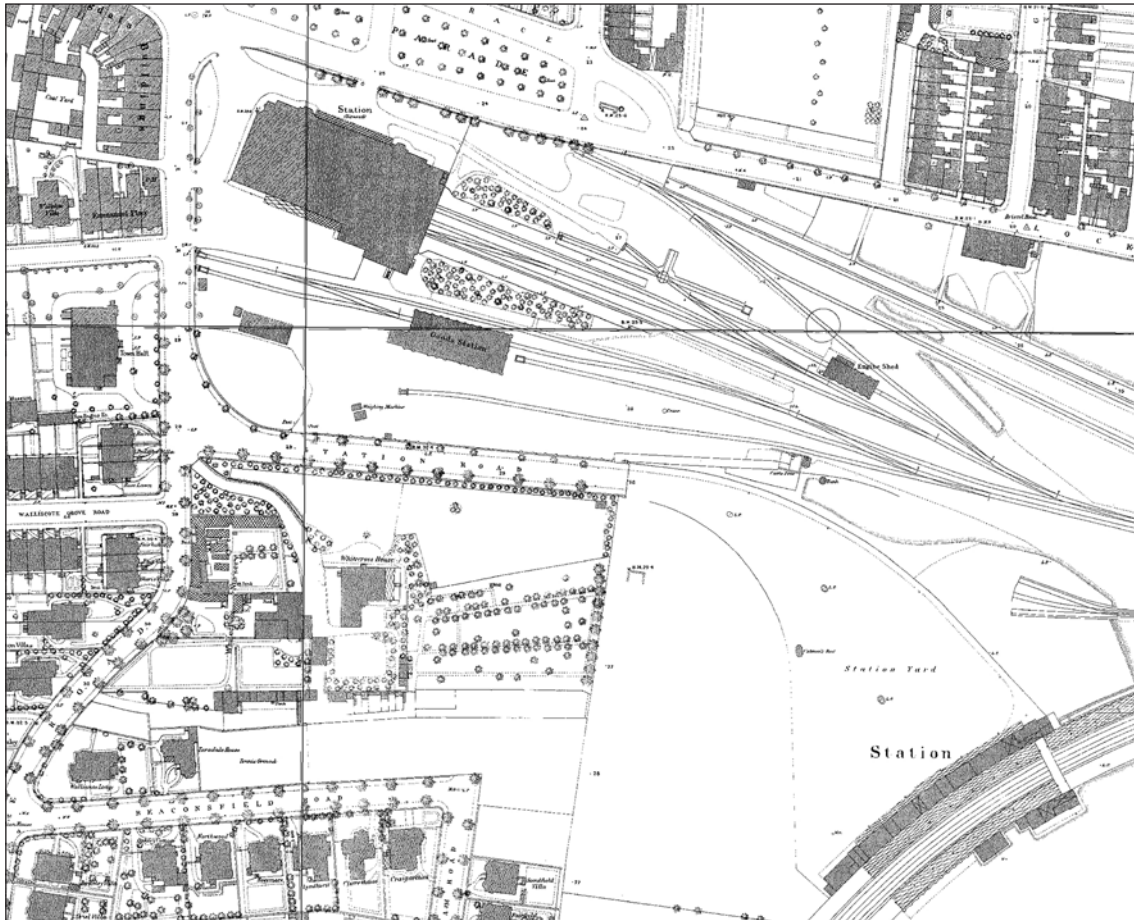


Figure 16: This extract from the 1886 Ordnance Survey map shows the 1860s railway station at the top of the map, disused by this date, beside Alexandra Parade, with the adjacent goods station. These were opposite the Town Hall, on the site of the Odeon Cinema, and the adjacent modern supermarket. To the south-east is the current station. (© Crown Copyright (and database rights) 2019 and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2019) Licence number 000394 and TP0024)

began to develop, including the town's renowned potteries. The coming of the railway effectively marks Weston-super-Mare's transition from being a village to a town.

The Bristol and Exeter Railway Act 1836 authorised the creation of a railway line linking the two cities, a route that would pass within a mile or two of Weston.¹⁴³ However, there was initial local resistance to Weston having a station, as some landowners felt it to be noisy and smoky, but the town relented and a short branch line was soon built to link it to the mainline.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, a second Act of Parliament was sought authorising a number of amendments to the initial scheme, including the creation of a short branch line to Weston.¹⁴⁵ Despite initial resistance and the consequent short delay, Weston became one of the first seaside resorts to enjoy a connection to the emerging national railway network when its station opened on 14 June 1841.¹⁴⁶ Whitstable had a rail link as early as 1830, while Brighton's first station opened in May 1840, but Scarborough's station only opened in 1845, and Margate and Ramsgate had to wait for a further year.



Figure 17: Coinciding with the new station, a new signal box for the branch line was constructed, though it now stands, unused, beside the current station. It is said to be the oldest surviving signal box on the British rail system. (DP218288)

The original branch line left the present main tracks at Weston Junction on Hutton Moor, where a small platform, a primitive waiting room and a ticket office were provided. It followed a straight course along the line of what is now Winterstoke Road to the original station. Initially, passengers were shuttled along the line in horse-drawn carriages, a journey that could take 30 mins in bad weather.¹⁴⁷

The original station in Weston was situated on Alexandra Parade, roughly on the site of the former floral clock, and when it was constructed, it was at the edge of the built-up area of the town, the most common type of location for Victorian railway stations. Disembarking visitors would have been greeted by the Railway Hotel, today's Tavern Inn, a facility constructed by Richard Parsley.¹⁴⁸ In 1847 it was described as 'a most convenient and desirable house for travellers' as 'It is within hearing of the bell announcing the departure of the trains, and possesses the accommodation of a daily ordinary.'¹⁴⁹ By 1854 it offered an attached billiard room and 'a very neat and commodious ASSEMBLY ROOM, which latter is entered from Regent Street. It is capable of holding about 200 persons, is beautifully lighted up with gas, and as a concert room is perhaps the best adapted for the purpose of any in the town.'¹⁵⁰ On Sundays it was used by as a Roman Catholic place of worship. There was also the Victoria Inn facing the station and one of the shops on Regent Street had a 'dial' over its doorway that kept railway time.¹⁵¹



Figure 18: This 1920 Aerofilms photograph shows the loop line of the railway and the large-scale branch line leading to the former 1860s passenger station on the left. (EPW001031)

The impact of the railway was felt immediately. An article in a Bristol newspaper on the eve of its opening predicted that it would prove popular with people in Bath and Bristol wishing to bathe in the sea:

‘From Banwell, at the distance of a few miles rapidly skimmed over, is the branch for Weston-super-Mare, which lies about a mile and a half distant. This branch cannot but prove highly acceptable to the citizens of Bristol and Bath, as it will enable them in about an hour to run down and enjoy the fine sea breezes, and the pleasure of a bath in the waters of Old Neptune, either before commencing business in the morning, or at the close of their labours in the evening.’¹⁵²

It was estimated in 1844 some 23,000 visitors arrived by rail, an increase of around 300% on the figures for the end of the coaching era only five years earlier.¹⁵³ Joseph Whereat, the founder and editor of the *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* recorded in 1845 that:

‘our town is fast enlarging and improving, the past few years have been made many alterations to the number and neatness of its shops. We think there is every reason to believe that the fears entertained by the many that the Bristol



Figure 19: Weston's current railway station is actually relatively small, with only two platforms flanking the twin tracks. (DP218284)

and Exeter Railway would carry the usual visitors of Weston into Devonshire are likely to prove quite groundless. Weston-super-Mare is found to be just at the most convenient distance from Bristol and Bath, in that gentlemen can easily bring their families hither, and come and return by early and late trains without interruption of their normal hours of business'.¹⁵⁴

As well as individuals purchasing tickets, the ease of access to Weston-super-Mare led to the provision of organised excursions. On 2 June 1849 1,600 workers from the Great Western Cotton Factory in Bristol assembled at the works at 6am and marched carrying banners and playing music to the railway station, where they boarded a train consisting of 16 carriages. On their arrival at Weston, the procession reformed and marched through the town towards Birnbeck 'where the party broke up and dispersed in various directions - some taking to the field, others to the sands, and others again to boating in the channel.'¹⁵⁵ After spending the day at Weston, the group assembled again in the evening at Knightstone and processed back to the station. In 1903, office staff at Cadbury's Factory at Bournville had a hectic day trip to Weston-super-Mare.¹⁵⁶ It included lunch, dinner, a boat trip and a ride on a charabanc, and all this had to be fitted in after they had completed their paperwork at the factory. In 1901, a guidebook stated that: 'It is quite a common occurrence for 6,000 or 7,000 persons to come to Weston in one day. On Bank Holidays a total of from 20,000 to 30,000 is reached.'¹⁵⁷

In 1851 the horse-drawn carriages on the branch line were replaced by steam power.¹⁵⁸ A decade later a separate goods station was constructed in a field in front of Whitecross House.¹⁵⁹ This new facility and its short branch line stood behind where the Odeon Cinema would later be constructed, on the site of the Tesco Superstore. This new station would prove particularly beneficial for the nearby Royal Pottery on Locking Road. By 1861 there was also 'a large and commodious room in the Locking-road for the accommodation of the excursion visitors.'¹⁶⁰ A map of Weston-super-Mare in 1865 shows that a new larger passenger station was being planned a short distance to the north of the goods station, because the 1841 station was too small to cope with the growing town and the increased number of visitors.¹⁶¹ The provision of a new station would also improve the functioning of this part of the town: 'It will be a great advantage to the public, and will remove a very great nuisance, namely, a level crossing over the Locking-road, the greatest thoroughfare to the town.'¹⁶² The new station opened on 20 July 1866 and consisted of two platforms, a separate excursion platform and a refreshment hall (Figure 16).¹⁶³ The provision seems to have been the stimulus to construct a new signal box for the branch line, though it now stands, unused, beside the current station (Figure 17).¹⁶⁴ It is said to be the oldest surviving signal box on the British rail system. At the same time the tracks were doubled to increase the number of trains that could be handled.¹⁶⁵

Despite having a new station, Weston-super-Mare was still simply at the end of a branch line. In 1875 the Bristol and Exeter Railway (B&ER) tracks had been converted to standard gauge and this immediately opened Weston up to a wider, direct excursion market, the first excursion from Birmingham taking place on 18 July 1875.¹⁶⁶ In the following year the B&ER was amalgamated with, and incorporated into the Great Western Railway (GWR). The same Act of Parliament behind the switch to standard gauge included a provision for the creation of a loop line at Weston-super-Mare and therefore the present station was designed in 1875-1876 by Francis Fox, the chief engineer for the B&ER, before its amalgamation with the GWR (Figure 18).¹⁶⁷ However, there were significant delays, so that the station only finally opened for passengers on 1 March 1884. For a major seaside resort, it is actually a small station, with only two platforms flanking the twin tracks (Figure 19). However, additional capacity was provided at the turn of the 20th century when a long excursion platform stretching from Alexandra Parade was constructed.¹⁶⁸ With the opening of the new station, the old passenger station that opened in 1866 was converted into a goods station, which closed in the 1960s, as did the excursion platform. This was a reflection of changing tourist habits, the car now being the dominant means of going on holiday.¹⁶⁹ The site of the former goods station is now the Tesco superstore.

Governing Weston

When the railway arrived in 1841, Weston-super-Mare was a settlement of just over 2,000 people, but a decade later, it had almost doubled in size to just over 4,000 residents. The village was becoming a town, and beginning to provide its residents and visitors with the first services. Therefore, there was a need to move from parochial administration to a more comprehensive form of local government.

An Improvement Act was obtained in 1842 for ‘paving, lighting, watching, cleansing and otherwise improving the Town of Weston-super-Mare in the County of Somerset and for establishing a Market therein’.¹⁷⁰ This standard form of legislation created a wholly new local government structure based on a body of eighteen Improvement Commissioners, leading figures in the town who were initially volunteers, but were subsequently elected. They were empowered to levy rates and borrow money to make improvements and compulsorily purchase land. For fire safety reasons, thatched roofs were banned in all new properties, front doors of properties had to open inwards and gutters and downpipes became compulsory. The Improvement Commissioners were also given powers to take down ruins and dangerous buildings and remove any problematic projections and obstructions caused by buildings. They also controlled and licensed hackney carriages, and had a duty to regulate weights and measures. Their powers also included managing public nuisances, ranging from dung heaps and discarded fish to loitering prostitutes and people exposing themselves, and they also had duties concerning the welfare of animals. Two police officers were appointed, which was insufficient for a town receiving substantial influxes of trippers.

Henry Davies (1807-1868), a local solicitor, was appointed as Clerk to the Commissioners and he went on to combine his practice, with this new position and being a successful building speculator, his ventures including Oriel Terrace and Royal Crescent, both dating from 1847.¹⁷¹ He was at the centre of a later controversy about the Town Hall, as it was suggested he was profiting from its construction, as he may have owned the land.¹⁷²

The first meeting of the Improvement Commissioners took place on 7 May 1842 in a meeting room at the gasworks on Oxford Street, immediately to the west of Emmanuel Church. Subsequently, they seem to have met at the Plough Hotel, but this was felt to be beneath the dignity of the institution. Therefore, in 1848 Francis Hutchinson Synge, first chairman of the Improvement Commissioners, purchased an old chapel off the High Street recently vacated by the Wesleyans when they moved into their new building at the corner of St James Street.¹⁷³ The former chapel could hold approximately 200 people, and was arranged so that it could stage concerts as well as court hearings, but it is clear that it was only expected to be a temporary measure.¹⁷⁴ By the mid-1850s the need for a new town hall had been recognised, a competition for its design was held in 1856 and as a result of the generosity of Archdeacon Henry Law the new building was inaugurated on 3 March 1859.¹⁷⁵ Ernest Baker in 1887 described the animosity that lay behind what seems now to have been logical necessity: ‘The most celebrated row in the annals of the town raged with great fury; it was commonly called the Townhall row. Most libellous squibs and leaflets were distributed [and] broadcast, and the town was divided against itself. It was finally settled by Archdeacon Law presenting the Townhall to the town.’¹⁷⁶

The new, purpose-built Town Hall was designed and constructed by James Wilson of Bath at a cost of £3,000 and contained the main hall, a smaller, though still large room for the Improvement Commissioners meetings, as well as rooms for magistrates’ meetings, police offices, and cells for prisoners (Figure 20).¹⁷⁷ The



Figure 20: The new Town Hall was constructed by James Wilson of Bath at a cost of £3,000. The original building was enlarged and remodelled in 1897 at a cost of about £5,000 by Hans Price to include new offices and a council chamber for the recently created Urban District Council. (DP218372)

Petty Sessions were held fortnightly at the Town Hall, while the County Court met there monthly. Until 1846, there had been no uniform national system for small debt recovery, a patchwork of Courts of Requests having grown up during the previous decades. In 1846 the County Courts Act abolished the previous haphazard arrangements and established the nationally organised system of County Courts that has remained in existence to the present day.¹⁷⁸ Weston-super-Mare's County Court came into existence in 1847 and when sitting as a court used the Town Hall chamber, while its office in the mid-1850s was at Henry Davies's house, Marine Villa, at the corner of Beach Road and Carlton Street.¹⁷⁹

At the beginning of the 19th century, Weston-super-Mare had no shop or regular market, but with the growth in the number of visitors, a market was established in 1827 by Richard Parsley.¹⁸⁰ Located behind the eastern side of the northern end of the High Street, where the Playhouse is now located, it was first mentioned briefly in 1829: 'A new market house has lately been erected for the accommodation of visitors, where, and at shops, every necessary article may be procured in abundance, at reasonable charges, and where civility generally prevails.'¹⁸¹ It was entered through an archway on the High Street; in 1847 it was described as being 'commodiously arranged, with an appropriate and well-built gate-way; and furthermore, what is not an object of minor importance, is well supplied with every description of provisions, sufficient to tempt the appetite of the most fastidious and dainty gourmand.'¹⁸² The Market was 'was greatly improved and well-nigh rebuilt in 1858, and is now far more befitting the rising character of the town than formerly.'¹⁸³ It was again



Figure 21: Henry Butt, a quarry owner and developer, in a portrait taken during his time as 'charter mayor' for the celebration of the town's new status the town's new status as Borough Council. (Borough of Weston-super-Mare Charter Souvenir 1937,15)

rebuilt in 1897-9 by Hans Price who had won the architectural competition in 1894.¹⁸⁴

The growth of Weston-super-Mare during the second half of the 19th century meant that the town outgrew its local government structures in stages. In 1859 to coincide with the move into the new Town Hall, the Improvement Commissioners became the wider district's Board of Health for the whole district and in 1894, Weston became an Urban District Council.¹⁸⁵ The growth in the town's population was accompanied by the growing complexity of local government; there was simply more for local authorities to regulate and manage and therefore more sophisticated governance and a larger town hall was required. The original building was enlarged in 1897 at a cost of about £5,000 by Hans Price to include new offices and a council chamber for the recently created Urban District Council.¹⁸⁶ In 1909, a new committee room was added and the Town Hall was again extended to the north in 1927 by the architects Fry, Paterson & Jones, with the borough surveyor, Harold Brown.¹⁸⁷ Milton was incorporated

into Weston-super-Mare in 1902 while the civil parishes of Uphill and Worle followed suit in 1933.

As local government grew in size and complexity, and Weston-super-Mare's population increased, a number of the functions that had been accommodated within the Town Hall began to be housed in separate buildings. By the time the 1886 Ordnance Survey map was published, the police occupied a separate building in Oxford Street and in 1901 the fire brigade moved to a new, two-storied fire station nearby.¹⁸⁸ On 18 September 1934 a commemorative datestone was laid by JJ Jackson-Barstow, Chairman of Weston-super-Mare County Justices, marking the opening of a new combined Magistrates' Court and Police Station, which had been designed by the County Architect Major AJ Toomer.¹⁸⁹ The building is located on the corner of Walliscote Road and Station Road, diagonally opposite the Town Hall. It is faced in stone and is two storeys high and seven bays wide. The large entrance on Station Road was the 'Justices' Entrance', according to a sign, while there were two doorways in the Walliscote Road elevation, the right-hand doorway being the public entrance, while the second doorway was for official court users. The building contained three courtrooms on the first floor. In 1970 the Police moved to a new purpose-built Police Station to the rear of the 1934 building, following the demolition of four police houses during the year before.¹⁹⁰ This was to provide more space but was also part of a national trend aimed at separating symbolically the functions of catching and prosecuting criminals. Both the Police Station and Magistrates' Court stood empty in 2018, with the former being demolished in 2019.

In 1937 Weston-super-Mare received its Royal charter and Henry Butt became the first Mayor of the Borough of Weston. In the official souvenir programme marking the Charter of Incorporation, Butt's official portrait as Mayor shows a stern figure in his robes and chain, but in the photographs of the members of the outgoing Urban District Council, he is the only councillor wearing a hat and sporting a cigarette in a long cigarette holder (Figure 21).¹⁹¹ He had begun working for a local coal merchant, and soon hired a horse and cart and set up a carrier business. By the start of the First World War, he had made enough money to purchase Milton Quarry and during the inter-war years he bought large numbers of properties and converted them into apartments or smaller flats, which will be discussed later. He was also active in raising funds for the new hospital buildings in the Boulevard.

In 1974, under the Local Government Act 1972, Weston-super-Mare Borough Council was merged into the Woodspring District of Avon County Council. When Avon was split up in 1996, Weston became the administrative headquarters of the unitary authority of North Somerset.

The Growth of Victorian Weston

Like other Victorian towns, Weston's population increased enormously during the 19th century and the town expanded with new streets, houses, churches and schools being built. When the Census was enumerated in 1841, only 2,103 people lived in Weston; sixty years later, its population had grown nearly ten-fold to 19,018.¹⁹² The strongest growth happened during the 1840s and 1850s when the population nearly doubled each decade (from 2,103 in 1841, to 4,034 in 1851 and 8,038 in 1861). Thereafter, the growth rate slowed somewhat but still the population grew steadily, so that by 1911 the town was home to 23,235 people.

The growth in population is reflected in the number of houses in the town. In 1841, Weston boasted 379 houses (of which 350 were inhabited, 25 uninhabited and 4 under construction). Fifty years later, this figure had nearly grown tenfold; in 1891 the town had 3,094 houses (2,801 inhabited, 264 uninhabited and 29 under construction). The strongest growth took place in the decade between 1851 and 1861, when the number of houses nearly doubled (from 668 in 1851 to 1315 in 1861). The demand for housing was partially driven by the expansion of the permanent population and partly by the need to provide accommodation for seasonal visitors. Weston's railway connection to Bristol also meant it became effectively a prestigious marine suburb for Bristolians.¹⁹³

The construction of houses was the town's largest industry and descriptions in guidebooks and newspapers frequently comment on the rate of construction and change. In 1849 a breathless account in the *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* described 'the various new rows, terraces, villas &c. &c., which at every turn arrest the gaze; and still the spirit of the craft goes on and houses of very imposing appearance grow while we gaze!'¹⁹⁴ At the annual dinner of the local Master Builders' Association in 1880, the chairman, Robert Landemann Jones, opined that Weston was famous for its building activity, rather than for its health benefits as one might expect from a seaside town:

‘Sheffield is remarkable for its cutlery, Birmingham for its hardware, Manchester for its cotton, and Liverpool for its shipping. But Weston is remarkable ... for its building. And well it may be, for within the memory of men now living its roads, esplanades, terraces, parks, and places have risen upon the sand tots of a wild and barren coast, occupied by a few poor fishermen, and the resort only of the sandpiper, the gulls and the curlew.’¹⁹⁵

As in other small but rapidly growing towns in the 19th century, Weston, its buildings and its institutions were shaped by a relatively small group of prominent citizens who were frequently active in several fields. Hans Price was the dominant architect at work in the town between 1860 and 1912 and has left the most visible legacy of the Victorian and Edwardian period. He was also a churchwarden in Christ Church parish, a town commissioner, and director of numerous local enterprises, including the Gaslight Company and the Pier Company. Archdeacon Henry Law was the founder of several churches and schools. Law arrived in Weston-super-Mare from Wells in about 1834. He came from a family of Anglican clergy and bishops, although he refused the offer of a bishopric for himself.¹⁹⁶ He was the Rector of Weston-super-Mare for two periods: first in 1834-38, and again in 1840-62. Henry Davies (1807-68) came from Wells at the same time as Law, but his family and professional background is less well known. He set up his own legal practice and according to his obituaries, he was only the second solicitor in Weston, after Joseph Edgar of Swiss Villa.¹⁹⁷ Davies was instrumental in securing the town’s first Improvement Act in 1842 and its amendment in 1851.¹⁹⁸ At the first meeting of the new Improvement Commissioners in May 1842 he was appointed as their Clerk, an office he held until 1854 and he was thereafter elected a town commissioner.¹⁹⁹ During his life he held numerous public offices in the town, including: registrar of the County Court (Weston district), clerk to the Burial Board, secretary to the Gas Company, a director of the Water Company, chairman of the Worle Brewery Company and others. He was also a chief promoter of the Gas and Water Companies’ Acts.²⁰⁰ Additionally, he was also active as developer, which will be discussed later, and he gave his legal advice freely to support Archdeacon Law’s many church and school projects.

The Development Pattern of Weston’s Victorian Housing

At the beginning of Victoria’s reign, most buildings in Weston were clustered around the High Street and along the seafront between Regent Street and Carlton Street. Development spread during the 1840s along the seafront towards Knightstone Island and further along towards Birnbeck Island. In the 1850s, several fashionable and exclusive hillside estates were developed, including the Shrubbery Estate and the Montpelier Estate. At the same time, development started to the south of the historic centre, including the roads around Ellenborough Park. These grand developments were aimed at prosperous citizens, wealthy retirees and visitors who wanted good quality lodgings. The 1866 Post Office directory noted that many families after service in India had settled in Weston, alongside large numbers of people from respectable towns such as Bath, Bristol, Cheltenham, Taunton and Oxford.²⁰¹ The most prestigious new development of the mid-1850s, comprising Ellenborough Crescent and Ellenborough Park, was named after Edward Law (1790-1871), first



Figure 22: This Aerofilms photograph of 1930, taken from the east, shows Royal Crescent, with Oriiel Terrace behind. Both were built in 1847 to a design by James Wilson of Bath for the solicitor Henry Davies (EPW033277)

Earl of Ellenborough, politician and Governor-General of India, whose cousin, Archdeacon Henry Law, was Rector of Weston.²⁰² Examination of censuses reveal a high number of people living in Weston, who are described as being of independent means, fundholders or annuitants, and when combined with their ages, it suggests they were often retirees. In contrast, housing in the form of more modest cottages and terraces and amenities for the lower classes were built close to the railway line, in the town centre and in the triangle framed by Meadow Street and Locking Road.

In the mid-19th century, prestigious developments in Weston-super-Mare tended to take the form of more or less grand terraces and crescents. The first examples were Victoria Buildings (1838-41), Albert Buildings (1843) and Princes Buildings (c 1843), all of which were relatively plain terraces of two- or three-storey houses. More ambitious were Oriiel Terrace and Royal Crescent of 1847, both developments by Henry Davies on a strip of glebe land (Figure 22). They are faced in oolitic limestone ('Bath' stone) and Bath's architecture was clearly the inspiration for the latter, in name and form. Grand terraces and crescents continued to be built during the following decades: Wellington Terrace (1849; now 1-9 Upper Kewstoke Road), the two halves of Manilla Crescent (1851), Ellenborough Crescent (1855, another development by Davies), Royal Terrace (1860, Gabriel & Hirst), and Claremont



Figure 23: The architect Henry Lloyd of Bristol designed the group of Holy Trinity Church and the flanking Atlantic Terraces as an architectural set piece on the hillside, which would be visible from the town centre. This aerial photograph, taken from the south-west, shows them in 2018. (HEA 33488/023)

Crescent (1865-7), its convex side facing the sea.²⁰³ Most of these early schemes were built along the seafront, but the grand terrace reached its apogee with the two impressive Atlantic Terraces of c 1861 by Henry Lloyd on either side of Holy Trinity church, high up on the hillside (Figure 23).²⁰⁴ Another prestigious form of development was the circus; however, only one such circular street was built in Weston, namely Landemann Circus on the Smyth Pigott Estate. This was not a circular terrace as in the Circus in Bath, but a group of villas, their diverse appearance and piecemeal development failing to make this a grand architectural statement. Raglan Circus at the west end of Upper Church Road was a circus only in name, and is in fact a crescent or a curved terrace.

These isolated set pieces were soon overtaken in numbers and prevalence by large-scale villa developments on entire estates, which were built throughout the Victorian period and beyond. Most of the fashionable estates from the 1850s onwards adopted the villa as their architectural unit, although occasionally terraces were inserted later, as happened in about 1877 when Shrubbery Terrace was built on the northern part of the grounds of the Villa Rosa.

Villas, both semi-detached and detached, formed the characteristic building type of Weston. Initially, they were the preserve of the wealthiest inhabitants and could be found on the seafront and especially in estates on the slopes of Worlebury Hill. Early examples of grand villas include the freestanding Villa Rosa in Shrubbery Road, and the semi-detached Elizabethan Villas in Birnbeck Road, both of 1844.²⁰⁵ Often

these early examples were built in generous gardens, such as those of the first phase of development in the Shrubbery, but as development gathered pace whole streets of villas were built. As the second half of the 19th century progressed, smaller versions were built in developments aimed at the middle classes, such as at the southern end of the Whitecross Estate. In 1844 about 40 villas were under construction, but this number would soon be dwarfed by a veritable villa boom, with over 30 villas being built on the Shrubbery Estate alone from about 1859.²⁰⁶

The architecture of Victorian Weston appears particularly homogeneous due to its use of local, grey, carboniferous limestone, which was too hard to shape and was generally used in rockfaced blocks. A softer oolitic limestone like Bath stone was generally used for carvings and dressings. The main quarries were the Town Quarry to the north of the town and Milton Quarry. The former had been established before 1815 and, as the Enclosure Award set out, provided stone for roads as well as for the use of owners and tenants of the auster tenements.²⁰⁷ Despite its proximity to the fashionable houses on the hillside and frequent complaints about the dangers of exploding charges, the Town Quarry remained active throughout the century, closing finally in 1953.²⁰⁸ Milton Quarry opened during the 1850s and in the 1880s was taken over by Henry Butt, later Mayor of Weston. Until 1939, it was the largest producer of white lime in the west of England.²⁰⁹ There were also numerous small-scale quarries that could still be found in the midst of residential areas in the 1880s. For example, in 1885 there were small quarries to the south-west of Landemann Circus and north of the rectory and St John's church.²¹⁰

Weston's Architects

The architect who has left the strongest mark on the streetscape of Weston-super-Mare was Hans Price. When he first moved to the town in 1860, there were few local architects and major commissions were given to outside architects as a matter of course. However, he soon came to dominate the architectural scene to such an extent that other local architects of any stature only begin to emerge at the end of the century when available work exceeded his practice's capacity and his career was drawing to a close.

Architects working in Weston during the pre-Price era generally came from Bath, Bristol and London. The first major architect to work in Weston was James Wilson (1816-1900) of Bath. Wilson's main patrons in the area were Thomas Tutton Knyfton of Uphill Castle (now Uphill Manor) and Henry Davies, solicitor and clerk to the Town Commissioners. In 1841, he was commissioned to build a new church in Uphill (1841-44), a proposal that was probably initiated by Knyfton as the church's patron.²¹¹ During the 1850s Wilson made major alterations and additions to Uphill Castle (c 1856) and designed a castellar gate lodge for Knyfton in 1859.²¹² In Weston-super-Mare, Wilson designed Oriel Terrace and the Royal Crescent, developments of 1847 on a strip of glebe land acquired by Davies from Archdeacon Law (Figure 24).²¹³ Davies may have been instrumental in Wilson gaining the commission for a new Town Hall in 1856-9.²¹⁴ Wilson also designed several other villas at Weston, including Villa Rosa of 1844 for Sophia Rooke, as well as a villa for Mr Kerlake, for whom he also built a villa in Lansdown Road, Bath.²¹⁵ In 1858 Wilson built a



Figure 24: Oriel Terrace was designed by James Wilson in 1847 for Henry Davies (DP218739)

house for Davies on the Whitecross Estate which the latter had acquired jointly with Whereat after Parsley's death.²¹⁶ Although Wilson was a leading architect for the Wesleyan Methodists, surprisingly he does not seem to have built any chapels in Weston.

Other architects only received isolated commissions in Weston-super-Mare. Manners & Gill, the practice of the Bath city architect George Phillips Manners (1789-1866), were commissioned to design the first two Anglican daughter churches in the town, Emmanuel Church in 1846-7 and Christ Church of 1854-5. Another Bath architect, Major Charles E Davis (1827-1902), won the 1855 competition for the municipal cemetery and its two chapels. Henry Lloyd of Bristol designed several major buildings during the 1850s-60s. He created Manilla Crescent in c 1851, the assembly rooms at the corner of West Street and High Street in 1858, and Holy Trinity and the Atlantic Terraces on either side of the church in 1859-61.²¹⁷ W Bruce Gingell of Bristol was responsible in 1864 for the bank (now Lloyd's) on the corner of the High Street; he also was the assessor in a competition for landscaping Knightstone Island in 1883, which was won by Herbert J Jones of Bristol.²¹⁸ William Christie of London built Victoria Crescent, a group of semi-detached villas in Madeira Road, and Wellington Terrace in nearby Upper Kewstoke Road, whose leases are dated 1849.²¹⁹ William Bonython Moffat of London designed Ellenborough Crescent and Park (c 1855-61) and Gabriel & Hirst of Bristol extended the Royal Hotel in 1849 and built the adjacent Royal Terrace.²²⁰

Sometimes, it was an architectural competition that brought an architect from further afield to Weston. Such competitions were held for many major buildings,



Figure 25: The striking furniture warehouse in Station Road was designed by Price & Jane in 1904 for the auctioneers and estate agents Messrs Lalonde Bros & Parham, who opened it in February 1905 with a staff dinner (DP218368)

including the Independents' chapel of 1858 (won in 1856 by Pritchett & Son of Darlington) and the Victoria Methodist church of 1899-1900 (won in 1898 by WJ Morley of Bradford).²²¹ The background to the appointment of estate architects is much less transparent, with the exception of Moffatt whose design for the Whitecross Estate was selected after a competition.

Hans Fowler Price (1835-1912)

Buildings designed by Hans Fowler Price profoundly shaped Weston-super-Mare's appearance (Figure 25). The architect was responsible for most houses and public buildings erected in the town during the second half of the 19th and the early 20th century. His obituary in *The Weston-super-Mare Gazette* stated that: 'Perhaps no one has seen more of and taken a greater part in the growth of Weston during the past 50 years in his professional capacity as architect, as a prominent Churchman, and as a member of various public bodies.'²²² Another account of his life and work aptly applied Sir Christopher Wren's epitaph to Price 'Si monumentum requires, circumpice' (if you seek his monument, look about you).²²³

Hans Fowler Price was born in Bristol on 11 June 1835, the sixth child of George (1798-1865) and Elizabeth (1802-96) (Figure 26). He was baptised in St James' church on 18 August 1835.²²⁴ His father appears to have been originally a druggist

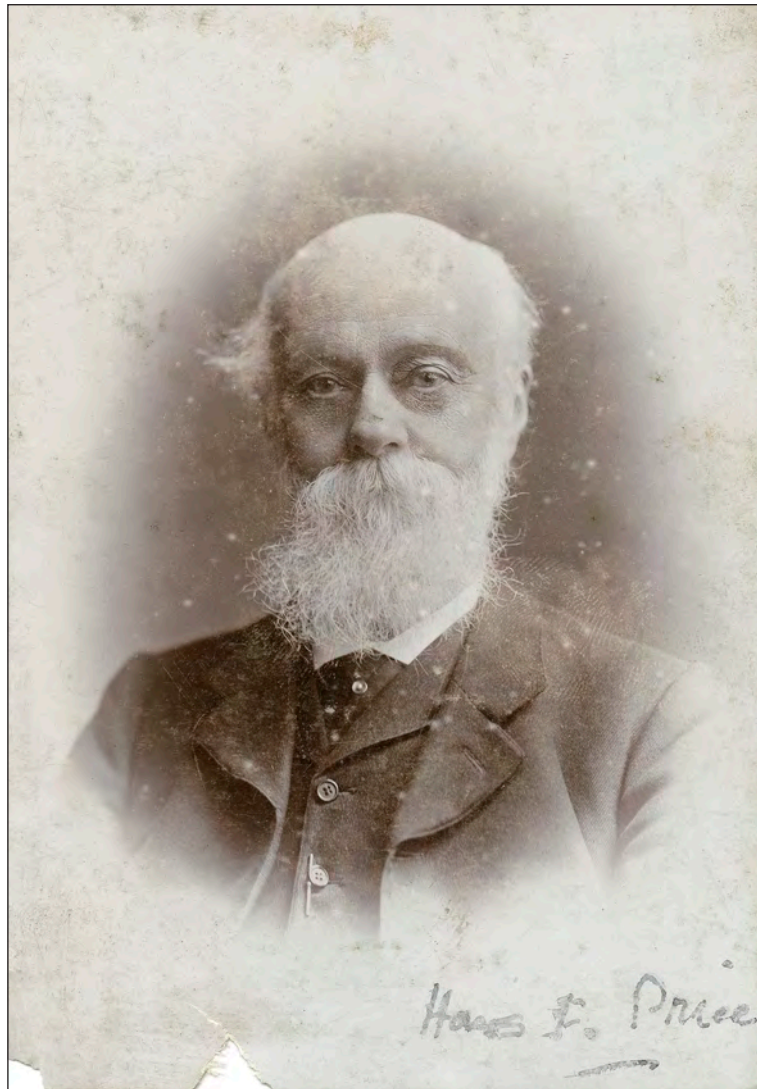


Figure 26: Hans Fowler Price (1835-1912) dominated Weston's architectural scene and influenced the town's Victorian development. (North Somerset Library Service)

who later came into money. On the baptismal certificates of his first six children, George is described as a druggist but on the certificate for his daughter Louisa in 1837 he is described as a gentleman.²²⁵ His profession on the Census returns of 1851 and 1861 is given as 'landed proprietor' and 'proprietor of houses'. By about 1840 the family were living in Cardiff where their eighth child was born, before moving to Churchill (Somerset).

By the age of 15 Price had been articled to the architect Thomas Denville Barry (1815 or 16-1905) and lived with him in Tranmere (Merseyside).²²⁶ Barry had been born in Cork and trained with Henry Prosser of London.²²⁷ He had subsequently become the City Surveyor of Norwich by 1861 and by 1868 he was Engineer to the Board of Health and Waterworks at Leamington Spa, before returning to Liverpool in c 1871 and setting up a partnership with his sons. He specialised in the design of cemeteries, their chapels and lodges, and was president of the Liverpool Architectural Society. Price's earliest known architectural design under his own name was his unsuccessful entry for the Manchester Assize Court competition

of 1859.²²⁸ He was more successful the following year when he won competitions for cemeteries in Oswestry and Bristol, the latter an enlargement of Arnos Vale cemetery.

In January 1860, Price is first mentioned in the *Weston-super-Mare Gazette*, where he is listed as visitor at Norwood House, Victoria Villas (today's 16 Madeira Road).²²⁹ A month later, he had established himself as an architect and surveyor at 5 High Street.²³⁰ On 17 September 1862 Price married Jane Plaister Baker (1840-89), the daughter of the solicitor Samuel Baker (1796-1875) of the hamlet of Bourne (or Bourn), near Burrington (Somerset).²³¹ Baker was the solicitor of the Smyth Pigott family, providing Price with excellent business connections. By July 1861 Price's office was at 1 Sydenham Terrace, just a few houses down from that of his father-in-law at number 7.²³² He shared this address with the 'old established House and Land Agency Office of Mr Gregory', who may have provided further useful contacts.²³³ Price's practice moved in c 1874 to 28 Waterloo Street, a building he had designed himself (Figure 27).

Hans and Jane had six daughters and two sons: Louise Carolina (1863-1944), who married George H. Ayerst, Minnie Livingston (1864-1941), George Meredith (1866-82), Hans Ogilvy (1867-1903) who married Caroline Harrap, Emily Fowler (1868-1942), Harriet Frances (1870-77), Winifred (1873-1951), and Marion Janet (1875-1967), a missionary in India. The family lived first at Tyn-y-Coed in Hill Road (demolished) and from c 1898 at what is now 7 Trewartha Park.

Price's career took off shortly after moving to Weston-super-Mare. His first known works there included the remodelling of the Baptist Church in Wadham Street in 1862-4, now the Blakehay Theatre, and, possibly, the design of the Albert Memorial Hall in 1862, a hall and school for Emmanuel parish.²³⁴ His first major public building in the town was the Weston-super-Mare and East Somerset Hospital of 1864-5. However, he launched his future specialism of residential developments by laying out of the Upper Worthy Estate for the Smyth Pigott family (1862-3) and then designing fifty-four houses in Woolcott Park, Redland, Bristol, together with the local architect James Adams Clark (1863-4).²³⁵ Between 1864 and 1870 he also found an early patron in Sir Arthur Hallam Elton who commissioned from Price several buildings in Clevedon.

Price held numerous official posts in Weston-super-Mare that led to further commissions, but also helped him keep in touch with his works once completed. His major official positions included being elected as a town commissioner in 1884-7.²³⁶ He was architect to the Somerset County Council Board of Education (by 1905-6 and probably from 1903), vice-president of the Hospital Committee, and chairman of the WSM Gaslight Company's board of directors (by 1903 until at least 1911). He was also an agent of the London Assurance Corporation (c 1866), a director and auditor of the Weston-super-Mare Pier Company (between c 1874 and c 1893) and he was responsible for some structures on Birnbeck Pier (1884, 1897-8).²³⁷ Additionally, Price was a director of the Weston-super-Mare Mutual Permanent Benefit Building Society (c 1880-4), a director (with his partner Wooler) of the Weston-super-Mare Steam Laundry Company (1888), a director of the Summer &



Figure 27: 28 Waterloo Street (the tallest building in the photograph) was designed by Hans Price as his own office. It remained in use by his successor practice into the late 20th century. (DP218744)

Winter Gardens Society (1889) and a shareholder of the Assembly Rooms Company Ltd (1902).²³⁸ He was also a founding trustee of the School of Science and Art for which he designed a new building which was built in 1892-3 and 1899-1900.

During his career Price was in partnership at least four times. In his earliest known partnership with James Adams Clark, Price was the junior partner, but his name was put first in all his subsequent partnerships. Relatively little is known about Clark (fl. 1849-76), with whom Price worked on the Woolcott Park development in Bristol. He has been described as 'a man of many partnerships which tended not to last long'.²³⁹ These included a partnership with Richard Shackleton Pope and John Bindon in Bristol (Pope, Bindon and Clark) in 1849-58, a partnership with Edward William Godwin in around 1860-3, a brief partnership with ST Welch in 1862, and the collaboration with Price in 1863-4. Clark was appointed the first honorary secretary of the Bristol Society of Architects in 1851. According to Gomme

and Jenner, he carried out much 'routine' work, although some of his buildings have 'some real dignity', but 'what individuality he had seems to have got lost in overproduction'.²⁴⁰

From 1873 to 1877 Price was in partnership with Matthias August Edward Grosholz (1851-78), who lived and worked in England only briefly in the 1870s. Born in Baden-Baden in Germany, Grosholz had moved to England by 1873.²⁴¹ It seems likely that the mistaken identification of Price's later partner, Walter Hernaman Wooler, as German is due to a conflation with Grosholz. By 1873 Grosholz was living in Weston-super-Mare and working as architect in partnership with Joseph Houghton Spencer (1844-1914).²⁴² The partnership was dissolved on 31 May 1873 and shortly afterwards, he went into partnership with Price, as their first known joint projects date belong to later in 1873.²⁴³ Their last known projects date from 1877, though Grosholz and his family appear to have emigrated to New Zealand in 1876.²⁴⁴ In March 1876 the *Weston Mercury* announced an auction of his household goods as he was leaving England.²⁴⁵ In late 1876 his second child, Elise Ellen Grosholz, was born in Wellington in New Zealand, where he was practising as architect in Grey Street by 1878.²⁴⁶ He died there aged 27 and is now buried at Bolton Street Cemetery in Wellington.²⁴⁷

In 1877 Price took Walter Hernaman Wooler into partnership and they practiced as Price & Wooler until 1900. Wooler (1853-1936) was born in Dewsbury (West Yorkshire), the younger son of the surgeon William Wooler.²⁴⁸ Little is known about his architectural training or his early career, but by 1881, Wooler was living in Weston-super-Mare with his widowed mother and a sister.²⁴⁹ In c 1883 he married Ellen Stanley Marshall (1857-1936), daughter of Rev Henry James Marshall and by 1885, they lived at The Chalet in South Road, which Price & Wooler remodelled in 1888.²⁵⁰ The partnership's last known project is dated 1900 and they seem to have gone their separate ways soon after.²⁵¹ On 31 March 1901 Wooler is described as 'living on [his] own means' and ten years later he had retired.²⁵² His obituary in *The Builder* states that he had not been 'engaged in professional practice for many years past'.²⁵³ He may have come into money in around 1900, which allowed him to retire early. At the time of his death, his estate was valued at £14,903 1s 8d.²⁵⁴ He and his wife are buried in Milton Road Cemetery, Weston-super-Mare.

From 1902 Price was in partnership with William Jane (1864-1918), who had served his articles with Messrs Pope & Paul of Bristol in 1881-84 before working as assistant to several architects in Bristol and Taunton. In 1892-96 he was chief assistant to the Borough Engineer and Surveyor at Reading before setting up in private practice there in 1897 and from 1902 in Weston-super-Mare. During the First World War Jane served in the Royal Engineers, rising to the rank of major. He died from his wounds in April 1918.²⁵⁵

Price also collaborated with the local architects Wilde & Fry on several occasions between 1899 and 1908, notably on the Free Library and Museum in the Boulevard (1899-1900) and the Locking Road Board schools (1899 and 1905). Quentin Alder has suggested that these were periods when Price had no partner and needed help



Figure 28: The high costs of carvings and other decorations meant that the fine street elevation of the School of Science and Art could only be added seven years after the main building had been completed. (DP218737)

to complete larger projects.²⁵⁶ However, they include the period when Price and Jane were in partnership.

Price appears to have had a practical mind and in 1905, at the age of 70, he registered a patent for 'heating and storing water'.²⁵⁷ A keen chess player, he was one of the founders of the local chess club and regularly appeared in County matches. For fifty years, he was a churchwarden at Christ Church and he helped found the Star Coffee House at the corner of Meadow Street and Alfred Street, a church enterprise to help the poor.²⁵⁸ By 1882 this had become a temperance hotel run by the local branch of the Church of England Temperance Society, of which Price was honorary secretary.²⁵⁹ In the 1860s he was also a founder member of the Sixth Somerset Company of Rifle Volunteers, and marched with them to Birnbeck Pier on the day of its opening in 1867.²⁶⁰

Price worked until a few weeks before his death on 27 November 1912. His obituaries in the local press praised his business sense, reliability, astuteness, 'remarkable fund of vitality' and 'practically unerring judgement'.²⁶¹ He is buried in Milton Road Cemetery, Weston-super-Mare. His wealth at the time of his death was £3,131 3s and 10d.²⁶²

After Price's death in 1912, Jane continued the practice at least for a year.²⁶³ He then joined the practice of Peter George Fry as Jane & Fry. Their successor practice

became Fry, Paterson & Jones and later Coffin, Jones & Roden who were still based in Price's former office at 28 Waterloo Street in 1979.²⁶⁴ They were bought out in the early 1990s by Brittain Hadley and the practice was dissolved in 1997.²⁶⁵

According to Quentin Alder, Price completed about 861 projects between 1860 and his death in 1912, most of which were for buildings in Weston-super-Mare. Alder also estimates that Price completed 93 commissions before Grosholz joined the practice, Price & Grosholz were responsible for 73 commissions and Price & Wooler for 411. Working on his own between 1900 and 1902, Price worked on 116 commissions. His final partnership with Jane was responsible for another 168 commissions.²⁶⁶

Price designed many of Weston's best-known public buildings, including the Hospital (1864-5), the Sanatorium (1871-3), the School of Science and Art (1892-3 and 1899-1900), the former Library and museum on the Boulevard (1899-1900), the current Museum (1912), several former church schools, and two council schools in Walliscote Road (1895-7) and Locking Road (1899 and 1905). Other major buildings, like the Victoria Hall in the Summer and Winter Gardens (1882-4) and the Market Hall (1897-9) no longer survive.²⁶⁷ Many of his public buildings, such as the Library and the Walliscote Road schools, have highly decorative elevations. Indeed, for the School of Science and Art such decoration was an important display of the high standards in design it hoped to foster (Figure 28). Yet the high costs of such carvings and other decorations meant that its fine street elevation could only be added seven years after the main building had been completed. The second phase cost £2,600, compared to the £1,600 of the first.²⁶⁸ When the elevation was completed in 1900, featuring faience panels and carvings by JP Steele of Kingsdown, Bristol, the *Weston Mercury* exclaimed that 'happily barren ugliness has now given way to well-proportioned beauty'.²⁶⁹

For the parish of Christ Church, Weston-super-Mare, Price built infant schools and their later extensions, as well as adding a clerestory to the church itself in 1876-8. He also received commissions from other local Anglican parishes, such as St John the Baptist, Holy Trinity and St Jude's in Milton, for their churches, schools and other buildings. Price built and extended several churches in Somerset, including at Sandford and restored numerous churches, including in Devon, Gloucestershire, Sussex and Herefordshire. When it came to business he was thoroughly ecumenical, happily working for Nonconformists, including Methodists, Quakers, Plymouth Brethren and Baptists; chapels for the latter in particular formed an important part of his early work.

Price designed a number of parish and council schools in Somerset; the latter commissions were helped, no doubt, by his appointment in 1893 as architect to the Council's new school board and from 1903 to Somerset County Council's education committee. The commission for his best-known school building, the Board School in Walliscote Road, was won in a controversial competition: Price's design had initially been disqualified by the competition's assessor, before being chosen as winner by the committee. Unsurprisingly, given Price's official position, the architectural press thought the competition 'fake' and 'fictitious'.²⁷⁰



Figure 29: The Weston Mercury was founded in 1843 and since 1885 has had its office at 32 Waterloo Street. The building to the left (2 The Boulevard) dates from 1888 and has also been attributed to Hans Price. (DP218745)

The vast majority of Price's oeuvre were private houses, supplemented by commercial, ecclesiastical, educational and industrial commissions. He was involved in the layout and design of several estates in Weston-super-Mare, including the Milton Park Estate, the Upper Worthy Estate, the Montpelier Estate, the National Freehold Land Estate, the Sunnyside Estate, the Shrubbery Estate, the Whitecross Estate, the Coombe Bank Estate and the Swiss Villa Estate.

Hans Price and the 'Weston style'

Apart from the prevalence of the local building materials, the town's architectural coherence also depended on a recognisable style of villa architecture, which was largely developed by Hans Price. While this relied on a certain formula, it could also be lively in character. This variety was highlighted in the *Daily Graphic* in August



Figure 30: This example of a decorative gable shows one of Hans Price's houses in Beaconsfield Road, which combines several Jacobean-style motifs, such as strapwork and a carved shell. (DP218345)

1891, which stated that 'monotony [in architecture] as in other seaside towns has no existence in Weston'.²⁷¹

In general, Hans Price and his practice worked in an eclectic style. His designs drew on many sources in their detailing, including Italianate, Gothic, Renaissance and Tudor. In Waterloo Street the Mercury Offices displays influences from Dutch Renaissance buildings, such as Leiden Town Hall, and Spanish churches, such as Segovia Cathedral (Figure 29).²⁷² At the same time, Price's buildings, and in particular his villas, are generally instantly recognisable and appear to have influenced others, leading to the establishment of a 'Weston style'. Villas by Price generally have at least one gable to the main elevation that features some kind of decoration (Figure 30). This is typically a panel of carved stone in the earlier buildings, but might also be a carved bargeboard, or even tile-hanging after about

1900. While this formula was not in any way revolutionary, its prevalence, together with the widespread use of local stone combined with Bath stone dressings, gave Victorian Weston a distinct visual identity that was not purely derivative of urban and suburban residences in Bristol or Bath.

It is, however, not always possible to distinguish between works by Price or one of his partners. Wooler in particular is credited occasionally with sole authorship, although hard evidence is frequently lacking. For example, the Moorish-style houses at 83-85 Upper Church Road have been attributed at times to Wooler or Price, both of whom are said to have been inspired to use Moorish arches and Spanish tiles by a trip to Spain or North Africa (Figure 31).²⁷³

Wilde & Fry

Other local architects emerged towards the end of the 19th century, in particular Sydney John Wilde (born 1852) who in 1898 formed a partnership with his former assistant Peter George Fry (1875-1925). Wilde was the son of John Wilde (born 1828), a physician and chemist who by 1875 had moved to Weston-super-Mare. John was born in Shropshire and had moved to Islington by 1851 where Sydney was born. The family then moved to Twyford (Hampshire) by 1861 and to Colebrook St Peter, near Winchester by 1871.²⁷⁴ It is not known where Sydney received his architectural training, but the 1871 Census records his profession as 'architect's pupil'. In 1886, he married Sarah Brown at Holy Trinity, Bridgwater (Somerset), with whom he had three children.²⁷⁵ His best-known works under his own name were the Atlantic Cable Office of 1889 in Richmond Street and the east end of the former St Saviour's church of 1890-2 in Locking Road.

Peter George Fry was articled to Wilde between 1891 and 1895, and then worked as his assistant before briefly working as assistant to the quantity surveyor W.



Figure 31: A pair of Moorish-inspired houses at 83-85 Upper Church Road, by Price & Wooler. (DP218506)

Simmons and to Harry Teather in 1896-8.²⁷⁶ Fry set up in private practice in 1898 and formed a partnership with Wilde the same year which lasted to 1909, after which he practiced alone. Wilde & Fry collaborated on several occasions with Hans Price, notably on the Library and Museum in the Boulevard. Following Hans Price's death in 1912, Fry went into partnership with Price's last partner, William Jane (died 1918). He gained Licenciate status of the RIBA in 1910 and ten years later Fellowship status. His main work was St Paul's Anglican church of 1911-12.

After 1918, Fry formed a new partnership with Paterson and Jones, creating Fry, Paterson & Jones, which continued until the 1960s. Major works by Fry, Paterson & Jones include the town hall extension of 1927 and the Victoria Methodist Church of 1935-6 in Station Road.

Weston's Estates

Smyth Pigott Estate

A number of estates shaped the development of large swathes of Weston-super-Mare (Figure 32). The largest estate was owned by the Smyth Pigott family who had been Lords of the Manor since 1696. The estate, which comprised the northern part of the town and much of the fashionable hillside, gradually released land for development.

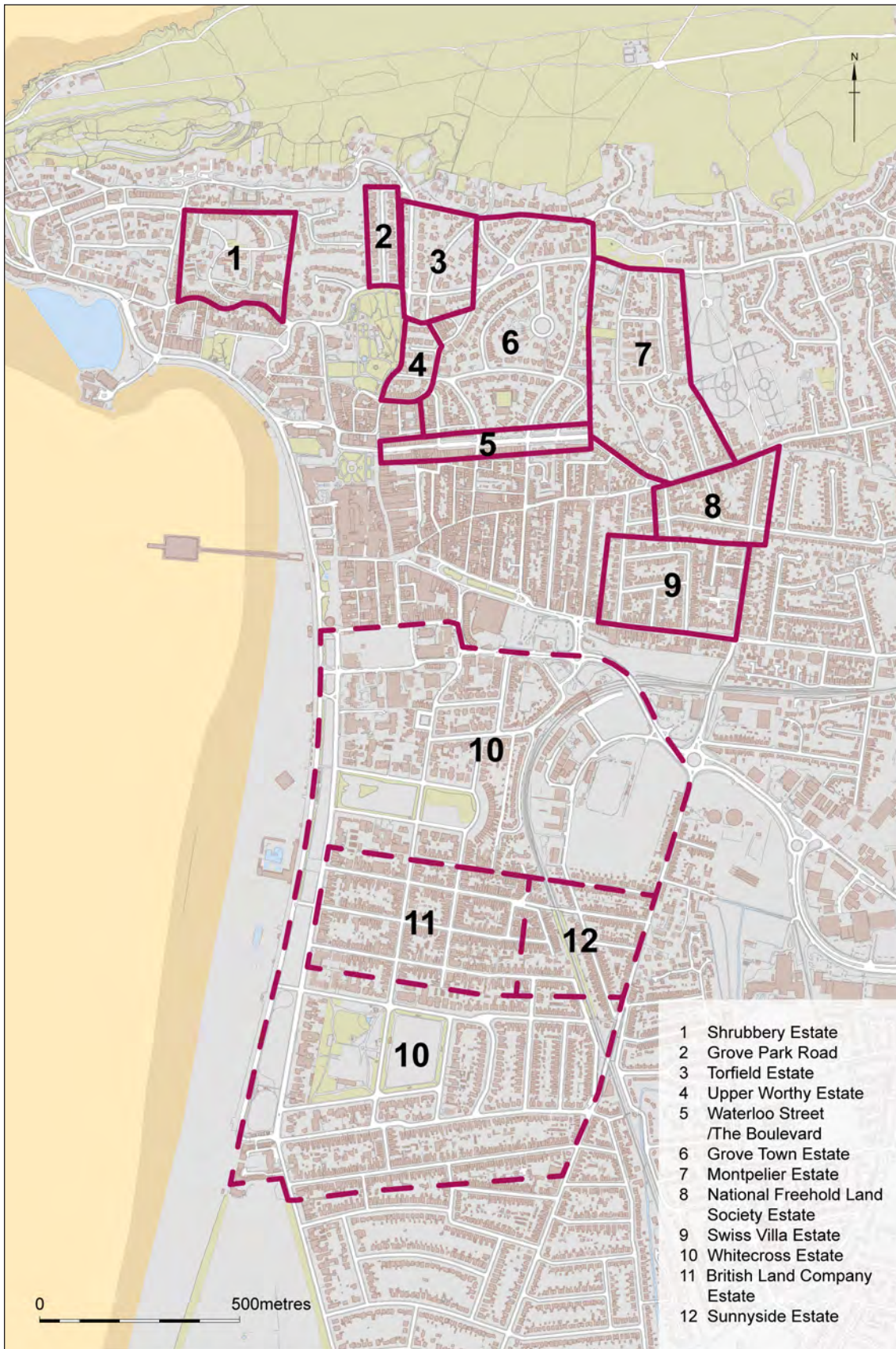


Figure 32: Map showing the approximate location of the main estates in Weston-super-Mare in the second half of the 19th century (© Crown Copyright (and database rights) 2019. OS100024900)



Figure 33: This photograph of 1888 shows the view to the west along the Boulevard and Waterloo Street, with the recently planted trees lining the street. (North Somerset Library Service)

Their earliest known building leases were for Wadham Street and date from 1846.²⁷⁷ The estate experienced three distinct peaks of development: in the late 1850s (South Road and Upper and Lower Church Road), the early 1870s (George Street and Bristol Road) and the late 1890s and early 1900s (Hatfield Road, Hughenden Road and Milton Road).²⁷⁸ However, perhaps the estate's most significant contribution to the townscape of Weston-super-Mare was the creation in the 1860s of the Boulevard and its continuation Waterloo Street as a link to the Montpelier Estate (Figure 33). North of the Boulevard and east of the Pigotts' Grove House was the Grove Town development, with Landemann Circus at its heart. Other discrete entities were the development of the Upper Worthy Estate just to the east of Grove Park during the early 1860s, the Torfield during the 1870s, and Grove Park Road in the 1890s. Development of the Smyth Pigott lands continued throughout the 19th century and into the Edwardian period.

The land agent and steward for the Smyth Pigott Estate was Robert Landemann Jones (c 1816-1903), after whom Landemann Circus was named (Figure 34). Jones had been a captain in the Merchant Navy, and then a farmer, but from the early 1850s he was employed by the Smyth Pigott family and based at their seat, Brockley Hall.²⁷⁹ He later retired to Weston-super-Mare, where he was living by 1891, and died there.²⁸⁰ A tribute accompanying his obituary in the *Weston Mercury* quoted his motto that 'the interests of the Pigott estates and those of the town are not only identical but inseparable, and together they must stand or fall'.²⁸¹ He was one of the promoters of the Sanatorium, brought the 'Italian Band' at his own expense to the town, and supported many public schemes such as the waterworks and the Summer and Winter Gardens.²⁸² As a sympathetic estate steward, he paved the way



Figure 34: Part of the Grove Town development, Landemann Circus was laid out in the 1860s but not completed until the early 20th century. (HEA 33489/007)

for creating Weston's four mile 'marine drive' on the seafront and for the acquisition by the town of the Prince Consort Gardens (1882) and Grove Park (1889) for public use.²⁸³

The local architect Hans Fowler Price was the estate's consulting architect and surveyor from at least 1862.²⁸⁴ During the same year, he married the daughter of the Smyth Pigotts' solicitor. Price designed many of the new houses for the Smyth Pigott family, including the Upper Worthy Estate, which was laid out in 1862, 67 cottages in Grove Town in 1871 and 19 houses in Grove Park Road in 1891-6.²⁸⁵

Whitecross Estate

The second largest estate was Richard Parsley's Whitecross Estate in the southern part of the town. Parsley died in 1846 and in 1855 his son Horatio sold most of its land to Henry Davies and Joseph Whereat.²⁸⁶ They promptly held an architectural competition, which was won by William Bonython Moffatt (1812-87) of London.²⁸⁷ Moffatt's winning scheme was a plan for 500 houses and an Anglican church on the 200 acre site. The houses were clearly aimed at the wealthy and upper middle classes, with plot sizes ranging from 1/4 acre to 1 acre.²⁸⁸ The first part to be realised was Ellenborough Crescent (1855-56), followed by Ellenborough Park (initially known as Whitecross Square) (Figure 35).²⁸⁹ The architect James Wilson also designed a villa on the estate for Davies.²⁹⁰



Figure 35: Ellenborough Park and Ellenborough Crescent were the first developments on the Whitecross Estate, to the south of the town. (HEA 33489/053)



Figure 36: Shrubbery Lodge was built in 1839 at the southern edge of the Shrubbery Estate. (DP236021)

The deaths of Whereat in 1865 and Davies in 1868 halted these grand plans and the southern part of the estate remained undeveloped for another twenty years. Davies's widow Rebecca kept the central part of the estate but sold 16 acres to the east to William Morgan of Bath; this later became the Sunnyside Estate (see below).²⁹¹ In 1882 Rebecca Davies donated Clarence Park as a public park and the neighbouring streets were built up soon after. The bulk of this part of the estate was developed during the 1880s by the British Land Company, the commercial subsidiary of the National Freehold Land Society (see below). Instead of grand houses for the most affluent, the Society's members built smaller houses aimed at a less wealthy market.

Shrubbery Estate and Coombe Bank Estate

The Shrubbery Estate, also known as the 'Villa Rosa Estate' after its most prominent villa, was one of the most exclusive of the early residential developments. Following the Enclosure Act, its site was owned by John Cox of Glentworth House and Richard Parsley. During the 1830s Cox let or sold his part to Miss Sophia Rooke (1787-1874) who built a mansion there and later started the residential development.²⁹² She was born at Langham in Essex but was living at Weston-super-Mare by 1838. The tithe apportionment and map of that year showed that she lived in a house just to the west of the site of the later Villa Rosa. Miss Rooke was independently wealthy and Census returns describe her as 'fundholder' (1851) and 'landowner' (1871). She is said to have kept a private menagerie in the grounds of her villa.

In 1844 Miss Rooke built herself a grand Italianate residence of pink limestone, called the Villa Rosa. This was a new house designed by the architect James Wilson of Bath and built by Thomas Locock, a local builder.²⁹³ It was built on the site of an earlier house, which in 1838 was inhabited by the Irish author Lady Eliza Tuite (c 1764-1850).²⁹⁴ Miss Rooke also started a small-scale, first phase of development, which took place between c 1839 and 1853. In 1839, a lodge was built to the south, followed in the 1840s by a second lodge at the east end of Shrubbery Avenue, which served as accommodation for the gardener (Figure 36).²⁹⁵ Three large villas were also built during this initial phase; Overcoombe was constructed in 1850 by Robert Ebbels of Wolverhampton for Mrs Diana De Bruyn, along with Coombe Bank and Coombe Cottage, subsequently renamed Coombe Lodge.²⁹⁶ These houses and the Villa Rosa were surrounded by the landscape of the eponymous 'shrubbery', which is shown on Joseph White's town plan of 1853 (Figure 37). Of these early buildings, only the 1839 lodge, Coombe Bank and the Villa Rosa's former coach house, now called the Villa Rosetta, survive today.

The second phase of development was more intensive, although still consisting of generously sized villas in large grounds. An early mention of Miss Rooke's plan to comprehensively develop the site with villas dates from 1849, although construction work only started in the 1850s.²⁹⁷ A network of winding roads was laid out, reflecting the sinuous paths of the previous landscaping on much of the site and in 1859, a plan showing thirty-one semi-detached villas, a well house and two lodges was drawn up by JP Sturge & Sons, surveyors of Bristol.²⁹⁸ The villas were placed mostly along the new roads, while the large plots of the initial four villas remained intact. At the centre of the estate was the S-plan Shrubbery Road which bisected the gardens of the Villa



Figure 37: This map shows the Shrubbery Estate in 1853, with four villas in the southern half of the eponymous landscaped gardens, as well as a lodge at the south and the gardener's lodge at the northeast. (North Somerset Library Service)

Rosa, meaning that a bridge linking the two halves had to be built (Figure 38). A well and a castellated water tower, now in residential use, supplied the estate. In 1871 Hans Price designed the North Lodge, on the site of the present 1 Shrubbery Avenue, and a fourth lodge (now 70 South Road) was built in 1882.²⁹⁹ Communal gardens, known as 'Shrubbery Walks', were provided, just to the south of the water tower. In 1863, Thomas Beedle described the Villa Rosa Estate as follows:

The Shrubbery Walks are situated here, but building seems to be the order of the day, and villas are springing up, and roads being formed where flowers once grew. When all the contemplated additions and improvements are effected, this locality will present a most cheerful appearance, and the owner of the property, Mrs [sic] Sophia Rooke, of Villa Rosa, (that charming Italian looking residence surrounded by well planted gardens and prominently placed on an eminence) will, we should hope, see no cause to repent her outlay and trouble.³⁰⁰



Figure 38: Shrubbery Road, at the centre of the Shrubbery Estate, bisected the gardens of Villa Rosa, prompting the construction of a bridge to link the two halves. (DP218585)

A third phase of development, starting after Miss Rooke's death, was even denser, encroaching on the gardens of the Villa Rosa and Coombe Cottage. To the north of Villa Rosa, Shrubbery Terrace, comprising eight houses, was built in c 1877 to a design by Price & Wooler.³⁰¹ In 1876 Price's practice prepared a general plan and a drainage plan for the Coombe Bank scheme for the builder Samuel Harvey, which was to comprise nine semi-detached houses and five detached villas.³⁰² Individual plans for thirteen villas were produced in 1876-8, as well as 'double villas' in 1885, all packed closely around Coombe Bank House. This process of densification continued in the early 20th century, when Victoria Park was laid out on the site of Coombe Cottage.

Montpelier Estate

The fashionable Montpelier Estate to the north east of the town centre was started by Henry Davies during the late 1850s. In 1852 he purchased for £2,100 the fields known as the Lynch (or Great Lynch), the largest part of which was numbered 119 on the 1838 tithe map (covering most of Montpelier) and two small adjoining strips (124 and 125).³⁰³ In total, the acreage was 25 acres.³⁰⁴ An initial, unrealised layout

is shown in Joseph White's town plan of 1853 with a central road on the line of the later Trewartha Park, which forks around an oval reservoir. Montpelier would have been a cul-de-sac, continuing not much further north than Christ Church. Instead, Montpelier was the first road to be laid out and an oblong reservoir was built west of the corner with Bristol Road.

In 1856 the surveyor Joseph White drew up drainage plans for the estate.³⁰⁵ Development started in the late 1850s, focusing on the west side of the street (complete by 1865), with a lodge at the north end (now number 35). As in the Shrubbery Estate, water supply was an important facility and a reservoir (still in use) was built at the north end of the street in 1854. Another important amenity was the construction of Christ Church in 1854-5; its establishment was aided by Davies's donation of the site as well providing funds towards its construction, and it was pushed forward through his friendship with Archdeacon Henry Law. In 1863 Thomas Beedle described Montpelier as 'the handsome and healthy locality of Montpelier, one of the modern beauties of Weston'.³⁰⁶

Hans Price designed several villas on the east side of Montpelier during the 1870s.³⁰⁷ By the 1880s the east side of Montpelier was largely built up, including the large house called Trewartha at the north and a D-shaped street called Montpelier East (now part of Trewartha Park). The northern half of Trewartha Park was added during the 1890s, connecting to Bristol Road Lower. In 1898 Hans Price designed four pairs of semi-detached houses (today's 5-7, 9-11, 13-15, 17-19), including his own house (now number 7; Figure 39).³⁰⁸

Not all of the estate was developed by Davies himself. In 1858 he sold part of the Great Lynch for £1,047 to Thomas Morland and Conrad Wilkinson, trustees of the National Freehold Land Society.³⁰⁹ This was an irregular plot south of the junction of Montpelier and Hill Road and north of Christ Church. It came with strict covenants regarding the kind of houses to be erected there; their value had to be £400 or above and the style, materials, distance from the road and quality had to be consistent with houses erected by Davies on neighbouring plots.³¹⁰ This development aimed at the wealthy and upper middle class market demonstrates that the Society had left its origins in the electoral franchise movement long behind and had become a mainly commercial proposition. By that date, it also owned the adjoining plot in Hill Road that similarly continued Davies's plans for Montpelier. In contrast, the Society's development south of Milton Road, untrammelled by cost and quality restrictions, was denser and of smaller villas (see below).

Swiss Villa Estate

Not every projected housing development was successful. Several proposals for the area around Swiss Villa to the south of Montpelier were delayed or failed to materialise, partly due to its poor location. It was inland, without a sea view and in close proximity to the railway, the cattle market and Locking Road.³¹¹ Swiss Villa existed by 1838 and is best known for Isambard Kingdom Brunel's reputed stay there in 1841.³¹² The initial proposal for the estate development was for another scheme featuring exclusive villas like Montpelier. The 1853 town map shows three



Figure 39: In the late 1890s, Hans Price designed a group of semi-detached houses in Trewartha Park. Number 7, pictured here, was to be his own house, where he lived with his family until his death in 1912. (DP218504)

projected roads of generously spaced villas roughly on the lines of today's Swiss Road and Stafford Road, framing Swiss Villa. However, none of this was built.

The owner of Swiss Villa, Joseph Edgar, Weston's first solicitor, planned to build cottages during the early 1850s in 'the style of the Henbury cottages near Bristol', meaning John Nash's picturesque cottages (1810-11) at Blaise Hamlet.³¹³ One such cottage had been built by 1854, when the proposal was described in a guidebook, but it is not known if the scheme was ever completed.³¹⁴ This was not the entrance lodge to Swiss Villa, known as Swiss Cottage, now 43 Locking Road, at the corner of Swiss Road and Locking Road, which existed by 1847. Edgar's death in December 1853 and the subsequent change in ownership appear to have cut short this proposal.³¹⁵

A more successful attempt to develop the land was made during the late 1870s. In 1879 tenders were invited to build a main drain for the estate and work started at the west with the construction of the west side of Swiss Road.³¹⁶ By 1881 Florence Villa and Herbert Villa were described as ‘newly-erected’.³¹⁷ The eastern part of the estate, including the dogleg middle section of Stafford Road and the T-plan Stanley Road and Stanley Grove Road, had been built by 1903. A second phase of development was initiated by the Cox family who had acquired the estate by 1904. They demolished Swiss Villa and sold the land in several auctions between 1904 and 1906.³¹⁸ Their surveyor Edward T Gillmore drew up a drainage plan in 1904.³¹⁹ Between 1904 and 1907 Gordon Road, Milburn Road and Trevelyan Road were built over the site of the villa and its gardens. Overall, the character of the Swiss Villa estate was closer to the medium-sized houses of the Freehold Land estate to its north, rather than the large villas of the Montpelier Estate that the initial scheme of the early 1850s had tried to emulate.

Middle-Class Victorian and Edwardian Housing

Other developments were aimed at the middle classes, although the exact socio-economic audience is not always easy to ascertain. There were several developments by the National Freehold Land Society (NFLS) and its commercial subsidiary, the British Land Company (BLC). The BLC was created in 1856 as the Society was legally unable to own land under the Building Societies Act. While the widening of the electoral franchise through property ownership had been a founding principle of the Society, it quickly became a commercial operation and their houses were increasingly aimed at people more affluent than the poorest in society. Their estates are atypical as there was no central design control through building leases or similar regulations. Instead, their members were free to build in whatever style or plan they chose, or even to leave the plot fallow for some years. The exception was the development on the Montpelier land that Davies sold in 1858 with covenants dictating the form of development.

By 1858 the NFLS owned three plots of land. A small one was located on the east side of Montpelier, another was in Hill Road north of Milton Road and a third was centred on Clarendon Road, south of Milton Road (Figure 40). While strict covenants stipulated that the development on the first two should continue Henry Davies’s grand plans for the Montpelier Estate, houses on the third were aimed at middle class owners. This plot was acquired in c 1853 and encompassed Clarendon Road and parts of nearby Hill Road, Milton Road and Ashcombe Road.³²⁰ Clarendon Road was laid out in about 1854.³²¹ The plots were distributed by ballot among the members based on the number of shares that they held. Development only started in earnest in c 1869 and continued into the 1870s and later, a typical example of the frequently piecemeal NFLS developments. There was at least one shop at the corner of Clarendon Road and Hill Road in a terrace designed by Hans Price.³²²

During the 1880s the British Land Company developed the southern part of the Whitecross Estate, including Clevedon Road, Clifton Road, Severn Road, Whitecross Road and Walliscote Road. These houses appear more homogenous in appearance than the earlier NFLS development, albeit still a mixture of semis and terraces, and



Figure 40: Clarendon Road was developed by the National Freehold Land Society between the late 1860s and the 1880s. Hans Price designed several cottages and villas in the street, as well as a corner shop. (DP218647)

they appear to have been developed relatively soon after the plots were released. A small shopping centre developed in Whitecross Road, which soon spilled over from purpose-built shops into converted houses.³²³

One of the investors who acquired plots from the Company was local house decorator William R Palmer. He recounted in his memoirs that he had bought two plots in Severn Road as an investment.³²⁴ He first used them as allotments but his crops of potatoes and peas were stolen. He then tried, unsuccessfully, to let the garden, and so in 1889 he built two 'good houses', which were the first two houses in Severn Road, except for an earlier one at the corner with Beach Road. Again, he failed to find tenants, so he moved into one house himself and let out his previous rooms over his business premises. When he found a tenant for the other house, the tenant preferred Palmer's home, so they swapped houses. When he finally found a tenant for the second house, Palmer moved back to his flat over his shop. Palmer's experience shows that houses proved a better investment opportunity than allotments but that the demand for houses to rent was not that great.

The eastern part of the Whitecross Estate had been sold by the Davies family to William Morgan of Bath. It was developed as part of the 'Sunnyside Estate' by the ABC Syndicate, whose acronym was formed from the surnames of the three directors. Charles Addicott was a prominent Weston builder after whom Addicott Road was named, (Robert) Henry Coate Butt was a quarry owner and the principal of the Somerset Trading Company, and John Pitman Curtis, was an ironmonger

with a shop on the High Street.³²⁵ The Syndicate acquired the estate from Morgan's daughter, Mary Martha Morgan.³²⁶ Between 1904 and 1912, Hans Price designed numerous houses and roads for the estate; the builder was Thomas Cox, a monumental mason.³²⁷ The syndicate lobbied the railway company for a bridge over the railway to replace a former level crossing. This bridge was finally built in 1910, linking Clevedon Road and Brighton Road, and the two halves of the estate on either side of the railway.³²⁸ On the west side of the railway, the estate was an infill development, extending the British Land Company's streets such as Clevedon Road to the east and connecting them with new streets on the other side of the railway line. In general, the houses on the Sunnyside estate were smaller than those on the adjoining BLC's estate and there was a greater prevalence of terraces.

Another Edwardian development for less wealthy residents, which made use of land beside the railway line, was the Bournville Estate. In c 1904 the Poole family of Brislington developed Bournville Road which was the beginning of the eponymous estate that became the site of council housing in the inter-war period. Mr Poole told the builder, George A Stroud, that he named the road after the Cadburys' model village in Birmingham, although the reason for this is unclear.³²⁹ The earliest buildings on Bournville Road took the form of a long terrace of houses on the east side. This was followed by Amberey Road to the north, again with long terraces, but also a few individual houses. Most histories of the Bournville Estate place the start of the development in 1905, but the earliest four houses were shown on a plan of October 1904; other individual houses and the terraces followed within four years.³³⁰ Kensington Road to the south of Amberey Road followed from about 1909. The inter-war years saw the first major expansion of this small estate, with a further expansion after 1945, as far west as Winterstoke Road.

Working-Class Housing

Working-class housing developments took place in the vicinity of the railway station and the railway line. Initially, these were to be found in the town centre, close to workplaces. During the 1850s and 1860s terraces of small houses had been built in a triangle formed by the railway station, Meadow Street and Orchard Street. This area expanded over the following decades but areas of lower-class housing were also increasingly found further afield. For example, in around 1853, short, plain terraces of two-storey cottages called collectively 'Camden Town' were erected along Locking Road, comprising today's Camden Terrace, the southern end of George Street, and Little George Street (Figure 41).³³¹ At the time of their construction, these were just to the west of the grounds of Swiss Villa.

Places of Worship

Queen Victoria's reign period saw a huge increase in Weston's population and a growth in the number of denominations worshipping in the town, factors prompting the construction of numerous places of worship. At the beginning of the 19th century the only purpose-built places of worship in Weston, Worle and Uphill were the historic Anglican parish churches, but by the end of the century all major Christian denominations were well represented.



Figure 41: The cottages at the south end of George Street were built in the early 1850s, as part of a small working-class development called 'Camden Town'. (DP218651)

Anglican Churches

Until 1847, when the first daughter church was opened, the parish church of St John the Baptist was the only Anglican church in Weston, although there were also churches in Uphill and Worle. By 1914 there were six additional Anglican churches in Weston, as well as new churches in Milton and Uphill. Existing churches were also restored and extended to increase their capacity. The nave arcade at St Martin's church in Worle was rebuilt by John Norton, who also added the north vestry and the organ chamber (1869-70).³³² The parish church of St John the Baptist was extended several times during the century to keep up with the growth in population. In 1840 the tower was raised by one storey and the tower clock was also moved up.³³³ In 1844 Thomas R Hannaford added the north aisle and in 1853 a new porch was built.³³⁴ By 1855 the church had a total capacity of 1,103 (648 pews, 275 free seats, and 180 seats for children), although out of season the church was not full.³³⁵ On 30 March 1851, the Census only recorded an estimated attendance of 750 at the morning service and 650 at the evening service.³³⁶ The church was repaired and improved in 1871-2 under the direction of Hans Price.³³⁷ In 1875 a competition to re-light the church was won by Mr E Tuck of Bath and in 1878 it was repewed.³³⁸ The organ chamber was added in 1883 and three years later the vestry enlarged.³³⁹ In about 1888 Edmund Buckle heightened the porch and in 1890 Price & Wooler added the south aisle and new windows.³⁴⁰ Despite these piecemeal additions, the church nevertheless has a relatively coherent appearance.

The first Anglican church to be built in the greater Weston area after Victoria's accession to the throne was a new parish church at Uphill. As the village grew, it was decided to replace the ancient church on the top of the hill with a building more conveniently located in the village. James Wilson of Bath was commissioned to build a new church (1841-44), to which a new chancel, porch and baptistery were added in 1891-2 by G F Burr of Hastings.³⁴¹ The rebuilding at Uphill was born out of the desire for a modern church not on a windswept hill, rather than because of large numbers of worshippers: in 1851, the estimated attendance at the Sunday morning service was only 82.³⁴² In contrast, the parish church at Worle had an attendance of 403 in two services that day.³⁴³

The early Victorian foundations of Anglican churches and schools were due to the exertions of Archdeacon Henry Law (1797-1884), who was Rector of Weston-super-Mare in 1834-38 and again in 1840-62.³⁴⁴ Law came from a large and well-connected family of churchmen. His father was Bishop of Bath and Wells, his grandfather had been Bishop of Carlisle and his brothers were Chancellor of Lichfield and a canon at Chester, respectively. Other members of the family had prominent legal and political careers: Henry's uncle Edward became Lord Chief Justice and the first Baron Ellenborough; his son, also Edward, first Earl of Ellenborough, was a politician and Governor-General of India. Archdeacon Law not only initiated the building of three new churches and two schools, but also contributed financially to their construction and endowment. He left the town in 1862 when he was appointed Dean of Gloucester.

The site for the first new church, dedicated to Emmanuel, was donated by Richard Parsley. The foundation stone was laid on 9 March 1846 by Law, who had also contributed financially to the funding appeal, as had Queen Adelaide, the Dowager Queen.³⁴⁵ The solicitor Henry Davies helped overcome the 'many difficulties which obstructed the erection of Emmanuel Church'.³⁴⁶ The completed church cost £3,200 which was funded entirely out of donations; it was consecrated on 15 October 1847.³⁴⁷ The architects Manners & Gill employed a Perpendicular Gothic design with a large west tower. The new church clearly fulfilled an urgent need; in March 1851, only four years after its opening, it had an estimated attendance of 310 for the morning service, including 60 Sunday scholars, and 600 for the afternoon service.³⁴⁸ As the date of the 1851 Census was outside the main tourist season, the summer figures would have been even higher.

The design of Emmanuel church clearly found favour with Archdeacon Law as Manners & Gill also received the commission for the second new Anglican church which was to serve the new district of Montpelier (Figure 42). The site for Christ Church was donated by Henry Davies, a major landowner in the area. The foundation stone was laid on 30 January 1854 and the church was consecrated by Lord Auckland, Bishop of Bath and Wells on 19 September 1855.³⁴⁹ The church, which was to become Hans Price's parish church, was extended by his practice in 1877 and heightened in 1889 when a clerestory was added.³⁵⁰ The building is located picturesquely on the slopes of Montpelier and has a short broach spire.



Figure 42: Christ Church of 1854-5 was one of the first buildings in the new district of Montpelier. This photograph was taken in around 1877, when the chancel extension by Price & Grosholz was under construction, with scaffolding visible at the right-hand side of the photograph. (North Somerset Library Service)

In 1856, two cemetery chapels were completed by Major Charles E Davis of Bath who had won a competition to design the cemetery in 1855.³⁵¹ The Gothic Anglican chapel survives today, but the Nonconformist chapel was demolished in 1980.

The third Anglican parish was that of Holy Trinity in the suburb of what was then known as Cliftonville (Figure 43). The church of 1859-61 formed the centrepiece of the two contemporary Atlantic Terraces which were, like the church, designed by Henry Lloyd of Bristol.³⁵² It was built on land given by John Cox. While under construction, a gale on 20 February 1861 blew down the spire which collapsed into the nave. The completed church was finally opened and consecrated on 3 October 1861.³⁵³ It was extended in 1885 when EH Edwards added an organ chamber and



Figure 43: Holy Trinity Church on Atlantic Road was the third Anglican church to be built during Victoria's reign. (DP218552)

a vestry, and again in 1910 when Price & Jane extended the vestry.³⁵⁴ The church was made redundant in March 1983; it was reopened three years later by an Elim Pentecostal congregation.³⁵⁵

Following the completion of Holy Trinity, the demand for new Anglican churches seems to have been met until 1871 when a temporary iron church by Messrs Morton & Co of Liverpool was built on the future site of All Saints.³⁵⁶ This was larger and more ornate than the usual 'tin tabernacle' and featured traceried windows, a rose window at the west, and a slender spire with pinnacles and small flying buttresses.³⁵⁷ Several other churches had such temporary predecessors, including St Paul's where an iron church was built in 1897.

In 1885-7 a small Anglican church with a short crossing tower was built in Milton, to a Gothic design by Price & Wooler.³⁵⁸ This is now St Andrew's Greek Orthodox



Figure 44: St Paul's church was built in 1911-12 to a design by Peter George Fry. (DP236017)

Church. The next new church was St Saviour's in Locking Road, to the east of the town centre. Due to a lack of funding, this was built in stages. The apsidal east end was erected in 1890-2 by the architect Sydney J Wilde, followed by a three-bay nave in 1901-2 by Wilde & Fry.³⁵⁹ It was never completed according to the original design; in 2005-6 the church was closed and converted to flats.

In 1898 construction began on a permanent church to replace the iron church of All Saints. This was a rare example where an architect of national stature, George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907), was commissioned to build a church in Weston and it was to be one of his last designs. The building was completed to his design after his death in 1907, except the church tower which remained unbuilt.³⁶⁰ The foundation stone was laid with Masonic rites on 24 June 1898 and the chancel was completed in 1899.³⁶¹ The nave and the north aisle were built in 1902, with the church being consecrated on 10 April 1902. The remainder was completed when funds permitted: the north-west porch was added by CG Hare in 1911-12; the south aisle, chapel and undercroft were built in 1925 by FC Eden, Bodley's pupil; and in 1955 Robert Potter added a south porch.³⁶² Despite these piecemeal additions, John Betjeman thought the building 'the finest church of entirely modern foundation in Somerset'.³⁶³

The last Anglican church to be built in Weston before the First World War was St Paul's (Figure 44). Built in 1911-12 to serve the new Clarence Park area, it was designed by Peter George Fry in a Neo-Perpendicular style.³⁶⁴ A planned south-east tower was never completed and its base remained at the height of the south aisle. After war damage the church was restored in 1954-7 by Harold Jones of Fry, Paterson & Jones.³⁶⁵



Figure 45: Shown in a print of around 1850, the Methodist chapel (left) was the first purpose-built Methodist place of worship in Weston. (North Somerset Library Service)



Figure 46: This modest chapel in Burlington Street was built in 1866 for the Methodists. (DP218735)

During the late 19th century, several Anglican parishes established mission halls or rooms in order to serve poor neighbourhoods. Such missions encouraged church and school attendance, but also provided basic welfare functions such as food and medicine. For example, Holy Trinity parish built a mission room off Manilla Crescent, while Christ Church had one in Alfred Street (now the Scooter Museum) and a second one in Ashcombe Park Road (c 1900), possibly by Hans Price; it is now the Bethany Gospel Hall. In 1880-81 Hans Price designed St John's Church Institute and Mission Hall in the Boulevard.

Nonconformist and Catholic churches

Nonconformist groups in the Weston area had small beginnings but soon grew due to the influx of visitors and permanent residents. In 1851 there were Methodist congregations in Uphill, Worle and Weston; Bible Christians were catered for in Weston and Worle, and there were an Independent chapel, a Baptist chapel and a Quaker meeting house in the town centre.³⁶⁶

The earliest Nonconformists with a permanent base in the area were the Wesleyans and Methodists. The Ebenezer Chapel at Worle dates from 1813 and was probably built for the Wesleyan Methodists; it is now the Worle Community Day Centre.³⁶⁷ Another early Wesleyan chapel is that at Uphill of 1841, the same year that a new Anglican church was built in the village.³⁶⁸ In Weston itself, Methodist meetings were initially held in a converted cottage in Wellington Lane, off the High Street, until a purpose-built chapel opened at the corner of Regent Street and St James Street (Figure 45).³⁶⁹ The foundation stone was laid in 1846 and it opened in 1847.³⁷⁰ In 1850 it was described in Whereat's guide as 'a neat and substantial building' in 'ornamented Gothic' with 'several fine windows' and 'some excellent coloured glass' in the south window.³⁷¹ According to the estimated attendance figures for 30 March 1851, this chapel had the third largest congregation that day after the two Anglican churches, with 290 worshipping in the morning and 360 in the evening.³⁷² The chapel was extended in 1860 when a short corner spire was added.³⁷³ It closed in 1899, and in 1901 was converted by Hans Price to two houses with shops on the ground floor.³⁷⁴ The Gothic tracery windows were replaced by oblong openings and the short spire and its arcade removed, leaving only a parapet above the curved corner. Other Methodist groups met in non-purpose-built premises, such as the Bible Christians who met in the Temperance Hall in Weston in 1851 and in a private house in Worle.³⁷⁵

In 1857 the Wesleyan Association and the Methodist Reform Churches formed the United Methodist Free Churches, which built several churches in Weston. In 1866 a small chapel was built for the United Methodists in Burlington Street (Figure 46).³⁷⁶ After the congregation moved to new premises in Locking Road, the chapel was used by the Bible Christians and most recently as a motorcycle shop. In 2018 it was converted into housing. In 1875-6, the United Methodists built a new chapel in the Boulevard, at the corner to Orchard Street.³⁷⁷ Two slightly differing designs survive, both by Hans Price; one of 1870 is without a basement, while another of 1875 includes a basement.³⁷⁸ He returned in 1894 to make minor alterations.³⁷⁹ The chapel fell out of use in 1959 and subsequent conversions altered most of the window



Figure 47: The first Victorian Methodist Church in Station Road, shown in an early 20th-century photograph. (North Somerset Library Service)



Figure 48: The Methodist mission room in Orchard Street had been built by 1886. (DP218525)

openings, although the pointed arches of the high-level windows of the former liturgical west front to the Boulevard and the former transept to Orchard Street remain. The Methodist Church of 1879-81 in Upper Church Road was designed by Alexander Lauder of Barnstaple who won a limited competition.³⁸⁰ This is a more elaborately Gothic building than the earlier town-centre chapels with a slim needle spire. Another United Methodist church had been built by 1885 in the Upper Bristol Road in Milton; it is now the Co-op funeral care offices.³⁸¹ In the early 20th century a Wesleyan Methodist church was built in Hill Road on an empty plot on the British Land Company's estate, a building which may have been originally intended as a church hall but was used as a church.

In 1907-8 the Primitive Methodists built a hall in Brighton Road (demolished), which was used as a chapel. It was probably designed by Wilde & Fry who were responsible for the Sunday school at the same site.³⁸² The grandest Methodist building in Weston was the Victoria Wesleyan Church of 1899-1900 in Station Road (Figure 47). It was designed in a Decorated Gothic style with a spire and large traceried windows. The architect was WJ Morley of Bradford who had won a limited architectural competition held in 1898.³⁸³ After a devastating fire, this church was replaced in 1935-6 by a new Gothic building by Fry, Paterson & Jones, albeit on a different orientation, facing east instead of south.³⁸⁴

Methodists also established mission rooms and halls, for example the extant 'iron room' on the west side of Orchard Street opposite the chapel in the Boulevard, and the mission room formerly at the corner of George Street and Baker Street (Figure 48).³⁸⁵ A late 19th-century mission room on Milton Hill led to the building of a permanent church there in 1930.

The Independents (later Congregationalists) arrived in Weston during the 1820s. In 1829 or 1830 they opened a chapel in the High Street which in 1854 was described as 'a plain looking structure with four fluted Ionic columns, forming a small portico'.³⁸⁶ It was replaced in 1858 with a Gothic chapel, designed by Pritchett and Son of Darlington who had won a competition held two years earlier (Figure 49).³⁸⁷ Seating 500 adults and costing £2,300, it had a 100ft (30.5m) high steeple over the entrance and a schoolroom to the rear.³⁸⁸ When the congregation moved to the Boulevard in 1876, the chapel was converted by Price for Felix Thomas into an ironmonger's shop, and the steeple was moved to the chapel of Banwell Court (now Banwell Abbey).³⁸⁹ The new chapel in the Boulevard was built in 1875-6 to a design by TL Banks, with Sunday schools to the rear.³⁹⁰ After its destruction by bombing in 1942, it was replaced in 1959 by a new chapel by Gordon W Jackson & Partners.³⁹¹ Another Congregational base was established in Moorland Road when a Sunday school was built there in 1894, followed by an iron chapel in 1904.³⁹² This was replaced in 1925 by a permanent Gothic church by Fry, Paterson & Jones, which commemorated the centenary of Independents and Congregationalists in Weston.³⁹³

The first Baptist chapel in Weston was the Italianate chapel in Wadham Street, which opened in August 1850, having cost just under £1,000 (Figure 50).³⁹⁴ Seating 300, by 1862 it was too small for the congregation and instead of an extension it was decided to let Price remodel the church. Described in 1879 as 'almost entirely a new



Figure 49: The Independents' Chapel of 1858 by Pritchett & Son of Darlington. (North Somerset Library Service)



Figure 50: The former Baptist Church in Wadham Street, now the Blakehay Theatre, was built in 1850 and extended in 1862 by Hans Price. (DP218538)



Figure 51: The Baptist Chapel in Bristol Road Lower was built in 1865-5 to a design by Hans Price. (DP218508)

erection' using 'as far as possible the materials of the old', it provided 400 additional seats and cost about £1,200.³⁹⁵ Closed as a church in 1985, it is now the Blakehay Theatre. Price also designed the second Baptist chapel, a Gothic building of 1865-6 in Lower Bristol Road, which makes the most of its highly visible hill site, with an octagonal tower and spire (Figure 51).³⁹⁶ By 1897 there was a Baptist chapel in The Scaurs, Worle, and in December 1908 a dual-purpose school and chapel opened in Walliscote Road. This fine, Arts & Crafts-influenced building by the architects Silcock and Reay of Bath replaced a tin chapel of the 1890s in Whitecross Road.³⁹⁷ The 1908 building became the Sunday school after a purpose-built church was built in front of it in 1929-30; it is now known as Clarence Park Baptist Church.³⁹⁸ Designed by Fry, Paterson & Jones in a late version of the Gothic Revival, it is more conventional than the earlier multi-purpose building behind.

The Roman Catholic mission in Weston-super-Mare was founded in 1806 by Father Pascal O'Farrell of Bristol. It only became a parish in 1908 when England and Wales ceased to be mission territory under Vatican law. Before a church was built, services were held in the Railway Hotel. In about 1858 Joseph Ruscombe Poole



Figure 52: St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church of 1858 by Charles Hansom was the first purpose-built Catholic church in Weston. (DP218486)

(died 1890), a Catholic convert and philanthropist, and lawyer to Bishop Clifford, purchased Westgate House for the purpose of donating part of the land for a new church. He also paid the architect and builder and provided an annual stipend of £50 for a resident priest. John Hugh Smyth Pigott, who owned the quarry on nearby Worlebury Hill and was also a convert to Catholicism, donated the stone for the church. The architect Charles F Hansom designed a small church, comprising a nave and chancel which could be extended at a future point (Figure 52). The foundation stone was laid by Poole's eight-year old son on 8 July 1858 and the church opened in time for Christmas the same year. In 1893 the planned extensions were carried out to designs by the architect-priest Canon AJC Scoles and included an aisle, west porch, side chapels, a sacristy and an organ loft. The side chapels were donated by the Smyth Pigott family.³⁹⁹

By the 1880s there were three Plymouth Brethren halls in Weston and one in The Scaurs; only the one in Waterloo Street remains in use today.⁴⁰⁰ The Waterloo Gospel Hall was built in 1876 by Price & Grosholz as a hall for 400.⁴⁰¹ By 1886 the Exclusive Brethren were based in the Boulevard Rooms on the south side of the Boulevard, but they had sold the building by 1897 to the Baptists who asked Price to remodel it.⁴⁰² There was also another hall in c 1889 in Orchard Street although its location remains uncertain. A single-storey stone building in Worle (20-22 The Scaurs/1-2 Mews Cottages) was briefly used by the Brethren in 1889 but may not have been purpose built.⁴⁰³

Quakers first met in private houses, but in 1846 Richard Parsley offered them a site in Union Street (now the southern end of the High Street) and the meeting house (facing Oxford St) opened in that year, though the internal gallery was still unfinished in 1855. The building was destroyed by bombing in 1942 and a new meeting house was built on the site in the 1950s.⁴⁰⁴ Due to post-war building licence restrictions, it had to be built in two phases, which opened in 1953 and 1956 respectively.⁴⁰⁵

Other Victorian places of worship include the chapel in Price's Sanatorium of 1871-3 and the Salvation Army citadel (also known as hall or barracks) in Carlton Street of 1882, which was replaced in 2002.⁴⁰⁶

Educating Victorian Weston

The Rector Archdeacon Law was also instrumental in the founding of several church schools. Anglican church schools dominated the provision of education in Weston until the end of the 19th century and in the middle of the century, they provided three quarters of all school places in the town.⁴⁰⁷ In 1835, the year after Law's arrival in Weston, he opened an infants' school (later known as the Emmanuel Infants' School) at the east end of Carlton Street, a plot he had bought from Richard Parsley.⁴⁰⁸

Ten years later, in September 1845, the National School (later St John's school) opened at the corner of Knightstone Road and Lower Church Road, again on the initiative of the rector (Figure 53).⁴⁰⁹ The school moved there from 'the Batch' (now the site of 4-8 All Saints Road), the site of the parish school of 1822.⁴¹⁰ A funding appeal for the school described the plight of seasonal child labour who should have 'the advantage of a sound religious education', especially the boys who tended to the donkeys in the summer but in winter had to rely on the charity of the residents.⁴¹¹ Pupils paid 2d a week. The *Weston Gazette* described the school building on its opening day as 'a plain Gothic structure, but neat and substantial, pleasantly and beautifully situated'.⁴¹² Historic images show the building as a many-gabled building with large Perpendicular windows, rectangular drip moulds, and elaborate gable finials. It was extended in 1870 and 1904 by Price & Jane.⁴¹³ It closed in 1964 and was demolished to allow the construction of Weston College.

After a false start in 1851, the British School in Hopkins Street opened in 1855 (Figure 54).⁴¹⁴ Run by the British and Foreign School Society, this provided non-sectarian education for 150 children. At its opening the building was described as 'handsome, lofty, and well-ventilated'.⁴¹⁵ It was extended in 1887 to accommodate 335 children and closed in 1918.⁴¹⁶ It is now in residential use.

Adult education also became an increasing concern. In 1846 the Mechanics Institute was opened by the Revd Hopkins, the minister of the Independent Chapel.⁴¹⁷ By 1854, this was based in the temporary town hall building in the High Street, where meetings were held and lectures given, as well as winter classes in drawing, singing, arithmetic, English grammar and composition.⁴¹⁸ In 1859 a night school was founded by Miss Salter in Carlton Street, which 1863 moved into a new building

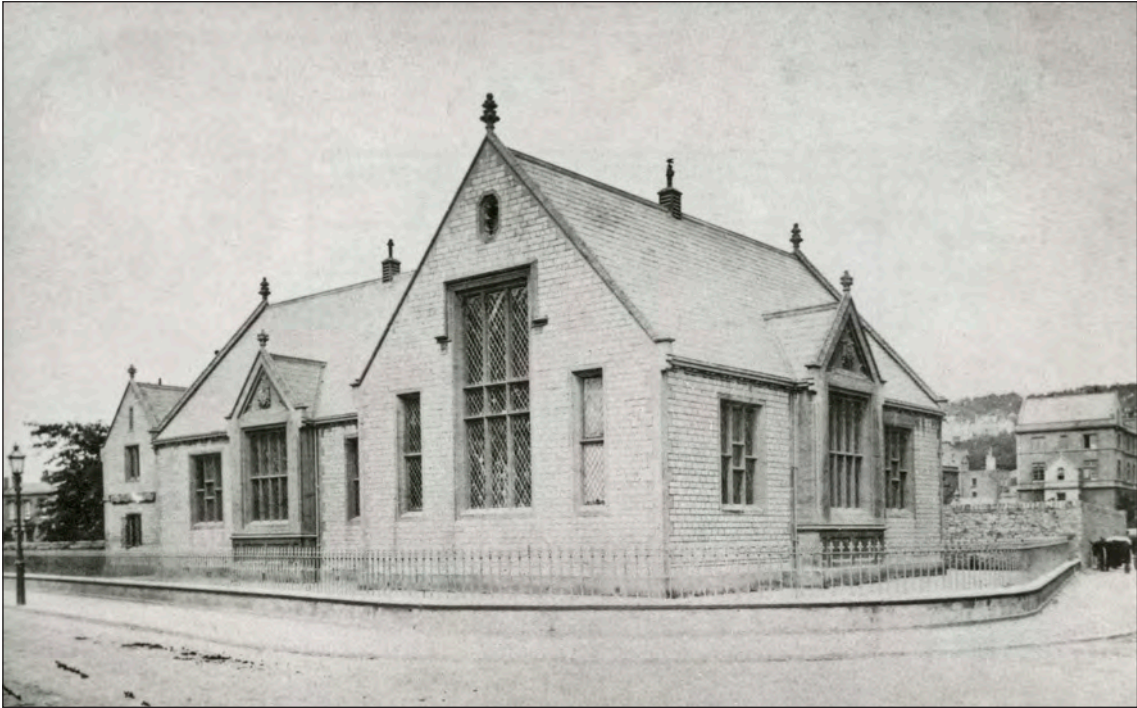


Figure 53: This photograph shows the National School of 1845. (North Somerset Library Service)



Figure 54: After its opening in 1855, the British School was described by the Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser as a 'handsome, lofty, and well-ventilated building'. (DP218581)

called the Albert Memorial Hall beside Emmanuel church. It was designed either by E Down or Hans Price in an Elizabethan style.⁴¹⁹

In 1863 the new parish of Christ Church opened its own school in Baker Street. It was designed by a Captain Tate and was his third school design.⁴²⁰ The Revd WF Lanfear had raised £1,180 for the new school, which was to be co-educational. Demand was high and capacity frequently exceeded. Therefore, in 1905, Price & Jane made additions and alterations to the original building.⁴²¹

In 1865 the National School in Worle was built next to the church, incorporating the remains of the former tithe barn. The architect was John Norton, who later made alterations to Worle church, and the cost was £890.⁴²² In 1872 a primary school was also opened in Uphill (now Uphill Primary School).⁴²³

In 1870 the new Elementary Education Act was passed and it encouraged the building of schools by providing grants from central government.⁴²⁴ Where this was insufficient, it allowed the formation of school boards whose members were elected by the ratepayers. As happened elsewhere, the Anglican parishes of Weston were keen to stave off the formation of such a board, which would have imposed non-denominational religious teaching and therefore they redoubled their efforts to expand school places.⁴²⁵ In 1873-4 a new United Infants' School opened beside Christ Church schools, designed by Price & Grosholz.⁴²⁶ And when the British School nearly closed in the mid-1870s due to financial difficulties, the Anglicans supported it to prevent the formation of a school board.⁴²⁷

However, demand for school places increasingly outstripped provision and on 4 July 1893 a school board was established; its nine members met for the first time on 20 July.⁴²⁸ The Revd EA Salmon was elected the first chairman, Mr Wadsworth Burrow Lillington the clerk and Lewis H Vickary the attendance officer. Hans Price was appointed architect to the board, a post he continued to hold after responsibility for education passed to Somerset County Council in 1903. The board took control of some of the existing schools and proceeded to build several new ones.

The first school to be built by the board was clearly intended to be a statement and no expense was spared (Figure 55). A site in Walliscote Road was acquired for £6,042 12s, which required the demolition of 'four pretty villas, and some cottages in Carlton-street'.⁴²⁹ An architectural competition was advertised in November 1894.⁴³⁰ This quickly attracted the wrath of the architectural press as initially no professional assessor had been appointed. The Council remedied this by selecting ER Robson, an eminent school architect, who chose design number 15. However, the committee overruled him and instead chose design number 3, which had been disqualified by Robson as it had violated the conditions by providing 60 more places for girls than was required. This design was found to be by Hans Price, the architect to the board, which led *The Builder* to describe the whole competition as a 'farce'.⁴³¹ The finished school was opened on 30 July 1897 by Sir George Kekewich, Permanent Secretary to the Department of Education and from 1900 Secretary to the national Board of Education. The cost of erecting the main block for boys and girls and the detached infants' block was £10,041.⁴³²



Figure 55: The Board School in Walliscote Road with its dramatic roofscape is one of Hans Price's best-known buildings and one of his most elaborately decorated. (DP218258)

The *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* described the school buildings as follows:

‘The buildings, which are renaissance in style, are constructed of local limestone, with Bath stone dressings, and the roofs covered with red Bridgwater flat tiles. The principal feature externally is the high roof of the central halls, with its 6 large Dutch gables and central turret, containing the school bell, flanked by the roofs of the 4 angle pavilions.’⁴³³

The old infants' school in Carlton Street was repurposed as 'a gymnasium and covered playground for the girls and infants' and an adjacent house purchased as a residence for the headmaster.⁴³⁴

The second board school in Locking Road was built to a more constrained budget and in a plainer style. The first block, which was opened in December 1899, was to be used temporarily as a mixed school for boys and girls. Accounts of its opening by Mark Minifie, Chairman of the Board, noted that expenditure was 'strictly limited by the board'.⁴³⁵ The site cost £2,032, the building £4,563, the heating apparatus £305 and the furniture £300. The school was designed jointly by Hans Price and Sydney Wilde. They returned five years later to build the girls' block to the west. Their drawings of February 1905 also show a planned infants' school behind the girls' school.⁴³⁶ The Locking Road Schools have been converted to residential use, called Wyvern Mews.

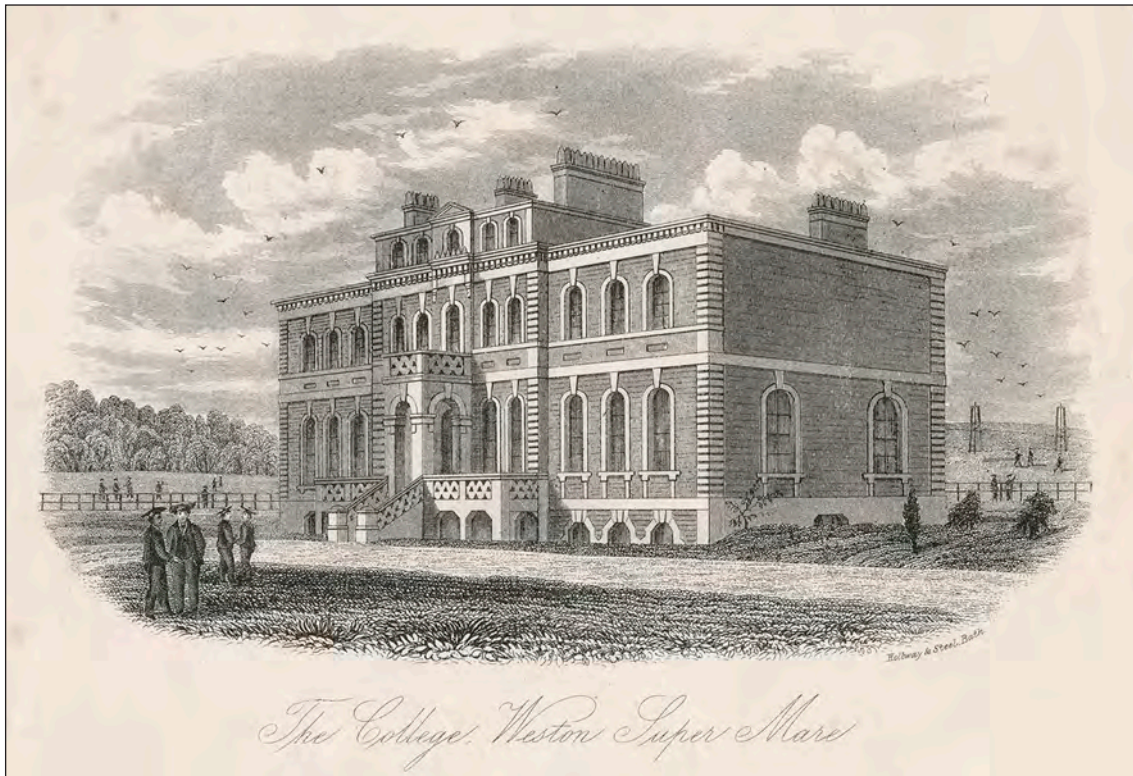


Figure 56: This engraving shows the Beach Road premises of the College, one of Weston's many private schools, before the building was converted to the Grand Atlantic Hotel. (North Somerset Library Service)

A third board school, provisionally called Moorland Board School, was planned in 1902 and a site acquired which was probably in Nithsdale Road, off Moorland Road. However, nothing was built there before the First World War.⁴³⁷ In 1913 the council deferred a decision on establishing a secondary school, probably on this site, due to a lack of funds and decided to wait until the next education bill had been introduced in case of potential subsidies.⁴³⁸ In 1922 the County Grammar School opened in converted war-time huts on the Nithsdale Road site, before moving to Uphill in 1935.⁴³⁹

At least one further council school was built in the Weston area in the 1900s. In 1906, Price & Jane designed an infants' school at Milton, now Milton Park Primary School, for the Somerset County Education Committee.⁴⁴⁰ A small school consisting originally of three classrooms and one 'marching corridor', this has been much extended over time.

In parallel with the church and council schools, there was also a wide range of private schools. In 1855 Whereat's guide listed nine for 'ladies' and seven for 'gentlemen' and by 1914 there were at least thirty.⁴⁴¹ As well as promising health benefits, it was fashionable to send children to a school by the sea. Most of them used converted houses and villas, but there were a few purpose-built private schools. In 1859 the College, a private boys' school which had been founded in c 1846 by Jonathan Elwell in Sidmouth House, moved into grand, new premises in Beach Road (Figure 56).⁴⁴² When the school moved out in 1889, the building was enlarged by John S Whittington of Manchester and reopened as the Grand Atlantic Hotel.⁴⁴³



Figure 57: The extension to St Peter's Preparatory School in Atlantic Terrace East by Price & Wooler. (DP218643)

St Peter's Preparatory School for boys was founded in 1882 by the Revd Robert Duckworth, who died in 1888.⁴⁴⁴ Based initially at Highbury in Atlantic Terrace East, it was aimed at boys preparing 'for the Universities, Army, Navy, the Public Schools &c.'⁴⁴⁵ By 1884, the school occupied the three easternmost houses of the terrace. That year, Hans Price & Wooler designed an extension to the east, which took the form of an oblong, two-storey building with four classrooms on the ground floor and a schoolroom above (Figure 57).⁴⁴⁶ In 1906 the school moved a new building on a large plot of glebe land to the north of the parish church, between the Shrubbery and Grove Town.⁴⁴⁷ This was a three-storey Arts & Crafts-influenced block designed by the architects Ward & Cogswell with the master's house at one end, the 'big school room' in the centre and the classrooms at the other end.⁴⁴⁸ Their design was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1910.⁴⁴⁹ A lead plaque at the centre of the south elevation featured the year of its opening.⁴⁵⁰ The large site to the south of the school included a recreation ground, tennis courts and a swimming pool. Its most famous alumnus was the writer Roald Dahl who attended for four years in the 1920s. The school was extended in 1924 and closed in 1970.⁴⁵¹ It was demolished a few years later and the site redeveloped with housing.

By 1914 St Peter's former building in Atlantic Terrace East had been taken over by St Faith's school for girls.⁴⁵² The inscription 'St Faith's School' on the carved plaque on the east elevation of the 1884 extension is still just about legible today. In 1934 the school moved to St Audries, West Quantoxhead (Somerset).⁴⁵³ The building

subsequently became the Highbury Club (by 1935) and a Methodist Holiday Home (by 1939).⁴⁵⁴ Today, it is in residential use.

In 1895 Clarence House School, which had been founded at Coombe Down near Bath in 1886, moved to Weston. A new school building was constructed at 8-10 Clarence Road South, an address that probably prompted the school's new name. The school moved to Canford (Dorset) in the early 1930s.⁴⁵⁵ It was still listed in a street-by-street directory for 1930 but not in that for 1935.⁴⁵⁶ In 1937, plans were prepared for the construction of a block of self-contained flats and lock-up garages on the site.⁴⁵⁷

Servicing Victorian and Edwardian Weston

By the mid-19th century, towns were beginning to have the technology and the desire to provide their citizens with the first basic services, either through local government activity or via an enterprising private company. Weston-super-Mare's first gas works was 'erected in 1841 by several influential gentleman who purchased the greater part of the shares'.⁴⁵⁸ The first share issue was for £2,500, consisting of 125 shares of £20, but when the Improvement Commissioners were formed in 1842, they took a lease of the new works for five years. The gasworks was constructed on land 'given for that purpose by R. Parsley', and adjacent to it a new church was to be constructed, the future Emmanuel Church.⁴⁵⁹ In 1841, 42 public lamps and about 50 private consumers were served by the gasworks and by 1847 it was providing gas for 60 public lamps and a growing number of private consumers.⁴⁶⁰ An 1853 map of Weston-super-Mare shows two small gasholders and other buildings on the site, close to the new church and a dense area of working-class housing.⁴⁶¹

A gasworks does not yet seem to have been considered a hindrance to development in the 1840s, despite the likelihood of noxious emissions and the regular influx of carts bringing coal and taking away coke. However, by 1854 a guidebook was complaining that the gasworks in Gas Street 'give a dingy appearance to the neighbouring tenements, principally inhabited by the poor'.⁴⁶² If the town was to grow, a new company and a new site further out providing more gas was required and in 1856 a new, larger gasworks was created on Drove Road, about half a mile further inland.⁴⁶³ An 1861 Act of Parliament allowed the gas company to extend its limits for supplying gas to other parts of the parish, and to the adjacent parishes of Uphill and Kewstoke.⁴⁶⁴ The 1886 Ordnance Survey map shows the site with three gasholders, while by 1903 a fourth larger one had been added. A fifth even larger one appears on the 1931 Ordnance Survey map, by which time they were part of a large and complex site. A c 1950 plan of the site shows the complexity and scale of the facility by this date, but gas production at Drove Road ceased in 1958 or 1968 and subsequently became the site for three high-pressure storage receivers (Figure 58).⁴⁶⁵

In 1912 the Gas Company built a large block of offices and stores in Burlington Street. An inscription along its façade reads 'WESTON SUPER MARE GASLIGHT COMPANY WORKSHOPS MCMXII WESTON SUPER MARE GASLIGHT COMPANY STORES'. This long, two-storied, classical building uses local stone, but



Figure 58: During the next hundred years the capacity of the gasworks site increased to match the demand of the growing town. This detail from a RAF photograph shows it as it was in 1958. (RAF/58/2544/PSFO-P1 0017 25-AUG-1958)

is finished with Bath stone detailing. It is the last known work designed by Hans Price and is now the town's museum (Figure 59).⁴⁶⁶

Seaside resorts wished to be associated in the public mind with good health, but many suffered from very poor hygiene standards. This was due to people depositing waste into cesspools that seeped into water supplies or because they pumped sewage into the sea via outfalls that proved too short, leading to waste being washed back onto the beach.⁴⁶⁷ Water in towns and cities was supplied from local wells and pumps, and outbreaks of cholera were eventually attributed to such infected water supplies. Seaside resorts suffered badly from outbreaks of the disease. During the late summer of 1849, Southport reported 26 cholera deaths, Hastings had 65 and Margate recorded 124. The small resort of Ilfracombe believed that it had lost between £8,000 and £10,000 as a result of the reluctance of potential visitors during the same outbreak.⁴⁶⁸ An editorial in the *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* in June 1849, shows the town's determination to head off any impact of the current cholera outbreak on its tourist trade; the article stated that during a previous outbreak, Weston had been immune and this would be likely to continue during the current outbreak.⁴⁶⁹

At Weston-super-Mare, it may have been the prospect of the creation of the Montpelier Estate in the 1850s that galvanised the town into action. The 1851 Improvement and Market Act contained powers for the Improvement Commissioners to create a sewage system and charge people to connect to it, while another Act of Parliament in 1853 authorised the establishment of a company to supply the town with water.⁴⁷⁰ An 1853 map shows the proposed new reservoir set amid a large housing development, which did not take place, but the reservoir measuring 120ft (36.6m) long, 40ft (12.2m) wide and 22ft (6.7m) deep was constructed.⁴⁷¹ Water for the reservoir came from a spring about a mile and a quarter away at Ashcombe, where the water works was completed in 1854.⁴⁷² With



Figure 59: In 1912 the Gas Company completed a large block of offices and stores in Burlington Street. It is the last known work designed by Hans Price and is now the town's museum. (DP218736)

the growth of the town, and the consequent increase in the number of customers wanting piped water, a second reservoir was constructed on Worlebury Hill in 1866.⁴⁷³ The waterworks became the property of the Board of Health at a cost of £65,000 in 1878 and additional works subsequently took place at a cost of £29,000.⁴⁷⁴ The Shrubbery Estate enjoyed its own water supply until 1890, with water supplied from a well and a Gothic-style tower that Miss Sophia Rooke had constructed.⁴⁷⁵ The water tower was acquired by the Weston Water Works in 1890 and survives today as a house (Figure 60).

Sewage treatment was a problem at seaside resorts from the outset. At Weston-super-Mare, a system, of sorts, was created in 1842-3, in which raw sewage was deposited into a rhyne draining through Uphill into the River Axe.⁴⁷⁶ Needless to say, the residents of Uphill were far from happy and therefore in 1852, depositing tanks and partial treatment was instituted before the sewage was released into the channel.⁴⁷⁷ In 1856 a new sewer was laid from Milton Road, along Ashcombe Road to the disinfecting works in Drove Road.⁴⁷⁸ However, the town still needed improved sewerage and therefore in 1865, the Board of Health employed Sir Joseph Bazalgette, who had developed London's sewerage system, to design a new system for Weston. This included a new main sewer running from Orchard Street to the Drove Road sewage works and an outfall sewer from there to the mouth of the river Axe, where the partially treated sewage was discharged upon the ebb and swept into the sea round Brean Down.⁴⁷⁹



Figure 60: The Shrubbery Estate originally enjoyed its own water supply from a well and a Gothic-style water tower that Miss Sophia Rooke had constructed. It was acquired by the Weston Water Works in 1890 and survives today as a house. (DP218492)

The provision of public toilets is a major commitment for seaside local authorities today, who have to maintain facilities beyond the level that would be required for their resident population. Public toilets were beginning to become available even before main sewers had been constructed. Large cities started to install them during the early 19th century, beginning in Paris, then in Berlin and finally reaching London by 1851.⁴⁸⁰ One of the unsung features of the Great Exhibition of 1851 was the presence of ‘Monkey Closets’ designed by George Jennings (1810–1882), who contributed a number of improvements to the design of sanitary engineering.⁴⁸¹ A penny was charged to use the retiring rooms apart from the men’s urinals and by the time the event closed in October 1851 receipts totalled £2,441, income that guaranteed that the principle of paying to use public toilets would continue.



Figure 61: The 1905 lavatory block is in an eclectic Edwardian style with plasterwork and timber framing providing a hint of the Tudor in a building that is far from being ashamed of its function. (DP218055)

Although seaside resorts had small populations compared to major cities, the annual influxes of holidaymakers, including trippers with no overnight accommodation, meant that there was pressure to provide public conveniences. An issue to ponder is the impact that a lack of toilets had on the sight and smell of the seafront in the early days prior to purpose-built facilities being available. At some resorts, facilities used by holidaymakers are incorporated into the large, publicly accessible entertainment venues such as piers and amusement arcades, and even the railway station at Cleethorpes, but most seaside resorts also have stand-alone toilet blocks provided by the local authority. At Weston-super-Mare, there is a freestanding block of public lavatories that bears the date 1905 (Figure 61).⁴⁸²

Keeping Victorian Weston Safe

The first police station was the home of the Sergeant in Plough Court off the High Street, with a lock-up beside his cottage.⁴⁸³ By 1850, the police station, along with the gasworks and coastguard station, was in Gas Street, on the edge of a recently developed working class district.⁴⁸⁴ Nearby, the new Town Hall, which opened in 1859, included office accommodation for the police and cells for prisoners.⁴⁸⁵ By the time the 1886 Ordnance Survey map was published, the police had left the Town Hall and a separate station had been created on the south side of Oxford Street. An 1895 guidebook provides a brief description of the police station, the police force and the magistrates court, which the author seems to have been unfavourably familiar with:

“The Police Station is an unpretentious building in Oxford Street, and at the rear is the Petty Sessional Court-House, where one or more of the “great unpaid” sit daily, at 11 a.m., for the despatch of business. The local police force comprises 3 sergeants and 12 constables, under Superintendent Balkwill.”⁴⁸⁶

Weston-super-Mare’s first volunteer fire brigade was formed in 1846 following a massive fire at Dr Fox’s premises on Knightstone Island when a horse-drawn fire engine had to be summoned from Banwell arriving several hours after the fire had taken hold. The fire brigade was housed in the new Town Hall when it opened.⁴⁸⁷ It had obtained a steam pump engine in the 1880s and by 1889 it had two engines.⁴⁸⁸ The 1886 Ordnance Survey map shows a small fire station, a short distance to the south of the Town Hall, attached to the end of Albert Memorial Hall and museum building. In 1901 a new, two-storied fire station was being built in Oxford Street, which was constructed of local limestone with Bath stone dressings.⁴⁸⁹

Local government also had responsibility for safeguarding the town from the sea. Edwin Knight, Chairman of the Board of Health, advocated the need for improvements to be made to the seafront. A committee was set up on 3 December 1879 to begin dealing with legal formalities and a further committee was appointed in January 1880 to develop plans in association with TJ Scoones, a consultant engineer from Bristol. Local opposition to the removal of the sandhills, and general resistance to change, led to a public enquiry by the Local Government Board. It ruled in favour of the scheme and the foundation stone was laid by Cecil Hugh Smyth Pigott on 15 March 1883.⁴⁹⁰ The Seafront Improvement Scheme, which was completed in August 1887, included the erection of gently sloping, stone-faced sea walls behind which two miles (3.2km) of seafront promenade was created.⁴⁹¹ Windshelters and seats were provided at frequent intervals. The work cost about £35,000 and required 1 million tons of stone, 85,000 cubic yards (64,987m³) of earth filling, 9,000 yards (8,230m) of metalling, 49,000 yards (44,806m) of asphaltting and 4,000 yards (3,658m) of running fencing (Figure 62).⁴⁹²

Caring for Victorian Weston

Seaside resorts came into existence to cater for the health needs, or equally the health whims, of wealthy Georgians. Doctors set up practices to treat influxes of patients, bathing machines populated the beaches of popular resorts and bathhouses were established for people who did not wish to bathe in the sea. As the number of sea bathers grew, the size and complexity of the facilities increased, as is evident in the story of Knightstone Island. Bathhouses started to offer treatments that practitioners felt to be more scientific, particularly after the impact of the new science of hydrotherapy was felt from the 1840s onwards.

Such health care was limited to the most prosperous, but by the late 18th century the seaside was already being recognised as an environment that would benefit the urban poor. The first institution to offer sea bathing treatments for London’s poor who were suffering from scrofula was established at Margate in 1796, but it only had a limited impact in England, spawning similar institutions at Scarborough and Southport.



Figure 62: The scheme involved the erection of gently sloping, stone-faced sea walls behind which two miles (3.2km) of seafront promenade was created. Wind-shelters and seats were provided at frequent intervals. The work cost about £35,000 and required 1 million tons of stone. (DP218026)

On 29 March 1826 George Henry Law, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, chaired an inaugural meeting at Wells to establish a committee to found a sea bathing hospital. The meeting resolved that ‘an institution, for the purpose of affording to the poor the opportunity and means of Sea Bathing, be established in the County of Somerset’ and that this institution would be ‘in the vicinity of Weston-super-Mare, or Uphill’. To fund it, subscriptions would be collected and donations encouraged.⁴⁹³ Sufficient money was raised to establish the ‘Somerset Sea-Bathing Infirmary’, which was ready to accept five patients by the end of the year. Whether or not any patients ever came to the Infirmary is unknown, and there is apparently no further record of this institution or its location.⁴⁹⁴ However, its size and short life suggests that an existing house was to be pressed into use. Among the subscribers listed is ‘Dr Fox, Brislington’, who would soon take over Knightstone Island.

From the 1850s onwards the responsibility for providing burial places shifted from churches to local authorities, part of their increasing role in guaranteeing good public health. As a result of the Burial Act of 1855, Weston-super-Mare, like every town, had to provide a dedicated cemetery, independent of a churchyard.⁴⁹⁵ Churches prior to this date had attached burial grounds, but the new Christ Church of 1854-5 in the Montpelier Estate was designed without one, as was Holy Trinity in Atlantic Road in 1859-61 and all subsequent churches. In 1856 a civic cemetery was opened a short distance to the east of Christ Church, on land beside Ashcombe House. Covering 7-7.5 acres (2.8-3ha), it was designed by Charles E Davis of Bath who had won a competition in 1855 and originally had two Gothic chapels, one for the Church of



Figure 63: The cemetery originally had two Gothic-style chapels, one for the Church of England and the other for Nonconformists, now demolished. Like the cemetery, they were designed by Charles E Davis. (DP218499)

England and the other for Nonconformists.⁴⁹⁶ It was extended in 1917, at which date it incorporated the gate lodge of Ashcombe House. Therefore, it stretched from Bristol Road Lower, where it was originally entered, southwards to Milton Road (Figure 63).⁴⁹⁷

By the mid-19th century, seaside resorts were being recognised as a good place for patients to convalesce, and by 1861 Weston was already being considered as a site for a convalescent hospital.⁴⁹⁸ However, before any action was taken to deal with incoming patients, the growing town had to address the needs of its residents. The hospital and dispensary was constructed in Alfred Street in 1864-65 by Hans Price, at a cost of about £950. It was enlarged in 1868 by the addition of the south wing at a cost of £600 and in 1870 new wards for fever cases were added at a cost of £300.⁴⁹⁹ This institution, as the hospital for the town, was located at the edge of the rapidly growing working-class area to the north of the station and just to the south of the recently created Boulevard. Weston's small workhouse was built later on the edge of the hospital site, behind a terrace of houses on Alfred Street and appears on the 1886 Ordnance Survey. Further additions were made during the 1870s and 1880s, so that by 1891, there were 34 beds for patients.⁵⁰⁰ Additions continued during the early 20th century, including a nurses' home in 1904 and a post-mortem room in 1910. At the beginning of the 20th century, a separate Isolation Hospital was established in Drove Road on the site of what was labelled as a Statutory Hospital in 1886 on the Ordnance Survey map.⁵⁰¹

The most substantial addition to the main hospital took place in the late 1920s, as a result of a public collection that raised £50,000.⁵⁰² Two of Weston's leading citizens appear to have led the way and it is therefore fitting that on 11 November 1926 Henry Butt and Ernest E Baker both laid commemorative stones, as well as the foundation stone laid by the Venerable Walter Farrer, Archdeacon of Wells. The new general hospital building, dedicated to Queen Alexandra, was opened on 6 July 1928 by the Duke and Duchess of York. The hospital closed in 1986, when a new one opened at Uphill.⁵⁰³

During the First World War, Ashcombe House served as a Red Cross Hospital for wounded soldiers and after the war, the building was taken over by Somerset County Council to use as offices. When the County Council moved, the building became flats and in 1946 it was converted into the Borough Maternity Hospital, which was opened by Duchess of Kent in June 1946.⁵⁰⁴

These hospitals were facilities for the town and their location indicates that sea bathing was not part of their regimen. However, on the seafront, the West of England Sanatorium for Convalescents was established to 'extend the benefit of the bracing air to the poorer classes', particularly for patients from hospitals in Western and Midland counties.⁵⁰⁵ The sanatorium was established in 1868 on a small scale, in the Halfway House, a pub of smuggling reputation midway along the sands between Weston and Uphill. In 1871 the foundation stone of the present building was laid by the Earl of Carnarvon in his capacity as Provincial Grand Master of Somerset, ushering in over a decade of construction.⁵⁰⁶ By 1875 the sanatorium was providing 72 beds and had a Gothic chapel capable of seating a congregation of 150.⁵⁰⁷ Almost £10,000 had already been spent on the institution, but a further £4,000 was required to complete the building, which would ultimately treat 100 patients. In 1890 £4,000 was spent on a seawater bathhouse, which contained two large plunge baths and eight private baths.⁵⁰⁸ Between the 1886 and 1903 editions of the Ordnance Survey map, the only significant addition to the site was a rectangular building to the west of the hospital, on the seafront, the most likely location for a bathhouse. By 1911 the sanatorium had 156 beds and could care for approximately 3,000 patients each year (Figure 64).⁵⁰⁹

In addition to these larger institutions, seaside resorts, including Weston-super-Mare, attracted individual physicians and small-scale health facilities throughout the 19th century. A number of convalescent homes appear in guidebooks and directories, undoubtedly in large houses converted for this use, and seaside resorts also attracted alternative therapists. In 1866 George Blair Cochran MD (homoeopath) was practising out of 6 Victoria Buildings on the seafront, where he had been for a number of years.⁵¹⁰ After his death in 1872 the Cochran Homoeopathic Dispensary was located in the Railway Parade at 22 Anstice Terrace and was established to perpetuate his memory.⁵¹¹ In 1875 the practising medical officer there was John Wilde (born 1828), the father of the architect Sydney J Wilde.⁵¹²

As well as looking after the physical needs of Weston's population, the town also had responsibility for providing stimulation for the mind. Uplifting activities and educational institutions figure prominently in guidebooks. By 1871 museum



Figure 64: Around £14,000 was spent on the original Sanatorium, which would ultimately treat 100 patients. It was designed by Hans Price. Today the building has been converted into private apartments under the name of Royal Sands. (DP218567)

specimens were exhibited in a building beside the Albert Memorial Hall, while a free library was established in Grove Park in the former seaside residence of the Pigott family, which held about 3000 volumes by 1894.⁵¹³ To combine the two, a new Free Library and Museum was erected on the Boulevard as a belated celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The foundation stone was laid on 1 August 1899 and the new building was opened by Sir Edward Fry on 3 September 1900. The Renaissance-style building contained a news room, reading room, librarian's room and the lending and reference libraries on the ground floor, while on the first floor there were two large rooms used as the museum. The building cost about £3,500 and when the library opened in 1901, it contained 5,000 volumes.⁵¹⁴ However, by 1910, it had a lending library with nearly 8,000 volumes, while the reference library boasted about 10,000 volumes.⁵¹⁵ The building was extended in 1932 (Figure 65).

Parks and Gardens

Victorian holidaymakers came to Weston-super-Mare to bathe in the sea and enjoy the beach, and they would have also admired and enjoyed the gardens on the seafront. However, from the mid-19th century onwards provision was also being made for Weston's residential population, through various mechanisms and with varying degrees of accessibility for the general public. The growing town was amply provided with small, private gardens, which are often mentioned in complimentary terms in guidebooks and new estate developments, such as the Shrubbery, had larger, but still private gardens. Ellenborough Park is located between the seafront



Figure 65: The Renaissance-style library and museum contained a news room, reading room, librarian's room and the lending and reference libraries on the ground floor, while on the first floor there were two large rooms used as the museum. (DP218747)

and Ellenborough Crescent and had villas to the north and south of it. The Crescent was built in 1855, and presumably the gardens were created at the same time or soon after. Elaborate shrubberies are shown in an engraving of 1864 and in 1868 its 'pleasure grounds, shrubberies, walks, fountains &c ...', are a most attractive addition to this already popular watering place.⁵¹⁶ This was a garden for the residents, though the public could have looked on admiringly. Alexandra Parade Gardens, originally known as The Plantation, was created on the site of Weston's first railway station and the accompanying railway line, which closed in 1866. It is shown in the 1886 Ordnance Survey map with three longitudinal lines of trees and by the 1930s, it had elaborate gardens with trees and shrubs, and in 1935, a floral clock.⁵¹⁷

By the 1880s, the town was acquiring land for public parks, including the Prince Consort Gardens overlooking Birnbeck Pier. This land was unsuitable for substantial development and hence it was donated by the Smyth Pigott Estate.⁵¹⁸ It had already been laid out as a private garden in 1862, much to the annoyance of excluded local people.⁵¹⁹ In its south-west corner there was a conservatory surrounded by rockwork and a pond:



Figure 66: In the south-west corner of Prince Consort Gardens, there was a conservatory surrounded by rockwork and a pond. This early 20th century postcard is from the Nigel Temple Collection in Historic England's Archive. (PC07189)

‘The Conservatory consists of a series of circular rooms, all comfortably warmed by gas stoves, and lit from the ceiling. One department, when finished, is to be devoted to an aviary, in which a collection of British and foreign birds will be kept; another will be set apart for plants, with niches round the walls for busts; amongst the latter will be those of one or two of the members of the Pigott family’.⁵²⁰

It passed into public hands in 1882 and was rearranged in the mid-1880s (Figure 66).⁵²¹

The 16 acres (6.5ha) of land that became Clarence Park was donated to the town by Rebecca Davies in memory of her late husband Henry Davies in October 1882, an event commemorated by a brass plaque on one of the gateposts into the park. However, the park only opened on 10 September 1889, having been postponed when Rebecca Davies died two days before its planned opening.⁵²² Spencer Tyler, Chairman of the Town Commissioners, donated a fountain for the park in her memory, which was turned on in September 1889.⁵²³ It provided residents and holidaymakers with two public bowling greens, and facilities used by the local hockey, tennis and archery clubs (Figure 67).⁵²⁴

The local authority provided the Recreation Grounds, adjoining the railway station, which opened on 12 September 1885, at a cost of £2,500.⁵²⁵ They covered 13.5 acres (5.5ha) and provided a quarter-mile (400m) long cinder track, a cricket pitch, and a football field. There were two grandstands, one capable of holding 500 spectators, as well as a refreshment bar, dining and dressing rooms and lavatories. The cinder

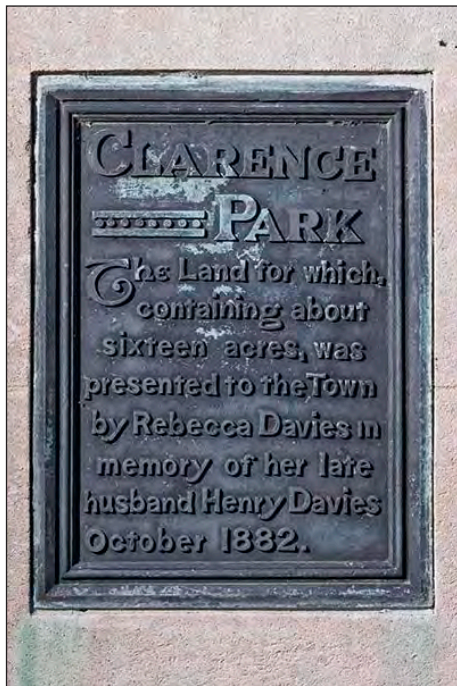


Figure 67: This plaque commemorates Rebecca Davies's gift of Clarence Park in 1882 (DP218573).

track was expected to be used by athletes and cyclists, and a cycling club had already been founded in 1878, soon after the first safety bicycle had been patented.⁵²⁶ In 1886, the National Cyclists Camp held a gathering in the Recreation Grounds.⁵²⁷

The Grove was released on a perpetual rent in 1889 and opened as a public park on 20 June 1891.⁵²⁸ Grove Park, which covered over 7 acres (2.8ha), had shelters and a bandstand in which regular 'high-class concerts' took place and there were flower shows and open-air entertainments regularly during the summer months (Figure 68).⁵²⁹

Ashcombe Park was acquired from two farmers and formally opened on 19 June 1902.⁵³⁰ Covering 36 acres (14.6ha) in the east end of the town, far from the seafront, it provided residents with tennis courts and a bowling green.⁵³¹

Industry in Victorian Weston

The first industrial activities in Weston-super-Mare were small-scale ones servicing the town's growth and the needs of its increasing number of inhabitants. These included smithies, sawmills, coal yards and carriage works in the working class areas in, and around Carlton Street and Oxford Street. In 1840 H Pond established a foundry in Richmond Street which operated until the 1960s. Around 1850 it was taken over by William Hillman and was still known as Hillman's foundry in 1901 when Wilde & Fry made alterations.⁵³² On the 1886 Ordnance Survey map it is shown on the east side of Gloucester Street as 'Western Iron Foundry', albeit with access from the south side of Richmond Street (between nos. 6 and 12). In the similarly working class area to the north of the railway station, Palmer Street has regular, large archways giving access through to yards behind the houses.

Perhaps the most visible sign of industrial activity in Weston-super-Mare is the Town Quarry on the hillside, which was in use by 1815 and continued in operation until 1953.⁵³³ Further inland, Weston's largest quarry opened at Milton during the 1850s, and it was taken over by Henry Butt in the mid-1880s. These two facilities were the source of the main stone used in Weston's housing boom from the mid-19th century onwards, along with stone imported from around Bath for dressings and fine detailing (Figure 69).

Weston also had to provide services and products for its residents and visitors; as the 19th century progressed, and the town's population grew, trade directories and guidebooks show an increasing number of tradesmen and services. The vast



Figure 68: The bandstand in Grove Park was created by Hill Brothers at their Sun Foundry in Alloa presumably in c 1890. Behind can be seen the path leading up to the two war memorials. (DP218403)

majority of these were small-scale businesses, but at Worle, a brewery was founded in 1795 by James May in partnership with Mr Castle.⁵³⁴ The company was put up for sale in 1865 and was purchased by the Weston-super-Mare Brewing and Malting Company, which was largely a creation of Henry Davies. The company was wound up in 1868, the year of Davies's death, and the brewery building stood empty until 1879 when it was converted into a laundry.⁵³⁵

Weston-super-Mare also manufactured various types of aerated mineral waters from the 1850s onwards. In 1869 William M Forty acquired the Weston and West of England Soda Manufactory, which had small premises in Orchard Street. The company, renamed Ross and Co, moved to larger premises in Lower Bristol Road, beside the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) building, where it was still active when the 1886 Ordnance Survey map was published. This new building was originally erected as a roller skating rink, a fad that soon passed, leaving a large, redundant building.⁵³⁶ Soft drinks were made by at least two other concerns; John Parrett and HT George produced them at the Westwick Brewery at Worle, which was established in 1863, and WG Carpenter had a business at the rear of 73 George Street from 1898 onwards.⁵³⁷

During the 19th century, one industrial concern in Weston went from serving a predominantly local market to catering for substantial numbers of customers throughout the country. Small brick yards existed throughout the area during the late 18th and 19th century, wherever suitable clay was available. The upper layer of clay was suitable for pot-making, statuary and garden ornaments; the layer of clay



Figure 69: The Town Quarry and another at Milton were the main sources of local stone used in Weston's housing boom from the mid-19th century onwards, along with stone imported from around Bath for dressings and fine detailing. (DP218544)

below was used for good bricks and drainpipes, while a layer of soft clay beneath served for the production of standard bricks.⁵³⁸

The Uphill Brickyard was one of the oldest in area and was probably the source of the pantiles for new houses being built in Weston from about 1815 onwards, once thatch had been banned as a roof covering for new houses.⁵³⁹ In Weston, the Royal Potteries began life as two separate businesses. John Harvey owned a brickyard and kiln in the Locking Road area by 1836.⁵⁴⁰ In 1841 William Wilcox took over the Weston-super-Mare Brick and Tile Manufactory as it was called, and worked it for the next six years. Wilcox was the son of a builder who was part of the family that owned the Banwell brickworks. In about 1843 Samuel Serle set up an adjacent works, which was managed by Charles Phillips (1816-94). Not content with simply managing a brickyard, Phillips bought Wilcox's works next door in January 1847 and two or three years later he bought the other yard amalgamating the two works for the first time.⁵⁴¹ On an 1853 map the site is described as Phillips Pottery, Brick & Tile Manufactory, and is obviously an amalgamation of two businesses.⁵⁴² Once Phillips owned his own yard, he began to experiment with products other than bricks and tiles, particularly flowerpots and garden ornaments, as well as statuary and, after the opening of the water works in 1854, fountains.

By 1851, when Phillips owned both potteries, he was employing 30 men and his pots received an honourable mention at the Great Exhibition.⁵⁴³ An advertisement in an 1854 guidebook includes an extract from 'Reports of the Juries of the Exhibition of

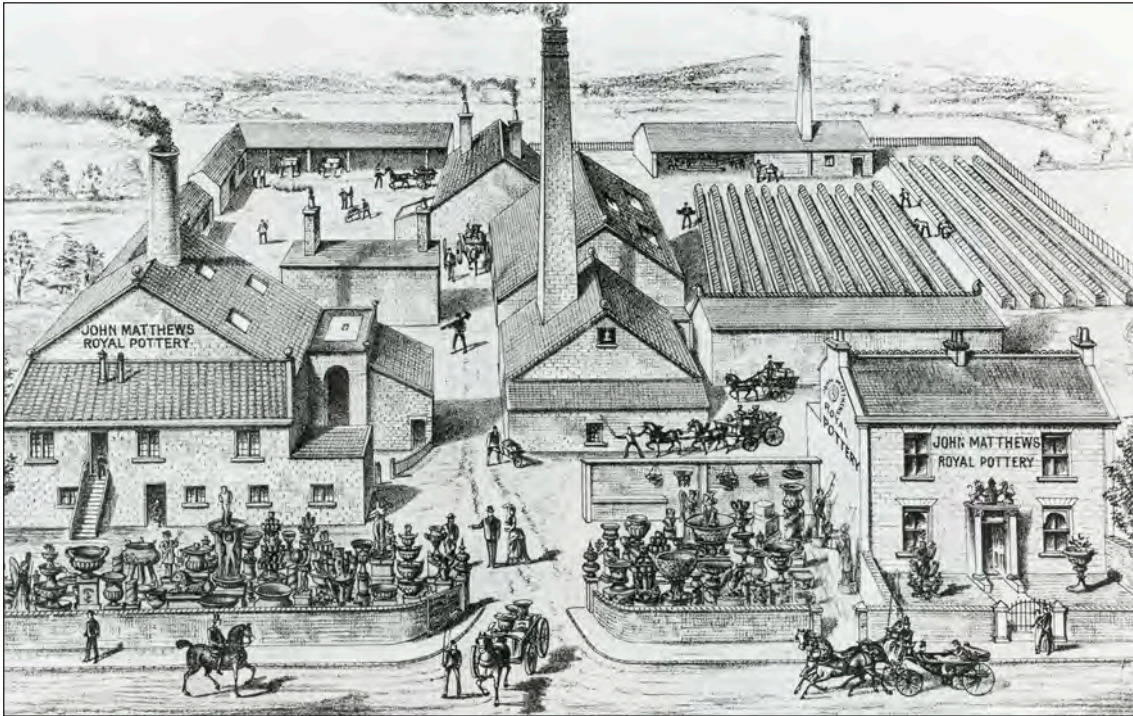


Figure 70: This view shows John Matthews's Royal Pottery, suggesting it dates from the 1870s or 1880s. (North Somerset Library Service)

the Works of Industry of all Nations, 1851, Class 27' in which Phillips' 'Flower-pots of very admirable manufacture' were described as being 'remarkable both for colour, smoothness, and style.' These works 'were deemed the best submitted for the World's inspection at the Crystal-Palace.' The advertisement goes on to say that:

'They are patronised at the Royal Gardens, both at Windsor and Kew, and by the principal Nurserymen throughout the Western, Southern, and Midland Counties of England; are extensively used in Ireland and Wales, and may be seen at almost every nursery between Plymouth and London.'⁵⁴⁴

In the same year as the guidebook advertisement, and despite accolades and what ostensibly seems to have been a thriving business, Phillips was declared bankrupt in October 1854. He was forced to sell a number of properties to clear his debts, including the original pottery (the western part of the works) to Messrs Wilcox and Harvey, presumably the same people who had owned it during the 1830s and 1840s.⁵⁴⁵ An advertisement in the *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* on 10 November 1855 proudly announced that they had taken over the business.⁵⁴⁶ In 1861 Phillips' Royal Pottery was employing 30 men whilst his neighbour William Wilcox had a workforce of 11 men and 9 boys.⁵⁴⁷ In March 1871 Charles Phillips retired; the Royal Pottery was sold to John Matthews (1824-1892) and by 1874 it was producing 20,000 to 30,000 flowerpots every day.⁵⁴⁸ A new type of roof tile was patented in 1873 by Edward Y Poole and in 1878, Matthews acquired the sole rights to it, as well the right to license it to other manufacturers.⁵⁴⁹ In 1885 Conway Gould Warne (1863-1923) took over Wilcox's business and in spring 1888 Matthews retired and sold the Royal Pottery to Warne, again unifying the businesses (Figure 70).⁵⁵⁰

During the 1890s housing development was coming ever closer, restricting where new deposits of clay could be dug, and therefore a new site had to be found. Before 1883 William Wilcox had already set up a kiln and works to the south of Locking Road close to the railway line. Warne decided to extend the New Pottery, which was renamed the Weston-super-Mare Pottery, Tile and Brick Co Ltd and all production was transferred to this new site.⁵⁵¹ WM Dubin designed a new kiln house with two kilns, a model shop, pot shop, machine shed, smith shop, cottage, stables and cart houses. The old potteries were demolished in 1897; the clay pits were filled gradually with the town's refuse and housing was built on the site.⁵⁵² The pottery was closed for the duration of the First World War, but reopened in 1919, when a new company was formed. In 1923 a large fire destroyed the main building, sparing only one kiln but causing the loss of all the old hand-made wooden moulds for ornate designs dating from the previous century. Production was interrupted for several months, but the 1920s proved, despite this setback, to be a successful time for the business. However, with the coming of the Depression, the construction boom ended and the pottery shifted from predominantly brick making back to producing flowerpots, which was more profitable.⁵⁵³ Flowerpot production continued throughout the Second World War and in 1952 the pottery received its last Royal order for 126,000 flowerpots to be used in the Coronation displays in London; similar orders had been placed in 1911 and 1937 for the coronations of George V and George VI. However, the arrival of the plastic flowerpot led to the final demise of the pottery, which went into voluntary liquidation in November 1961.⁵⁵⁴

The Cable Company and Telecommunications

The Commercial Cable Company was established in 1883 by John William Mackay, a mining magnate, and James Gordon Bennett, the owner of the New York Herald. It was created to compete with the Western Union Atlantic service and between 1884 and 1923 six transatlantic cables were laid for the company. In 1884 two cables were laid between Canada and Waterville (Co. Kerry) in Ireland, from where one was linked to Le Havre in France and the other to Britain in June 1885, making landfall at Weston-super-Mare.⁵⁵⁵ Before the construction of a purpose-built facility, a pair of cottages was used as the cable office.⁵⁵⁶ An advertisement appeared in the *Weston Mercury* on 13 April 1889 seeking tenders for alterations to the Atlantic Cable Office in Weston-super-Mare.⁵⁵⁷ The advertisement was signed by the local architect Sidney J Wilde and in May 1890 a feature in the *Western Daily Press* described the recently constructed building, which survives today in Richmond Street.⁵⁵⁸ The contractor for the construction was HA Forse of Bristol, presumably the person selected by Wilde as a result of his advertisement a year earlier. An 1889 guidebook suggests that the building was in use by the end of the year: 'The Bennett-Mackay Atlantic Cable starts from Weston, and has its offices in Richmond-street. A new and handsome building has been erected, but messages for it must be handed in at the Post Office.'⁵⁵⁹

The building in Richmond Street in Weston-super-Mare was required to retransmit signals, which were weak after having crossed the Atlantic, and it was linked directly to London by landlines. It is three bays long with a central doorway and elaborately treated pairs of windows on its upper floor. The left and right pairs of windows have roundels beneath them depicting the company logo, which was route of the cable



Figure 71: The former Cable Company Building closed in 1962 and is now in use as a bar/restaurant. (DP218272)

across the Atlantic, while the central pair of windows has a roundel below with the initials of the Mackay Bennett Company. The strategic significance of the Cable Office explains why it was guarded by troops during the wars and was a target for the Luftwaffe (Figure 71).

Birnbeck Pier had the telephone by 1891, and by 1895 Weston-super-Mare had its own West of England Telephone Company exchange in Wadham Street.⁵⁶⁰ The modern telephone exchange at the east end of the Boulevard is a substantial brick and concrete building with the commemorative tablet 'EIIR 1967' on it.

Electricity and getting around Weston

Electricity only came to Weston-super-Mare in May 1901, a decade after powers had first been granted for its provision.⁵⁶¹ Despite temporary demonstrations of electric lighting, including twenty arc lamps lit for a month during the summer of 1887, and ideas about installing electric trams on a proposed new pier as early as the mid-1880s, no permanent scheme for providing an electricity supply was forthcoming.⁵⁶² The reason for the delay seems to have been economic; the provision of electric lighting only came about when the Weston-super-Mare and District Electric Supply Company realised the possibility of running trams by day while lighting the streets by night, maximising their potential income. The company was established in 1899 and a Tram Order was obtained in 1900 to give them the necessary powers,



Figure 72: This early 20th-century photograph shows Claremont Crescent in the background, with the sea to the left. (North Somerset Library Service)

including authorisation to raise capital of £80,000. A power station (designed by local architects Wilde & Fry) was constructed at Locking Road with direct access to the adjacent Great Western Railway line to allow for deliveries of coal.⁵⁶³ Initially the power station provided lighting for 134 customers, but by 1907 this figure had risen to 260. This is a very small number when compared to the fact that during the first year of operation, the trams carried 778,965 passengers.⁵⁶⁴ The route of the tramway was originally intended to be along Regent Street, with one line turning northwards towards Birnbeck Pier and the second heading south towards the sanatorium. When constructed, the route used was along Oxford Street instead.⁵⁶⁵ Work began in January 1902 and by April the first trial runs of trams were taking place. The official opening of the tram service took place during the following month (Figure 72).⁵⁶⁶

From the outset, trams faced competition from buses, and opposition from taxi drivers. In 1934 the local bus operator Burnell was taken over by the Bristol Tramways Co and there were other bus services operated by the Great Western Railway. The Bristol Tramways Co began operating buses on the tram route during the summer and soon reached an agreement to close the tramway, purchasing it for £15,000, while paying the Urban District Council another £5,000 to lift the rails. The last tram ran in April 1937.⁵⁶⁷ Weston-super-Mare was the 102nd tramway system to close in Great Britain, and by 1962 Blackpool alone continued to operate a service. During their lifetime Weston's trams carried over 51 million passengers.

Even before Weston was creating its tram network, a scheme to link the town to Clevedon and Portishead by a light railway was taking shape. Despite their geographical proximity, there was no straightforward way of travelling between the three towns. Therefore, in 1885 an Act of Parliament authorised the creation of a light railway, but work does not seem to have begun for several years due to the slow pace of acquiring land.⁵⁶⁸ By November 1889 only four miles of the route had been completed and after a tortuous almost decade-long construction programme characterised by practical, financial and administrative setbacks and delays, the first recorded train ran between Weston and Clevedon on 18 August 1897. Portishead was connected a decade later, the first train running to there on 7 August 1907.⁵⁶⁹

The Weston, Clevedon and Portishead Light Railway had its terminus at the junction of Milton Road and Ashcombe Road and the route headed eastwards through the growing town before turning northwards. The first part of the route still exists as a cycleway/walkway, the Colonel Stephens Way. The Weston, Clevedon and Portishead Light Railway Company obtained powers to extend its route to the Boulevard and track was laid along Gerard Road and the Boulevard in 1897. However, the Urban District Council objected because it claimed that the rails stood above the road surface and were therefore dangerous. The company refused to modify the arrangements and so the track was lifted and the scheme abandoned before any services had run.⁵⁷⁰ During the 1930s, the growing number of cars, improved bus services and a lack of people wishing to travel between the three towns led to the line to Clevedon and Portishead being closed on 18 May 1940.⁵⁷¹

Weston's tramway system and the light railway to Clevedon and Portishead both succumbed to the internal combustion engine, particularly the increasing provision of buses. In 1905 there had only been a single motor coach for hire in Weston, but by 1911 there were charabanc trips out from the resort to places of interest, such as Cheddar and Glastonbury. In 1912 the Bristol Tramways and Carriage Company introduced the first regular bus service from Ashcombe Park to Uphill, but the rapid expansion of bus services only took place during the 1930s.⁵⁷² The Beach Bus Station opened in 1936 in a building designed by the company's staff architect, HA Penney; its prominent seafront locations indicating the importance of the new services. It was demolished in January 1988 and its site is now occupied by Carlton Mansions.⁵⁷³

The Victorian and Edwardian Holiday in Weston-super-Mare

During the 18th century, a holiday to the seaside was normally restricted to a few people with the disposable wealth and free time to be able to enjoy staying away from home for weeks. Georgian seaside resorts catered for small numbers of affluent tourists, by providing small-scale sociable facilities and by making most of these accessible only by monthly or seasonal subscription rather than a single admission fee. By doing this, circulating libraries and assembly rooms could guarantee exclusivity; bathhouses were expensive and beyond the pocket of working people, but at theatres, anyone could potentially be admitted, though their experience and the company they kept would vary according to their ticket price. The vast majority of Georgian seaside tourists would stay in lodgings, taking rooms in a house where the

landlord or landlady cooked the food that the holidaymakers had purchased earlier in the day.

In contrast, by the end of the 19th century, well-developed Victorian resorts were catering for growing numbers of visitors coming by train and steamer. Where once dozens or hundreds of wealthy sea bathers stayed for weeks at a seaside resort, by 1900, thousands, and sometimes hundreds of thousands, of holidaymakers and day trippers flocked to beaches and bars, the latter activity attracting considerable comment from Victorian moralists. The exclusive institutions that had entertained the wealthy elite might continue, though often their seasonal customers moved to quieter resorts beyond the reach of the railways and increasingly to resorts abroad. New and larger forms of entertainment venue were needed to cope with thousands of customers and the advances in construction technology that had contributed to Britain's growing wealth were now applied to providing for its fun. Blackpool's vast, industrial-scale entertainment venues, including the Tower, the Winter Gardens and the Alhambra, may not have been matched elsewhere, but every Victorian seaside resort was providing its new customers with more modest facilities, as well as the iconic seaside pier. Lodgings remained the main means of housing holidaymakers, but an activity once only practised by wealthy householders welcoming similarly affluent visitors spread to potentially any house with a room to let.

Respectable Entertainment for Respectable People

Weston-super-Mare broadly follows this story, but the town's prosperity and success during the second half of the 19th century seems to have been more dependent on respectable God-fearing residents, rather than boisterous trippers. This is clear from guidebooks and trade directories; at most resorts their contents aim to inform and attract visitors, while also providing useful information for residents. At Weston-super-Mare, the guidebooks and directories seem to be squarely aimed at respectable residents, the people who publishers felt to be their most lucrative market. There is considerable emphasis on the clubs and societies that existed in the town, including Conservative and Liberal clubs, Masonic lodges and similar venues for Oddfellows, Foresters, Shepherds, Patriots, Good Templars and Sons of Temperance.⁵⁷⁴ There were active musical and literary societies and sporting opportunities ranged from golf, bowls, cricket, fishing, archery, croquet and even opportunities to go hunting.⁵⁷⁵

These societies and organisations would have welcomed holidaymakers, as well as residents and the same would have been true of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Formed in October 1875 and originally located at 69 High Street, by 1887 it had taken over Trafalgar House on Bristol Road Lower (Figure 73).⁵⁷⁶ The high wall that surrounded the house and gardens was taken down and a gymnasium measuring 58ft (17.7m) long by 31ft 6in (9.6m) wide.⁵⁷⁷ The original Trafalgar House is still recognisable today despite later alterations to its external appearance. A painted sign above an extension to the right hand side of the original house reads 'SUBSCRIPTION READING ROOM OF THE YMCA'.

The target audience for many guidebooks included people who had retired to Weston. Examination of censuses reveal a high number of people living in Weston,



Figure 73: The YMCA building contained a room for public meetings and lectures, a reading room, a lecture room, a study, a library with over 1,000 volumes and accommodation for boarders in the house, as well as a large gymnasium at the rear. (DP218743)

who are described as being of independent means, fundholders or annuitants, and when combined with their ages, it suggests they were often retirees. Therefore, it is no surprise that from an early date, publications seek to emphasise the town's respectability and health giving qualities, not only in the summer, but also during the winter, a market first exploited by resorts on the south coast. An 1850 directory noted that:

'Weston is a favourite and well frequented watering place, the fixed abode of many affluent families, a summer resort of almost numberless fashionable visitors, and the winter residence of scores of invalids and others in search of health, for whose accommodation, a variety of houses have been erected on charming sites; its hillsides are studded with temples of health and mansions of the rich; and its ocean-bounded valley is thickly covered with handsome habitations, in rows and detached, consisting partly of shops, but chiefly lodging houses close to the sea.'⁵⁷⁸

As early as 1854, a guidebook described how the winter evenings were enlivened by concerts, balls, lectures and exhibitions of a literary and scientific order.⁵⁷⁹ By the early 20th century, guidebooks record how busy Weston was during the winter, with visits from touring theatre companies, readings, lectures and entertainments,

ranging from dramatic recitals to conjuring tricks.⁵⁸⁰ The town's official guidebook for 1910 listed the winter recreations, which included the Philharmonic Society, with about 200 trained voices, the Orpheus Society featuring 40 male voices and the Instrumental Society, which boasted high-class amateur performers. The Shakespearian Reading Society offered frequent public and society readings and there was also a chess club and an archaeological association.⁵⁸¹

Where entertainments are discussed in guidebooks and directories, the emphasis is often towards the more uplifting, the moralists' obsession with rational recreation being evident. An 1854 guidebook described the amusements available in Weston-super-Mare as 'generally of a rational and innocent kind.'⁵⁸² What is also clear is that two of the key entertainment institutions of the Georgian period continued to flourish in Victorian Weston, with guidebooks regularly continuing to list, and advertise circulating libraries and the assembly rooms.⁵⁸³ In the case of the latter, this was a new venture of 1858, replacing the old assembly rooms at the seaward end of Regent Street. The company registration document of 30 January 1858 specifies that a site on the High Street, the site of Sackville House, had been identified as a location for the new assembly rooms and that the nominal capital of the company would be £4,000 to be raised by the issuing of 800 shares.⁵⁸⁴ It was proposed that the assembly rooms would be used for concerts, lectures, public meetings, magisterial meetings, as well as the County Court and meetings of the Improvement Commissioners. This document suggests that the prospect of the purpose-built Town Hall actually opening lay some distance in the future. The men, and occasional ladies, backing the project at this date were all local and were led by John Cox of Glentworth House, who had agreed to purchase 60 shares in the company. Among the subscribers listed separately in the documentation are George B Cochran, the homoeopath who resided at 6 Victoria Buildings, and Sophia Rooke of Villa Rosa. The first directors were John Cox, Thomas Rich, John Palmer, Joseph James and Robert Harris.⁵⁸⁵

A list of shareholders dating from 21 March 1859 includes their names and addresses, the number of shares they held and most interestingly their occupations. John Cox, 'Esquire', headed the list with 60 shares, and alongside a few other 'Esquires' can be found builders, two chemists, a physician, a butcher, a tailor, a carpenter, a victualler, three lodging house keepers, the postmaster, a grocer, an innkeeper and a shoemaker. All but a handful of the shareholders came from Weston-super-Mare, as this was a venture rooted in the local community and was still small enough to be able to be funded by it. The architect of the assembly rooms was Henry Lloyd of Bristol, who also built Manilla Crescent, Atlantic Terrace and Holy Trinity Church.⁵⁸⁶

A newspaper article in April 1859 announced the forthcoming opening of the assembly rooms. This would be marked by performances by 'several of the leading artistes of the day', including the celebrated Polish violinist and composer Henryk Wieniawski (1835-1880). 'Such a combination of talent will doubtless prove highly attractive, and the concerts being under distinguished patronage, there is little doubt there will be a large and fashionable attendance.'⁵⁸⁷ The main hall at the new



Figure 74: Respectable Edwardians are promenading around Grove Park while others sit and listen to the band in the bandstand (PC07176)

assembly rooms could hold 500 people, making it Weston's largest venue for over 20 years.⁵⁸⁸

As the opening of the assembly rooms demonstrates, respectable music and entertainment was a key element of Victorian rational recreation. Moralists and guidebooks alike often frowned on the raucous behaviour and loud songs of minstrels and pierrots, and at some resorts they might be specifically banned from performing on the seafront and beach. At Weston respectable musical fare was available in its parks, as well as in concert venues. An 1872 guidebook noted that 'During the Summer season, the attractions of the town are further enhanced by a splendid band, which plays at stated times at the Grove, Prince Consort Gardens, Ellenborough Park, and the Royal Hotel Field' (Figure 74).⁵⁸⁹ As well as the town band, there were a number of local amateur musical groups considered worthy of mention in guidebooks and directories, and the town was also visited by a variety of travelling musicians. Henry Mogg's band was founded in 1887 and went on to entertain Weston until 1929, winning the national band championship at the Crystal Palace in 1912, while in 1920, the HC Burgess orchestra was formed and soon became a permanent feature in the town, regularly performing at the Rozel bandstand and the Winter Gardens until 1938.⁵⁹⁰

Weston's First Unrealised Pier

The character of the opening night festivities at the new assembly rooms demonstrates that this was not a facility aimed at large numbers of tourists, but a respectable venue for genteel Weston and its polite visitors. However, the town was already beginning to experience significant influxes of holidaymakers, and particularly day trippers in search of fun. Steamers began to call occasionally at Weston; the *Duke of Argyll*, built at Port Glasgow in 1814, was the first to ply the Severn and regular packet services were in operation by 1821. As early as 1825, Weston was on a local excursion route from Bristol to Flat Holm and Barry Island.⁵⁹¹ The high tidal range severely restricted the development of steamer services and this is the reason that Weston undertook the construction of a pier in 1845. The only seaside piers constructed before this, designed for landing tourists and providing a pleasant promenade, were at Ryde on the Isle of Wight, Granton at Edinburgh, Brighton, Margate, Southend-on-Sea, Herne Bay and Gravesend.

Weston-super-Mare's first pier was the short-lived and never-completed suspension bridge design on the site of the current Birnbeck pier. Before a pier had been constructed, stepping stones provided a causeway out to the island at lower states of the tide. This delayed fishermen dealing with their nets and therefore fish were often exposed and eaten by seagulls. Therefore, during the fishing season, two men lived on the island and were known as 'gull yellers', as they were paid to scare gulls away from the nets.⁵⁹²

Inspiration for the suspension bridge scheme came from two chain piers constructed a quarter of a century earlier. An alternative to piled jetties, such as the pier at Ryde and the first jetty at Margate during the 1820s, a suspension bridge design was the more ambitious approach to pier design pioneered by the civil engineer and naval officer Captain Samuel Brown (1776–1852).⁵⁹³ In 1816 he had installed the first machine of its type in his own workshops for testing chain cables and the cables for the steamship *Great Eastern* were manufactured at his works in Pontypridd. As a result of his expertise, he became involved with the construction of suspension bridges, including the Union Bridge across the Tweed near Berwick, completed in 1820. In the following year he erected the Chain Pier at Granton near Edinburgh and in 1823, he constructed another pier with a suspension structure at Brighton.⁵⁹⁴ Two other examples were erected at Greenhithe on the Thames during the 1840s (demolished in 1875) and at Seaview on the Isle of Wight in 1880.⁵⁹⁵ This pier survived into the 1950s, but the Chain Piers at Granton and Brighton were destroyed by storms in 1898 and 1896 respectively. The apparent sophistication of the superstructure of the Chain Piers at Granton and Brighton should not disguise the fact that they were constructed using driven wooden piles, the mainstay of pier construction until the 1850s.

The Visitor's Companion in Rambling about Weston of 1847 has a frontispiece showing the design of Weston's proposed chain pier connecting Birnbeck Island to the mainland.⁵⁹⁶ It was to be 1,100ft (335m) long with a central span of 545ft (166m) carried on substantial, stone piers that stood a short distance into the sea on either side of the channel. The side spans were to be 272½ft (83m) long and the roadway

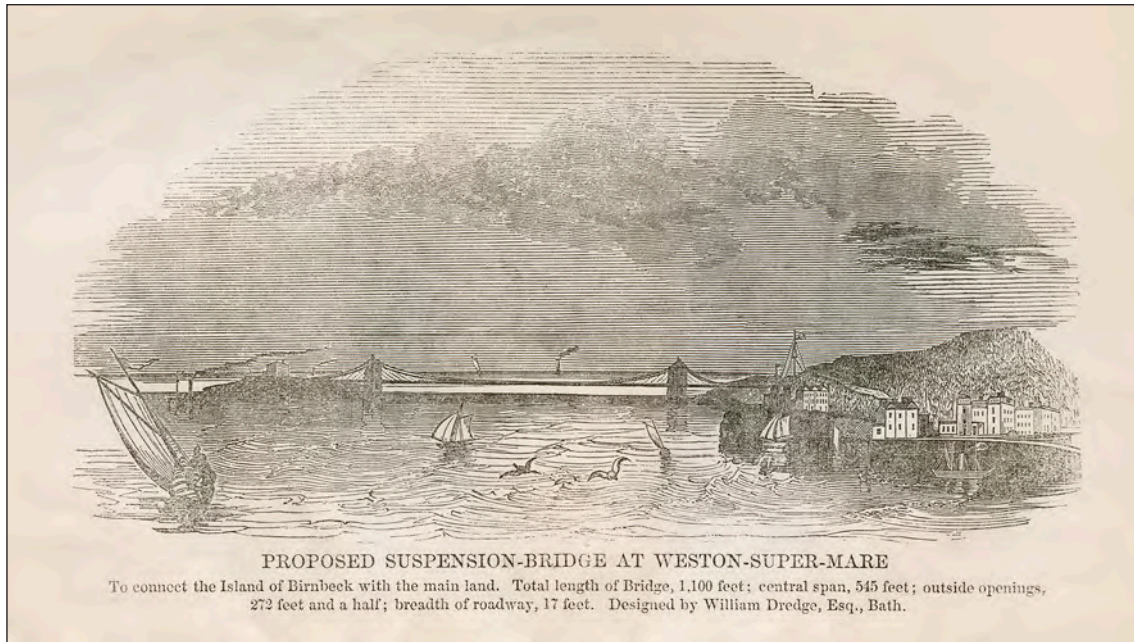


Figure 75: Dredge's Pier was to be 1,100ft (335m) long and carried on substantial, stone piers. This view of 1847 lovingly records the elegant profile of the proposed pier, but shows only a single, small cuboidal block on Birnbeck Island, suggesting that the journey across was initially to be more important than the destination. (North Somerset Library Service)

was to be 17ft (5.2m) wide. The same view that lovingly records the elegant profile of the pier shows only a single, small cuboidal block on Birnbeck Island, suggesting that the journey across was initially to be more important for the project than the destination (Figure 75).

In April 1845 a public meeting was held and a committee was formed to promote the construction of the pier under the chairmanship of Francis Hutchinson Synge, Chairman of the Town Commissioners. A company was registered in May 1845 and shareholders were sought to provide the necessary capital of £20,000 through the issue of a thousand shares. The company registration papers reveals that most of the initial backers of the scheme were local or from Bristol.⁵⁹⁷ An Act of Parliament received its Royal Assent on 18 June 1846 and it lists Synge, as well as John Hugh Smyth Pigott, the Lord of the Manor, and Thomas Tutton Knyfton of Uphill among the leading promoters of the scheme.⁵⁹⁸

There appears to be some confusion about the identity of the designer of the pier. The 1847 guidebook firmly attributes it to the Wiltshire engineer William Dredge (1764-1849), but other sources suggest it was a work by his son James Dredge (1794-1863) who had been responsible for the Victoria Bridge over the River Avon at Bath in 1836.⁵⁹⁹ Work began on the vertical supports of the pier in 1847. However, a major storm later in the year swept away the first stonework of the uprights, leaving only foundations.⁶⁰⁰ There were no funds to continue work, Dredge was declared bankrupt and the pier company was wound up.

Despite the failure of the pier project, steamers still landed passengers, when the tide was right, at a jetty on Knightstone Island, at Anchor Head and in the Axe Estuary. The first steamer to run an excursion was a tug called the Sampson in 1843 and various other excursions took place during the 1840s.⁶⁰¹ In 1846 Francis Crawshay of the Treforest ironworks asked the Taff Vale Railway about running a train from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff, to meet with the steamer to Weston-super-Mare to give his men a day there.⁶⁰²

To improve steamer services, an unsuccessful scheme was launched in 1854 to link the main railway line to Uphill, where a port would be equipped with suitable facilities.⁶⁰³ In 1861 Richard Jones, a fisherman, advocated the construction of a pier where later the Grand Pier would be constructed.⁶⁰⁴ On the reverse side of his letter, Jones drew a plan of his pier, starting from the beach opposite Regent Street at Whereat's library (later Huntley's restaurant) and running straight out to sea. There would be a floating breakwater at the end of the pier parallel to the shore. He explained in a side note that on the south side of the end of the pier there were to be many moorings for boats. At the same time as Jones was sketching out his design, there were more concrete moves to create a harbour at Brean Down. A company was incorporated with a capital of over £365,000 and the foundation stone of the harbour was laid on 5 November 1864.⁶⁰⁵ Work continued until December 1872 when a violent storm destroyed the jetty; the scheme was revived in 1887, but came to nothing.⁶⁰⁶ Neither of the 1860s schemes bore fruit, but they seem to have been part of the discussions taking place in Weston-super-Mare about the desirability of providing a pier, which would culminate in the construction of Birnbeck Pier.

On Holiday at Weston in the Victorian and Edwardian Era

The first destination for holidaymakers and trippers arriving during the Victorian era at Weston-super-Mare was undoubtedly the beach. An 1854 guidebook recorded that 'The strand is well supplied with commodious and strongly-built bathing machines, which are kept extremely clean and neat.'⁶⁰⁷ Experienced female attendants were available to assist ladies. A bylaw of 1869 stipulated that male and female bathers should be kept 200 yards (183m) apart and that bathers had to use machines if they were entering the sea within a quarter of a mile (402m) of a dwelling house.⁶⁰⁸ The Revd Francis Kilvert, who stayed in Princes Buildings in 1872, reluctantly used a bathing machine:

'Wednesday, 4 September

Bathing in the morning before breakfast from a machine. Many people were openly stripping on the sands a little further on and running down into the sea, and I would have done the same but I had brought down no towels of my own.'⁶⁰⁹

The following day he had obviously remembered his towel and bathed in exactly the way he liked – naked:

‘Thursday, 5 September

I was out early before breakfast this morning bathing from the sands. There was a delicious feeling of freedom in stripping in the open air and running down naked to the sea, where the waves were curling white with foam and the red morning sunshine glowing upon the naked limbs of the bathers.’

Reinvigorated, Kilvert returned to his home at Langley Burrell (Wiltshire). Men had bathed in the nude since the early 18th century, but Kilvert’s diary reveals that he was probably one of the last to indulge in what was probably felt to be an increasingly scandalous practice, permitted only at the fringes of beaches and early in the day.

By the early 20th century, there had been a relaxation in the rules regarding bathing and bathing machines at Weston, and at seaside resorts in general. Bathing without machines was permitted before 9am and after 8pm on any part of the sands south of Severn Road and mixed bathing was allowed on one part of the foreshore. As well as bathing machines, tents were also available on the sands opposite the Grand Atlantic Hotel.⁶¹⁰

Increasingly, beaches were becoming ‘the children’s Paradise’. A 1901 guidebook described the fun they could enjoy on Weston-super-Mare’s sands:

‘There they are, these bright-eyed, cheek-tanned, bare-legged little ones, fairly revelling, it seems, in this sense of security. Scores of them are exercising their ingenuity in building castles of sand, with wondrous ramparts and dark mysterious tunnels. And the donkey rides! Surely nowhere else does this fascinating form of childish amusement reach so nearly to perfection as it does at Weston, due, of course, largely to the fact that the incoming tide is not to be reckoned with to any serious extent.’⁶¹¹

Beach entertainers amused adults and children alike during the summer season, though it may not have been to everyone’s taste:

‘N****rs, pierrots, performing dogs, donkeys, and the never-failing Punch and Judy are all in evidence, and the sands and the terraced esplanade above are crowded with appreciative listeners. Readers for whom such fare is too highly spiced will pass on – there is plenty of elbow-room elsewhere.’⁶¹²

Away from the beach, the Knightstone Baths were still an important facility for residents and tourists. The baths were sold, or were planned to be sold in 1850, again in 1860 and then around 1880. On this occasion, they were sold to Mr Griffiths, who enlarged the open-air pool and built a covered pool for women on its north side.⁶¹³ In 1891 the island was bought by a company that intended to develop the commercial use of the wharf; 20,000 tons of coal was imported from south Wales here each year during the late 1880s and limestone was taken away. The only alteration to the baths at this date was an extension of 15 feet (4.5 metres) to the ladies pool.⁶¹⁴



Figure 76: This 1932 Aerofilms photograph shows Knightstone Island with the Georgian bathhouse at the bottom of the island, with the swimming baths behind and the Pavilion to the right. This photograph was taken soon after the Marine Lake was created in the late 1920s. (EPW039937)

In 1894 Arthur's Tower and the other lodging houses were demolished and soon after, the newly formed Weston Urban District Council decided to purchase the island for £13,482.⁶¹⁵ Part of the island was extended using girders placed over an earlier swimming pool, thus providing more space for a large pavilion. On 13 May 1902 the new swimming pool and pavilion/opera house were opened.⁶¹⁶ From the 1870s onwards, swimming had grown in importance and the creation of this substantial purpose-built facility was recognition of its new significance. The swimming baths cost £9,800 and the main pool measured 100ft (30.5m) long by 35ft (10.7m) wide, with a gallery for 400 spectators around it. This venue could host water polo matches and there were also diving stages, chutes and douches. There was also a sea-water swimming bath for ladies measuring 65ft (19.8m) long and 28ft (8.5m) wide, an open sea-water swimming bath measuring 76ft (23.2m) long and 40ft (12.2m) wide and a number of slipper baths.⁶¹⁷ The nearby Pavilion and Opera House, which cost around £20,000 to build, housed a concert hall measuring 100ft (30.5m) long by 67ft (20.4m) wide, with a gallery around it, except at the stage end. It was capable of seating 2,000 people. The building also housed a refreshment room, a billiard room and a reading room (Figure 76).⁶¹⁸

In 1881 the Weston-super-Mare Summer and Winter Gardens Co Ltd was established by RL Jones with capital of £2,500 to be raised through the issue of 500 shares.⁶¹⁹ Its purpose was to create tennis courts and a pleasant garden with a large hall in it. The Victoria Hall, designed by Price & Wooler, opened on 19 December 1884 with a concert by the Black Watch band and pipers.⁶²⁰ Its site lies to the north of the Boulevard, between Victoria Quadrant and Albert Quadrant. The hall could accommodate 1,000 people and was attached to the Summer and Winter Gardens, which were entered from a porch reminiscent of a triumphal arch.⁶²¹ By 1910, its proprietor Michael William Shanley had altered it so that he could provide his customers with three daily roller skating sessions on the Victoria Hall's 'perfect floor' and two cinematograph shows during the evening in another room.⁶²² The Victoria Hall later became a Palace of Varieties, then a theatre run by Carlton Fredericks and finally the Tivoli cinema in 1928. It was destroyed by bombing in 1942 and the site remained derelict until it was redeveloped as flats in 1983-4.⁶²³ In 1908 a masonic temple was built at the rear of the Victoria Hall, according to designs by Price & Jane in collaboration with Wilde & Fry.⁶²⁴ Although the Victoria Hall was destroyed during the war, the masonic lodge survived and bears the date of 1908 above its door.

By 1910 Shanley was offering 'cinematographic entertainment' nightly at the Victoria Hall. In 1911 some films were shown in the Knightstone Pavilion and in the same year Weston acquired its first purpose-built cinema, the Electric Cinema on part of the site of the future Odeon Cinema.⁶²⁵ The Regent (later the Gaumont) in Regent Street followed, opening on 22 March 1913, and the Central opened in Oxford Street in 1921.⁶²⁶

If a holidaymaker grew tired of Weston's charms, guidebooks provided ideas for excursions to places of interest, such as to see the ruined church at Uphill, Kewstoke with its interesting church and Woodspring Priory. Initially, this would have been on horseback or by coach, but by the early 20th century, tourists could enjoy a variety of charabanc trips provided by the Bristol Tramways and Carriage Co Ltd.⁶²⁷ Improved transport meant excursions could reach more distant destinations, such as Cheddar or Glastonbury.

Weston's Piers – Birnbeck Pier

While hundreds of people might enjoy themselves at Knightstone's baths and pavilion each day, enjoy a visit to the Summer and Winter Gardens, or see a film at a cinema, a seaside pier would prove to be an attraction capable of catering for thousands each day. As well as Richard Jones' highly speculative scheme in 1861, there were two more serious ideas to provide Weston-super-Mare with a facility that would allow steamers to land holidaymakers.⁶²⁸ The Brean Down Harbour Company was established to create a commercial deepwater harbour at the western end of Brean Down, to the south of Weston-super-Mare. The scheme did not come to fruition, but a rival attempt to create a pier for steamers was more successful, leading to the creation of the pier linking the mainland to Birnbeck Island, in the same location as Dredge's unsuccessful project.



Figure 77: The components of Birnbeck Pier were erected by Messrs Toogood from parts prefabricated at their Isca Foundry across the Severn in Newport (Monmouthshire) and the bridge section was completed by the end of 1866. (DP218350)

The Weston-super-Mare Pier Company, registered in January 1860, was largely a creation of the Smyth Pigott Estate, but also attracted investment from businessmen in the town and some interest from investors in south Wales.⁶²⁹ An initial Act of Parliament was obtained in 1862 and a second one with extended powers two years later.⁶³⁰ The foundation stone of the pier was laid on 28 October 1864. The components of the pier were erected by Messrs Toogood from parts prefabricated at their Isca Foundry across the Severn in Newport (Monmouthshire) and the bridge section was completed by the end of 1866.⁶³¹ Birnbeck Pier was officially opened by Master Cecil Hugh Smyth Pigott, the eight-year-old son of the Lord of the Manor on 6 June 1867.⁶³² An article in the *Illustrated London News* describes the ceremonial opening, which was also attended by John Hugh Smyth Pigott, Lord of the Manor and RL Jones, Chairman of the Weston-super-Mare Pier Company. During the first three months of operation, 120,000 people passed through the turnstiles and receipts during this period totalled £5,000 (Figure 77).

The designer was the renowned Victorian pier engineer Eugenius Birch (1818-84). The new jetty at Margate (1853-6) was the first pier that he constructed and eventually he would be responsible for fourteen, a career that helped to define the essential characteristics of a pleasure pier. His first contribution to pier engineering was to select the screw pile, patented by Alexander Mitchell (1780-1868) in 1833, as the means of creating the structure, a technique using a screw on the end of an iron rod to fix the pile into the sea bed.⁶³³ Margate's new jetty led the way in the use of iron, but like other piers being built during the 1850s and 1860s it had a fairly plain

superstructure to maximise the area for promenaders and passengers disembarking from steamships. This sparseness can still be experienced today in a walk along the piers at Saltburn-by-the-Sea and Clevedon, both of which opened in 1869. However, before their construction, changes were underway in the presentation of the seaside pier. At Blackpool, Eugenius Birch erected the town's first pier, which opened in 1863, and he included a series of kiosks on its deck. Three years later, he completed Brighton's West Pier using a similar formula, but he included the first hint of exotic detailing inspired by the nearby Royal Pavilion. This vocabulary would come to dominate the detailing of piers for several decades and culminate in the extravagance of Eastbourne and Brighton's Palace Pier.

Birnbeck Pier was another product of the main part of Birch's career, and while it visually and structurally resembles other contemporary piers, his pier at Weston is unique as it makes use of an island to create its pier head. The advantage of this was that substantial structures could be erected on it, but the slight disadvantage was the necessity to provide a series of satellite landing stages, as the island would be dangerous for any ships trying to moor alongside the rocky shore.

The pier consisted of a 317m long main structure between the mainland and Birnbeck Island, with originally a 12m long timber jetty resting on iron piles extending westwards. The jetty was dismantled in 1872 and replaced by another one, 76m long facing north.⁶³⁴ In 1882 a lifeboat was first stationed on the island, though a boathouse was not constructed for another eight years. The stone pavilion was built in 1884, a material made possible by the presence of the island, and it contained a concert hall and refreshment rooms. It was destroyed by fire on 26 December 1897, but was replaced by a new building by Price & Wooler that opened for business in July 1898.⁶³⁵ A low-water landing stage was added in 1898, but in September 1903 both jetties were badly damaged in a same storm that also damaged the seafront, breached Knightstone Causeway and destroyed all the bathing machines. The north jetty was rebuilt in steel and extended to 91m in length, but the low-water landing stage remained closed until 1910.⁶³⁶

The large area and the stable footings provided by the island allowed substantial fairground rides to be erected by the early 20th century. Among the attractions were a water chute, a switchback railway, a shooting gallery, a helter-skelter, a merry-go-round, and a flying machine. It consisted of a tall metal pylon from which hung gondola-shaped seats that swung out as the machine rotated.⁶³⁷ The original inspiration for this ride is Sir Hiram Maxim's Captive Flying Machine at Blackpool Pleasure Beach, which dates from 1904.⁶³⁸ The increasingly boisterous and commercial dimension of the island seems to have upset some local residents, who objected to the construction of a concrete platform to increase the size of the island. However, it was constructed on the south side of the pier, opening on 29 May 1909. It housed the theatre, a bio-scope (cinema) and a roller skating rink (Figure 78).

These entertainments and amusements helped the pier to achieve a profit of over £3,000 during the summer of 1913. It also benefitted from having a monopoly of steamer services landing passengers from around the Severn Estuary and especially from South Wales. The construction of the Grand Pier at the beginning of the 20th



Figure 78: Among the attractions were a water chute, a switchback railway, a shooting gallery, a helter-skelter, a merry-go-round, and a flying machine. It consisted of a tall metal pylon from which hung gondola-shaped seats that swung out as the machine rotated. (PC48002)

century had threatened this monopoly, but difficulties with navigation and currents prevented steamers ever successfully mooring alongside the Grand Pier despite the building of a low water jetty extension.

Weston's Piers – The Grand Pier

Birnbeck Pier lies some distance from the centre of Weston-super-Mare, which is undoubtedly not contributing to its resuscitation today. The idea of a pier at the western end of Regent Street, where the Grand Pier is located, had been floated as early as 1861 and in 1883, it was revived by the Weston-super-Mare Board of Health, which approved plans for a new promenade pier, over a mile in length, which would cost £70,000.⁶³⁹ It would form a central part of the scheme for a new seafront, and while new sea walls and promenade were created, the pier's construction was delayed. In July 1884, *An Act for incorporating and conferring powers on the Weston-super-Mare Grand Pier Company and for other purposes* received its Royal assent.⁶⁴⁰ The first prospectus of the Weston-super-Mare Grand Pier Company Ltd was published in search of capital totalling £90,000 from 9000 shares.⁶⁴¹ Despite enthusiastic local meetings, no work took place. During the 1890s, this idea was revived and an Act of Parliament received its Royal Assent in 1893.⁶⁴² However, there was no progress immediately and as the powers in the Act were time-limited, further Acts were obtained in 1897 and 1899 to extend the duration of its powers.⁶⁴³ People in Weston and Cardiff were the largest contributors to the £200,000 subscribed and work finally began on 7 November 1903 to designs produced by Peter Munroe.⁶⁴⁴ By summer 1904 the contractors, Mayoh and Haley of London, had completed the



Figure 79: The Grand Pier's original pavilion was destroyed by fire in 1930 and its replacement also succumbed to fire in 2008. This early 20th century postcard also shows the seafront tram, a number of horse-drawn carriages and some early motor cars. (PC08229)

pavilion and the first stage of the pier, and these opened on 11 June 1904.⁶⁴⁵ Initially 329m long, a narrow, low-water landing stage was added taking the pier to a total length of 786m, less than half the anticipated length of the original design.⁶⁴⁶ Only three steamers attempted to use the pier and once the approach channel had rapidly silted up, other pleasure steamer captains refused to call there (Figure 79).⁶⁴⁷

Without income from steamers, the pier had to focus on raising revenue from entertaining visitors. A 1910 guidebook described how it was famous for its high class instrumental music and entertainments. At the end of the pier there was a pavilion in which musical entertainments and vaudeville parties were staged for audiences of 2,000, and there were concert parties on the new stage behind the pavilion.⁶⁴⁸ A 1913 guidebook described how 'The interior of the Pavilion is tastefully decorated in white and gold, and has a blue-tinted panelled ceiling.'⁶⁴⁹ There was also a bandstand in front of the pavilion and the pier also offered roller skating, confetti carnivals and many other seasonal attractions (Figures 80, 81).

Staying in Victorian Weston

The first visitors to seaside resorts might stay at a simple hotel or a handful of inns, but this was usually just until they had secured lodgings. Most Victorian holidaymakers, like their Georgian counterparts, also stayed in lodgings. They took rooms, a floor of a house or even an entire house, either by prior arrangement or took their chances on arrival at a resort. It is clear from guidebooks, censuses and diaries that any house might offer lodgings and any prospective customer might



Figure 80: The Grand Pier in the immediate aftermath of the 1930 fire. (EPW033286)



Figure 81: A 1935 Aerofilms photo of the Grand Pier once the pavilion had been rebuilt. (EPW048451)

recognise an available room by a notice posted in a window or by word of mouth. Settled in their lodgings, guests would usually purchase their own food, which would be cooked by their host, but during the 19th century some landlords went further, becoming boarding houses providing meals.⁶⁵⁰

The first visitors to a resort such as Weston had to stay in any house that was available, houses not constructed with the comfort of visitors in mind. However, by the early 19th century, the presence of tourists, and, perhaps more importantly, their return each year, led local people to build more comfortable and more substantial houses, the additional expense being affordable because of income that would be raised from lodgers. Weston's first guidebook of 1822 mentions a number of lodgings by name, and by the 1830s and 1840s, terraces were being constructed that contained a number of lodging houses by the time of the 1851 Census. An 1850 directory listed 61 people providing lodgings, with a number of lodgings located in the newest houses in Oriel Terrace, Princes Buildings and Albert Buildings.⁶⁵¹ This is not cheap holidaymaking; it is wealthy middle-class people staying at the seaside.

In 1851 the seven houses comprising Victoria Buildings on Knightstone Road, built in 1838-1841, were home to people of means, a builder and two lodging-house keepers; Elizabeth Wilcox, aged 28, resided at number 4, while Benjamin Pearson (62 years old) and his 37-year-old wife Elizabeth were at number 6. Nearby, the nine houses of Albert Buildings on Knightstone Road, which had been constructed in 1843, were home to the following people and their families:

- 1 A Schoolmistress.
- 2 A Fundholder.
- 3 Kitty West, a 48-year-old lodging-house keeper.
- 4 A proprietor of houses.
- 5 A solicitor's wife.
- 6 Mary Prichard, a 58-year-old lodging-house keeper.
- 7 William Ash, gentleman.
- 8 Mary Manly, a lodging-house keeper aged 42.
- 9 Visitors are listed, but no lodging-house keeper was mentioned.

The adjacent Princes Buildings of a similar date had already become dominated by lodging-house keepers in 1851:

- 1 George Brown was described as a landed proprietor.
- 2 John Donnet, 31 years old and his wife Rachel aged 41 were hosting four annuitants.
- 3 Margaret Michell was a married 44-year-old lodging-house keeper, but her husband was not listed at the same address.

- 4 Elizabeth Poole a widow aged 41, who was a lodging-house keeper.
- 5 Georgiana, aged 41 and her sister Louisa Pritchard, aged 42 were hosting John C Faber, Rector of Chicklade, his wife Emily, their six children and their governess.
- 6 Matilda Ryall, a 40-year-old widow and her 18-year-old daughter Matilda were described as lodging-house keepers. Robert Ramsden, his wife, Mary and their four children were lodging with them, along with the children's nurse, a nurse maid and a lady's maid.
- 7 Mary Watkins, aged 26, is described as a lodging-house keeper and had four lodgers.

The reason for the ungentlemanly emphasis on the gender and age of lodging-house keepers is that during the 19th century this profession provided a useful income for many single women, including a number of widows. It also provided a valuable second income to supplement a husband's wage and the lodging house business underpinned the economy of a town such as Weston. A general rule of thumb in Victorian seaside resorts is that when houses were first built, they were designed to be family homes, and while this may have often been their initial function, they might go down in status and become lodging houses.⁶⁵² However, in the 1851 Census, Royal Crescent, which had only been built four years earlier, already had a number of people providing lodgings:

- 1 Charles R Hall, a 38-year-old Church of England clergyman.
- 2 Charles Gregory, a 35-year-old carpenter and his 31-year-old wife, described as a carpenter's wife. However, the list of people in the house included six visitors.
- 3 Major Charles Boyd retired on half pay.
- 4 Henry Collis, a 24-year-old confectioner.
- 5 Elizabeth Harris, a 50-year-old widow who was a lodging-house keeper.
- 6 Selina Watkeys, a 45-year-old widowed lodging-house keeper.
- 7 Maria Sanger, a 55-year-old lodging-house keeper.⁶⁵³

Royal Crescent, when constructed in 1847, was, alongside Oriel Terrace, the most prestigious new development in Weston-super-Mare (Figure 82). Therefore, the presence of a retired major and a clergyman, alongside houses providing lodgings suggests the status of the customers being catered for. Holidaymakers arriving at Weston-super-Mare who had not reserved rooms, would be able to judge suitably affordable accommodation by looking at the status of the buildings. The 1866 Post Office directory mentions lodgings in the most recently constructed and



Figure 82: Royal Crescent of 1847, clearly echoing its more famous namesake in Bath. (DP236012)

most prestigious streets and terraces.⁶⁵⁴ Wealthy visitors would naturally gravitate towards these larger houses on the seafront and on the slope of the hill in search of rooms; less affluent visitors would leave the station and head into the working class areas to the north and west. An 1889 guidebook neatly described Weston's lodging landscape:

'Lodging houses are numerous and adapted to the wants of all classes of society, from the highest to the lowest. The charges are most moderate except in the very height of the season, and even then they are lower than in many first-class watering places. There are several excellent boarding houses.'⁶⁵⁵

Identifying lodging house keepers in less prosperous areas is more difficult at an early date, as the number of visitors in this price bracket who could afford to stay was very limited, and therefore people were less likely to be classified in censuses as a lodging-house keeper rather than their everyday trades or profession. However, by the early 20th century, directories listed lodgings, which had become known as 'apartments', throughout the town. Clearly there was now a sufficient number of customers for lodgings at the lower end of the market.

Although the vast majority of people stayed in lodgings, inns and small hotels still catered for short-term stays, new arrivals and for some people who preferred that type of accommodation (Figure 83).

The largest hotel in Weston for much of the 19th century was the Royal Hotel, constructed at the beginning of the 19th century and enlarged to almost its current



Figure 83: Weston had a number of temperance houses and hotels; in 1905 the Shaftesbury Hotel was a 'high-class temperance' establishment, located in the angled, corner block in the centre of Hans Price's 1870 Magdala Buildings and discolorations on the upper parts of the facade show where signs were located. (DP218650)

size in 1849.⁶⁵⁶ However, by the 1860s, major seaside resorts were beginning to build hotels on a much larger scale and with more sophisticated facilities. The largest seaside hotels were striving to emulate the grandest, palatial hotels being built in London, which in turn had been influenced by Paris.⁶⁵⁷ Brighton's Grand Hotel, which opened in 1864, was the first seaside hotel to adopt the name that associated it with the Grand Hotel du Louvre in Paris (opened 1855). The Grand Hotel at Scarborough opened in 1867 and contained 300 bedrooms, reputedly making it Europe's largest hotel at that date. To rival these hotels and resorts, a prospectus was issued by the Grand Hotel, Weston-super-Mare Ltd in 1886 with a proposed capital of £40,000 to be raised by selling £5 shares. The intention was to erect a first-class hotel on the Grand Parade.⁶⁵⁸ However, instead of a new building, Weston-super-Mare was graced with the Grand Atlantic Hotel, which opened on Saturday 13 July 1889 (Figure 84).⁶⁵⁹ It originated as The College in 1859 and this original building consisted of two, three-bay blocks flanking a five-bay centrepiece which broke forward slightly.⁶⁶⁰ It was predominantly two storied with a basement and an attic above the central block. The windows were round headed with keystones. Examination of the current facade reveals that this original elevation survives, but the building has been extended on either side by wings with polygonal, corner turrets. It has also been raised to four stories, with an attic throughout. The architect, John S Whittington of Manchester, 'introduced every conceivable improvement and modern appliance' into the building.⁶⁶¹ The newspaper article celebrating its opening also described the accommodation. On the ground floor there were a dining room,



Figure 84: Examination of the Grand Atlantic's facade reveals that the original elevation of the College survives, but the building has been extended on either side by wings with polygonal, corner turrets. It has also been raised to four storeys, with an attic throughout. (DP218759)

reception room, sitting room, a billiard room with two full-size tables, a smoking room, and other apartments. The best bedrooms and sitting rooms were located on the first floor and on every landing there were double sets of lavatories and bathrooms for ladies and gentlemen. An elevator ran from the basement to the top of the hotel. Bed and board was available from eight shillings a day. Price & Jane were responsible for a number of additions to the rear of the building at the beginning of the 20th century, including an early motor car house in 1903 that does not survive, and a rear extension with a skylight which does survive.⁶⁶²



Figure 85: This 1928 Aerofilms photograph shows the busy seafront beside the Grand Pier with trams, cars and horse drawn carriages. There are also a couple of small charabancs parked on the seafront. (EPW023970)

WESTON-SUPER-MARE 1914-1945

Inter-war Weston - Improving Weston's Tourist Facilities

'Weston is one of the most up-to-date and enterprising watering places in the kingdom, and is well provided with handsome and commodious hotels, first-class boarding establishments, and innumerable lodging houses, so that the requirements of all classes are readily met.'⁶⁶³

Immediately after the First World War, there was an air of business as usual in Weston-super-Mare. Guidebooks, such as this one of 1924, reveal the same range of holidaymaking activities and facilities as in 1914. The town's two piers, the long sandy beach, Knightstone Island and its cinemas were entertaining tourists, while guests still found beds in the same hotels, boarding houses and lodgings. The number of pre-war bank holiday excursionists had peaked at around 38,000, but in 1921 the August bank holiday crowds totalled 51,000 and reached 78,000 in 1937.⁶⁶⁴ In 1919 most visitors came by train, but by the late 1930s as many people were arriving by car; this trend is evident in contemporary photographs, with the seafront becoming the car park that is so familiar today (Figure 85).⁶⁶⁵ The steamer service from South Wales also continued during the inter-war years: 'It [Weston] is not only well served by the railway systems, but the palatial steamboat service from Easter to early in October, has done much to popularise the town among those who are fond of the sea' (Figure 86).



Figure 86: An Aerofilms photograph of Birnbeck Pier with a paddle-steamer in 1920. (EPW001051)



Figure 87: This postcard shows the gardens behind the Winter Gardens pavilion probably soon after they opened in 1927. It also shows the tennis courts that were part of the scheme. (PC09135)



Figure 88: Designed by TH Mawson with the Borough Engineer Harold Brown, the Winter Gardens pavilion provided the town with a larger ballroom and it became home to HC Burgess's Orchestra. This modern, long time exposure image has the lights of cars streaking along the seafront road in front of it. (DP218335)

However, standing still would not be an option for a successful seaside resort; the growing number of tourists, people with modest, but increasing disposable income wanted more entertainment and better facilities. The inter-war years therefore saw Weston Urban District Council taking a more interventionist role in the provision of facilities for holidaymakers, adopting a policy similar to other high-spending resorts such as Blackpool and Hastings.

In 1922 the Urban District Council bought Rogers' Field, the still undeveloped field between the High Street and the seafront beside the Royal Hotel. Formerly known as the Hotel Field, it acquired its name from the one-time owner of the Royal Hotel, Thomas Rogers.⁶⁶⁶ This field had been suggested as the site for the Summer and Winter Gardens in 1881, but instead it was created further inland beside the Boulevard. Henry Butt had a long, drawn-out lawsuit with the Council concerning the damage to the town's roads caused by his heavy lorries. He lost, but to show that there were no hard feelings, he offered in 1925 to meet the cost of acquiring the field as well as the arbitration proceedings.⁶⁶⁷ The Italian Gardens were the first part of the project to be completed, when in August 1925 the putting green, rose garden, lily pond and Alpine garden were opened to the public (Figure 87). On 14 July 1927 the pavilion was officially opened by Sir Ernest Palmer, Deputy Chairman of the Great Western Railway. Designed by TH Mawson with the Borough Engineer Harold Brown, it provided the town with a larger ballroom and it became home to HC Burgess's Orchestra (Figure 88).⁶⁶⁸

One of the main concerns of the local authority at Weston during the inter-war years was to cater for the growing number of visitors who wished to swim and play in the sea, something that could be problematic at low tide. A scheme had been mooted



Figure 89: The new Marine Lake was originally equipped with a diving stage, rafts, rubber boats, water chutes, children's paddle boats and hundreds of bathing tents and dressing enclosures. It proved to be an instant success, being used by more than a quarter of a million people during 1929. (HEA 33066/008)

as early as 1871 to enclose Glentworth Bay to allow bathers easy access to a body of sea water regardless of the tide.⁶⁶⁹ The idea was revived during the 1880s, and in 1888 John S Whittington proposed a huge marine lake between Ellenborough and Clarence Parks, measuring 500yds (457m) by 150yds (46m). An Act of Parliament was obtained and a company was floated, but insufficient funds were raised for the project to proceed.⁶⁷⁰ Whittington's interest in such a scheme was presumably related to his work at the Grand Atlantic Hotel, which opened in 1889, and probably reflects his desire to provide greater opportunities for sea bathing for the hotel's clientele.

In 1895 the newly created Urban District Council decided to support a proposal by the engineers J Wolfe-Barry and Cuthbert A Brereton, which envisaged creating a barrage from Knightstone Island to Black Rock at Uphill, an eye-watering distance of 3km.⁶⁷¹ By the 1920s a more realistic scheme had taken shape and by 1929 a barrage had been constructed between Knightstone Island and the shoreline near the southern end of Claremont Crescent, a more manageable distance of 270m. The new Marine Lake was equipped with a diving stage, rafts, rubber boats, water chutes, children's paddle boats and hundreds of bathing tents and dressing enclosures.⁶⁷² It proved to be an instant success, being used by more than a quarter of a million people during 1929.⁶⁷³ The Rozel bandstand was added in 1937 as a further extension of the colonnaded walkway around the edge of the lake.⁶⁷⁴ However, following gale damage in 1981, this extension was demolished and the Victorian seawall restored (Figure 89).

After having improved access to the sea by creating the Marine Lake, Weston Urban District Council decided to construct an open air bathing pool further south. Its opening ceremony took place in July 1937 at which a message from the government was read out: 'Any money which may have been expended upon [the pool] will come back a hundredfold ... not necessarily in cash, but in health, which is better than wealth.'⁶⁷⁵ After the usual round of speeches, the assembled crowd of 4,000 spectators were entertained by a display by members of the local diving club, including a sequence of synchronised diving from the top stage. This was followed by a 'mannequin parade of bathing fashions for 1937' and a demonstration of 'physical culture' by the Women's League of Health and Beauty, all against a backdrop of music played by the Municipal Orchestra. In the evening, a repeat performance of the afternoon programme ended with a water polo match (Figure 90).⁶⁷⁶

The entrance to the bathing pool on the seafront is a two-storey pavilion flanked by single-storey wings containing changing rooms, and roof terraces. Designed by the office of the Borough Engineer, Harold Brown, the architecture is an essay in stripped-down civic classicism and is in striking contrast to the elegant modernism of the former diving platform at the seaward end of the pool (since demolished). It was described from the outset as 'the finest diving platform in Europe' and immediately became used as a symbol of the town, frequently featuring in posters produced by railway companies. It was built by Messrs George Pollard of Taunton, with reinforced concrete steel work provided by Messrs Coignet of London. The contribution of the Borough Engineer Harold Brown in this part the project is uncertain (Figure 91).⁶⁷⁷

In its opening year the bathing pool attracted 109,000 bathers and 156,000 spectators.⁶⁷⁸ However, by the 1960s, with the number of tourists declining, the bathing pool was becoming less popular and in 1976 the diving stage was cordoned off on safety grounds. Despite the pool being spot listed in November 1981, the diving stage was demolished in February 1982. During the following year the bathing pool was transformed into a £1 million water theme park, featuring slides, a fibreglass elephant and a giant pineapple. This may explain why the relaunched Tropicana Pleasure Beach was advertised as 'fun, fruity, wet and wild'.⁶⁷⁹

As well as intervention by the Urban District Council, there was also some notable investment by private sector businesses. In January 1930 a fire destroyed the Grand Pier's pavilion and construction of a new building began in the autumn of 1932. The pier head was enlarged and strengthened to support the larger structure, which was designed by John Darby. The new pavilion opened during 1933 and a cafe and ballroom were added in 1935.⁶⁸⁰ The relative remoteness from mainland Europe meant that the Grand Pier, like its neighbour Birnbeck Pier, was not breached during the Second World War, but it was guarded round-the-clock.

With growing numbers of tourists arriving each year, new facilities had to be larger than before and were therefore normally beyond the economic capacity of investors from the immediate locality. This explains why the active intervention of local government was so important and is the backdrop to the creation of the Odeon Cinema in 1934-1935. Oscar Deutsch (1893-1941) built and opened his first cinema,



Figure 90: In its opening year the open air bathing pool attracted 109,000 bathers and 156,000 spectators. This Aerofilms photograph of 1949 also shows the large number of parked cars along the seafront and on the beach, reflecting the way that most people now came to Weston. (EAW025157)



Figure 91: The structure consisted of two parallel reinforced concrete arches, 26ft (8m) high, faced with a band of coloured tiles from which seven boards at 3m, 5m, 7m and 10m were cantilevered. These were reached by steps from the rear. This photograph was taken to mark its completion in 1937. (BB81/08493)



Figure 92: The Odeon Cinema originally had 1,174 seats in the stalls and 633 in the balcony. In 1973 it was divided into three cinemas and by 2001, the fourth cinema had been created. This photograph was taken on its opening day in 1935. (BB87/02803)

the Picture House at Brierley (Staffordshire) in 1928 and in 1930 he opened a cinema at Perry Barr in Birmingham, the first to bear the name Odeon.⁶⁸¹ Weston's Odeon opened on 25 May 1935, replacing the smaller Electric Premier Cinema on this prominent corner site beside the Goods Station (Figure 92).⁶⁸²

The Odeon was designed in 1934 by the Nottingham architect T Cecil Howitt (1889–1968) and his drawings for the original and amended design are held in the Somerset Archives.⁶⁸³ The Weston-super-Mare Odeon was constructed by C Bryant & Son Ltd of Birmingham and had a Compton organ with an illuminated console (Figure 93).⁶⁸⁴

Living in Weston between the Wars

The years between the two wars saw local government actively intervening in the tourism industry more comprehensively than before. The same was true in the housing market and was a response both to greater national government involvement, with consequent increased available funding, but also to cater for the town's growing population. In 1911 Weston was home to 23,235 people, but by 1921 this had risen to 31,653. The 1931 Census, rather curiously, shows a drop in population to 28,554, which is certainly against national trends, but by 1951 40,165 people were living in Weston.



Figure 93: Howitt was responsible for designing four other Odeon cinemas: Warley, near Birmingham (1934); Clacton (1936, demolished); Bridgwater (1936); and Bristol (1938). All of his Odeon cinemas featured a square tower with a projecting flat slab roof supported by squat, cylindrical columns. (BB87/02801)

In general, inter-war and post-war housing in Weston is influenced more by national trends than was the case with the Victorian and Edwardian housing, which managed to achieve a local distinctiveness. This is in part due to the emergence of council housing, and the use of prefabricated construction techniques, as well as changes of taste, at least in part influenced by the Daily Mail Ideal Home exhibition. Another factor was the growth of national firms of speculative builders who propagated houses designed in ‘stockbroker’s Tudor’.

In Weston-super-Mare, as elsewhere, there was a housing shortage after the First World War, caused by the slowing of any building activity before the war and then its total cessation for the duration. The 1919 Housing Act, also known as the Addison Act, introduced for the first time a government subsidy to prompt the construction of new council housing. In 1937 the new Borough Council claimed proudly that its predecessor had built the ‘first houses in the country’ under the Act at Milton Green.⁶⁸⁵ The exact assertion is: ‘1919 - The Council entered into contracts to erect the first houses in the country under the ‘Addison Act’.⁶⁸⁶ The veracity of this claim is difficult to prove and depends on the definition of ‘first’, namely the first to have completed one house or a whole scheme. Similar claims were made by numerous other local authorities across the country, including Guildford and Newbury.⁶⁸⁷ The houses at Milton Green are a group of thirteen semi-detached houses grouped



Figure 94: The public housing at Milton Green was built shortly after the Housing Act of 1919 and is one of the earliest post-war schemes in the country. (DP218578)

around an elongated ‘square’, with six further semis and two double-length terraces of four dwellings to the north on both sides of Milton Road (Figure 94). They are instantly recognisable by the broad gables either at the end bays or in the centre bay of each house, details derived from Arts & Crafts architecture.

Other public housing schemes were started during the late 1920s. In 1928 the council acquired land for housing around Osborne Road, north of Locking Road. The resulting development included predominantly two-storey, pebble-dashed houses with hipped roofs and shallow two-storey bay windows, such as those in Osborne Avenue. In 1929 the Urban District Council started work on the Bournville Estate.⁶⁸⁸ This built on a speculative development of around 1904-5 to the east of the railway line and expanded it to the east. Y-shaped Stradling Avenue was one of the first roads built by the local authority and by 1931 over forty semi-detached houses and one terrace of three houses had been built there.⁶⁸⁹ By the time war broke out, the estate had reached as far as Selworthy Road but roads further east had already been laid out. For example, the octagon formed by Scott Road, Byron Road, Shelley Road and Coleridge Road was laid out by about 1942, when it is visible on wartime aerial photos, but the houses were only built after the war. The war’s interruption has given the estate a somewhat piecemeal appearance. What appear to be grand setpieces on a map, such as Coniston Crescent or the octagon or roads further east, are let down by the post-war planning. For instance, Coniston Crescent overlooked an asymmetrically-placed 1950s church that has now been replaced by the Healthy Living for All Centre, which hides the crescent from view. The first shops on the estate were prefabricated structures in Selworthy Road. After 1945, Nissen huts with



Figure 95: This modern photograph shows some of the Art Deco houses in Station Road, built in around 1934 to designs by Leete & Darby. (DP218280)

brick frontages were built at the crossing of Lonsdale Avenue and Baildon Road; they were later replaced by two post-war shopping parades on the same site.⁶⁹⁰ A primary school was started before the war and completed in 1941, but a permanent Anglican church was only built during the 1950s.

Relatively few inter-war public housing projects involved replacing older, condemned 'slum-like' housing. One example was a site in Worle, described in 1937 as 'the Rows' with twenty 'old-fashioned' cottages. They were probably the almshouses on the east side of The Scaurs. In 1935 they were acquired for demolition under the Housing Acts.⁶⁹¹ It was anticipated that the site would be used for new housing, but this did not happen until the post-war period.

While the council took an active role in providing public housing during the inter-war years, large numbers of private houses continued to be built, notably in Milton. These were generally of a standard inter-war design with bay windows, hipped tiled roofs and details such as timbered gables or tile hanging, as can be found in inter-war houses along Locking Road, beyond the site of the electricity works, and on Milton Road. More unusual are the Art Deco houses in Neva Road, which local architects Leete & Darby designed in 1934 for The Building Constructors (Somerset) Ltd (Figure 95).⁶⁹² This development, together with Ridgway Avenue and part of Albert Avenue, was initially known as the 'Ellenborough Estate'. This group comprises eight flat-roofed semis with integral garages at the east ends of Neva Road and Station Road, two detached houses, one of which has a full-height semicircular bay, and two bungalows (one semi-detached) on the south side of Neva Road with

curved corners and bays. The bungalows were designed by Leete & Darby for the builders Gribble, Sons & Company.⁶⁹³

Henry Butt and the ‘mansions’

While Weston’s Urban District Council led the way in the provision of new housing, one man was at the forefront of transforming a significant part of the town’s existing housing stock, by subdividing large houses into flats. Robert Henry Coate Butt (1861-1944), known as Henry, is best remembered as Weston’s first mayor who received the town’s charter from the Lord Lieutenant in 1937, and as a major quarry owner. In early 2018 a blue plaque was erected in his memory on the former Princess Alexandra Hospital, a building for which he helped raised the funds.⁶⁹⁴ His career was summarised by the *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* as ‘from office sweeper to King of the Flats’.⁶⁹⁵ Aged sixteen he started work as an office sweeper at the Somerset Trading Company.⁶⁹⁶ Two years later, he came to Weston to take over the management of their local branch and successfully increased their turnover, notably by providing cheaper haulage with his own horses and carts.⁶⁹⁷ He had numerous commercial interests, from quarries and lime kilns to property speculation. By the time he left the Somerset Trading Company in 1891, he is said to have owned about 12 different businesses, including Henry Butt Ltd Co, a coal, timber and general merchant’s business.⁶⁹⁸ Not all of his ventures were successful. His obituary notes that he lost money on American meat shares and ‘two or three vessels’.⁶⁹⁹

Butt also held several public offices, and was, for example, a county councillor for 25 years, a hospital governor for 20 years, chairman of the local gas company, and a justice of the peace.⁷⁰⁰ He was also captain of the volunteer fire brigade, and in December 1897 he rushed from an evening function to help fight the fire at Birnbeck Pier. Despite losing a lengthy court case in 1917-22 against the council over road damage by his lorries, he proved his goodwill with many public donations, including in 1925 when he gave the council a cheque to cover the purchase price for Rogers’ Field and the arbitration costs arising from its compulsory purchase.⁷⁰¹ Butt left a fortune of £84,866, which is roughly the equivalent of over £3 million today.⁷⁰²

His property speculation started shortly after he arrived in Weston. He bought seven houses at an auction, improved them and leased them on a ground rent, making over £1,000 in seven months.⁷⁰³ In November 1937 he formed Weston-super-Mare Residential Flats; he also owned Weston-super-Mare Land Company and was chairman of Weston Building Estates Ltd.⁷⁰⁴ His most significant architectural legacy was the extension and conversion of numerous large Victorian houses into flats (Figure 96). He renamed them ‘mansions’ and had their new names carved over, or near the entrances; such signs can be found throughout the town with a particular concentration around Atlantic Road.

In 1914, shortly after the war had started, Butt bought 100 houses within six weeks and started to convert them into flats; a process of acquisition and conversion that continued throughout the inter-war period.⁷⁰⁵ He later claimed that for nine years he completed a flat conversion every fourteen days.⁷⁰⁶ An advertisement in 1938 described Butt as the ‘owner of 300 flats’.⁷⁰⁷



Figure 96: This pair in Victoria Quadrant was among many Victorian houses acquired by Henry Butt and converted into flats during the interwar period. It is now known as Bouverie Mansions (right-hand side) and Hibernia Mansions (left-hand side). (DP218645)

The building control plans now at Somerset Archives include 49 applications from, or on behalf of, Henry Butt for flat conversions between 1919 and 1937. These were more than mere subdivisions of large houses: generally, a large side or rear extension was built, in addition to providing new entrance arrangements by means of external stairs or bridges over a front area. For example, in 1928 Tresco and Dunedin, a pair of semi-detached Victorian houses in Highbury Road (now numbers 32 and 30), were converted into flats and large rear extensions were built.⁷⁰⁸ The new extensions were skilfully executed and are frequently indistinguishable from the original fabric. For example, the side extension by Jane & Fry of St Neot's, 10 Atlantic Road, which added a whole new bay, reused not only the quoins and parapet of the former corner and side elevation, but also the window and door surrounds.⁷⁰⁹ As built, the side extension was gabled making it more incongruous than the original design of December 1918, which would have continued the parapet of the original house.

These were generously sized flats and those in Dunedin and Tresco each had five bedrooms, a drawing room, a dining room, a bathroom and a kitchen. Butt may have overestimated the demand for such large flats, as from 1933, a second wave of conversions further subdivided them. For example, in 1936 the ground and first-floor flats of what had become Dunedin Mansions were subdivided to create two flats on each floor.⁷¹⁰

Butt used several architects for this work. The earlier conversions between 1918 and the early 1930s were designed by Theophilus Bradford Ball (1875-1955) of the local firm Ball & Pope. By 1911 Ball was also the chief assistant surveyor to the Urban District Council.⁷¹¹ From the early 1930s Butt employed the architect Nicholas Henry N Darby of the firm Leete & Darby.⁷¹²

The appeal and the intended audience of Butt's flats and mansions were captured in an advertisement of 1938: 'Live at the Seaside in a Modern, Labour-saving Flat. Every modern and sanitary convenience. Hot water night and day. Tiled kitchen, larder, bath-room, w.c., &c. Decorations to suit tastes. Rental £52, £55, £60, £75, £85, and up to £140, inclusive. Brochure free. Car to view. – Henry Butt, Weston-super-Mare. Owner of 300 flats'.⁷¹³

Inter-war Churches

Weston's growing population between the wars needed new places of worship and schools. Several new churches were built, some of which replaced temporary premises of the pre-war years, while others were built to serve new and growing neighbourhoods and communities. There was a particular concentration of new churches in Milton, which in 1902 became part of Weston-super-Mare and where the largest numbers of inter-war houses were built. Due to the economic uncertainties of the period, a number of congregations started in temporary premises before sufficient funds were raised to build a permanent church. During these years Roman Catholics, Methodists and Baptists, each built two new churches, while the Congregationalists built one.

In 1921 a Roman Catholic chapel dedicated to Corpus Christi opened in Carlton Street, which replaced a Mass centre in the convent school run by the La Retraite Sisters. The chapel was in turn replaced by a permanent church in Ellenborough Park South, built on a site acquired in 1921 (Figure 97). The foundation stone for the church was laid by Bishop Burton on 8 September 1928 and it was opened on 6 June 1929, having been blessed the previous night by Monsignor (later Bishop) Lee. The architect was John Bevan of Bristol and the contractors were Hendey & Sons of Bristol. The overall cost was £16,000, a surprisingly large sum for an inter-war church. The church is in the Byzantine style, with a stone-faced west elevation and an impressive brick interior with carved capitals and, originally, a baldacchino over the altar. It has fine stained glass windows by the Harry Clarke Studios of Dublin.⁷¹⁴

Another new Catholic church was Our Lady of Lourdes in Baytree Road, Milton. Again this started in a temporary building, in this case in a timber chapel on land donated in 1923 by Daniel Cotter. After another piece of land was acquired in 1933,



Figure 97: Corpus Christ Roman Catholic Church of 1928-9 has an elegant ashlar exterior and a fine Byzantine-inspired brick interior. (DP218753)

a permanent church was built for about £4,000 to a design by the architectural practice Roberts & Willman of Taunton. Their design allowed for a future extension in the form of a chancel, sacristy and south transept; the latter two were finally built in 1976.⁷¹⁵ In contrast to the design of Corpus Christi, Our Lady of Lourdes was more economical and instead of a richly decorated historicist style uses a free Gothic combined with reinforced concrete vaulting.

The Methodists also built two new places of worship during the period. In 1930 a new church designed by local architects Ball & Pope replaced a mission hall at Milton Hill.⁷¹⁶ After suffering bomb damage in 1942, this church was restored in 1951, although it is not clear if this amounted to a full rebuilding. Today, the church is a relatively plain, gabled brick building with side elevations of five round-arched windows. Another, much grander church was built as a result of the fire in 1935 that destroyed the Victoria Methodist church in Station Road. It was replaced in 1935-36 by a new building in a simplified Gothic style by local architects Fry, Paterson & Jones (Figure 98). This church uses an approximation of the traditional Victorian building materials of Weston, namely Pennant stone with Ham stone dressings.⁷¹⁷ The new church did not emulate its predecessor other than both being in a Gothic style and in fact it was deliberately placed on a different orientation to make full use of the site, with the chancel being orientated to the east instead of the south.

The Baptists also built two permanent churches. In 1929-30 a new Gothic church by Fry, Paterson & Jones was built in front of the dual-purpose hall in Walliscote Road, which had previously been used as a church.⁷¹⁸ In Milton, a new church was built in



Figure 98: The Victoria Methodist Church of 1935-6 was built after a fire destroyed the Victorian predecessor church. (DP218734)

Baytree Road in about 1937, which superseded a small pre-fabricated mission hall in Salisbury Road.⁷¹⁹ The new church was designed by local architects Ball & Pope.⁷²⁰ This was replaced in about 1999 by a modern church by Steel, Coleman & Davis of Taunton.⁷²¹ The temporary mission hall is used today by the Milton Christian Fellowship.

The Congregationalists' iron chapel of 1904 in Moorland Road was replaced in 1925 by a permanent Gothic church by Fry, Paterson & Jones, a building that commemorated the centenary of Independents and Congregationalists in Weston.⁷²²

Inter-war Schools

Somerset County Council's school building programme had slowed down before 1914, but during the inter-war years Weston's long-planned secondary school was finally realised. In 1922 the County Grammar School for boys and girls was established in temporary buildings in Nithsdale Road, off Moorland Road. In 1935 the school moved to a large new building designed by the County Architect, Major AJ Toomer, in Broadoak Road, Uphill.⁷²³ The plan was symmetrical with double courtyards, separate gymnasias for boys and girls, and a central tower in the fashionable stripped classical style. Renamed Broadoak Comprehensive School (now



Figure 99: This Aerofilms photograph of Weston-super-Mare airport was taken in 1939. By this date, the small terminal building in the corner of the field was accompanied by two hangars. (EPW062080)

Broadoak School), it was demolished in 1999 when a new building opened on the eastern part of the site.⁷²⁴

The Council's Bournville Estate, commenced in 1929, was initially served by an infants' and junior school.⁷²⁵ The building had been begun before the war and was opened on 17 February 1941.⁷²⁶ This became the infants' school when a separate junior school opened in 1948. Both buildings, designed by the county council's architects' department, have been demolished and replaced by modern buildings.

Flight

The industries at work in Weston before the First World War broadly continued during the inter-war years, but the town also became the centre for an entirely new industrial activity. Some seaside resorts were quick to embrace the new technology of flying; Blackpool tried to arrange the country's first aviation week in October 1909, but Doncaster hastily arranged an event during the preceding week to steal its thunder. Blackpool continued to be a pioneer in aviation, including providing Britain's first scheduled daily air service in 1919 and the development of one of the earliest municipal aerodromes, at Stanley Park, which opened in 1929.⁷²⁷ The resort was quick to embrace the possibilities of flight, little knowing that it would ultimately

be a contributing factor to its, and the seaside's, decline during the late 20th century by making travel abroad affordable to the mass market that had once flocked there.

Weston-super-Mare had a similarly pioneering spirit. On 1 September 1911 'during his visit to Weston-super-Mare Mr CB Hucks decided to pay a visit by aeroplane to his one-time home at Cardiff.'⁷²⁸ Using a Blackburn aircraft, he flew over Cardiff and then turned back to Weston, a flight lasting 40 minutes. It was the first double journey across the Bristol Channel in an aeroplane. Hucks is often claimed to be the first aviator to land at Weston, but a month earlier Samuel Cody was forced to land on the beach while flying between Bristol and Exeter during the Circuit of Britain Air Race.⁷²⁹

Weston's airport had its first commercial landing on 31 May 1936 and it was officially opened by the Deputy Lord Mayor of Cardiff, who flew over to perform the ceremony on 25 June 1936.⁷³⁰ In August 1936 *Flight* magazine ran a feature about the new airport at Weston-super-Mare.⁷³¹ Work had only started on the airport in February under the watchful eye of Harold Brown, but by August the administrative building was nearly complete. It contained the usual booking and general offices, as well as extensive restaurant and similar facilities with a large veranda to allow customers to watch the planes. Nearby was a large aircraft hangar; Brown had the benefit of the specialist knowledge required for its erection provided by John Lysaght Ltd of Bristol. Since it had begun operating nine weeks earlier, Western Airways had already transported 8,000 passengers and the company was running an hourly service between Bristol and Cardiff, and a new twice-daily service between Birmingham and Weston. Analysis of passenger numbers led the author to conclude that 'holiday-makers will use the air while business people still view it with misgiving'. This may explain why Blackpool, Weston and Shoreham were among England's earliest airports outside major cities (Figure 99).

As well as scheduled services to a growing number of destinations, pleasure flights took holidaymakers for trips over Weston and around the bay, and adverts for these trips can be found in guidebooks, particularly after the Second World War. During the war, the Air Ministry took over the airfield and in 1940 closed down the service between Weston and Cardiff.⁷³²

For a few short years at the end of the 1930s, Weston was looking to the future, hoping that aircraft would bring affluent holidaymakers to the town. However, like Blackpool it would suffer during the post-war period because aircraft took a significant part of its traditional market elsewhere. Aircraft also had another impact on the town's future, the impact of air raids during the Second World War contributing to transforming the townscape of central Weston during the post-war years.

Weston-super-Mare at War

1860s

Although far from mainland Europe, a real, or more realistically imagined, threat from France led during the 1860s to the creation of some defences around Weston, not to protect the town, but to safeguard the approaches to Bristol. An article in the *Illustrated London News* described the laying of the foundation stone of the proposed breakwater for Brean Down harbour in November 1864.⁷³³ The article also mentioned that the government had announced their intention to erect a powerful artillery battery on Brean Down, with corresponding fortifications on Steep Holm and Flat Holm, as well as a battery at Lavernock near Barry Island to complete the chain of defences. Work on these sites seems to have begun in 1866 and was complete by 1870.⁷³⁴

The fortifications on Brean Down consist of three gun positions and two accommodation blocks (a barrack block and separate officer's quarters) with a dry moat bridge across the peninsula.⁷³⁵ Brean Down was armed with seven, 7-inch rifled, muzzle-loading guns in three detached positions.⁷³⁶ This type of gun weighed 7 tons and could penetrate 7 inch plate at 1,400 yards.⁷³⁷ The accommodation buildings were partially rebuilt during the Second World War and the large quarry is now occupied by further Second World War accommodation.⁷³⁸ Steep Holm and Flat Holm Islands were both equipped with the same guns and as they were islands, accommodation had to be provided for the gunners, as well as landing stages for equipment, ammunition, food and replacement gunners.⁷³⁹

Brean Down was also an active military site during the Second World War. An observation post was built between 1903 and 1941, but probably before the Second World War.⁷⁴⁰ During the war it was again part of a defensive line to protect the approaches to Bristol. Work began in 1941 to create a coastal battery manned by 571 Coast Regiment, Royal Artillery and there was also work at Steep Holm and Flat Holm at the same time. The remains of this date at Brean Down comprise two gun emplacements and accommodation and service buildings. Two coastal artillery search light positions are associated with the battery and the battery observation post overlooks the gun position. A catapult truck to the north west of the gun positions was installed by the Admiralty's Department of Miscellaneous Weapon Development and was used to test a seaborne version of the bouncing bomb. The same department also took over Birnbeck Pier to use as their base, HMS Birnbeck. Neville Shute Norway, the aeronautical engineer and author (under the penname Neville Shute), was a member of this department between 1939 and 1944.⁷⁴¹

The First World War

The nature of warfare during the First World War meant that direct conflict would have been distant from Weston-super-Mare, which lay beyond the reach of Zeppelins and later Gotha bombers. And as there was a fixed frontline for most of the war, there was no direct threat to the fabric of the town. However, the impact of the war would have been noticed and felt, with soldiers billeted in town to guard strategic

points, such as the piers and the Commercial Cable Company building in Richmond Street, but also to receive training and to convalesce after injury.⁷⁴² Rogers' Field, later the site of the Winter Gardens, was used for drilling until 1917, when it was turned over to allotments. There were also refugees in Weston; as early as October 1914 there were requests in the local press to house 100 displaced Belgian civilians for six months and there is a memorial in the town's cemetery to five refugees who died there, including a one-year-old child.⁷⁴³ While the First World War may not have come directly to Weston-super-Mare, the town lost many of its sons and in 1922 the war memorial was unveiled in Grove Park.⁷⁴⁴

The Second World War

The Second World War was a very different affair. Britain faced a serious invasion threat and this time the enemy was just 20 miles across the channel, with aircraft that could hit every part of the country. However, Weston was felt to be a relatively safe place, and therefore hosted women and children evacuated from London, the south-east and the south coast. Large, vacant houses were requisitioned by the armed forces and the general hospital was emptied to make way for expected military casualties.⁷⁴⁵ By 1940 most seaside piers had been breached to prevent enemy forces from landing troops, but as Weston was located on England's west coast, it was felt that a few troops could guard the Grand Pier, while Birnbeck Pier became HMS Birnbeck, a naval weaponry research establishment.

Sporadic, small-scale air raids took place from mid-1940 onwards, with the first bombs landing on Weston's beach on 14 August 1940, while later in the month Albert Quadrant was hit, resulting in a number of houses being damaged and demolished. The first major blitz took place on 4 January 1941 when in the space of nine hours, 3,000 incendiaries and 30 high explosive bombs led to the deaths of 34 people, with a further 85 being injured. A second, larger and more sustained attack occurred on two successive nights on 28 and 29 June 1942, during which the town was hit by 100 high explosive bombs and 10,000 incendiaries, resulting in the loss of 102 lives, with a further 400 people being injured.⁷⁴⁶ The victims were buried in their own plot within the Milton Road cemetery.

Among the sites destroyed during the war were the Tivoli Cinema, the Boulevard Congregational Chapel, Grove Park Pavilion and Lance and Lance's department store on the corner of Waterloo and High Street. There was also damage in Oxford Street, Orchard Street, Wadham Street, Prospect Place and along Union Street, as well as in further out residential areas.⁷⁴⁷ St Paul's Church was gutted by fire, but rebuilt after the war and a number of prominent buildings and sites were damaged, including the Open Air Pool, Knightstone Baths and the public library (Figure 100).⁷⁴⁸ If the Cable Office, HMS Birnbeck (in use by the Department of Miscellaneous Weapons Establishment), the railway line, the RAF station and Weston's military industrial production plants were the main targets, the Luftwaffe was wholly unsuccessful.

By late 1943, Weston-super-Mare, like so many towns and cities in southern England, was filling with troops and machinery in readiness for D-Day. Soldiers were billeted in local hotels, boarding houses and in a camp on Beach Lawns, and



Figure 100: This photograph shows St Paul's Church after it had been hit during an air raid on 4 January 1941. (North Somerset Library Service)

some could be seen practicing climbing down nets hung from the Grand Pier.⁷⁴⁹ Worlebury Hill Road, sheltered by the trees of Weston Woods, was used to stockpile equipment and vehicles. Then one morning in late May 1944 residents awoke to find all the soldiers had left.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE 1945-2000

Post-War Master Planning

The two decades after the end of the Second World War were dominated by discussions about two idealistic, almost utopian schemes that would have transformed Weston-super-Mare. The first proposal in 1947 would have seen a wholesale redevelopment of the centre of the town, but a lack of funding meant that consideration of this scheme would drag on for over a decade, by which time it was increasingly out of date. Therefore, in 1959, a second, less extensive, though no less idealistic proposal was put forward, and while this was never executed, it has left a legacy in the modern form of the town.

After the war, Weston-super-Mare Borough Council invited Sir (Bertram) Clough Williams-Ellis (1883–1978) and the Hon Lionel Gordon Baliol Brett, later fourth Viscount Esher (1913–2004) to develop a plan for the future of the town. Ellis is most famous for the creation of the romantic holiday village of Portmeirion, which was begun in 1925, but due to his wife's close connection with the Attlee government, he became involved with finding solutions to the problems of post-war planning and reconstruction. This involved working on ideas for new towns, created as a result of The New Towns Act 1946, and led to him being briefly the chairman of the Stevenage New Town Development Corporation.⁷⁵⁰ Contemporary newspaper reports about the proposed scheme for transforming Weston-super-Mare often refer to him as the architect of Stevenage. Immediately after the war, Ellis was briefly in partnership with Lionel Brett, and they were involved with developing a town plan for Littlehampton (Sussex), as well as Weston-super-Mare. Brett also worked alongside Patrick Abercrombie on plans for Redditch new town and in 1947, Brett was appointed architect-planner for Hatfield New Town and subsequently other commissions came for Stevenage and Basildon.⁷⁵¹

Therefore, when Weston Borough Council wanted to secure a vision for the future, Ellis and Brett were obvious candidates to deliver it. On 23 January 1947 Brett gave a two-hour presentation in the King's Hall to the people of Weston-super-Mare, in which he outlined a masterplan that would create a garden city by the sea.⁷⁵² This would involve the construction of a new railway station, a new coach park and an imposing new civic centre, which would house an extension to the Town Hall, a health centre, a clinic, a youth centre and a large hotel. New tree-lined traffic routes would connect these with the main shopping centres and entertainment centre, and a 90,000-seat, multi-sports stadium would be created in the Town Quarry. Driving this new vision was the need to revive the town, transform its damaged fabric and make the town ready for dealing with the proposed motorway heading southwards from Bristol, which would pass within a few miles of Weston. Therefore, despite renewing the railway station, car parking would be a major feature of the new design, to provide for visitors and the growing population of the town. To cater for population growth, a series of eight- or ten-storey blocks of flats, (60ft (18.3m) or 80ft (24.4m) high), would be built lining the seafront. These would be orientated at 90° to the sea, allowing flats on either side of the blocks to enjoy views out across the

sea. Such monumental structures seem at odds with the headline underpinning the proposed development, namely that it should be a garden city by the sea.

Newspaper accounts of the presentation suggest that the public's reaction to it was generally positive and the next stage in pushing forward the scheme was an exhibition held at the Town Hall from 13-30 August 1947.⁷⁵³ The guest of honour at its opening was the Right Honourable Lewis Silkin MP, Minister of Town and Country Planning. The centrepiece of the exhibition was a model of the future Weston-super-Mare and visitors were invited to record their comments in a book. One local resident thought that it was too continental for Weston, another felt it was commendable, but utopian, while one person's reaction was very positive, except that they doubted whether it would ever happen.⁷⁵⁴

To make the scheme a reality would involve the demolition of around 120 houses and therefore the council served compulsory purchase orders on properties in Carlton Street, Little Carlton Street, Castle Street, New Street, Sidmouth Cottages East and West, Marine Square, Atlantic Cottages and Shaddick's Cottages. They formed an area of dense, small-scale, working-class housing that was developing as early as 1841 and was well-established by the time a map was published in 1853.⁷⁵⁵ Something of the character of this area can be determined from the gable walls of the southern end of Sidmouth Cottages East and West that can still be seen from inside the Carlton Street car park. To planner's eyes, these may have been regarded as slums, but this was a well-established community with a significant proportion of people who had lived there for decades.

A lack of funding and local resistance, culminating with the formation in 1957 of a residents' group, the League of Home Defence, to fight the clearance orders, meant that the scheme did not take place.⁷⁵⁶ A public enquiry was held in 1957 and during the following year, the Minister of Housing gave a temporary reprieve to 50 houses, but the demolition of others did begin.⁷⁵⁷ However, by 1959 Ellis and Brett's scheme of a decade earlier was a design from a different era, one suffused with post-war, new-town optimism underpinned by dreams of endless government funding to make the scheme a reality. The proposed motorway of 1947 had still not appeared, but Weston-super-Mare was nevertheless grappling with a significant increase in the number of cars, a challenge it initially met by using bomb sites as makeshift car parks.⁷⁵⁸

In May 1959 Weston Borough Council prepared a preliminary briefing about what it wanted to achieve in a new central development and the Borough Engineer and Surveyor prepared a zoning map.⁷⁵⁹ In July 1959 Chamberlin, Powell and Bon (CPB) were invited to prepare a proposal for a new civic centre on a 5-acre (2 ha) site between the Town Hall and the seafront.⁷⁶⁰ The 1952 Ordnance Survey map of the proposed development area shows larger properties on the seafront Beach Road with the area behind them filled with small engineering works, and narrow streets with densely packed housing. A survey conducted 10 years later shows that the eastern part of this area, up to the west end of Emmanuel Church, had been cleared for use as car parking.



Figure 101: The 1961 scheme would have cost £3.1 million, but the money was not available and this vision of the future was never realised. This model in Weston-super-Mare Museum suggests how different the town might have been. (DP218758)

The council asked for a scheme for this site to include new offices, housing and a public library, with shops, car parks and wider streets. It also asked CPB to consider whether conference facilities, a theatre, and swimming baths should be provided. Geoffrey Powell produced the firm's report in March 1960. It recommended retaining the Town Hall, the Albert Memorial Hall and Emmanuel Church, but between them and the sea it envisaged the creation of five, twelve-storey high blocks of high-class maisonettes and a twenty-two storey hotel rather than family houses on such a central site. Their vision included a library in the centre, combined with a swimming pool and facilities for large conferences, but the practice had carried out research that suggested the town had no need for another theatre. So many facilities could be provided on one small site by stacking them vertically; the conference hall and terraces would stand above a single-storey shopping arcade containing twenty-two units, with extensive car parking beneath. The central car park would accommodate 408 cars, while each block of flats would have their own private car parks, providing a further 104 spaces. An aim of the design was to separate vehicles from pedestrians above, and by stacking elements, and by creating tall blocks, large areas of public space between would be created.⁷⁶¹ This area would be transformed from a large expanse of low, dense housing with little public open space, into one providing dozens of one-, two- and three-bedroom maisonettes, and a new hotel would offer more than 200 rooms (Figure 101).⁷⁶²

Reconstruction and Development after 1945

While the grand schemes of 1947 and 1961 were never realised, wartime damage, a growing population and the need to improve the town did lead to some concrete outcomes. After 1945 most government investment was necessarily aimed at the reconstruction of major industrial towns and cities, and the provision of new housing for displaced workers. A town such as Weston-super-Mare, and seaside resorts in general, were not usually considered to be priorities, but by the late 1950s, new buildings were beginning to spring up in the town (Figure 102). Union Street was widened during the 1950s through the removal of the last surviving small houses on its east side and a line of new office buildings and shops, including Regent House dated 1957, along with a new Friends Meeting House, was created. The widening had been planned as early as 1934, when the Council obtained powers to do this (Figure 103).⁷⁶³ Lance and Lance, the department store at the corner of the High Street and Waterloo Street, had been destroyed during the war and in the post-war years its site had been used as a car park. By 1962 it had been redeveloped after a heated debate nicknamed the 'Battle of Waterloo Street'!⁷⁶⁴

Weston also got a new theatre, not due to wartime damage, but as a result of a fire in 1964 that destroyed the old Playhouse, which had been created in 1946 by converting the former Market Hall (Figure 104). On the Boulevard in 1967, a new, modern telephone exchange was constructed in striking contrast to the adjacent Edwardian museum and library. These 1950s and 1960s developments and other smaller additions in the High Street and South Parade can now be seen to be of some quality and add something to the townscape. The same could not be said for the site earmarked for the ambitious Chamberlin Powell & Bon scheme, which instead became Dolphin Square; the first shops of this unambitious, low-rise development, with car parking above, opened in 1965 and by the early 21st century it had become very rundown.⁷⁶⁵

The Second World War brought industry to Weston-super-Mare, including aircraft manufacturing, and fortunately, many of the factories stayed in the town and shifted to making peacetime products. For instance, the Bristol aircraft factory switched to manufacturing prefabricated housing and subsequently larger buildings, such as schools and hospitals.⁷⁶⁶ A helicopter production line was established in 1956 and in 1961 the site was taken over by the newly formed Westland Helicopters.⁷⁶⁷ At one time, it was Weston-super-Mare's largest employer, providing work for 1,500 people on its 88-acre site.⁷⁶⁸ In January 2002 it was announced that Westland's Weston-super-Mare site would close, with the loss of the last 350 jobs.⁷⁶⁹ The site has also been home to The Helicopter Museum since 1988.⁷⁷⁰

In 1958 Weston-super-Mare Borough Council decided to actively promote the town as a base for light industry and they offered to sell, or lease, sites or buildings along Winterstoke Road at Oldmixon. Council housing was also made available for workers wishing to move there; a large area of land between the main railway line and the loop line was initially filled with prefabricated housing, subsequently replaced by more permanent housing including post-war Cornish units providing houses and flats.⁷⁷¹ The Bournville Estate was created around a large crescent and



Figure 102: The Boulevard Congregational Chapel (now the Boulevard United Reform Church) was rebuilt and reopened in 1959 to designs by Gordon W Jackson & Partners. The adjacent church hall was rebuilt in 1953, another victim of the highly damaging air raid of 28-29 June 1942. (DP218516)



Figure 103: Union Street was widened during the 1950s when it became simply an extension of the High Street. The last surviving small houses on its east side were removed and new office buildings, shops and a new Friends Meeting House was created. (DP218536)



Figure 104: The new Playhouse, which opened in 1969, was designed by WS Hattrell & Partners and has a brutalist facade with boxed-out panels of textured glass fibre, sculpted by William Mitchell. (DP218395)

a central shopping parade, and now has a large community facility at its heart. The construction of the M5 motorway between 1968 and 1973 helped to stimulate the development of new areas of private housing at the east end of Weston-super-Mare, though it took until 1994 for a direct link road to be constructed.⁷⁷² However, amongst all the good news for Weston's economy was the end of one traditional, local industry in 1961, when the Royal Pottery went into voluntary liquidation.⁷⁷³

During the 1960s, in line with national trends, a growing percentage of Weston's tourists came by car, with fewer arriving by train than before the war. Steamers and their successors along, and across, the Severn were also in decline, due to the opening of the Severn Bridge in 1966 and the relaxation of licensing laws in South Wales; the last service landed at Birnbeck Pier in 1979, further undermining its



Figure 105: The eight-storey Weston College was designed by Bernard Adams, the County Architect; it was enlarged and updated in 1997-8 by Stride Treglown. (DP218342)

economic viability. In 1963 there was a brief experiment using a hovercraft ferry between Weston and Penarth in South Wales, but it was never a success despite the journey only taking 12 minutes and costing £1.⁷⁷⁴

By the 1970s grandiose masterplans must have seemed things from a distant past, and instead the decade witnessed only piecemeal development and rebuilding. The eight-storey Weston College opened in 1970 on the site of the National School (Figure 105).⁷⁷⁵ This building seems to have given the green light to developers who would seek to build vertically, at the expense of the existing historic buildings of Weston. The spacious footprints of their gardens proved an ideal place to construct large blocks of flats; among the historic houses lost on the seafront were Etonhurst, Kingsholm, and Glentworth Hall (formerly Glentworth House), while Villa Rosa at the heart of the Shrubbery Estate was also replaced by flats.⁷⁷⁶ It was against this backdrop that Weston's Civic Society was formed in 1973, its first battle being to campaign successfully to reduce the height of the proposed 14-storey Etonhurst flats to something more in keeping with its surroundings (Figure 106).⁷⁷⁷ One building saved in the mid-1970s was the former Gas Company Offices and Showrooms in Burlington Street, which became Weston Museum in 1975. The Civic Society would go on to open the Weston Heritage Centre in a converted coach house and warehouse in Wadham Street in 1986 and nearby the Blakehay Theatre was created in the former Baptist Church in Wadham Street.⁷⁷⁸ Heritage and culture were already being successfully mobilised to save some of Weston-super-Mare's buildings.



Figure 106: Carlton Mansions on Beach Road has a slightly different story. This large complex of flats replaced the seafront bus station, which had in turn replaced early 19th-century houses. (DP218310)

Piecemeal development and replacement continued during the 1980s; in 1980, the Albert Memorial Hall behind Emmanuel Church was demolished to allow the construction of a large extension to the Town Hall.⁷⁷⁹ The hospital on the Boulevard closed in 1986, following completion of the long-awaited new hospital at Uphill and within a few years, the site had been converted into housing. The site of the Victoria Hall in the Summer and Winter Gardens off the Boulevard, later the Palace of Varieties and finally the Tivoli cinema, had lain undeveloped since 1942, but it was redeveloped as flats in 1983-4.⁷⁸⁰

Weston-super-Mare suffered major storm damage in December 1981; the promenade was damaged, the Rozel bandstand was wrecked beyond repair and homes at Uphill were flooded. This led to a significant programme of repair to the seafront, including rebuilding the top of the sea wall.⁷⁸¹ Undamaged by the storm, the town's open air pool continued to be used, but despite being rebranded as the Tropicana in 1983, its iconic diving boards having been removed during the previous year, by the end of century it was receiving an unsustainably large annual subsidy of £250,000 and closed in 2000.⁷⁸²

With the cessation of steamer services to Birnbeck Pier in 1979, the income of the business had been reduced and there was growing concern about the structure and the safety of the pier (Figure 107). In 1998 it was put up for auction and sold, but the new owners, White Horse Ferries, proved unable to make it a going concern. The pier passed in 2006 to Urban Splash, but they were hit by the general economic downturn. In 2012, a firm of developers, CNM Estates (Birnbeck) Ltd, acquired the

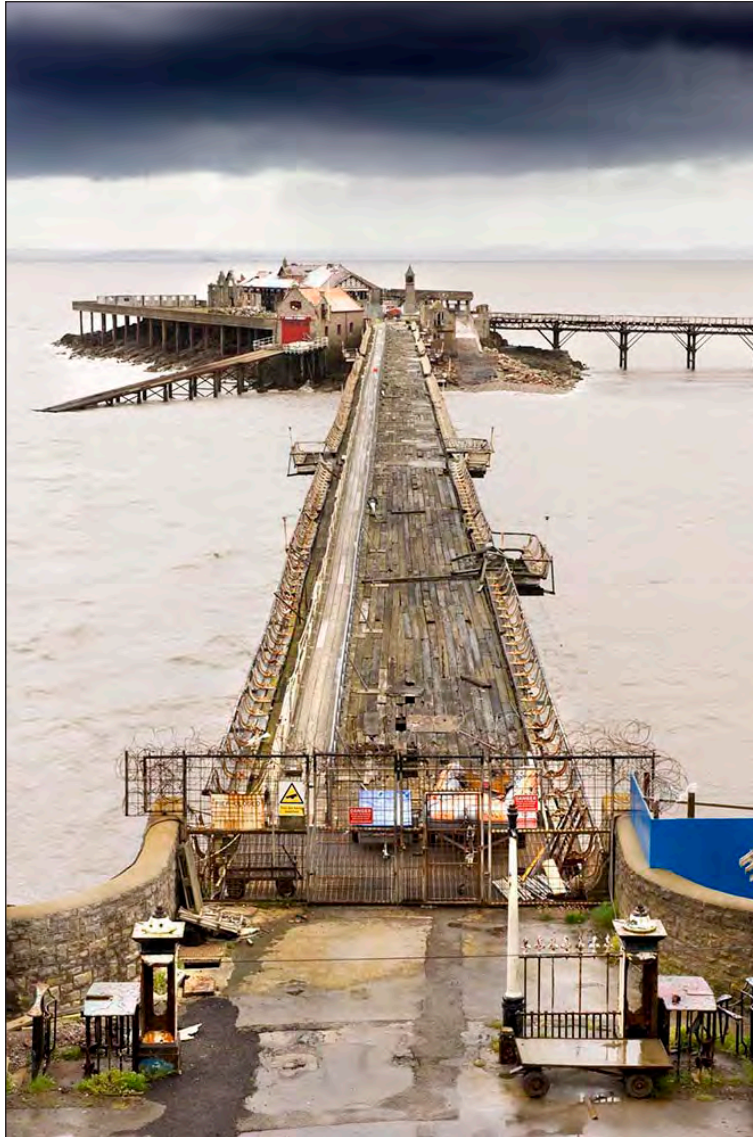


Figure 107: Birnbeck Pier had been seriously damaged by a fire in 1984; three years later, there was a fire on the pier head and in 1988 the Victorian arcade building was also gutted. By 1994 the pier was in such a dangerous condition that it had to close. (DP083541)

pier, but still no tangible developments have taken place.⁷⁸³ Weston's other pier, the Grand Pier, has been more successful as it was more centrally located. In 2008 it was sold to Kerry and Michelle Michael, but unfortunately on 28 July 2008, the Pavilion caught fire and was destroyed. The Michaels acted decisively and quickly and a new pavilion housing a range of attractions and facilities opened on 23 October 2010 (Figure 108).⁷⁸⁴

The major event in the town centre in the early 1990s was the construction of the Sovereign Shopping Centre, which opened in 1992. Its construction necessitated the demolition of a multi-storey car park, remnants of the Royal Arcade and the General Post Office (constructed in 1899, and extended in 1923). Nearby, a substantial extension to the Winter Garden Pavilion opened in January 1992 and on the seafront, the new SeaQuarium opened in June 1995. It includes a 50,000 gallon



Figure 108: The Grand Pier after dark – at its end is the new pavilion which opened in October 2010 after a major fire two years earlier. (DP218333)



Figure 109: The SeaQuarium is in the foreground, with the Grand Pier in the middle distance and the derelict Birnbeck pier on the horizon. At high tide Weston could be said to have three piers, a claim that only Blackpool can rival. (DP218017)

tank with a walk-through tunnel and although the sea is at times only a few metres away, the water used in its aquaria is tankered in from the south coast of England (Figure 109).

The creation of such a visible tourist attraction on the seafront could not disguise the fact that Weston-super-Mare, like other seaside resorts was witnessing a significant decline in visitor numbers, leading to less investment in attractions and to the closure of many guest houses and hotels. By the early 21st century, seaside resorts were having to recognise a change in the shape and size of the tourism market and find ways to cope with the impact of climate change.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In February 2017 North Somerset Council adopted a supplementary planning document (SPD), a masterplan and delivery strategy for the regeneration of the town centre of Weston-super-Mare.⁷⁸⁵ The subtitle of this document is ‘Living, Learning, Lifestyles’, a recognition that the quality of life in Weston-super-Mare is of primary importance, and while tourism may still be a notable contributor to the local economy, a good place to live and work should also prove to be a good place to visit.

The SPD begins by outlining overarching principles; the first aim is to increase significantly the number of people living, working and making use of the services and the cultural offer in the town centre. The second principle is to improve the quality of the town’s offer and to change perceptions about the town centre, in an effort to kick-start regeneration. A priority will be the provision of at least 1,000 new homes on brownfield sites stretching from the railway station to the seafront. These will be created in the area around the railway station, at the northern end of Walliscote Road on the site of the former police station and including the Magistrates’ Court, and in the Dolphin Square area (Figure 110). Part of this last area has already been redeveloped to provide a cinema, indoor climbing facility, a gymnasium and a range of bars and restaurants. As well as creating new housing around the railway station, which is also the location of the main road into Weston-super-Mare, this area will be reimagined as a gateway to the town, providing a welcome to the joys that lie ahead for visitors.

The SPD also recognises the need to invest in improving existing housing, by limiting the creation of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in some sensitive areas, and by promoting good practice. The desire to catch the tourist eye has led businesses often to compete rather than cooperate, and insensitive alterations by one householder can have an equally negative impact on a whole terrace or a street (Figure 111). In Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset Council is seeking to encourage property owners to work together to improve the appearance of their buildings and their street (Figure 112).

The SPD breaks Weston-super-Mare down into nine areas, neighbourhoods with distinct identities in which tailored policies and development ideas will enhance the character of each area. What the SPD carefully skirts around is two major, and thus far, intractable problems, the future of the Tropicana and Birnbeck Pier, major relics of Weston’s tourism history. Although the Tropicana has proved adaptable for use as Banksy’s Dismaland in 2015, Icescape@The Tropicana between November 2017 and January 2018, and Funland during the summer of 2018, intermittent use is no guarantee of a sound future and a long-term solution is awaited (Figure 113).

In September 2019 North Somerset Council, working with Historic England, served a repairs notice to the private owner of Birnbeck Pier. The council had exhausted all other options to encourage the owner to improve the condition of the pier and therefore issued the repairs notice to advise the proprietor that repair work must take place (Figure 114).



Figure 110: The 1934 Magistrates' Court will be retained and adapted to provide new homes in the centre of Weston, but the 1970 Police Station behind has been demolished to make way for housing. (DP218306)



Figure 111: This former Burton's store of about 1932 by their company architect Harry Wilson has elephant capitals which are a common motif for a small group of Burton stores. It was not listed in 2017 due to the loss of original detailing. (DP218533)



Figure 112: The Centre opposite the Town Hall, a 1933 block of flats above a shopping parade, has been renovated and restored using consistent materials and colours, raising the quality of the complex and the immediate neighbourhood. (DP218259)



Figure 113: This photograph of the Tropicana was taken in November 2017 while it was home to the largest covered ice rink in Britain, which allowed 500 people to skate at any one time. (DP218337)



Figure 114: Birnbeck Pier looking towards the island (DP218733)

The SPD still sees tourism as making a significant contribution to the town's economy. The collection and evaluation of visitor numbers, and assessments of their economic impact, are notoriously difficult and imprecise. However, various figures collected and collated for North Somerset Council suggest that tourism brings between £350m and £500m into the local economy and provides between 4,900 and 6,700 full-time equivalent jobs.⁷⁸⁶ While Weston may no longer be a destination for long summer holidays, a fact reflected in the decline of the number of hotels and bed and breakfasts, it is still a popular day trip destination for people from Bristol, Bath and even as far as Birmingham.

Two of Britain's most prosperous seaside resorts, Brighton and Bournemouth, are enlivened and enriched by the presence of a large student body. In November 2015 Weston College was granted University Centre status, bringing Weston-super-Mare one step closer to becoming a university town. While it might never compete with longer-established rivals, this will add to the attraction and vitality of the town, particularly stimulating its nightlife and hopefully its cultural offer. The decreasing significance of tourism to the local economy, and the growth in the size and the status of Weston College has seen the Winter Gardens becoming part of that institution, providing new facilities for staff and students, while safeguarding the 1920s ballroom for use as a public venue. A building with an uncertain future now has a key role to play in the life of the town (Figure 115).

The growing contribution of Weston College to the local community and economy is seen as part of a shift from seasonal, low-paid and low-skill work to year-round, high value, highly skilled, well-paid employment. The town is seeking to increase



Figure 115: A large modern extension to the Winter Gardens opened in September 2017, providing additional teaching and library facilities for Weston College's staff and students. At this site there is also a café, restaurant and event space, which are open to the public. (DP218509)

employment in businesses in the digital, creative, telecommunications, media and technology sectors, including through investing in a hub to support and inspire creative entrepreneurship in the town. Seaside resorts once suffered from their relatively poor road and rail links to major population centres, but today the speed of a motorway is much less significant than the speed of an internet connection. Therefore, around the coast many seaside resorts are successfully welcoming 'creatives', particularly those attracted to a high-quality lifestyle in an attractive location. They are keen to stay in flats in the heart of towns, preferably in buildings with (historic) character. Attracting them therefore offers a way to regenerate areas of dense urban development that might in the past have seemed hard to improve.

The town centre of Weston-super-Mare is still dominated by small-scale private sector businesses, where the ground floor contains the business but everything above is a potential financial burden. Historic England believes in the vital role that the accommodation above the shop plays in the townscape and could play in meeting housing shortages. Fully occupied buildings contribute to improving streets and neighbourhoods and generate the community atmosphere so vital to embed regeneration once the initial investment phase has passed. Accompanying this is a desire to be greener, a philosophy encompassing everything from better recycling arrangements and smart bins to improving the quality of life for pedestrians and cyclists. To this end, traffic between Alexandra Parade and the seafront along Regent Street has been largely restricted to public transport, and control of this key axis in the town has shifted to the pedestrian.



Figure 116: The recently completed Italian Gardens includes a collection of variable fountains to amuse children of all ages. This large public space at the heart of Weston is a place to sit, meet people and enjoy a coffee, but it also serves to link the town centre, the college and the seafront. (DP218388)

Public realm improvements in the town centre, on the seafront, in the Princess Royal Square and in the Italian Gardens have set a standard for Weston-super-Mare, but as in many seaside resorts, there can be a marked disparity between the level of public and private investment and a consequent variation in the quality of the finish (Figure 116). While the SPD emphasises the need for high quality development, recent experience suggests that private sector investors can be reluctant to match the level of funding and the quality of finish as they are not convinced of its commercial merit. Continuing demonstration of the value of quality and the economic worth of high-quality new investment and sensitive reuse of historic assets is something that both Historic England and North Somerset Council see as priorities.

Great Weston Heritage Action Zone

It is perhaps significant that in the first group of ten Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) successful bids, two were seaside resorts, Weston-super-Mare, and Ramsgate. The lure of foreign sunshine, changes in lifestyle and a growth in the number of short breaks and day trips have all contributed to a decline in the number of people taking their long summer holiday at the English seaside. Since the war there has been consistent under-investment in seaside resorts and a consequent decline in the state of repair of buildings and attractions.

Seaside resorts have also suffered from long-term economic problems arising in part from the seasonal and casual nature of their leading industry. Additionally, many resorts have large numbers of economically inactive residents, high numbers of people with low skills and higher than average crime. Therefore, it is common to find seaside resorts figuring prominently among the most deprived places in the government's Index of Multiple Deprivation. To add to the problems of seaside resorts, anthropogenic climate change is leading to a rise in sea level and increased storminess, necessitating the costly and potentially visually intrusive reconfiguration of many seafronts.

While there may be no magic wand to solve the social and economic problems of seaside resorts, many of these towns have recognised that they are attractive

locations, with a strong local community and an interesting heritage that can contribute to economic revival and physical renewal. North Somerset Council has acknowledged that making Weston-super-Mare a better place to live in, study and work will also make it a better place to visit. The subtitle of the masterplan for the future of the town is 'Living, Learning, Lifestyles', and a significant strand in this document is to make the most of Weston's historic environment.⁷⁸⁷

Historic England's decision to create a HAZ in Weston-super-Mare is supporting the local authority's programme in a number of ways. It is making money available for grants to improve historic buildings within conservation areas. It commissioned LUC to carry out a study to assess and map patterns of historic character across Weston-super-Mare and its adjacent seascape.⁷⁸⁸ Allies and Morrison have also conducted a review of Weston's Conservation Areas and their boundaries, prior to the development of a conservation area management plan and area appraisals.⁷⁸⁹

Historic England has also used its resources to provide advice and support. A number of listed building entries have been updated and made more precise, and new structures, including the town's railway station, have been added to the National Heritage List for England (NHLE). Members of the Historic Places Investigation Team in Swindon, now part of the South West Region Partnerships Team, have carried out detailed research and fieldwork, and have compiled this research report and a gazetteer. The Aerial Investigation and Mapping team carried out a study of the archaeology of the town as captured in aerial photographs, and the Archaeological Survey and Investigation team carried out an analytical earthwork survey of Worlebury Hillfort and the linear earthworks to its east.⁷⁹⁰ New terrestrial and aerial photography has also been undertaken to assist the research programme, and to provide illustrations and exhibition material to promote the work of the HAZ.

Weston-super-Mare as a town may be less than 200 years old, but it has a rich architectural heritage and a wealth of historic buildings. In planning the town's future, they will play a vital role in shaping it. Long gone is the belief that the future lay in wholesale redevelopment; the monumental blocks of flats envisaged in 1947 would have by now been recognised as a problem rather than a solution. Instead, the designation of the Heritage Action Zone in Weston-super-Mare indicates that the historic environment will be a vital part of the town's prosperity, an attractive place being a great place to live, work and visit. Weston's colourful past will make a vital contribution to its bright future.

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Population figures are primarily drawn from Histpop (<http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/>).

Newspaper articles have predominantly been consulted using the British Newspaper Archive (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>) unless otherwise specified.

For simplicity and consistency, the title *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* is used in notes, but this newspaper has been variously known as:

1845–55 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette, and General Advertiser*

1856–68 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette, and Clevedon Journal*

1868–1910 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette, Clevedon Journal and East Somerset Gazette*

Similarly the *Weston Mercury* is used in notes but has been variously known as:

1843–55 *The Weston Mercury*

1855–69 *Weston Mercury & Central Somerset Herald*

1869–1911 *The Weston Mercury & Somersetshire Herald*

ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/books/id/52305/>
- 2 Brown and Loosley 1979, 19; Beisly 2001, 8
- 3 Anon 1913, 12
- 4 Brown and Loosley 1979, 15
- 5 Ibid
- 6 National Heritage List for England (hereafter NHLE) 1137549, NHLE 1011131, NHLE 1129743; Beisly 2001, 5
- 7 Beisly 2001, 4-7
- 8 Baker 1928, no pagination; Beisly 2001, 6
- 9 Brown and Loosley 1979, 15-16
- 10 Collinson 1791, iii, 611; *Gentleman's Magazine* December 1805, 1097-9; Baker 1911, no pagination; Baker 1928, no pagination
- 11 Collinson 1791, iii, 611
- 12 Baker 1911, no pagination
- 13 Baker 1912, 11; Rendel, Palmer and Tritton 1996, 216
- 14 Baker 1884, 15
- 15 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 16 Beisly 2001, 9, 10, 12ff
- 17 Poole 2002, 23; Brown and Loosley 1979, 17
- 18 Baker 1912, 12
- 19 Defoe 2005, 69-71, 75-6, 109
- 20 Brown and Loosley 1979, 20; Beisly 2001, 15; NHLE 1320674
- 21 Brown and Loosley 1985, 19; Beisly 2001, 15
- 22 Poole 2002, 25
- 23 ODNB; Beisly 2001, 15; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannah_More [accessed 26 January 2018]
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- 31 Baker 1912, 1; Poole 2002, 48
- 32 Baker 1928
- 33 *Ibid*, no pagination; Poole 2002, 28
- 34 Baker 1911, no pagination
- 35 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 36 Baker 1912, 5
- 37 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 38 www.ancestry.co.uk [accessed 26 January 2018]; Brown and Loosley 1979, 32
- 39 Baker 1911, no pagination
- 40 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 41 Brown and Loosley 1985, 19
- 42 Brown and Loosley 1979,33. In 1829 Rutter's guide says that Richard Fry provided a public billiard table near the Hotel. Rutter 1829, 23
- 43 *Bristol Mirror* 30 June 1810, 3; According to Baker 1911, drawing on his collection of oral history presumably, Mrs Sawtell first kept the Hotel and it was then taken over by Mr Fry and then Mr Reeves.
- 44 *Bristol Mirror* 1 June 1811, 2
- 45 Brown and Loosley 1979, 34; Brown and Loosley 1985, 20
- 46 Anon 1822, 9; Anon 1847, 13; Brown 1854, 9; Whereat 1855, 48
- 47 North Somerset Studies Library, Joseph White's 1853 town plan
- 48 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 712
- 49 Brown and Loosley 1979, 32
- 50 50 Geo III c. 59; Baker 1912, 4
- 51 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 52 Baker 1912, 4
- 53 *Ibid*, 15

- 54 Ibid, 16
- 55 *Bristol Mirror* 29 June 1811, 1; *Bristol Mirror* 10 August 1811, 1; *Bristol Mirror* 04 January 1812, 1; Baker 1912, 7, 9, 10; Buchanan 1982, 114 discusses how most enclosure awards in North Somerset were financed by selling land.
- 56 Buchanan 1982, 124
- 57 Baker 1912, 17
- 58 Somerset Archives, Q/RDe/123
- 59 Baker 1912, 12
- 60 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 61 Anon 1822,11
- 62 Poole 2002, 34; Anon 1847, 54
- 63 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 64 Anon 1822, 15
- 65 Brown and Loosley 1979, 36
- 66 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 67 Rutter 1840, 16
- 68 1:500 Ordnance Survey Map of 1886 shows a symmetrical house with a large rear extension.
- 69 Baker 1911, no pagination
- 70 Whereat 1855, 60
- 71 Baker 1911, no pagination; Beisly 2001, 20
- 72 Anon 1847, opposite 20
- 73 Beisly 2001, 21
- 74 *Bristol Mirror* 22 May 1819, 2. Interestingly, a very similar form of words was used two years earlier to advertise Weston's first hotel. This was due to a family connection; Mrs Sawtell who with her husband John kept the first hotel, had a son by her first marriage, Christopher Kingdon, who kept the Plough. *Bristol Mirror* 26 April 1817, 3.
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- 77 Brodie and Winter 2007, 155-6
- 78 *Bristol Mirror* 23 February 1811, 1

- 79 *Bristol Mirror* 26 April 1817, 3
- 80 *Bristol Mirror* 08 May 1819, 2
- 81 Beisly 2001, 21
- 82 Brown and Loosley 1979, 35
- 83 Ibid, 38
- 84 *Bristol Mirror* 23 February 1811, 1
- 85 Anon 1822, 6
- 86 Poole 2002, 35
- 87 Anon 1822, 15
- 88 Poole 1995, figure 20
- 89 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 90 Rutter 1829, 25
- 91 Ibid, 26
- 92 Anon 1822, 15; Rutter 1829, 26
- 93 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 94 Ibid
- 95 Historic England Archive, Buildings File 86314: Anon 1822, 15
- 96 Anon 1822, 19
- 97 Brown and Loosley 1979, 37. In 1833-4 the causeway was heightened using granite. *History of Knightstone Island*. Woodspring Museum, Weston-Super-Mare Local History Leaflet
- 98 Rutter 1829, 27
- 99 Ibid, 26
- 100 *Bristol Mirror* 2 August 1828, 1
- 101 *Bristol Mirror* 15 April 1826, 1
- 102 Historic England Archive, Buildings File 86314
- 103 Rutter 1840, 20
- 104 *ODNB*
- 105 *Bristol Mirror* 25 February 1832, 3
- 106 *Illustrated London News* 27 April 1844, 5

- 107 *Bristol Mercury* 9 January 1847, 4
- 108 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 109 Baker 1911, no pagination; Baker 1928, no pagination
- 110 Brown and Loosley 1979, 38; Poole 2002, 43
- 111 Anon 1822; Rutter 1829; Pigot 1993
- 112 <http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/> [accessed 31 January 2018]
- 113 Anon 1822, 5
- 114 Ibid, 6
- 115 Ibid, 9
- 116 Ibid, 10
- 117 Ibid, 13
- 118 Ibid, 14-15
- 119 Ibid, 15-16
- 120 Ibid, 30-1
- 121 Ibid, 16-18
- 122 Rutter 1829, 22
- 123 Ibid, 22-3
- 124 Ibid, 23
- 125 Rutter 1840, 17-18. In 1845 Whereat began publishing the *Weston Gazette*.
- 126 Anon 1847, opposite 10
- 127 Rutter 1829, 23
- 128 Pigot 1993, 241
- 129 *Gentleman's Magazine* December 1805, 1098
- 130 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 131 Anon 1822, 12
- 132 Brown and Loosley 1979, 38
- 133 Baker 1928, no pagination
- 134 Rutter 1829, 20
- 135 Ibid, 19

- 136 National Archives, IR 30/30/452
- 137 Baker 1911, no pagination
- 138 NHLE 1129730, 1129731
- 139 Anon 1847, 18
- 140 Anon 1840, 362-3, 365
- 141 Rutter 1840, 16; *ODNB*
- 142 Skinner 1984, 440
- 143 6 & 7 Will. 4 c.xxxvi; *Bristol Mercury* 9 July 1836, 2
- 144 St John Thomas 1966, 9; Brown and Loosley 1979, 49; Simmons 1986, 244-5
- 145 1 & 2 Vict. c.xxvi; *Bristol Mercury* 10 March 1838, 2
- 146 Butt 1995, 246. During the construction of the line, Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806–1859) is reputed to have lived with his family in Swiss Villa, off Locking Road, a building now demolished and replaced by standard streets of housing, including some in Swiss Road. Brown and Loosley 1979, 49
- 147 Brown and Loosley 1979, 50
- 148 Brown 1854, 20
- 149 Anon 1847, 51
- 150 Brown 1854, 20
- 151 Anon 1847, 51-2
- 152 *Bristol Mercury* 5 June 1841, 7
- 153 Brown and Loosley 1979, 51
- 154 *Ibid*, 50
- 155 *Bristol Times and Mirror* 9 June 1849, 5
- 156 Simmons and Biddle 1999, 151
- 157 Anon 1901, 7
- 158 Brown 1854, 19; Brown and Loosley 1979, 51
- 159 Poole 2002, 64
- 160 Kelly 1861, 475
- 161 *Ibid*; Post Office Directory of Somerset 1866, 503
- 162 Kelly 1861, 475

- 163 Butt 1995, 246; Poole 2002, 64
- 164 NHLE 1129748; Signalling Record Society, 2011, 174
- 165 St John Thomas 1966, 10
- 166 38 & 39 Vict. c.cxxvii: Brown and Loosley 1979, 50
- 167 38 & 39 Vict. c.cxxvii; NHLE 1448779
- 168 It does not appear on an 1898 map but is present in a 1907 one.
- 169 Beisly 2001, 45 says that the goods station closed in 1960, while Poole 2002, 70 says it closed in 1966. Beisly 2001, 45 states that the excursion platform was demolished in 1967.
- 170 5 & 6 Vict. c.xx
- 171 Brown and Loosley 1979, 62
- 172 Borough of Weston-super-Mare Charter Souvenir 1937, 24-5
- 173 Brown 1854, 17
- 174 Whereat 1850, 69
- 175 *The Builder* 20 September 1856, 517; <http://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/news/when-weston-aspired-to-a-market-hall-1-313932> [accessed 28 February 2018]
- 176 Baker 1887, 13
- 177 *The Builder* 26 February 1859, 157; Post Office 1866, 503
- 178 9 & 10 Vict. c. 95; <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-civil-and-coroners-courts/heag141-civil-courts-iha.pdf> 3-5, [accessed 4 November 2019]
- 179 Hunt and Co 1850, 425 ; Slater 1852-3, 105; Whereat 1855, 43
- 180 Anon 1840, 362; Anon 1847, 50; Whereat 1850, 68; Brown 1854, 18
- 181 Rutter 1829, 23
- 182 Anon 1847, 50
- 183 Gooch 1868, 40
- 184 *The Builder* 20 October 1894, 275; Brown and Loosley 1979, 65, 129; Beisly 2001, 49
- 185 Borough of Weston-super-Mare Charter Souvenir 1937, 25, 28; Brown and Loosley 1979, 141
- 186 Kelly 1897, 456
- 187 Kelly 1914, 504; Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 711

- 188 Anon 1901, 19
- 189 Orbach undated
- 190 Poole 1999, 56
- 191 Borough of Weston-super-Mare Charter Souvenir 1937, 4, 15
- 192 Census, 1841-1901
- 193 Simmons 1986, 113
- 194 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 13 October 1849, 4
- 195 *Weston Mercury* 17 January 1880, 8
- 196 *ODNB*
- 197 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 18 January 1868, 5
- 198 5 & 6 Vict. c.xx; 14 & 15 Vict. c.lxv
- 199 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 18 January 1868, 5
- 200 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 18 January 1868, 5
- 201 Post Office 1866, 503
- 202 *ODNB*
- 203 Brown and Loosley 1979, 62; Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 712
- 204 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 714
- 205 *Bristol Mirror* 20 April 1844, 3; Baker 1928, no pagination
- 206 Brown and Loosley 1979, 63
- 207 Poole 2002, 59
- 208 Ibid
- 209 Ibid
- 210 1886 Ordnance Survey map
- 211 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 630
- 212 Ibid, 631-2; RIBA Library, Drawings & Archives Collection, PB499/1(1-2)
- 213 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 713
- 214 Ibid, 710
- 215 *Bristol Mirror* 20 April 1844; RIBA Library, Drawings Collection, PB499/2(1-2)

- 216 RIBA Library, Drawings Collection, CrA/1/1; PB499/3
- 217 Beedle 1863, 27; Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 714
- 218 *The Builder* 3 February 1883, 158
- 219 Poole 2002, 56
- 220 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 712-3
- 221 *The Builder* 8 November 1856, 616; *The Builder* 5 February 1898, 132
- 222 'Death of Mr Hans F. Price' *Weston Mercury* 30 November 1912, 5
- 223 North Somerset Studies Library, file on Hans Price, undated and unsigned typescript entitled 'Hans Price'
- 224 Christening index <https://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=1351> [accessed 27 March 2018]
- 225 Hase and James undated
- 226 Census of 1851
- 227 *The Builder* 1 April 1905, 356; *Architect's, engineer's and building trade's directory* (London Wyman, 1868), p. 99
- 228 Harper 1983, 281
- 229 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 28 January 1860, 4
- 230 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 25 February 1860, 4
- 231 *Dorset County Chronicle*, 25 September 1862, 20
- 232 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 13 July 1861, 8
- 233 *Ibid*; Robbins and Scotney 1865, 40
- 234 The attribution of the Hall is contested. According to Brown and Loosley, Price designed the building. However, Gooch's Directory of 1868 has E Down as the architect. Brown and Loosley 1979, 130; Gooch 1868, 36
- 235 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/4/234; Alder 2004, no pagination. The drawings are in the Bristol Record Office.
- 236 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 30 November 1912, 12
- 237 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 29 August 1874, 3; *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 25 February 1893, 3; SA, D/B/wsm/24/2/615, D/B/wsm/24/1/629 and D/B/wsm/24/6/34
- 238 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 30 November 1912, 12
- 239 Gomme and Jenner 2011, 411
- 240 *Ibid*

- 241 Allen, <http://sussexparishchurches.org/architectsandartistsfg/> [accessed 29 March 2018]
- 242 Ibid
- 243 *The London Gazette* 24 October 1873, 4710; For example: Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/129 and D/B/wsm/24/2/131
- 244 See for example: Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/219
- 245 *Weston Mercury* 11 March 1876, 1
- 246 Census of 1911; Wise's New Zealand Post Office Directory, 1878-9, 281
- 247 His grave had to be moved from its original location due to motorway construction. Wellington, Bolton Street Cemetery, burial record number 102935 <http://boltoncemetery.org.nz/burial-list/detail/2935/> [accessed 23 August 2017]
- 248 Census 1861-1911
- 249 Census of 1881
- 250 Census of 1911, 1891
- 251 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/720
- 252 Census of 1901 and 1911
- 253 *The Builder* 16 October 1936, 724
- 254 National Probate Calendar for 1936, https://www.ancestry.co.uk/interactive/1904/31874_221821-00610/3285853?backurl=https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/114697775/person/430132014401/facts/citation/1160353746613/edit/record [accessed 3 April 2018]
- 255 *The Builder* 10 May 1918, 290; Brodie et al, *Directory of British Architects*, vol. 1, 1012
- 256 Alder 2004, unpaginated
- 257 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 4 February 1905 (transcript in Hans F. Price file in North Somerset Studies Library)
- 258 'Death of Mr Hans F. Price' *Weston Mercury*, 30 November 1912, 5
- 259 *Weston Mercury* 4 February 1882, 5; *Weston Mercury* 25 April 1885, 8
- 260 'Death of Mr Hans F. Price' *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 30 November 1912, 12
- 261 'Death of Mr Hans F. Price' *Weston Mercury*, 30 November 1912, 5
- 262 National Probate Calendar for 1913 <https://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=1904> [accessed 27 March 2018]

- 263 Brodie et al, *Directory of British Architects*, vol. 1, 1012; Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/1985
- 264 Bailey 1979
- 265 Information from Quentin Alder
- 266 Alder 2004, no pagination
- 267 For the dates of the market please see: *Weston Gazette* 16 Jan 1897, 3; *Weston Mercury* 11 Nov 1899, 1
- 268 *Weston Mercury*, 27 October 1900, 2
- 269 Ibid
- 270 *The Builder* 17 November 1894, 348; 9 February 1895, 99
- 271 Quoted in Jones undated, 30
- 272 Historic England Archive, Building File 82866
- 273 For example, see Poole 2006, 108; Taylor 2004, 11
- 274 Census for 1851-71
- 275 Marriage index on Ancestry.co.uk <https://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=8913> [accessed 27 March 2018]
- 276 Brodie et al 2001, vol. 1, 693
- 277 Brown and Loosley 1979, 63
- 278 Ibid
- 279 Census for 1851 and 1861
- 280 Census for 1891 and 1901; National Probate Calendar <https://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=1904> [accessed 27 March 2018]
- 281 *Weston Mercury* 7 February 1903, 8
- 282 Ibid
- 283 Ibid; Beisly 2011, 64
- 284 'Death of Mr Hans F. Price', *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 30 November 1912, transcript in North Somerset Studies Library file on Hans F. Price; *Building News*, 6 December 1912, 792
- 285 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/4/234, D/B/wsm/24/2/66; Alder 2004, no pagination
- 286 Jones undated, 1; *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 20 October 1855, 2
- 287 Jones undated, 3; Brodie 2001, 2, 195

- 288 Jones undated, 4, 6
- 289 Ibid, 4-5
- 290 RIBA Library, Drawings Collection, CrA/1/1; PB499/3
- 291 Jones undated, 22
- 292 <http://discovernorthsomerset.co.uk/villa-rosa-and-the-shrubbery-estate>
[accessed 2 March 2018]
- 293 *Bristol Mirror* 20 April 1844, 3
- 294 National Archives, IR 30/30/452 (tithe map) and IR 29/30/452 (tithe apportionment)
- 295 North Somerset Studies Library, file on Villa Rosa
- 296 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 14 December 1850, 2
- 297 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 13 October 1849, 4
- 298 North Somerset Studies Library, file on Villa Rosa, 1859 plan of Shrubbery estate; tracing in Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/6/3
- 299 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/78, D/B/wsm/24/2/551
- 300 Beedle 1863, 47-8
- 301 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/264
- 302 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/184; D/B/wsm/24/2/185
- 303 Somerset Archives, DD/VB/1/6/8
- 304 Ibid
- 305 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/4/230
- 306 Beedle 1863, 21
- 307 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/198; D/B/wsm/24/2/208
- 308 Orbach undated
- 309 Somerset Archives, DD/VB/1/6/8
- 310 Ibid
- 311 Beisly 1988, 44
- 312 Brown and Loosley 1979, 48-9
- 313 Brown 1854, 30
- 314 Ibid, 30

- 315 *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser* 28 December 1853, 7
- 316 *Weston Mercury* 30 August 1879, 1
- 317 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 5 March 1881, 1
- 318 See for example *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 29 October 1904,1; 28 January 1905,1; 5 May 1906, 1
- 319 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/1062; D/B/wsm/24/1/1073
- 320 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 25 June 1853, 1
- 321 Somerset Archives, DD/BR/rs/2
- 322 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/6/3
- 323 Jones undated, 17, 44, 77
- 324 Palmer undated, 142
- 325 Jones undated, 71-2
- 326 Ibid, 32
- 327 For example, SA, D/B/wsm/24/1/1704, D/B/wsm/24/1/1922
- 328 Jones undated, 39
- 329 Undated letter from Borough Librarian to HW Thorne of Bournville Primary School, <https://thebournvillenoticeboard.wordpress.com/about/> [accessed 29 March 2018]
- 330 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/1063; D/B/wsm/24/2/1087
- 331 North Somerset Studies Library, Joseph White's 1853 town plan
- 332 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 724-5
- 333 *The parish church, Weston-super-Mare* 1890, unpaginated (guidebook)
- 334 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 709; Baker 1887, 5
- 335 Whereat 1855, 36
- 336 The National Archives, HO129/134, Ecclesiastical Census of 1851, return for parish church, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1359783> [accessed 3 April 2018]
- 337 Anon 1891, 19
- 338 *The Builder* 30 October 1875, 974; Plaque in church
- 339 *The parish church, Weston-super-Mare* 1890, unpaginated (guidebook)
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- 341 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 630-1
- 342 The National Archives, HO129/134, Ecclesiastical Census of 1851, return for St Nicholas's church, Uphill, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1359783> [accessed 3 April 2018]
- 343 The National Archives, HO129/134, Ecclesiastical Census of 1851, return for St Martin's church, Worle, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1359783> [accessed 3 April 2018]
- 344 *ODNB*
- 345 *The Builder* 21 March 1846, 140
- 346 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 18 January 1868, 5
- 347 Baker 1887, 10
- 348 The National Archives, HO129/134, Ecclesiastical Census of 1851, return for Emmanuel church <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1359783> [accessed 3 April 2018]
- 349 *The Builder* 6 Oct 1855, 477; Baker 1887, 12
- 350 Somerset Archives, D/D/cf/1889/13, D/B/wsm/24/2/212
- 351 *The Builder* 16 June 1855, 286
- 352 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 5 October 1861, 2; Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 708
- 353 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 5 October 1861, 2
- 354 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/681, D/B/wsm/24/1/1781
- 355 Historic England Archive, Building File 051456
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- 357 *Ibid*
- 358 Lambeth Palace Library, ICBS09045 (plan)
- 359 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 710
- 360 Crockford-Hawley 2004, no pagination
- 361 *Ibid*
- 362 *Ibid*
- 363 <http://www.allsaintswsm.org/church/> [accessed 29 March 2018]
- 364 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 709
- 365 *Ibid*
- 366 The National Archives, HO129/134, Ecclesiastical Census of 1851, <http://>

discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1359783 [accessed 3 April 2018]

- 367 Stell 1991, 200
- 368 Ibid
- 369 Beisly 1988, 75; The National Archives, HO129/134, Ecclesiastical Census of 1851, return for Wesleyan Methodists, Regent Street <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1359783> [accessed 3 April 2018]
- 370 Baker 1887, 9; Morris 1872, 453
- 371 Whereat 1850, 70
- 372 The National Archives, HO129/134, Ecclesiastical Census of 1851, return for Wesleyan Methodists, Regent Street <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1359783> [accessed 3 April 2018]
- 373 Brown and Loosley 1979, 64; Poole 2012, 58
- 374 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/8641
- 375 The National Archives, HO129/134, Ecclesiastical Census of 1851, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1359783> [accessed 3 April 2018]
- 376 Morris 1872, 452
- 377 Baker 1887, 28-9
- 378 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/47, D/B/wsm/24/24/2/180
- 379 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/294
- 380 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 26 March 1881, 3
- 381 1886 Ordnance Survey map
- 382 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/1424 and D/B/wsm/24/1/1527
- 383 *The Builder* 5 February 1898, 132; *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 18 Nov 1899
- 384 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/5868
- 385 Robbins 1887, 24
- 386 Brown 1854, 40
- 387 *The Builder* 8 Nov 1856, 616
- 388 Ibid
- 389 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/192, D/B/wsm/24/2/219; Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 89

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- 392 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/269, D/B/wsm/24/1/1002 ; Field 1959, 12
- 393 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/3251
- 394 Handbook of 1879, quoted in Anon 1898 *Wadham Street Baptist Church, WsM. Jubilee Handbook*, 16-7
- 395 Ibid
- 396 *Western Daily Press* 28 September 1865, 3; *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 1 September 1866, 4
- 397 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/1553, D/B/wsm/24/1/1510; <http://www.cpbc.co.uk/history.asp> [accessed 29 March 2018]
- 398 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/4238, D/B/wsm/24/1/4251
- 399 Anon 2008; *Weston Mercury*, 10 July 1858, 25 December 1858; Diocesan Archive, typescript parish history and historic photos; Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 710; Roethe 2015 (1)
- 400 Anon 1889, 23
- 401 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/216
- 402 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/542
- 403 1889 Ordnance Survey map
- 404 Burton 2016 'Friends Meeting House, Weston-super-Mare', <http://heritage.quaker.org.uk/files/Weston-super-Mare%20LM.pdf> [accessed 29 March 2018]; Butler 1999, vol.2, 551-2
- 405 *The Friend*, 31 August 1956, cutting in file in North Somerset Studies Library
- 406 Baker 1887, 33; North Somerset Council, planning application number 02/P/0685/F, <https://planning.n-somerset.gov.uk/online-applications/simpleSearchResults.do?action=firstPage> [accessed 4 November 2019]
- 407 Beisly 2001, 57
- 408 Brown and Loosley 1979, 31
- 409 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 15 October 1845, 2
- 410 Davies's obituary mentions the move of the schools 'from the Batch to their present desirable location'. *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 18 January 1868, 5; Know your place North Somerset website, <http://maps.bristol.gov.uk/ky-p/?edition=nsom> [accessed 11 April 2018]
- 411 Beisly 2001, 56

- 412 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 15 October 1845, 2
- 413 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/1057 and D/B/wsm/24/1/1091
- 414 Beisly 2001, 56
- 415 *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser* 20 June 1855, 8
- 416 Baker 1887, 36; Kelly's 1897, 460; Jones undated, 88
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- 418 Brown 1854, 17, 42
- 419 Ibid, 57; Brown and Loosley 1979, 65; Gooch 1868, 36
- 420 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 26 September 1863, 2
- 421 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/1157
- 422 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 725; Brown and Loosley 1985, 32
- 423 Uphill village website, <https://uphillvillagesociety.org.uk/town-history/> [accessed 29 March 2018]
- 424 33 & 34 Vict. c. lxxv
- 425 Beisly 2001, 57
- 426 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/2/131
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- 428 *Weston Mercury* 22 July 1893, 2
- 429 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 31 July 1897, 2
- 430 *The Builder* 17 November 1894, 348
- 431 *The Builder* 9 September 1895, 99
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- 434 Ibid
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- 436 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/1142
- 437 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 14 June 1902, 1; *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 24 Oct 1908, 7
- 438 Jones undated, 103
- 439 North Somerset Studies Library, file on the Grammar School

- 440 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/1279
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- 442 Baker 1887, 14
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- 444 *Western Daily Press* 28 July 1883, 5
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- 446 Somerset Archives, SA, D/B/wsm/24/2/617
- 447 North Somerset Studies Library, file on St Peter's school, typescript notes
- 448 RIBA Library, Drawings Collection, PB355/3
- 449 RIBA Library, Drawings Collection, PB355/3
- 450 North Somerset Studies Library, file on St Peter's school, historic photos
- 451 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/3065; NSS Library, file on St Peter's school, typescript notes
- 452 Lawrence Bros 1914, 179
- 453 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/som/vol5/pp129-136> [accessed 29 March 2018] ; *Western Daily Press* 22 Sept 1933
- 454 Lawrence Bros.1935, 200; Lawrence Bros.1939, 216
- 455 North Somerset Studies Library, file on Clarence School
- 456 Lawrence Bros. 1930, 150; Lawrence Bros.1935, 117
- 457 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/6872
- 458 Anon 1847, 54
- 459 Ibid, 55
- 460 Brown 1854, 18; Anon 1847, 55
- 461 North Somerset Studies Library, Joseph White's 1853 town plan
- 462 Brown 1854, 18
- 463 18 & 19 Vict. c.lxxxii; Gooch 1868, 52
- 464 24 & 25 Vict. c.cxvi
- 465 Gledhill 2003, 64-6. John Crockford-Hawley suggests 1968, once North Sea gas became available.
- 466 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 714

- 467 Hassan 2003, 31ff
- 468 Walton 1983, 133
- 469 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 16 June 1849, 2
- 470 14 & 15 Vict. c.lxv; 16 & 17 Vict. c.lxvi
- 471 North Somerset Studies Library, Joseph White's 1853 town plan
- 472 Whereat 1855, 58; Baker 1887, 12; Borough of Weston-super-Mare Charter Souvenir 1937, 23
- 473 Kelly 1889, 403
- 474 41 & 42 Vict. c.clxxxv; Baker 1887, 29; Kelly 1889, 403
- 475 Poole 2002, 55
- 476 Brown and Loosley 1979, 66; Beisly 2001, 51
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- 480 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_toilet [accessed 28 August 2017]
- 481 Warren 1978, 67; Lambton 1979, 10; *ODNB*; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Jennings [accessed 28 August 2017]; <http://thevictorianist.blogspot.co.uk/2011/02/spending-penny-or-first-public-flushing.html> [accessed 28 August 2017]
- 482 NHLE 1386806
- 483 Beisly 2001, 81
- 484 Hunt and Co 1850, 425; Whereat 1855, 39
- 485 Post Office 1866, 503
- 486 Heywood 1895, 14
- 487 Borough of Weston-super-Mare Charter Souvenir 1937, 23
- 488 Kelly 1889, 404; Beisly 2001, 52
- 489 Anon 1901, 19
- 490 Brown and Loosley 1979, 86-7
- 491 Anon 1891, 6
- 492 Brown and Loosley 1985, 87
- 493 *Bristol Mirror* 15 April 1826, 1

- 494 Brown and Loosley 1979, 127
- 495 18 & 19 Vict. c.128
- 496 Kelly 1861, 476; Gooch 1868, 51; Baker 1887, 13; *The Builder* 16 June 1855, 286
- 497 Beisly 2001, 55
- 498 Kelly 1861, 475
- 499 Kelly 1875, 554; Baker 1887, 22
- 500 Anon 1891, 11
- 501 Brown and Loosley 1985, 45
- 502 Ibid
- 503 Beisly 2001, 120; Poole 2002, 69
- 504 Brown and Loosley 1985, 46
- 505 Post Office 1866, 503. It was subsequently renamed The Royal West of England Sanatorium.
- 506 *Building News* 2 June 1871, 428
- 507 Kelly 1875, 554
- 508 Kelly 1894, 452; Brown and Loosley 1979, 128
- 509 Brown and Loosley 1985, 45
- 510 Harrison, Harrogate and Co 1859, 668; Post Office 1866, 507
- 511 Baker 1887, 27; Heywood 1895, 22
- 512 Kelly 1875, 558
- 513 Anon 1889, 29; Norton, Son and Lalonde 1894, 452
- 514 Kelly 1902, 472
- 515 Anon 1910, 68
- 516 Lambert 1998, 5
- 517 Ibid, 11
- 518 Kelly 1883, 369
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- 522 Ibid, 22
- 523 *Bristol Mercury* 11 September 1889, 6
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- 562 Abel Heywood and Son 1885, 8; Anon 1889, 30; Heywood 1895, 13
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- 595 Easdown 2007, 11, 13. Interestingly, a company was formed by a Mr Birch in 1842 to build Greenhithe pier. Adamson 1977, 28
- 596 Anon 1847, frontispiece
- 597 National Archives, BT 41/921/5641
- 598 8 & 9 Vict c.xxv
- 599 Brown and Loosley 1979, 88
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- 602 Simmons 1991, 303
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- 606 Baker 1887, 20; Beisly 2001, 67-8
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- 610 Anon 1913, 1
- 611 Anon 1901, 10
- 612 Anon 1913, 12; full word is used in the original text
- 613 Historic England Archive, Buildings File 86314
- 614 *History of Knightstone Island*. Woodspring Museum, Weston-Super-Mare Local History Leaflet; Rutter 1829, 27
- 615 Brown and Loosley 1979, 91. Some early 20th century guidebooks suggest the cost was closer to £12,000.
- 616 NHLE 1138201; NHLE 1246623
- 617 Anon 1913, 14-15
- 618 Anon 1905, 24; Anon 1913, 14
- 619 National Archives, BT 31/2870/15834; Baker 1887, 32
- 620 Baker 1887, 35
- 621 1886 Ordnance Survey Map; Heywood 1895, 12; Beisly 2001, 89
- 622 Anon 1910, 41, 45-6; Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/1739
- 623 Brown and Loosley 1979, 128; Beisly 2001, 90
- 624 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/1483, drawings dated December 1907
- 625 Brown and Loosley 1979, 128
- 626 Eyles 1996, 221
- 627 Anon 1913, 3
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- 629 National Archives, BT 41/753/4060
- 630 25 & 26 Vict c. clxix; 27 & 28 Vict c. clv
- 631 Kelly 1894, 451; Brown and Loosley 1979, 89
- 632 *Illustrated London News* 15 June, 1867, 601; Wills and Phillips 2014, 246
- 633 *ODNB*
- 634 Wills and Phillips 2014, 246
- 635 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/629
- 636 Wills and Phillips 2014, 247-8
- 637 *Ibid*, 248
- 638 Bennett 1996, 19-21
- 639 *Illustrated London News* 21 July 1883, 54
- 640 47 & 48 Vict c. clxxvii
- 641 Baker 1887, 35
- 642 56 & 57 Vict c. xxx
- 643 60 & 61 Vict c cxciv; 62 & 63 Vict c. ccxii
- 644 Brown and Loosley 1979, 90. Wills and Phillips 2014, 253 attribute leadership of the project to a group of Cardiff businessmen.
- 645 The cast-iron columns of the pier bear the cast-in name of Mayoh and Haley Contractors London.
- 646 Wills and Phillips 2014, 254
- 647 Brown and Loosley 1979, 90
- 648 Anon 1910, 41
- 649 Anon 1913, 11
- 650 Brodie and Winter 2007, 154-8
- 651 Hunt and Co 1850, 423-4
- 652 Brodie and Winter 2007, 154
- 653 Royal Crescent consists of ten houses and that is the number shown on the 1853 map of Weston. Why only seven appear in the 1851 Census is unclear. Were 8-10 incomplete and thus unoccupied?
- 654 Post Office 1866, 507-11
- 655 Walters 1889, 23

- 656 Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 712
- 657 D'Ormesson 1984, 17; Pevsner 1976, 189-90
- 658 Baker 1887, 37
- 659 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 13 July 1889, 3
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- 661 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 13 July 1889, 3
- 662 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/8651
- 663 Anon 1924, 3
- 664 St John Thomas 1966, 19; Brown and Loosley 1979, 52
- 665 Brown and Loosley 1979, 52
- 666 Poole 2002, 82; Poole 2012, 32
- 667 Brown and Loosley 1979, 128; Beisly 2001, 95; Borough of Weston-super-Mare Charter Souvenir 1937, 31
- 668 Brown and Loosley 1979, 129
- 669 Ibid, 91
- 670 52 & 53 Vict. c.xviii; Somerset Archives and Local Studies Q/Rup/428, Q/Rup/430;
- 671 Somerset Archives and Local Studies Q/Rup/479
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- 675 Smith 2005, 134
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- 686 Ibid
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- 692 For example, Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/5794; Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 714
- 693 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/5824, D/B/wsm/24/1/5961
- 694 *Weston Mercury* 27 January 2018 <http://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/news/weston-super-mare-blue-plaque-unveiled-for-henry-butt-in-the-boulevard-1-5370242> [accessed 4 November 2019]
- 695 *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 11 November 1944, transcript in Henry Butt file in North Somerset Studies Library
- 696 Ibid
- 697 *Weston Mercury* 11 November 1944, transcript in Henry Butt file in North Somerset Studies Library; *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* 11 November 1944, transcript in Henry Butt file in North Somerset Studies Library
- 698 Ibid
- 699 *Weston Mercury* 11 November 1944, transcript in Henry Butt file in North Somerset Studies Library
- 700 *Weston Mercury* 11 Nov 1944, transcript in Henry Butt file in North Somerset Studies Library
- 701 Borough of Weston-super-Mare Charter Souvenir 1937, 31; *Weston Mercury* 25 February 1922, transcript in Henry Butt file in North Somerset Studies Library
- 702 National Probate Calendar for 1945, 875; <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter> [accessed 4 November 2019]
- 703 *Weston Gazette* 11 Nov 1944, transcript in Henry Butt file in North Somerset Studies Library
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- 705 North Somerset Studies Library, file on Henry Butt, undated news clipping
- 706 *Weston Mercury* 11 Nov 1944, transcript in Henry Butt file in North Somerset Studies Library
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- 708 Somerset Archives, D/B/wsm/24/1/3987, 3607
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- 725 Borough of Weston-super-Mare Charter Souvenir 1937, 31
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- 728 *Flight* 9 September 1911, 787
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- 742 Brown and Loosley 1985, 97
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- 746 Poole 2002, 89
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- 750 1946 c. 68; *ODNB*
- 751 *ODNB*
- 752 RIBA Library, Archives Collection, File RL/2/3 contains extensive newspaper coverage of the scheme.
- 753 Williams-Ellis and Brett 1947, 251-4

- 754 RIBA, Archives Collection, File RL/2/3 contains extensive newspaper coverage of the exhibition.
- 755 North Somerset Studies Library, 1841 Map and Joseph White's 1853 town plan
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- 759 Chamberlin, Powell & Bon 1961, 3
- 760 Harwood 2011, 67
- 761 Chamberlin, Powell & Bon 1961, 7
- 762 Chamberlin, Powell & Bon 1961, 23, 29
- 763 Borough of Weston-super-Mare Charter Souvenir 1937, 31-2
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